



## Taboo Words in Contemporary Persian Literature: A Case Study of Works of Sadegh Hedayat and Sadegh Chubak

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### Introduction

Language as a social phenomenon is the most important means of communication and its social dimension has always attracted researcher's attention. The close and bilateral relationship between language and social structure is studied in sociolinguistics in which language is examined in the socio-cultural context. In fact, it can be said that sociolinguistics tries to study the interaction between language and society by considering linguistic features such as grammatical and lexical factors as well as social like age, gender, education, identity, occupation, etc. According to Fishman (1971) one of the important linguistic and social phenomena is the use of taboo words in different social contexts.

"In every language there are words and expressions that have an unpleasant, undesirable or rude form or meaning; therefore, members of the speech community avoid their explicit and direct use. Such forms are called linguistic taboos." (Modarressi, 2008: 79)

According to Wardhaugh(1992), it is the social conditions that lead to the formation of taboos. He defines taboo as a word that is avoided in language. As a result, the use of these words violates a norm created based on linguistic values and damages the morals of society, and people believe that such an undesirable thing will have detrimental consequences for them.

Of course, there are always those who try to break taboos their speech works in order to show their freedom from such social restrictions. According to Wardhaugh, language taboos include a variety of situations, including: sexual status, death, excretion and bodily functions, religious affairs, politics, family matters, animal matters, and general cases other than areas mentioned (1992: 238).

Taboos have a special position in the literature of any country; therefore, examining them in literary novels and stories will help us to better understand the pattern and function of these words, first in our literature and then in the society in which we live.

In this regard, the present study examines the works of Sadegh Hedayat and Sadegh Chubak to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the differences and commonalities of taboos and the frequency of their use in the works of Hedayat and Chubak?
2. In the works of these two authors, is the use of taboo different for the male and female characters of the story?

### **Literature Review**

The followings are some of the Persian works which have dealt with this issue. Ma'dani (1999) in his article entitled "A brief look on the linguistic taboo word and its type", has surveyed linguistic taboos and its types and believes that there are two types of taboos, complete versus incomplete ones.

Janlou (2001) in his dissertation entitled "*Rewriting Blind Owl to a Report to Ageless Generation of Future.*" deals with the extent to which Persian men and women use neutralizing structures and pleasant words instead of bad ones.

Shakiba (2002) in her article entitled "Scholastic criticism of Sadeq Hedayat stories" has directly addressed the taboos in the Persian.

### **Summary**

This paper is a qualitative-quantitative study in which sexual, animal, family, religious, death, disease as well as general taboos have been surveyed. The collected data from the sample has been categorized based on Wardhaugh's (1992) theoretical approach. After classifying the taboos, the frequency of their use by male and female users is shown. The sample includes *Blind Owl* and *Stray Dog* by Sadegh Hedayat and *Tangsir* and *Sang Sabour* by Sadegh Chubak.

The results indicate that in addition to the similarities between the works of these two authors, there are differences too. The first difference is the number and frequency of the use of taboos in their works. In Chubak's works, the number of taboos used is more than Hedayat's works. Sepanloo (2008: 128) considers Chubak an extremist realist and the most powerful Iranian writer whose goal in painting the details of the subject is the reality itself- naked from his motives and ideal. Chubak's works are a kind of psychological and mental analysis of the realities of society, and for this purpose, taboos have been used extensively in them. However, the frequency of taboos in some areas is higher in the works of Hedayat; for example, those related to the field of disease (thirteen in Hedayat's works and only seven in Chubak's stories), which may be related to Hedayat's own depressive illness. Moreover, the terms of death

and mental-physical states have been used more in Hedayat works than other terms.

In Hedayat's works, only 4 taboo types (mental-physical, general, death and animals) have been used by female characters. In *Sang-e-Saboor*, sexual taboos used by female characters are higher than those used by male characters. The other domain which women used more in their speech was related to excretion. On the other hand, death-related taboos in women's speech were also higher than men.

### **Conclusion**

Examination of the data shows that taboos in Chubak's works have a much higher frequency than Hedayat's. Hedayat in *Blind Owl* narrated by only one male character expresses the symptoms of illness, and uses taboos related to sex, excretion, and animals to express his feelings. In *the stray dog*, the taboos used by men shows that mental states and death that occur as a result of distress and mental disorder of the person, is always highlighted in men.

Regarding the female characters of the story, due to their low presence, we can say that, from Hedayat's point of view, the characters, whether female or male, are always involved in the psychological disasters of his time and he uses any expression to indicate his inner feelings about that situation.

The female characters in the works of Chubak are also involved in superstition and ignorance and have formed their personality using words that are related to sexual and psychological states.

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