EDU WORLD2022
Edu World International Conference Education Facing Contemporary World Issues

TABOO IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Adrian Florin Bușu (a)*
*Corresponding Author

(a) University of Craiova, Romania, adibusu2002@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article tackles the topic of taboo, highlights some of the most recurrent types of taboos in language and literature and sheds light on the mechanism which enabled people to create euphemistic expressions to diminish the rigidity of tabooistic words. Derived from the Polynesian term taboo (ta designates the sacred and bu functions as a superlative degree), the term taboo refers to a set of absolute prohibitions that aim to prevent the negative effects of a magical contagion. Taboo appeared in language and literature and throughout time there have been many attempts to relate linguistic taboos to culture, especially during the 1960's. Defined within the framework of cultural imprinting, the taboo appears as a reflex to reject pagan, forbidden, repressed things, which work both in the language of everyday life and in literature. People have created euphemistic terms or expressions in order to soften the rigidity of taboo words. Euphemistic words and expressions offer the possibility to refer to unpleasant things in circumstances when we cannot avoid them in communication and therefore to soften the disagreeable meanings of taboo words. When we express thoughts, opinions or ideas, we can avoid saying certain things by using deliberate circumlocution. Linguistic taboos circumscribe various topics ranging from death or illness to religion or the metaphysical. In literature, taboo covers topics such as alienation, racism, depression, drugs and prostitution. The article concludes that our way of interpreting taboos is in reality subordinated to the condition of finiteness and historicity, explained in terms of philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics.

Keywords: Cultural imprinting, euphemistic expression, taboo

1. Introduction

On the occasion of a visit to the Roșia Montană Gold Mine, I had the opportunity to hear a story told by an engineer named Valentin Rus about the existence of chthonian beings, spirits of gold, who have appeared throughout time to the miners in various forms, ranging from beautiful girls, old men with white beards, children, soldiers or dwarfs, to the dangling of bells, a rooster's crow or a clock ticking. The miners called them vâlve and they had the role of distributing the gold in the mine to the miners with a pure soul, in exchange for keeping the secret of the meeting and provided they used the gold found for the benefit of their peers. The most famous legend about the appearance of such a supernatural power is the one related to Mihăilă Gritta, a historically documented miner, who, in the early 1800's, at the suggestion of a vâlva, found a vein rich in gold. He kept the promise he made to the spirit and built with the money he obtained by selling 17 metric meshes, that is the equivalent of 1700 kilograms of noble metal, 7 churches and 7 schools in the vicinity. What is interesting about this story is the way in which the ban on telling anyone about the meeting the vâlva was imposed and the tasks that the miner had to perform in order to benefit from the goodwill of the vâlva.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. The roots of taboo and the psychological mechanism

There is no doubt that the episode of the above story carries a mythological aura, whose roots are lost in the mists of time, and the ban imposed on the miners to recount the meeting with the *vâlva* to other miners under the threat of repression in various forms circumscribes this subject largely represented by taboo. According to Durkheim, the term *taboo* is derived from the Polynesian term *tabu* (*ta* designates the sacred and *bu* functions as a superlative degree) and refers to a set of absolute prohibitions that aim to:

> Prevent the harmful effects of a magical contagion, preventing any contact between a thing or a category of things where there is supposed to be a supernatural principle and others that do not have character or do not have it in the same degree (Durkheim, 1912, p. 74).

2.1.1. Early notes on taboo

Taboo as a term was first noted by James Cook during his visit to Tonga in 1771. Cook introduced it into the English language, after which the term spread globally. Although taboos are often associated with the Polynesian cultures, they have become present almost in all societies within the last two centuries. The prohibition that is implicit in a taboo refers to the idea that its infringement or disobedience will have as consequence some kind of mishap to the offender, such as bad luck in activities as harvesting crops, hunting or fishing, sickness, miscarriage or even death. In some of the cases, proscription represents the only way to avoid these troubles: rules have been made against hunting, fishing or harvesting crops at certain moments and against trespassing certain areas. Restrictions regarding diet are also common, as are rules for the behaviour of people facing important life events such as marriage, birth of a child and death. William Robinson Smith (1995) and James Frazer (2010), two contributors to the

