

Taboo Terms and Euphemisms in the Yemeni Speech Community: A Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Study

التوريات التلطيفية للألفاظ المحظورة المستخدمة في المجتمع اللغوي اليمني
(دراسة نوعية في ضوء اللسانيات الاجتماعية والتداولية حول ألفاظ المحظورات وتورياتها التلطيفية في
المجتمع اللغوي اليمني)

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Abstract:

The present research paper examines the sociolinguistic phenomenon of taboo and euphemism within the Yemeni speech community. In Yemen, certain topics—such as death, sex, bodily functions, and even personal talents—are considered socially harsh or offensive if addressed directly. To navigate these sensitivities, Yemeni speakers employ a sophisticated system of euphemisms: polite, indirect, or religiously grounded substitutes that allow for communication while preserving 'Face' (*Wajh*) and 'Honor' (*Aradh*). Using a qualitative methodology based on Ronald Wardhaugh's (2010) sociolinguistic model, the study analyzed a corpus of 55 euphemistic expressions collected through unstructured interviews with 13 native Yemeni informants representing various regions and dialects. The data were categorized into eight domains

(taboo situations), namely: death, health, politics, religion, sex, body parts, talents, and family relations. The findings reveal that the Yemeni speech community relies heavily on the *Logic of Divine Attribution and Spatial Displacement* to soften the impact of taboo subjects. Religion acts as the primary linguistic filter, where speakers use sacred formulas not only for politeness but as a psychological shield against spiritual threats like the 'Evil Eye'. The study concludes that euphemisms in Yemen are essential tools for maintaining social harmony and cultural identity, serving as a protective 'veil' that allows the community to discuss the realities of life without violating the deep-seated norms of modesty (*Haya*) and respect.

Keywords: Taboo, Euphemism, Yemeni Speech Community

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* أستاذ اللغويات التطبيقية والترجمة المساعد بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية والترجمة، كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة الأندلس للعلوم والتقنية - اليمن، والمدير التنفيذي لمركز الأندلس للاستشارات والدراسات والترجمة

الملخص

مجالات رئيسة (مواقف الألفاظ المحظورة) هي: الموت، الصحة، السياسة، الدين، الجنس، أعضاء الجسم، المواهب، والعلاقات الأسرية. كشفت النتائج أن المجتمع اللغوي اليمني يعتمد بشكل مكثف على "منطق العزو الإلهي" و"الإزاحة المكانية" للتخفيف من حدة المواضيع المحظورة. كما يبرز الدين بوصفه "المصفاة اللغوية" الأساسية؛ حيث يستخدم المتحدثون الصيغ المقدسة ليس فقط من باب اللياقة، بل كدرع نفسي ضد التهديدات الروحية المتصورة مثل "العين الشريرة". وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن التوريات واللطائف اللغوية في اليمن تُعد أدوات جوهرية للحفاظ على التناغم الاجتماعي والهوية الثقافية، فهي بمثابة "ستار" واقٍ يتيح للمجتمع مناقشة حقائق الحياة دون المساس بالقيم المتجذرة المتعلقة بالحياء والاحترام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المحظورات اللغوية (التابو)، التوريات التلطيفية (الكناية اللغوية)، المجتمع اللغوي اليمني

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تقصي الظاهرة اللغوية الاجتماعية للمحظورات اللغوية (التابو) والتوريات التلطيفية (الكنائيات اللغوية) الخاصة بها ضمن سياق المجتمع اللغوي اليمني؛ حيث تُعد بعض المواضيع في اليمن- مثل الموت، والجنس، والوظائف البيولوجية لجسم الإنسان، وحتى المواهب الشخصية- قضايا معيبة اجتماعياً أو خادشة للحياء إذا ما تم تناولها بعبارات مباشرة. ولتجاوز هذه الحساسيات، يستخدم المتحدث اليمني نظاماً معقداً من الكنائيات واللطائف اللغوية، وهي بدائل مهذبة، غير مباشرة، أو ذات مرجعية دينية، تتيح استمرارية التواصل مع الحفاظ على "ماء الوجه" الاجتماعي وصون "العرض" والشرف. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج النوعي استناداً إلى نموذج رونالد واردو (2010) في اللسانيات الاجتماعية؛ حيث جُمعت وحُللت مدونة لغوية مكونة من (55) تعبيراً كنايياً من خلال مقابلات غير مقيّنة مع (13) مبحوثاً من الناطقين باللغة العربية في اليمن، يمثلون مناطق ولهجات يمنية متنوعة. تم توزيع البيانات على ثمانية

INTRODUCTION

Taboo terms are usually available in all speech communities and their use cannot be avoided by interlocutors of a language. However, people often find it difficult to use such words in their communication for the consequences which take place due to their use. Allan and Kate (2006, p. 11) define taboo as the term which refers to "a proscription of behavior for a specifiable community of one or more persons at a specifiable time in specifiable contexts. What is in fact tabooed is the use of those words and language in certain contexts". In short, the taboo applies to instances of language behavior. In principle, any kind of behavior can be a taboo.

Allan (2018, p. 1-2) further classifies behavior as a taboo one if it is, "in some way, harmful to an individual or their community; but the degree of harm can fall anywhere on a scale from a breach of etiquette to out-and-out fatality". He adds that "taboos are among the common values that link the people of a community together. What one group values another scorns. So, shared taboos are a sign of social cohesion". And the avoidance of linguistic taboos can cause language change and give rise to linguistic creativity as revealed by remodeling, especially as a source of *Euphemisms* and as a function of verbal play.

Euphemisms, as alternatives employed to avoid taboo impact, differ from one place to another and from one society to another. They also differ from one context to another based on the features of that context, the role of interlocutors, and the purpose for which such euphemistic terms have been used. Therefore, the present research is focused on exploring the euphemistic terms used in the Yemeni speech community in eight taboo situations.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

It is expected that present research will meet the following objectives:

1. Exploring the euphemistic terms used by Arabic Yemeni native speakers to mitigate the effect of taboo terms employed in eight selected situations.
2. Identifying the contextual social details of the obtained euphemistic terms.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The present research is limited to the euphemistic terms used by Arabic Yemeni native speakers of different ages, background, regions, level of education, etc. to reduce the negative impact of the use of taboo terms of eight selected situations, namely: *death, health and diseases, politics, religion, sex and sex-related subjects (acts, organs, menstrual fluid, etc.), body parts and organs, talents and abilities, and family relations*. The euphemistic terms studied belong to Arabic language, particularly; the local Arabic dialects used by Yemeni people. The researcher has selected in each of the abovementioned situations a group of

examples, which do not any way represent the entire euphemistic terms in the same situation.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This research is believed to be significant as it deals with a topic which has hardly ever been tackled by researchers in the Yemeni context or in the Arab context where Arabic language is spoken as the mother tongue and first language. Its significance comes from the fact that it sheds light on a socio-cultural phenomenon related to the Arabic language in the era of politeness and directness of communication is seen to be distorted by Arabic native speakers, and its linguistic pragmatic features are not given their due proper use.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Taboo & Euphemism

Language is believed to contain special powers that make a speaker able to cure sickness, keep away evils, bring good to oneself and do harm to an enemy. This belief, that words control objects, people and spirits, has influenced human activities throughout human history since ancient times. Language usually has to be used with great care, and meticulous attention is paid to pronunciation and wording. People even tend to avoid mentioning taboos. When people have to talk about taboo matters, they are talked about in very roundabout ways (Gao, 2013). Taboo language, which is of an ancient origin, is seen to be one of the language powers through which several functions of language are performed (Keturi & Lehmonen, 2012). Taboos are one of the social phenomena through which language change comes about and seems to be characteristic of languages, (Malmkjær, 2002). Wardhaugh (2010, p. 246) defines taboo as "The prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, guilt, or punishment". He argues that linguistic taboo is a form of censorship. Certain things are not said, not because they are unknown, but because saying them directly is socially "dangerous" or offensive.

Taboo, according to Allan and Kate (2006, p. 11), refers to "a proscription of behavior for a specifiable community of one or more persons at a specifiable time in specifiable contexts. What is in fact tabooed is the use of those words and language in certain contexts; the taboo applies to instances of language behavior" .

Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (Sixth edition, 2004) describes the term taboo as a cultural or religious custom that does not allow people to do, use or talk about a particular thing as people find it offensive or embarrassing; taboo words are those considered by many people offensive or shocking, for example because they refer to sex, the body or people's race. Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics (2000) defines taboo as a term that is avoided for religious, political or sexual reasons and is usually replaced by a euphemism, for example, rest room or bath room for toilet. In these dictionaries, the definitions of 'taboo'

seemingly vary but basically they are the same. The New Oxford Dictionary of English (2001) describes the term 'taboo' (also tabu) as a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing.

The word taboo goes back to a language spoken by Polynesians in the Pacific archipelago where it was used to refer to this phenomenon and means *holy* or *untouchable things*, (Gue, 2002). As a result, every taboo term has a euphemistic term, and a language without euphemisms is a defective instrument of communication, so is taboo without euphemisms (Burchfield, 1985)

Euphemisms, which are the concern of this paper, can be defined by the researcher as the words that usually collocate or substitute the taboo terms to reduce their harmfulness, and that there is no taboo without a euphemism. Burchfield (1985) indicates that euphemistic words and expressions allow a speaker talk about unpleasant things and neutralize the unpleasantness. This is because interlocutors usually avoid taboo words and resort, instead, to what is called *euphemism*. The term 'euphemism' is also defined as "a pleasant replacement for an objectionable word that has pejorative connotations such as *to pass away* for 'to die' " (Bussmann, 2006, p. 388).

Besides, Cruse (2006, p. 57) defines the term *euphemism* as "an expression that refers to something that people hesitate to mention lest it causes offence, but which lessens the offensiveness by referring indirectly in some way". The process through which certain words are avoided is called *tabooization* (Bussmann, 2006). Wardhaugh (2010) also defines euphemisms as a form of linguistic "sanitization" used to navigate social taboos; they act as polite or indirect substitutes that allow speakers to discuss forbidden or sensitive topics without causing the anxiety, shame, or social discomfort associated with direct naming.

It is worth mentioning that taboos as well as their euphemistic terms vary, in terms of their use according to the place and situations in which they are said. What is considered to be a taboo in one region might not be so in the other region. Sa'd (2017) mentions a situation in which a man in some Arab countries such as Iraq and KSA has to be called by the name of his son (*Abu Ali*, *Abu Saleh*) or any other name. However, this is not considered to be a taboo in some countries like Yemen, but such nicknames are used only to show some respect; and the absence of the use of such words does not bother any member of the society. This phenomenon has been further supported by Mbaya's (2002) statement that using a euphemism is not merely a matter of decency, but it can be based on social conventions.

Types of Taboos

Fatal Taboo

This type, according to Allan (2018), includes situations as those when a man comes into contact with another person; the adultery crimes committed in countries like Yemen, Saudi Arabia and any other Arabic and Islamic country, the acts of magic in Islamic countries, apostate Christians (heretics) were executed in medieval Europe, and apostate Muslims may be put to death in some Islamic states today.

Gao (2013) mentions that "the fear of death carries into fear of words having to do with death and certain diseases". This is for Gao because many people believe "words have great relations with what they symbolize. Therefore, 'If anything should happen to me' means 'when I die'. Instead of saying 'die', they use substitute expressions such as 'pass away', 'go to his reward', 'answer the call of God', 'go home', 'to have a better place', 'depart' and 'go west'" (p. 2312).

Wardhaugh (2010) explains that taboos surrounding "fatal" subjects, such as death and incurable diseases, arise from a deep-seated social anxiety where direct naming is perceived as a dangerous act that might inadvertently invoke the very reality one fears. Consequently, he suggests that speech communities develop elaborate euphemistic systems to mask these "fatal" certainties, thereby neutralizing their perceived threat and maintaining psychological and social stability.

Uncleanliness Taboo

Many communities taboo physical contact with a menstruating woman, believing that it pollutes males in particular; so some Orthodox New York Jews will avoid public transport lest they sit where a menstruating woman has sat. Many places of worship in this world taboo menstruating women because they would defile holy sites. Linguistic taboos on death and disease and those on the body parts and effluvia associated with sex, micturition, and defecation are uncleanliness taboos. It is such taboos that motivate the plethora of taboo language expressions in English invoking sex organs and practices, and the body parts and effluvia of urination and defecation. Only certain terms can function as swearwords (Agyekum, 2002; Ernster, 1975; Hays, 1987; & Joffe, 1948).

Wardhaugh (2010) observes that subjects associated with bodily "uncleanliness," such as excretion and human effluvia, are universally subject to strict linguistic taboos because they provoke a sense of physical and social revulsion. He argues that euphemisms in this domain function as a "sanitizing" mechanism, allowing individuals to navigate these biological necessities through technical, clinical, or vague terminology that distances the speaker from the perceived "impurity" of the subject.

In the same regard, Gao (2013), suggests that all the words related to the bodily excretion are believed to be taboos", his earliest sayings of 'move the bowels' and

'pass water' are considered inelegant. And 'defecate' and 'urinate' seem to be the words used in hospitals. Thus, some euphemisms find themselves in replacing them, such as answering the call of nature, doing one's needs. We ask where the 'rest room' is, although we have no intention of having a rest. 'Powder room' 'loo', and 'john' are other ways to say 'toilet' (p. 2312).

Sex and Exploiting Taboos

As one of the most sensitive types of taboo, Deng and Liu (1989) suggest that "words having to do with anatomy and sex, and words even vaguely suggesting anatomical or sexual matters, have remarkable connotations, especially in American culture. Ladies of the nineteenth century could not bring themselves to say 'breast' or 'leg', not even of chicken" (p. 93).

Moreover, Wardhaugh (2010) asserts that sexual acts and human reproductive organs are among the most heavily guarded linguistic territories in any culture. He notes that because these topics are so closely linked to private behavior and social morality, they necessitate a complex system of euphemisms—ranging from clinical terms to vague metaphors—to ensure that social interactions remain within the bounds of "decency" and do not cause undue embarrassment. Regarding the taboo of exploitation, Wardhaugh suggests that taboos can be "exploited" by speakers to convey intense emotion or to establish group identity. He argues that by deliberately breaking a linguistic taboo—such as through the use of profanity or "slang"—a speaker can exert power, express extreme frustration, or signal a rebellious intimacy that defies standard social norms

The sexual revolution which took place in 1960 began to make a great change and young people after such a revolution felt freer to speak about sex and the sexual organs of the human body in countries where English is spoken as the first language. Some terms have been used to reduce such sexual taboos such as the use of 'to make love' which means 'to have sex with' (Gao, 2013).

This type of taboos and euphemistic terms takes place in situations where, for instance, a person claims the possession by saying those two canoes are my two thighs; and giving the names of some chiefs to their pet animals, and preventing the others from killing them (Steiner, 1967).

Swearing

In this respect, Wardhaugh (2010) characterizes swearing as the deliberate use of taboo language to express strong emotions, such as anger or frustration, or to establish a specific social persona. He contends that the effectiveness of swearing relies entirely on the persistence of the underlying taboo; for a "swear word" to maintain its emotional or social impact, the subject it refers to—whether it be religious, sexual, or related to bodily functions—must remain culturally forbidden or offensive.