324

theories of taboo, paid a great deal of attention to the subject of irrationality in direct relationship with taboo. According to Wagner (2018), Frazer analysed totems as concepts related to taboos in a very interesting manner: "Frazer characterized totemism as a unique mixture of religion and social system" (p. 45). Other anthropologists, such as Steiner (1956), established a viable connection between taboo and irrational or primitive superstitions and offered an extensive history of the development of the word taboo. Taboo appeared in language and literature and throughout time there have been many attempts to relate linguistic taboos to culture, especially during the 1960's. Wardhaugh (2006) went on to describe taboo as "one way in which a society expresses its disapproval of certain kind of behaviour believed to be harmful to its members, either for supernatural reasons or because such behaviour is held to violate a moral code" (p. 92).

3.   Research Questions

So which is the internal mechanism that drives people to exhibit a special type of behaviour when dealing with taboos and which are the psychological explanations for this?

The current taboos in any society tend to relate to objects and actions that are significant for the social order and, as a consequence, taboos belong to the general system of social control. The scholarly interest in taboo was traced by Steiner, starting from the age of British explorers in the Pacific and ending with Robert Smith and Sigmund Freud. Steiner failed to offer a valid definition of taboo. The title of Steiner's book, *Social anthropology*, is somehow elusive, as there is not enough information about taboo, as Steiner basically dedicated most of his exposition to a critical survey of the methodology employed by writers on the topic since the late 1700's and down to middle 1900's. He was unable to offer a complete elaboration of his own theory, as he died before his time, and, consequently, the summary of his approach towards the end of the book is hazy, as *taboo* is defined by Steiner (1956) as "an element of all those situations in which attitudes to values are expressed in terms of danger behaviour" (p. 37). However, Steiner claimed that the primacy of taboos as performing a function in the maintenance of social structures over subjective attitudes might be considered the cause of taboos themselves. Taboo, in Steiner's perspective, implies four aspects:

1. Social mechanisms of obedience having ritual significance;

2. Specific restrictive behaviour in situations that are deemed dangerous;

3. The protection of individuals exposed to such danger;

4. The protection of society from its members who are both endangered by taboo violations and therefore dangerous.

Freud (2001) provided perhaps the most ingenious explanation for the apparently irrational nature of taboos, claiming that "they were triggered by ambivalent social attitudes and in effect represent forbidden actions for which there is a strong unconscious inclination" (p. 65). Sigmund Freud stated that all present forms of socialization are configured by the primitive culture of origin. More than that, he claimed that all types of behaviorism in terms of conformity originate in a common primitive form.

Freud made an attempt to give a proper definition for taboo, which he described as being hallowed and contaminated at the same time. He went on to analyze the causes of taboo and he concluded that a taboo is something disassociated from day-to-day actions and forbidden to a society, with few exceptions,

such as shamans or tribe chiefs. Specific social categories, including clergymen or culprits, are subjected to taboos and consequently associated with a dangerous power of contamination. This might be the explanation why, in Freud's opinion, primitive societies set up a system of intricate rituals in order to render void the danger of taboos. Freud emphasized the similitude between the taboos of primitive societies and the clinical behavior of obsessive-compulsive people, who avoid having physical contact with specific objects as they fear they might become contaminated. As they are unable to find a rational explanation for the origin of their fears, this type of individuals unconsciously perform complex rituals to alleviate their fear of touching forbidden objects. Freud pointed out that neurotic individuals display a desire for prohibited objects, they need to watch, get close or even touch prohibited objects. Although their craving for the prohibited object needs to be subdued, a phenomenon of ambivalency between the patient and the prohibited object emerges. Freud showed that obsessive-compulsive people simultaneously experience the conscious repugnance against touching the prohibited object and a subconscious craving for it. The complex rituals of obsessive-compulsive people are essentially ways of performing physical contact with the forbidden object in a safe manner.

By applying this similarity to primitive societies taboos, Freud (2001) claimed that the primal taboos were probably "prohibitions of primeval [sic] antiquity which were at some time externally imposed by the previous generation. These prohibitions must have concerned activities towards which there was a strong inclination" (p. 79). As the primal taboos forbade the physical suppression of the totem animal and the interbreeding, Freud concluded that killing animals and incest must have been the strongest desires displayed by members of primitive societies. The punishment for the individual who transgressed the taboos regarding the prohibition of killing the animal totem and the incest was a shield against the alluring condition that transgression may have: if a member of the society could fulfill their unconscious cravings and not be punished, why wouldn't all the other members of the society try to fulfill their own desires? All the community members were to oppress taboo breakers in order to collectively abstain from their unconscious desires. Freud concluded that taboo represents a specific type of prohibition imposed by someone in charge and aimed at the most powerful human yearnings. The need to transgress a prohibition lingers in the back of the mind of each individual. The supernatural quality given to taboo is based on its function to trigger desire and it functions like a contamination because the unconscious desire shifts from one prohibited object to another. The observation that "the transgression of a taboo may be compensated by refraining from temptation" (p. 87), shows that abstention lies at the basis of obedience to taboo.

A certain Freud-Jung paralellism in terms of opinions was observed by Merot (2016), who noted that "Freud shares with Jung the intuition that psychoanalysis furnishes the keys to understanding the universe of beliefs, even though they adopt opposing approaches: Jung advances into individual psychology on the basis of the psychology of peoples" (p. 77).

The dismissal of the spirit from the arrogant, autocratic, omnipotent stance which it used to occupy in the glorious days of modern philosophy in Descartes and Leibnitz's work was gradually accomplished by accepting the lucid findings of psychoanalysis on the conscious flow of impulses and the precariousness of rational control. It was thus admitted that cognitive activities are conditioned from a

socio-cultural perspective and that our ideas and interpretations are influenced by factors internal and external to the human body. According to Hanaba et al. (2020):

Complex concepts require specific interpretation: Since the ways of complex systems cannot be predetermined in advance, then the vital activity, functioning and development of a specific complex object must be considered as a chain of bifurcations with a random selection of potential characteristics and properties. (p. 246)

So, in light of this, do anticipatory structures, predispositions, prejudices and traditions limit thinking, as the subject is thus enslaved to all these factors included under the concept of background or precomprehension?

4. Purpose of the Study

This article aims at establishing which are the major components of our cognitive structures which influence the interpretations of taboos and the socio-cultural perspectives that lead to our actions when dealing with taboos.

5. Research Methods

This article uses analysis, interpretation, exploratory, fundamental, applied and correlational research methods with insights into the domains philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics and literature.

6. Findings

Beliefs and social representations are two of the major pieces of our cognitive structures that connect, at an accessible level, with innate dispositions, information inputs and resulting activities such as speech and actions. The constitution of the corpus of knowledge and skills, that is bringing the individual to the common denominator of the language, values, norms, symbols of the society in which the man lives, is a long process, spanning from childhood to adulthood, in which family and school play a decisive role. This corpus is composed of an encyclopaedic vulgate, in elementary education, an essentialized variant of the traditions and beliefs specific to the community (religion, myths, and taboos), an internalized reminder of the main norms of collective coexistence.

In this process of modernizing the individual human being, called *cultural imprinting* by Konrad Lorenz (1935), and after him by Edgar Morin, the taboo appears as "a reflex to reject pagan, forbidden, repressed things, which works both in the language of everyday life and in literature" (p. 59). Lorenz Konrad investigated the mechanisms of imprinting, where some species of animals form a type of emotional attachment to the first large moving object that they meet. In order to figure out how the process of imprinting works, Lorenz set up an experiment. He took goose eggs and kept them until they were about to hatch out. Half of the eggs were then placed under a mother goose, while Lorenz Konrad kept the other half hatched in an incubator, with Lorenz making sure he was the first moving object the newly hatched goslings encountered. As soon as the goslings hatched, Lorenz Konrad imitated a mother