Besides, Gao (2013) explains that cursing and swearing encompass a broad spectrum of linguistic forms, ranging from sophisticated expressions used in formal religious or legal settings to everyday taboo language used to channel emotions like hatred or surprise. He further notes that while these expressions typically consist of brief phrases or single words, their impact varies significantly in terms of emotional intensity and the level of social acceptance they receive.

Allan (2018) also defines swearing as a highly emotive application of taboo language and identifies four distinct communicative functions. First is the expletive function, used for emotional release; second is abuse and insult, intended to offend or belittle others. Additionally, he notes that swearing can be used to foster social solidarity within a group, or as a stylistic choice to emphasize the speaker's specific attitude or intensity regarding the subject matter.

Privacy

In a linguistic context, Wardhaugh (2010) highlights that the concept of privacy creates a powerful linguistic barrier, where subjects related to a person's private life—including financial status, domestic arrangements, and personal hygiene—are often shielded by taboo. He explains that speakers use euphemisms in these areas not necessarily because the topics are "dirty," but because direct inquiry or statement would constitute an inappropriate social intrusion, necessitating more discreet and indirect forms of communication to maintain personal boundaries

In the same regard, asking personal questions and talking about matters have something to do with the privacy of an individual are considered to be of taboos. Deng and Liu (1989) talk about this matter that "to ask questions concerning one's age, weight, income, marital status, politics, religion, etc. would be considered prying into an individual's personal life, which is another form of invading a person's castle" (p.96).

The Use of Euphemisms

The term 'Euphemism' has been defined above that it has been symbolized as a softening tool utilized by a speaker to carry on the conversation on taboo situations. According to Burchfield (1985), a language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication, and so is taboo without euphemisms. There is a feeling that the names of the gods are too holy, and the names of evil spirits are too terrifying, and they are not supposed to be treated as other common words. Therefore, they are purposefully avoided in a roundabout way. *Gee, gosh almighty* and *gosh darn* are ways to say *Jesus, God Almighty* and *Goddamn*.

There are dozens of expressions especially in the words of different jobs. Euphemisms make unpleasant jobs more attractive; even the word *job* itself is called *profession*. For example, *janitor* becomes *custodian*; *sanitation engineer* replaces

garbage collector; *gardener* is changed into *landscape architect*, (Gao, 2013, p. 2313).

Talking about poverty using the word 'poor' is one of the taboos that euphemistic terms have come to replace. Wang (2008), for instance has used a humorous sentence to euphemize the term poverty "I used to think I was *poor*. Then they told me I wasn't poor, I was *needy*, I was *deprived*. Then they told me *unprivileged* was overused. I was *disadvantaged*. I still don't have a dime. But I have a great vocabulary.

Deng and Liu (1989) observe that euphemisms are frequently employed to mitigate embarrassment and safeguard the feelings of individuals, particularly within the realm of international relations. They illustrate this by citing how President Reagan rejected the term "invasion" in favor of "rescue mission" regarding the 1983 US action in Grenada. Furthermore, they highlight the evolution of labels for economically challenged nations, noting a shift from "underdeveloped" to more diplomatically sensitive terms like "developing," "emerging," or the United Nations' preferred "less-developed countries" (p. 89)

However, the excessive use of euphemisms is not appropriate either. Suppose an occasion where there is such a line "The departed rests in his casket in a slumber room where friends may visit with him before the grief therapist assists the dear one to his plot in a memorial garden" Gu and Lu (2002, p. 274). Too many euphemisms in one sentence made it the opposite of what is wished.

Besides, Wardhaugh (2010) views euphemisms as the linguistic "buffer." They allow a speaker to discuss a taboo subject by "dressing it up" in less direct language. He notes that euphemisms are used to:

- *Avoid Provocation*: Neutralizing the "sting" of a harsh reality.
- *Maintain Politeness*: Ensuring the "face" of both the speaker and hearer is preserved.
- *Sanitize Reality*: Making unpleasant things (like death or bodily functions) sound more clinical, spiritual, or vague.

Language Change and Development

The avoidance of linguistic taboos can cause language change and give rise to linguistic creativity as revealed by remodeling, especially as a source for euphemisms and as a function of verbal play. Wardhaugh (2010) emphasizes that the boundaries of what is considered taboo are not static but are subject to constant change and development as a society's values and social structures evolve. He suggests that as the "social distance" or "power dynamics" within a community shift, the linguistic strategies used to manage these taboos, such as euphemisms, must also adapt to remain socially effective (pp. 249-251).

Allan (2018) claims that "there are predominantly two ways in which novel terms and expressions are created leading to language change: formally through remodeling and semantically through figurative language" (p. 19). For instance, the word *naked* can be replaced by several words like *nude* (artistic or pornographic depending on the viewer); *buck/ butt naked* to refer to a naked child, etc.

Such expressions display folk culture in a remarkable inventiveness of metaphor and figurative language sourced in the perceived characteristics of whatever is being talked about. For instance, terms for tabooed objects and events provide ready-made material for the dysphemistic language of curses, insults, epithets, and expletives. X-phemisms, for example, orthophemisms and/or euphemisms and/or dysphemisms, are motivated by a speaker/writer's want to be seen to take a certain stance by upgrading, downgrading, obfuscating, and deceiving; and they extensively manifest indulgence in verbal play. Although the discussion here focuses on English, the categories illustrated occur across the world's languages, and many of them are significant for the study of language change (Allan, 2018).

Previous Studies

Qanbar (2011) has investigated linguistic taboos in Yemen to identify how variables like gender and age influence euphemism choice. The study was administered to 150 participants from across various Yemeni regions. The study used a mixed-methods approach with a sociolinguistic questionnaire to elicit verbal responses. The primary findings have been that religion and the cultural concept of *Ayb* (shame) act as the ultimate regulators of speech, where speakers prioritize "saving face" over direct communication. The study has also revealed that Yemeni women use euphemisms more frequently and creatively than men to maintain social decorum. Furthermore, it has been concluded that Yemeni speakers rely on religious formulas not just for politeness, but as a psychological shield against the perceived "spiritual danger" of certain taboo topics.

Rabab'ah & Al-Qarni (2012) have conducted a comparative study of euphemistic strategies in Saudi Arabic and British English. The researchers utilized a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) with 60 university-level participants from Riyadh and the UK to identify mechanisms such as metaphors and part-for-whole substitutions. The findings emphasize that while English speakers often use clinical or technical terms to avoid taboo, Arab speakers rely almost exclusively on religious formulas and metaphorical extensions. The study has found that in topics of death and sex, Saudi speakers used "litotes" (understatements) to soften the harshness of reality.

Ghounane (2014) has conducted a study to analyze sociolinguistic patterns of taboos in Tlemcen, Algeria, to examine how traditional values and Islamic teachings shape linguistic selection. This qualitative descriptive study, was carried out with approximately 40 informants, using observation and interviews to collect a corpus of daily euphemisms. The researcher has found that euphemisms act as a "social filter," particularly for "uncleanliness" taboos such as bodily functions and menstruation. A major finding is that speakers often rebrand these taboos as

"illnesses" (e.g., saying "I am tired" instead of "I am menstruating") to avoid social revulsion. The study concludes that the Arabic language provides a sanitized, metaphor-rich vocabulary that allows speakers to maintain ritual and social purity.

Sa'd (2017) has carried out a study to explore discourse strategies for navigating sensitive topics among an Arab community in Khuzestan, Iran. Using an ethnographic methodology in 2017, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and observations with 20 native Arabic speakers. The findings have shown that the situational context—specifically the presence of "others"—dictates the level of linguistic "shielding" required for topics like death, sex, and family affairs. A significant finding is the use of "semantic displacement," where speakers substitute a specific taboo word with a general or vague term to minimize emotional impact. The study also highlights "prosodic euphemisms," where lowering the voice or using silence serves as a non-verbal euphemistic strategy.

Khedir (2018) has examined euphemism as a communicative tool within the Hijazi and Southern regions of Saudi Arabia to determine the impact of regional dialects on linguistic behavior. The study employed a descriptive questionnaire to measure the frequency and type of euphemisms used for various taboos. The results have indicated that regional identity and local customs significantly influence which terms are considered "polite" versus "offensive." Specifically, the study has found that more conservative southern regions utilized a higher density of religious euphemisms compared to the more urbanized Hijazi region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present research paper is a descriptive socio-cultural and applied linguistic one as it examines the relationship between language (euphemisms) and social/cultural factors (taboos, religion, and regional dialects) within a specific speech community. It also contains elements of Pragmatics since it focuses on the practical use of language to manage social interaction and 'save face'. Qualitative content analysis has been used to interpret the socio-cultural origins and the contextual functions of the terms discussed.

Population and Sampling

In this research paper, a randomly selected group of Yemeni native speakers of Arabic language was the sample that represents different Yemeni regions. Their total number is thirteen informants (13) selected by the purposive representative sampling method of the Yemeni speech community to capture dialectical and social variations. The criteria for selecting the informants of this research, in terms of gender, age and educational background, can be as follows.

1. Their ages are no less than 40.

2. They come from different regions and speak different Yemeni local Arabic dialects.
3. They were born in the Yemeni society and they have lived the majority of their life in Yemen, so that their language is not highly affected by other national dialects.
4. The educational level of the selected sample is not important. Uneducated people sometimes can be very useful for this type of study.

The researcher used a corpus of fifty (55) euphemistic terms/expressions categorized into eight specific taboo domains.

Data Collecting Instrument

The data of this study was collected using an unstructured interview. The informants were given some taboos in which they were required to provide the euphemistic terms used in such contexts. Free interaction was allowed which made the informants able to add, comment and give their opinions freely in this regard.

The Framework Adopted for Analysis

The researcher has followed Wardhaugh's (2010) Sociolinguistic Perspective on Taboo and Euphemism model which is mainly based on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987). Ronald Wardhaugh's perspective, primarily detailed in his seminal work *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, approaches Taboo and Euphemism as a mirror of a society values, fears, and social hierarchy. This model is believed by the researcher to be suitable for the Yemeni speech community because it does not just look at the words, but the reason behind a culture choice to hide certain realities. Besides, Wardhaugh's model seems to be appropriate for the present study as it accounts for regional and dialectical variation. Wardhaugh (2010) argues that as social structures change, taboos change. The following table presents a summary for Wardhaugh's model

<i>A summary of Wardhaugh's (2010, PP. 246 - 249) Model of Taboo and Euphemism</i>	
Death / Health	The fear of Unknown
Sex / Body Parts	Physical / Biological Taboo
Politics / Family	Social Order & Power Dynamic
Religion	The Sacred & Supernatural
Talents / Abilities	Social Comparison & Envy (Evil Eye)

The researcher has subdivided the above classifications into eight categories for the purpose of providing constructive analysis for the collected data.

DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

The researcher has collected data (55 euphemistic terms) about the targeted tabooed situations from the targeted informants, who come from different Yemeni regions, through an structured interview. The data of each targeted tabooed situation will be presented below along with a logical interpretation which satisfactorily and briefly provides answers to the questions of the research.

Death Taboo Euphemistic Terms

Table (1): Death euphemisms used in the Yemeni speech community		
No.	Taboo Situations	Euphemistic Term
1	Talking about somebody's death	المرحوم - المنتقل إلى جوار ربه - المغفور له بإذن الله
2	The announcement of someone's death	فلان أعطاك عمره / البقاء في حياتك / فارق الحياة
3	When talking about the dead body of someone	الجنزة
4	The grave where a dead man is buried	ضريح
5	Mentioning the act of burial	مأواه الأخير
6	Referring to a 'Martyr'	نال الشهادة / اصطفاه الله
7	Talking about a dead child	طير من طيور الجنة

The terms, in Table (1) above, cover some of the most common euphemisms used in the taboo situations of death. Such death taboo euphemisms are used differently from region to another within the Yemeni speech community like any other dialectical terms. Moreover, the situation of death includes many various tabooed terms said in different death contexts which demand different types of euphemistic words. Therefore, the terms presented in Table (1) above are just examples of the terms used in this regard.

In the Yemeni speech community, the use of death-related euphemisms is a sophisticated sociolinguistic strategy rooted in the concepts of "Fear Taboo" and "Social Solidarity." Because the word "death" (mawt) is perceived as a linguistically "heavy" and potentially traumatic term, speakers utilize these substitutes to fulfill the religious and social duty of Tasliya. This linguistic behavior acts as a psychological lubricant, softening the harshness of mortality and shifting the focus from physical loss to spiritual transition. The logic behind these terms varies based on the specific timing of the event and the social setting in which the interaction occurs.

The first logical layer is *Spiritual Relocation*, primarily used during formal condolences in the Majlis or in written tributes. Terms such as المنتقل إلى جوار ربه

(the one who moved to be next to his Lord) or المرحوم (the one receiving mercy) redefine death as a journey rather than a terminal end. By framing the deceased as a guest of the Creator, the speaker logically elevates the status of the departed. This is particularly evident when referring to a "Martyr" (نال الشهادة); the terminology transforms a tragic, often violent loss into a divine selection (اصطفاه الله), which provides the family with a sense of pride and religious validation to replace their immediate grief.

Another vital dimension is the *Logic of Shared Permanence*, which is typically employed at the precise and sensitive moment of announcing a death to a relative. Phrases like فلان أعطاك عمره (So-and-so gave you his life) or البقاء في حياتك (May the remaining life be in yours) function as symbolic precise compensations. In the Yemeni conviction, life is sometimes seen as a finite blessing; by suggesting the deceased has "left" their remaining years to the listener, the speaker attempts to balance the emotional 'minus' of death with a linguistic 'plus' of permanence for the living. This acts as a protective shield is intended to prevent the listener from collapsing under the initial shock.

Furthermore, the Yemeni speaker utilizes *Ritual Softening* to sanitize the physical and biological aspects of death. During the funeral procession or at the cemetery (Maqbara), direct words for a grave are avoided because they are seen as rude or terrifying. Instead, the term الجنائز is used to focus on the social ritual of the procession, and ضريح is used to lend a sense of sacredness to the burial site. Similarly, when a child passes away, the metaphor طير من طيور الجنة (A bird of Paradise) is used. This imagery removes the heavy, static connotations of death and replaces them with a light, soaring symbol of innocence, logically assuring the parents of a guaranteed heavenly reunion.

Eventually, these euphemisms preserve the Wajh (social face) of both the speaker and the listener within the community. In a society built on close-knit tribal and family ties, the direct mention of death would be too abrasive for the delicate social fabric. By employing these religiously grounded and metaphorically rich terms, Yemenis manage to acknowledge the reality of loss while maintaining the decorum, modesty, and mutual support required by their cultural and spiritual values.