goose's quacking sound, upon which the newly-hatched goslings regarded him as their mother and followed him accordingly. The other group followed the mother goose. Lorenz Konrad concluded that geese follow the first moving object they see. This process is known as imprinting and he believed that once imprinting has occurred, it cannot be reversed, nor can a gosling imprint on anything else. To ensure imprinting had occurred, the researcher put all the goslings together under a box turned upside down and allowed them to mix. When the box was removed the two groups separated to go to their respective 'mothers' - half to the goose, and half to him. Lorenz Konrad's experiment shows that attachment is innate and programmed genetically. His term, *cultural imprinting*, refers to the fact that from birth, human are marked with the stamp of family culture first, then school culture and ultimately professional culture. There has been some disagreement towards Lorenz Konrad's experiment, as McLeod (2018) noted: "However, there are criticisms of imprinting as the concept of imprinting within Lorenz's study suggests that within this context the object leads to an irreversible situation on the nervous system".

Edgar Morin went on to analyse the relationship between imprinting and normalization in his *Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future*, published in 1999. He highlighted that the determinism of paradigms and explanatory models combines with the determinism of convictions and beliefs which, when they rule over society, impose on one and all the imperative force of the sacred, the normalizing force of the dogma, the prohibitive force of taboo. Dominant doctrines and ideologies also dispose of the imperative force that brings evidence to those who are already convinced, and coercive force instils inhibitory fear in those who might have doubted. The prohibitive and imperative powers of paradigms, official beliefs, sovereign doctrines and established truths combine to determine cognitive stereotypes, unquestioned received ideas, uncontested beliefs, triumphant absurdities and rejections of evidence in the name of evidence to expand the reign of their intellectual and cognitive conformism. All social-economic-political determinations, such as power, hierarchy, class divisions and specialization, converge and mix with all cultural determination to imprison knowledge in the multi-determinism of imperatives, standard and prohibitions. Morin (1999) claims that "cognitive conformism is much more than standard conformism" (p. 28). It is the so-called *cultural imprinting*, a template imprinting that inscribes conformism in depth, a *normalization* that eliminates anything that might dispute it. *Imprinting* is the term used by Konrad Lorenz also to describe the unreliable mark imposed by the first experiences of a young animal, such as the newly hatched chick who follows the first living creature that goes by, making it its mother. Cultural imprinting marks human beings from birth with the seal of a certain type of culture, therefore individuals tend to treat taboos in the same way as the people around them do, either in the family or in the society.

6.1. About the linguistic taboo

Language can be defined as a means of delivering cultural content and, as such, lexicon in particular is linked to culture. Because humans are defined as social beings, the transfer of ideas, opinions and thoughts from one individual to another is done by means of language, therefore linguistic communication among members of society cannot be bypassed. Within the framework of social interaction, especially in the boundaries of cross-cultural communication, individuals often encounter delicate linguistic aspects which are known as linguistic taboos. As we are living in a world defined by

globalization with cross-cultural communication increasing at an amazing speed and, good knowledge of linguistic taboo is necessary, in order to avoid misunderstanding and cultural conflicts among speakers.

Primitive societies bestowed special powers upon language. Language was thought to have the power to heal the sick, to keep the evil away from the doorsteps of the house, to bring fortune or to cast harm upon enemies. So strong, in the common conscience of primitive society, the belief that words control objects, people and spirits was that, throughout the entire human history, it has influenced every single activity performed by humans. In the light of this belief, individuals had to be very cautious with using language and had to pay meticulous attention to correct pronunciation and wording. When circumstances dictate that people talked about certain things, they either avoid mentioning things or talk about them in indirect manners. This is when we have instances of linguistic taboos.