Health and Diseases Euphemisms

No.	Taboo situations	Euphemistic Term
1	To refer to the blind	البصير
2	To refer to the poor	الكفيف
3	To mention a fat person	بدين
4	To refer to a person who cannot work because of health problems	مقعد
5	For a person who always forgets situations, events and names of people around him easily due to their age or physical diseases like dementia.	تخونه الذاكرة/لم تسعفه ذاكرته /لم يسعفه شيخوخته على تذكر شيء ما
6	To refer to a person with a mental illness	تعبان نفسياً / خفيف عقل
7	To refer to a person with cancer	المرض الخبيث / هذاك المرض

In Table (2) above, seven common euphemistic terms have been suggested by informants to represent seven health and disease taboo situations in the Yemeni speech community. In the Yemeni speech community, health and physical conditions are governed by the logic of *Compassion and Sanctification*. In this context, a physical or mental illness is often viewed through a religious lens as an *Ibtila'* (a divine test). Therefore, naming a disability or a disease directly is considered an act of social cruelty or "gloating" (*Shamatah*). The analysis of the following examples describes how these euphemisms function as a protective linguistic shield for both the patient and the speaker.

The first logical mechanism observed is *Antiphrasis* or *Linguistic Reversal*, most notably when referring to a blind person as البصير (the one with insight/vision). Logically, the speaker replaces a physical deficit with a spiritual strength. In the Yemeni mindset, while the physical eyes may be closed, the "inner eye" is perceived to be open and more connected to divine truth. By using this term, the community acknowledges the individual's human value and insight, effectively erasing the stigma of "disability" and replacing it with "special perception." This preserves the person's dignity in social gatherings, ensuring they are seen for their wisdom rather than their limitation.

Another significant dimension is the *Logic of Externalized Blame*, specifically used for cognitive decline or dementia. Terms like تخونه الذاكرة (his memory betrays him) or لم تسعفه ذاكرته (his memory did not aid him) treat the memory as an external entity separate from the person's character. This is crucial in the Yemeni social hierarchy, where the elderly hold a position of high respect and authority. By framing the condition as a "betrayal" by the memory or age, the speaker ensures the individual remains a *Barakah* (blessing) within the family. This prevents the

embarrassment of labeling a respected elder as "senile" and maintains their "face" (Wajh) despite their physical decline.

The *Logic of Avoidance* and *Distancing* is applied to "heavy" or terminal illnesses, particularly cancer, which is referred to as المرض الخبيث (the wicked disease) or simply هناك المرض (that disease). In Yemeni culture, there is a deep-seated belief that words carry power; naming a terrifying disease directly is seen as an invitation for it to manifest or as a psychological blow to the listener. By using vague pronouns or descriptors like "wicked," the speaker creates a linguistic distance between the person and the illness. This treats the disease as a nameless "enemy," allowing the community to discuss the situation without acknowledging the harsh medical reality that causes fear and despair.

Finally, the logic of *Softening the Physical* is seen in terms of obesity (بدين) or mental health (تعبان نفسياً). Direct words for "fat" or "crazy" are considered highly offensive (Ayb) and abrasive. Substituting them with بدين (obese/stout) or خفيف عقل (idiot) shifts the discourse from a harsh judgment to a softer, more manageable observation. This ensures that social interactions in the Majlis or the marketplace remain civil and empathetic. Whether dealing with a physical handicap (مقعد) or a mental struggle, the Yemeni speaker utilizes these euphemisms to prioritize the collective peace and the emotional well-being of the sufferer over blunt literalism.

Political Taboos Euphemistic Terms

Table (3): Political Euphemisms used in the Yemeni speech community

No.	Taboo situations	Euphemistic Term
1	To refer, for instance, to the missiles used in the war led by Saudi Coalition against Yemen, according to Saudi Coalition spokesperson	قذائف ذكية
2	A common term used, for example, by the United Arab of Emirates to justify its occupation of some Yemeni regions and islands.	مهمة إغاثية
3	A Coup d'état or forceful takeover	حركة تصحيحية / تصحيح المسار
4	Civil War, armed conflict, or unrest	الأحداث / الأزمة
5	Economic Inflation or major price hikes	إصلاحات اقتصادية
6	Political Prisoners or detainees	المتحفظ عليهم / النزلاء
7	Military Defeat or forced retreat	إعادة انتشار / انسحاب تكتيكي
8	Dictatorship or Absolute Rule	القيادة الحكيمة / ولي الأمر
9	Assassination or Political Killing	حادث أليم / تصفية

In the Yemeni and broader Arab political sphere, language is strategically employed as a diplomatic and security tool to manage public perception and safeguard the "Face" (Wajh) of the state. Political euphemisms in this context are governed by the Logic of Legitimacy and Stability, where potentially explosive or shameful events are rebranded to maintain social order and national dignity. By using these terms, political actors attempt to bridge the gap between harsh realities and the desired image of a stable, moral authority.

The first logical mechanism observed is *Technological and Humanitarian Reframing*, which is used to sanitize the violence of war and foreign intervention. For instance, referring to missiles as *فذائف ذكية* (smart shells) logically shifts the focus from destruction and human casualties to technical precision and military "intelligence." Similarly, when foreign entities describe territorial control as *مهمة إغاثية* (relief mission), they are utilizing the *Logic of Humanity*. By framing military presence through the lens of aid and charity, the taboo of "occupation" is hidden behind a mask of humanitarianism, making the intervention more palatable to both the local population and the international community.

Another vital dimension is the *Logic of Restorative Justice*, applied specifically to power shifts and civil unrest. Naming a "Coup" directly is a heavy political taboo because it implies illegality; instead, using *حركة تصحيحية* (a corrective movement) or *تصحيح المسار* (path correction) suggests that the change was a necessary "fix" for a system that had failed. This logically justifies the takeover as a heroic act of repair rather than a violation of the law. In the same vein, describing a devastating civil war simply as *الأحداث* (the events) or *الأزمة* (the crisis) follows a *Logic of Minimization*. This strips the conflict of its bloody reality — turning death and destruction into a vague, manageable "issue" that can be solved through negotiation, thus reducing public panic.

The Logic of *Strategic Competence* is used to navigate economic failures and military setbacks. When the government imposes price hikes that burden the poor, it is rebranded as *إصلاحات اقتصادية* (economic reforms). This follows a "medical" logic, implying that while the policy is painful, it is a necessary cure for the nation's long-term health. Similarly, a military defeat is never admitted; it is called *إعادة انتشار* (redeployment) or *انسحاب تكتيكي* (tactical withdrawal). Logically, this reframes a forced loss as a planned, voluntary choice made by a "wise" command, ensuring that the image of the military's strength remains intact despite the reality of the retreat.

Finally, the Logic of *Institutional Sanctity* is applied to the state's treatment of individuals and the nature of leadership. Referring to political prisoners as *نزلاء* (guests) or *المتحفظ عليهم* (those under reservation) replaces the harshness of "incarceration" with terms that imply temporary and respectful hosting, thereby avoiding accusations of human rights abuses. To avoid the taboo of "Dictatorship," the leadership is labeled *القيادة الحكيمة* (the wise leadership) or *ولي الأمر* (the guardian). This logic taps into traditional and religious structures of authority,

suggesting that the ruler is a protective father figure rather than an absolute power. Even in the case of political killings, the use of *حادث أليم* (a painful accident) or *تصفية* (liquidation) sanitizes the act, turning a deliberate crime into a technical process or an unfortunate, "vague" occurrence.