Wardhaugh (2006) defined taboo as the act of avoiding any type of behaviour that is considered risky, dangerous or detrimental to its members because "this would cause fear, embarrassment or shame" (p. 90). As far as language is concerned, it is expected that certain things cannot to be said or certain objects can be mentioned only in certain circumstances, through deliberate circumlocution. Linguistic taboos circumscribe topics such as death, illness, religion or the metaphysical and can be replaced, for obvious reasons, with euphemisms. The word "euphemism" originated from Greek, with the prefix "eu-" meaning "good, well", the root "pheme" meaning "speak", and the suffix "-ism" meaning "the action or its result". Thus, "euphemism" literally means "to speak well of". Euphemisms are equivocal or lax words or phrases meant to replace tabooistic words. To put it another way, euphemisms are alternate means of expressing words or things that are prohibited. Rahmayani and Fitrawati (2018) pointed out the function of taboo words: "One of the essential functions of taboo words, in which verbal obscenity provides to its user, is to provide catharsis" (p. 340). Although most speakers of English are aware of the rules of taboo and comply with them, transgressing a taboo may cause great discontent. The risky use of a tabooistic word may result in undesirable consequences, ranging from physical violence to actions in courts of justice. Let us take a look at some classical examples: Bernard Shaw's use of *bloody* in *Pygmalion* or the infamous *damn* in *Gone with the Wind* stirred up profound public offence. Although *Pygmalion* was considered to be one of Shaw's less provocative comedies, it did provoke controversy and famously outraged audiences with the line *not bloody likely*. Many things are less horrifying now, of course, than they were back in 1914. Nevertheless, Michael Quinion (2006), who ran a web site devoted to linguistics, called World Wide Words, implicitly suggested in 2006 that it may have packed some residual punch in the late 20thcentury: "George Bernard Shaw caused a sensation when his play Pygmalion was first performed in London in 1914. He had the flower girl Eliza Doolittle flounce out in Act III with the words, <Walk! Not bloody likely. I am going in a taxi>. The line created an enormous fuss, with people going to the play just to hear the forbidden word, and led to the jocular euphemism not Pygmalion likely, which survived into the 1970s".

The other example we mentioned above refers to the most famous line in *Gone with the Wind*, which is one of the most famous motion pictures of ever produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The line is right there, at the end of the film, where Vivien Leigh's Scarlett O'Hara tries to convince her long-suffering lad, Clark Gable's Rhett Butler, that she really loves him and not Leslie Howard's Ashley. Reasonably enough, Rhett is fed up with her devilishness, so he leaves her with the line "Frankly, my

dear, I don't give a damn." Aware that the word *damn* might cause some kind of public disapproval, the script writer decided to add "frankly" at the beginning of the phrase to soften the word *damn* at the end, although "frankly" does not appear in the Margaret Mitchell original novel.

Distinct things are to be avoided mentioning regardless of the language one speaks. This observation is also valid for the words with such connotations. In English, for example, we ask where the *powder room*, the *loo*, *John* or the *rest room* is, instead of referring to the more obvious *toilet*. In this case we can observe a semantic shift that is involved, because the replacement words used have nothing in common with their referents. Words such as *death* or *disease* are often replaced with euphemistic expressions, such as "If anything should happen to me" instead of "should I die", or "That person is not all there" when we speak about a person with a mental disorder. "Die" is commonly substituted with euphemistic expressions such as "pass away", "answer the call of God", "go to a better place", "depart" or "go west", as the East is associated with the rising of the Sun, or birth, whereas the West is associated with the setting of the Sun, or death. This association of the cardinal points with life and death has roots in the old Egyptian beliefs, which presumed that the East represented the house of Ra, the God of the Sun, and the birth of nature and of all human beings, whereas the West, more specifically the desert west of the Nile, was the destination of the dead. This belief started from the observation of the Sun dying every day in the western horizon, only to be reborn the next morning in the East. Most Egyptians were buried to the West of the Nile with their heads facing the West. The households and the Pharaoh's palace were built on the East bank of the Nile, while the tombs and the pyramids were built on the West bank of the Nile, for the same reasons.

In terms of linguistic approach, people are more tolerant with the so-called "four-letter words". For example, in London there is a shop named "FCUK", which is actually the abbreviation of "French Connection United Kingdom". Although people seem to have become more open-minded, these words are still considered unsuitable in most conversations, even if they are displayed in written form, because they are very similar with the infamous four-letter word. Several random occurrences of the four-letter word in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1959), determined the ban on the edition on the grounds of vulgarity, so libraries refused to display the book in their shelves. Later, the word made its way into the newspapers and has become widely used in literature. However, there is still strong animosity regarding to the use of the four-letter word and just few dictionaries have indexed it.

In the Communist period, Romanian literature was deprived of the freedom of speech, as many subjects were considered taboo by the Communist Party. For example, Santa Claus was referred to as *Moş Gerilă* instead of *Moş Crăciun*, as the latter term had intrinsic reference to the Christian celebration of Christmas; one of the greatest personalities of Romanian history, known as Mircea the Elder was referred to as Mircea the Great, so that no allusion to Ceauşescu's age be made.

Lexicon is a set of intricate and sophisticated terminology that can be used in contexts of various types, ranging from religion to law, for instance. There are numerous everyday examples of taboo language that convey feelings like astonishment, annoyance or even rage. The most frequent type of communication comprises individual words or short sentences that transmit various intensities and garner various levels of social acceptance. In English, examples vary from the somewhat polite *heck* and *dash*, to the most severe ones. Sentences often contain prohibited items in specific social circumstances, in which

swearing can become a dominant linguistic trait. Half of taboo words deal with locutions referring to gods and devils, such as Dear Lord, Heavens or Hell, whereas the other half allude to body parts and bodily functions, which the society considers taboo. In Romanian language, for instance, in Tudor Arghezi's religious poetry, we can find a differentiated treatment of the taboo regarding Divinity. God is called tabooistically by periphrases (Who-knows-Who, The-One-Above, Someone, The All-Maker) when the poet feels His presence alive or when Tudor Arghezi has the intuition of His uniqueness, out of the real natural order: „*Din murmur, poate, din niscai/ Icoane, rugi ori sniere de nai/ Semeni leit şi te-am văzut cumva/ Cu Cine-ştie-Cine sau cu Careva*" (*Mi se pare*). In *Duhovnicească*, the presence of *Who-knows-Who*, *the One who knocks at the bottom of the world*, does not destruct and does not annul the self identity of the human being. We can identify a substantially restructured image of the modern religious being, which retains the illusion of distancing itself from the Divine as an immeasurable surrealism, but which refuses deindividualization.

About taboos in literature

In literature, the taboo found its place with some difficulty, because there were few authors who approached the field of *taboo* and who assumed the consequences of publishing writings on such topics. As Horlacher (2010) stated:

Since taboos are normally not the topic of open discussions but largely internalized, any form of critical questioning is realized, if at all, only through massive outside influence. Given literature's ability to constitute a discursive field in which even marginalized, aberrant voices can articulate themselves, to give voice to something which could be called "the collective unconscious" and to transcend its time of origin, literature becomes an extraordinarily privileged medium for the depiction and analysis of phenomena such as taboo and transgression. From this in turn it follows that an approach that conceives of taboos only as social phenomena misses the point, that textual analyses need to pay attention to the strategies and the contents of symbolizations, and that aesthetic traditions need to be taken into consideration, such as, to give but one example, the modernist aesthetic of innovation which often depends on rupture and on violating taboos. (p. 67)

If, for example, Ion Agărbiceanu uses the motif of the gold rush in his novel, *The Archangels*, to capture the folly that accompanied the rapid enrichment of those who discovered, overnight, huge ammounts of gold, having a good reception to the public, not the same thing happened with other notable writings. J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* was banned in most U.S. school libraries because of the offensive language and the topics covered (alienation, depression and prostitution). Other examples of writing that tackled tabooistic subjects and caused unpleasant consequences for their authors were *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie, *The Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller or *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. The topics covered by these writers were Aryan purity and the mixture of race, politics, religion or gender equality.