Religious Euphemistic Terms

No.	Taboo situations	Euphemistic Term
1	A word used as a name for people who are Jewish	ذمي
2	The people who belong to religions other than Islam	أهل الكتاب
3	To refer to the animal killed as a sacrifice for God	أضحية / قربان
4	A woman who had already been married and got divorced.	ثيب
5	Referring to Jinn (Spirits)	بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم / من لا يُذكرون /
6	Mentioning a personal sin or error	تقصير / غلبة عليه نفسه
7	Referring to a religious "curse"	ابتلاء / قضاء وقدر
8	Using the name of God in a common place	المولى (عزوجل) / الخالق
9	Referring to the "Evil Eye" (Envy)	عينه حارة

In the Yemeni context, religious euphemisms are governed by the *Logic of Sanctification* and *Spiritual Protection*. Religion is the primary framework through which Yemenis interpret the world; therefore, language must be carefully adjusted to show reverence to the divine while creating a protective barrier against supernatural or "unclean" forces. These terms function as a sociolinguistic filter that replaces harsh or potentially dangerous realities with a vocabulary that is spiritually "safe" and culturally dignified.

The first logical layer is the *Logic of Supernatural Avoidance and Protection*, specifically used when referring to *Jinn* or the "Evil Eye." In the Yemeni belief, names are believed to have a summoning power; mentioning the *Jinn* directly can attract their presence. Consequently, speakers use the protective phrase *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم* (In the name of God) or the vague descriptor *من لا يُذكرون* (Those who are not mentioned) to neutralize the threat. Similarly, when discussing envy, referring to someone as having a *عين حارة* (hot eye) logically transforms a malicious spiritual act into a physical sensation of "heat." This allows the speaker to acknowledge the danger of the "Eye" without making a direct, relationship-destroying accusation of witchcraft.

Another significant dimension is the Logic of *Holy Categorization and Contractual Status*, which handles the taboo of religious "others." Instead of using terms that might be perceived as belittling or exclusionary, the Yemeni speaker utilizes Quranic classifications. Referring to Jews as ذمي (one under a covenant of protection) or to non-Muslims as أهل الكتاب (People of the Book) follows a *Logic of Legal Sanctity*. These terms define the "other" through their historical and legal relationship with Islam rather than their "unbelief." This prevents social friction and provides a formal, respectful status that maintains the "Face" (Wajh) of the community while adhering to Islamic traditional terminology.

The *Logic of Moral Softening and Externalized Fault* is applied to personal sins and marital status. Directly labeling oneself a "sinner" or a woman as "divorced" can be socially "heavy" and stigmatizing. Using تقصير (shortcoming) or غلبة عليه (his soul overcame him) logically shifts the blame from a permanent character flaw to a temporary human weakness. This allows for repentance without total social shame. Similarly, the term ثيب (a woman previously married) is a classical, formal descriptor that avoids the modern social weight often attached to the word "divorced." By using a neutral, jurisprudential term, the speaker maintains the woman's dignity and focuses on her legal status rather than her social misfortune.

Finally, the *Logic of Divine Rebranding* is used to interpret misery or the use of sacred names in daily life. When a "curse" or a disaster occurs, it is rebranded as ابتلاء (a test) or قضاء وقدر (fate & destiny). This logic transforms a negative, frightening event into a meaningful spiritual trial, suggesting that God is testing the believer's patience. Furthermore, in common places where using the proper name "Allah" might be seen as irreverent, Yemenis substitute it with المولى (The Protector) or الخالق (The Creator). This creates a *Logic of Sacred Distance*, ensuring that the Divine is always mentioned with a title of high respect, thereby protecting the speaker from the taboo of being casual with the name of God.

Sex & sex-related Subjects

No.	Taboo situations	Euphemistic Term
1	Used when talking about having sex	الجماع / المضاجعة / الخلوة بإمرأة / الوطأ
2	Used when a women willingly offers sex for a man	مكنته من نفسها / راودته عن نفسها / همّت به
3	To express a situation where a woman is in menstrual period.	حائض / الدورة الشهرية / مدة الطمث / العذر الشرعي
4	Sexual desire / urge	شهوة / رغبة
5	To refer to a pregnant woman	نفاس

In the Yemeni and broader Arab speech communities, subjects related to sex and reproduction are governed by the *Logic of Modesty* (Haya') and *Linguistic Clothing*. Because these topics are deeply tied to family honor (Aradh) and personal privacy, direct functional or biological descriptions are viewed as "auditory pollutants." Consequently, speakers utilize a strategy of *Vague Allusion and Legalistic Substitution* to discuss these realities while maintaining a thick layer of social dignity.

The first logical mechanism is *Functional and Spatial Substitution*, primarily used when discussing sexual intercourse. Instead of naming the biological act, terms like *خلوة بإمرأة* (privacy with a woman) or *المضاجعة* (lying together) are used. Logically, the speaker substitutes the "act" with the "setting" (privacy) or the "posture" (lying down). This allows the community to acknowledge the existence of the act within a legitimate marital framework while avoiding the "Ayb" (shame) of literalism. By using *الجماع* (coming together), the logic shifts to a "social union" rather than a physical one, effectively "clothing" the biological reality in a formal, respectful linguistic garment.

Another significant dimension is the *Logic of Agency and Intent*, used when describing a woman's role in a sexual encounter. Terms such as *مكنته من نفسها* (she enabled him) or *راودته عن نفسها* (she sought to entice him) follow a *Logic of Literary Elevation*. By borrowing from classical and Quranic rhetoric, the speaker moves the discussion from a "vulgar" street-level description to a high-linguistic plane. This reframing treats the situation as a narrative of "will" and "temptation" rather than a mere physical act, which preserves the gravity of the social situation while adhering to the strict requirements of "Haya".

The *Logic of Jurisprudential Shielding* is applied to the taboo of menstruation. Direct mention of biological blood is avoided in favor of terms like *العذر الشرعي* (the legal excuse). This follows logic where the biological process is defined solely by its religious consequence (the exemption from prayer). By shifting the conversation to "law" and "excuse," the physical reality is completely hidden behind a veil of piety. Even the term *الدورة الشهرية* (the monthly cycle) acts as a *Logic of Temporal Neutrality*, rebranding a private bodily function as a simple, mechanical passage of time.

Finally, the *Logic of Physical Transition* is seen in the treatment of pregnancy and desire. Using *رغبة* (desire) instead of more explicit terms treats a sexual urge as a "human inclination," logically placing it in the same category as a desire for food or rest. Regarding the term *نفاس*, although it specifically refers to the post-partum period, its use in the context of pregnancy follows a *Logic of Outcome*. By referring to a woman through the lens of her maternal state, the community shifts the focus from the "conception" (which is private/sexual) to the "motherhood" (which is public/sacred). This ensures that the woman's status is protected and that the conversation remains focused on her health and the "safety" (Salamah) of her transition into parenthood.

Body Parts & Organs Functions Euphemistic Terms

Table (6): Body parts and organs functions euphemistic terms used in the Yemeni speech community

No.	Taboo situations	Euphemistic Term
1	To indicate the secret / hidden parts of the human body which are taboos in most religions customs.	عورة / الأماكن الحساسة
2	When talking about the sexual organs of a woman or man.	الأعضاء التناسلية / فرج المرأة / عضو الإنسان
3	When talking about a woman's breasts	الثديين
4	To refer to the bathroom or toilet	بيت الأدب / بيت الراحة / الحمام
5	When a person gets rid of stool and urine matters of the body	قضاء الحاجة / يذهب إلى الحمام / يطير ماء
6	To refer to breaking wind (Flatulence)	هواء / ريح

In the Yemeni speech community, body parts and their biological functions are governed by the Logic of *Privacy and Honorific Shield Zones*. Because the physical body—particularly its lower or reproductive sections—is viewed through the lens of Awra (vulnerability/shame), direct naming is seen as a sign of poor upbringing or a lack of Adab (refinement). These euphemisms function as a sociolinguistic filter, ensuring that the "Face" (Wajh) of the individual remains intact and that the physical body never overshadows the moral and social persona.

The first logical mechanism is *Anatomical Generalization and Moral Labeling*, used to describe private parts. Terms like عورة (vulnerability) or الأماكن الحساسة (sensitive places) logically define the body part by its social requirement (to be covered) rather than its biological form. By using the term عورة, the speaker invokes a religious and moral duty of protection. Similarly, referring to sexual organs as فرج المرأة (the opening/relief) or عضو الإنسان (the human organ) follows a *Logic of Functional Neutrality*. These terms "zoom out" from the sexualized reality to a formal, jurisprudential level, allowing the community to discuss medical or legal matters without violating the strict codes of 'Haya' (modesty).

Another significant dimension is the Logic of *Spatial and Moral Rebranding*, most clearly observed in terms for the bathroom. Referring to the toilet as بيت الأدب (the house of manners) is a sophisticated linguistic reversal. Logically, the speaker replaces a place associated with "impurity" with a term associated with "refinement", suggesting that a person's manners are proven by how they handle their private needs discreetly. Calling it بيت الراحة (the house of rest) follows the *Logic of Result*, focusing on the physical relief obtained rather than the biological process itself. This

allows a person to announce their destination in a social gathering, like a Majlis, without bringing "lowly" imagery into the conversation.

The *Logic of Functional Vagueness* is applied to the act of elimination. Phrases like *قضاء الحاجة* (fulfilling a need) or *يطير ماء* (releasing water) reduce a specific biological act to a generic necessity or a simple elemental metaphor. This "masks" the physical details under a layer of general utility. Furthermore, when discussing involuntary functions like flatulence, the speaker utilizes the *Logic of Metaphorical Externalization*, referring to it as *ريح* (wind) or *هواء* (air). Logically, this attributes the bodily occurrence to a natural, external element, absolving the individual of the social embarrassment associated with internal biological "noises" by treating them as a natural force of nature.

Finally, the *Logic of Literary Elevation* is used for sensitive anatomy, such as referring to a woman's breasts as *النهدين*. By moving the discourse from common or vulgar street-level words to a more classical and poetic linguistic plane, the speaker maintains a high level of dignity. This ensures that even when the body must be mentioned, it is done so within the boundaries of Adab. Whether through the use of "honorific buffers" or "spatial displacement," the Yemeni speaker prioritizes the collective modesty and the sanctity of the social interaction over blunt literalism.

Talents & Abilities Euphemistic Terms

Table (7): Talents & abilities euphemistic terms used in the Yemeni speech community

No.	Taboo situations	Euphemistic Term
1	A phrase used to talk about slow-understanding people.	التكرار يعلم الشطار
2	A term used ironically when addressing a stupid person	يا فهيم
3	Ironically indicating a person with slow lazy movements.	حميشة / مشحوط(ة)
4	To refer to disabled people whether mentally or physically	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة
5	To praise professional success	الله فاتح عليه / مستور الحال
6	To describe someone's financial social deficiency case	مستور الحال

In the Yemeni social fabric, discussing a person's talents, intelligence, or physical abilities is governed by the *Logic of Envy Prevention* and *Social Preservation*. Because the Yemeni community is deeply communal and spiritual, any deviation from the "norm"—whether it is extraordinary success or a noticeable deficiency—is treated with linguistic caution. These euphemisms function as a "social lubricant," allowing people to comment on others' traits without triggering the "Evil Eye" (Al-Ayn) or causing a permanent loss of "Face" (Wajh).

The first logical mechanism is *Irony and Linguistic Reversal*, which is frequently used to address intellectual or physical slowness. Using terms like *يا فهميم* (O, sharp one) for someone who has failed to understand, or *حميشة* (energetic/sprightly) for someone moving slowly, follows a *Logic of Sarcastic Softening*. Rather than using a direct, abrasive insult like "stupid" or "lazy," which would be a major breach of Adab (manners), the speaker uses the exact opposite quality. This allows the speaker to deliver a critique while maintaining a thin veil of humor, preventing the interaction from turning into a direct, irreversible confrontation. Similarly, the proverb *التكرار يعلم الشطار* (Repetition teaches the clever) follows a *Logic of Encouragement*; it reframes the need for repetition as a path to mastery rather than a sign of low intelligence.

Another significant dimension is the *Logic of Institutional and Moral Dignity*, applied to those with disabilities. The term *ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة* (those with special needs) replaces older, harsher anatomical labels. This follows a *Logic of Respectful Modernization*, where the individual is defined by what they require for support rather than what they lack physically or mentally. In the Yemeni context, this aligns with the religious view of disability as an 'Ibtla' (divine test) that demands communal compassion. By using this formal euphemism, the speaker upholds the person's humanity and ensures they are treated with the sanctity required by social and religious norms.

The *Logic of Divine Attribution and Spiritual Shielding* is the primary tool for discussing success. Phrases like *الله فاتح عليه* (God has opened for him) follow a *Logic of Grace*, where personal talent is reframed as a gift from a higher power. This is a critical "Fear Taboo" strategy; by crediting God, the speaker proves they are not envious, thereby protecting the successful person from the "Evil Eye." This ensures that professional achievements are acknowledged without creating a "heat" of envy that could damage social relations or the person's well-being.

Finally, the *Logic of "Sutrah" (Veiling) and Contentment* is used to describe financial or social deficiency through the term *مستور الحال* (his state is veiled). This is perhaps the most profound euphemism in Yemeni culture, as it can be used for both the successful and the struggling. Logically, it implies that God has placed a "veil" over the person's private affairs, keeping their needs or their wealth hidden from the prying eyes of the public. This treats "sufficiency" as the ultimate talent. Whether a person is wealthy or poor, saying they are *مستور* protects their dignity, prevents the taboo of "begging" or "boasting," and reinforces the value of being satisfied with one's lot in life.

Family Relations Euphemisms

Table (8): Family relations euphemistic terms used in the Yemeni speech community

No.	Taboo situations	Euphemistic Term
1	When mentioning any female member of the family to anyone who is not a member of the family	مكاف
2	In the Islamic religion to emphasize that a man is allowed to accompany a woman in travel or to be with her in any other situation because she is not permitted to be a wife for him.	محرم
3	To refer to the sister of a husband	حمية
4	To refer to the wife of the husband's brother	سليفة
5	Mentioning one's own wife in a public gathering	البيت/ أم العيال/ المدام
6	Referring to a second wife (co-wife)	الشريكة (بدلا عن الضرة)

In the Yemeni social fabric, family relations are governed by the *Logic of Privacy and Tribal Honor*. The family is considered a "Haram" (a sacred, protected space), and language is used to delineate strict boundaries between the private world of the home and the public world of strangers. These euphemisms serve to protect the sanctity of the household and define the legal and social status of its members with high precision, ensuring that "Honor" (Aradh) is maintained through linguistic discretion.

The first logical mechanism is the *Logic of Collective Anonymity and Responsibility*, most clearly seen in the term مكاف. When a man refers to a female relative as a "Mukallaf" (a woman who needs to be looked after by the family guardian), he is utilizing a Logic of Protective Veiling. In tribal Yemeni culture, mentioning a woman's specific name to an outsider is often considered a breach of Ghayrah (protective jealousy). By using this term, the speaker acknowledges her existence while keeping her identity "veiled" from the public. This ensures that the private details of the home are not exposed to unnecessary familiarity, framing the woman as a person under the family's protection rather than an object of public curiosity.

Another significant dimension is the *Logic of Jurisprudential Boundary Marking*, applied through terms like محرم and سليفة. The term محرم follows a *Logic of Religious Safety*; it explicitly labels a male relative as "unmarriageable," which legally permits him to accompany a woman in travel or privacy. Similarly, specific terms like حمية (husband's sister) and سليفة (husband's brother's wife) follow a *Logic of Structural Mapping*. In large, extended Yemeni households where multiple generations live together, these terms clarify the exact "rank" and relationship of every individual. This prevents social confusion and ensures that every member knows their specific role and level of authority within the domestic hierarchy.

The *Logic of Spatial Metonymy and Maternal Honor* is used when a man refers to his own wife in public. Calling her البيت (The House) or أم العيال (Mother of the children) follows a logic where the person is identified by her role or the place she inhabits. Equating the wife with the "Home" signals that she is the core of the private sphere and is not a subject for public discussion. Using أم العيال shifts the focus from her status as a "spouse" (which carries sexual overtones) to her status as a "mother," which is a position of high sacredness in Yemeni society. This allows the man to discuss his family needs without violating the cultural code of modesty.

Finally, the *Logic of Domestic Harmony* is applied to sensitive marital dynamics, such as referring to a second wife as a شريكة (partner) instead of the traditional ضرة (from the root dharar, meaning harm). Logically, this replaces a term that implies conflict and "injury" with a term that suggests "cooperation" and "participation." This linguistic shift is intended to reduce friction within the polygamous household and prioritize the stability of the family unit. By choosing the word "partner," the speaker attempts to create a more positive social reality, focusing on shared life rather than competition.

RESULTS DISCUSSION

The findings of the present research paper demonstrate that the Yemeni speech community utilizes a deeply layered and culturally specific system of euphemisms to navigate the delicate boundaries of social and spiritual life. One of the most prominent findings is that religion acts as the ultimate sociolinguistic filter, where almost every identified euphemism serves as a "spiritual shield" rather than a simple polite substitute. In domains such as death and talents, speakers utilize divine attribution (e.g., *Mashallah* or *Al-Muntaqil ila jiwara rabbihi*) not merely for religious piety, but as a functional tool to redirect the "heat" of the Evil Eye or to provide a "circuit breaker" against psychological shock. This aligns with Qanbar (2011), who has found that religion and *Ayb* (shame) are the primary regulators of Yemeni speech. However, the present research extends this by illustrating how this religious framework specifically addresses the "Fear of the Unknown" and "Envy," as has been proposed in Wardhaugh's (2010) model.

Another major finding is the pervasive Logic of "Sutrah" or Linguistic Veiling, which governs the domains of family relations and sex-related subjects. In the Yemeni context, the preservation of "Honor" (*Aradh*) is achieved through spatial and functional displacement. For instance, referring to a wife as *Al-Bayt* (The House) or a female relative as *Mokalaf* (A Responsibility) creates a thick linguistic barrier that prevents the exposure of the family's inner sanctum to the public eye. While Sa'd (2017) has noted "semantic displacement" in Iranian Arab communities, the present study reveals a uniquely Yemeni tribal nuance: the term *Mukallaf* specifically highlights the man's role as a protector. This reinforces the Social Order and Power Dynamic category of the adopted framework, showing that euphemisms in Yemen are not just about hiding, but about defining tribal responsibilities.

Furthermore, the research highlights the Logic of Honorific Buffering and Spatial Rebranding in the management of "uncleanliness" taboos. The study found that Yemeni speakers are highly sensitive to the mention of "lowly" objects or bodily functions, necessitating the use of "cleansing" phrases like *Akramak Allah* (May God honor you). This acts as a linguistic disinfectant that elevates the listener's status before an "impure" topic—such as a bathroom or a physical ailment—is introduced. This finding mirrors Ghounane's (2014) Algerian study regarding "sanitized vocabulary", yet the present study adds a layer of novelty by identifying Irony and Sarcastic Softening as a method for critiquing intellectual or physical deficiencies (e.g., calling a slow person *Hamisha* / Energetic). While Rabab'ah & Al-Qarni (2012) have found that Arab speakers use "litotes" (understatements), the Yemeni informants in this study demonstrated a preference for antiphrasis (using opposites) to maintain social "Face" (*Wajh*) during criticism.

Finally, the research identifies a significant gap between the present findings and the previous literature regarding Talents and Abilities. Most existing studies (like Khedir, 2018) focus on anatomical or fatal taboos, but this research highlights how the Social Comparison Taboo drives linguistic creativity in Yemen. The use of

Mustoor Al-Hal to describe both wealth and poverty illustrates a unique Yemeni "Logic of Contentment," where the goal of communication is to minimize social friction and envy. This suggests that euphemism in Yemen is a mechanical necessity for social survival, acting as a "buffer" that allows the community to manage the constant tension between public decorum and the harsh or private realities of human existence. Collectively, these results prove that the Yemeni system of euphemism is more than a list of synonyms; it is a vital strategy for Psychological and Social Stability.

CONCLUSION

The present research has successfully explored the sociolinguistic landscape of euphemisms within the Yemeni speech community, revealing a sophisticated system of linguistic "sanitization" that governs eight critical taboo domains. The findings demonstrate that euphemism in Yemen is not merely a matter of politeness but serves as a fundamental mechanism for Social Preservation and Spiritual Protection. The analysis of the collected data confirms that the Yemeni speaker operates within a dual framework: the Logic of Fear, which seeks to avoid the summoning of evil or misfortune (as seen in death, disease, and the Evil Eye), and the Logic of Modesty (*Haya*), which shields the private and anatomical realms from public exposure.

A key conclusion of this study is that religion serves as the ultimate linguistic filter. Nearly all euphemistic strategies identified—ranging from death to family relations—rely heavily on divine attribution (e.g., Allah Fatih Alayh) or Quranic terminology (e.g., Ahl Al-Kitab). This suggests that for Yemeni native speakers, language is perceived to have supernatural power, where the right choice of words acts as a shield (*Sutrah*) against social shame or spiritual harm. Furthermore, the study highlights that regional dialects and tribal norms significantly influence the density of these terms, reinforcing the idea that euphemisms are dynamic tools used to manage "Face" (*Wajh*) and "Honor" (*Aradh*) in a deeply communal society. Ultimately, the research proves that a language without euphemisms in the Yemeni context would be a defective instrument of communication, as it would fail to navigate the complex social distances and sacred boundaries that define Yemeni identity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings regarding the linguistic strategies and cultural logic of euphemisms in the Yemeni speech community, the researcher proposes the following recommendations:

Future research should conduct comparative analyses between younger generations and older speakers (40+) to measure the resilience of traditional euphemisms (e.g., Al-Mokalaf or Bayt al-Adab) against the shifting linguistic norms driven by globalization and digital media. There is a need for further exploration into the "Pragmatics of Modesty" across various Yemeni sub-dialects, as it plays a foundational role in shaping social identity and interpersonal relations.

Curriculum designers for Arabic learners should incorporate the socio-cultural "logic" of Yemeni euphemisms. Teaching literal meanings without their euphemistic functions often leads to Pragmatic Failure or unintended social offense in high-context environments.

Besides, translators and international organizations operating in Yemen are encouraged to look beyond the literal lexicon. Understanding the Logic of Displacement is crucial; for instance, recognizing that clinical terms for health or family status are often masked by vague metaphors to maintain "Sutrah" (veiling).

It is also highly recommended to compile a specialized dictionary of "Yemeni Politeness and Euphemism". This would serve as a vital linguistic archive for traditional terms that reflect social harmony, hospitality, and tribal ethics before they are replaced by more direct, westernized forms of speech.

Media professionals and drama producers in Yemen should be encouraged to utilize these sophisticated linguistic "buffers" in their content. This preserves the refined nature of Yemeni public discourse and reinforces the traditional values of respect and social decorum.

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