The Romanian literature is no exception, as there is a series of books in which topics considered taboo have been dealt with. In Vasile Alecsandri's *Vasile Porojan*, the topic of interethnic coexistence is tackled, at a subsidiar level, of course; in Ioan Slavici's *Mara*, the author tells the story of a Romanian

widow who forbids her daughter to marry Naṭl, a young man who belongs to a rival family of Saxon ethnicity, on the same principle of ethnic separation and non-interference. The list can continue with Liviu Rebreanu's *Ion*, in which young Herdelea, of Christian denomination, has a love affair with Roza Lang, of Jewish denomination. Other examples are G. Călinescu's *Enigma Otiliei*, in which Felix Sima is a college colleague and good friend of Wiessmann, a Jewish medical student, or Mihail Sadoveanu's *Baltagul*, a novel whose main heroine, Vitoria Lipan, is helped by the Jewish innkeeper David (a name with biblical resonance) in identifying the murderer and in preparing the memorial ceremony, according to the customs of the Orthodox religion. The tabooistic approach on racism goes beyond the religious denomination, as the roots of racism originate in the belief that some human races are inherently inferior to others. Racist language is the language that degrades. Black people or black colour is the target of much discrimination in English language and literature. In general, white colour is associated with virtues like cleanliness, decency or probity. Conversely, black is associated with wickedness, evil, filth. A possible explanation is that, from a religious perspective, the Heaven is a place of light, whereas the Hell is associated with dark.

After analysing the aspects presented in this paper, we found that taboo, encountered both in language and literature, acts as a driver for language change. Taboo is a counter-agent to the operation of regular change, and consequently disrupts the conventional methods of historical and comparative linguistics, which operate on principles such as the arbitrary nature of the word, the regularity of sound change and the non-existence of true synonyms. To soften the rigidity of taboo words, people have created euphemistic terms or expressions. People consider that the names of the gods are too pure and the names of evils too fearsome to be treated as other common words. As a consequence, they are deliberately avoided by digression. Euphemistic language and phrases allow us to talk about unpleasant topics while minimizing the unpleasantness. Euphemisms are created using methods such as semantic shifts of existing words, circumlocution and phonological modification. Sounds occur in unexpected places or they suddenly transmute. There is also a high rate of word borrowings, even among core vocabulary items that are not generally borrowed from other languages. So what is the reason for which in common circumstances speakers feel the need to borrow similar terms from another language? It seems that the answer to this question points to the established common-usage words that historical linguists trust when it comes to establishing genetic relationships. However, in this context, even the basic vocabulary of this kind cannot remain stable. Extensive word borrowings and taboo-induced remodelling make it difficult to determine the chronology of linguistic changes that have occurred.

7. Conclusions

All things considered, we can conclude that taboo is a strong social prohibition. Anything that is improperly referred to is considered undesirable and offensive by a group, culture, society, or community. Taboo is based on the belief that the action a person is going to perform is too sacred but at the same time it is too violent to take the same step by any other ordinary person of the society. Taboo is also performed under the threat of supernatural punishment in most of the societies of the world. But everything related to term taboo exists in all nearly all the societies of world and "breaking a taboo" is usually considered objectionable by society in general. It is also believed that if taboo is broken or disobeyed, it will cause

some kind of trouble for the offender. Taboo in language and literature is a detectable phenomenon, which has the consequence of increasing interest in the topic subjected to this phenomenon. The responsible factor in this sense is the reader's ability to perceive and interpret information. Current philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics claim that, far from being antonymous, of our way of interpreting taboos is in reality subordinated to the condition of finiteness and historicity.

References

Durkheim, É. (1912). *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* [Elementary Forms of Religious Life]. Les Presses Universities de France.

Frazer, J. G. (2010). *Totemism and Exogamy: A Treatise on Certain Early Forms of Superstition and Society*. Kessinger Publishing.

Freud, S. (2001). *Totem and Taboo*. Translated by James Strachey. Routledge Publishing House.

Hanaba, S., Voitiuk, O., & Goliardyk, N. (2020). *Methodological Potential of the Complexity Concept in Education Modernization*, in Postmodern Openings, *11*(2sup1). https://doi.org/10.18662/po/11.2Sup1/190

Horlacher, S. (2010). *Surrealpolitik. Taboo and Transgression in British Literature from the Renaissance to the Present*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Konrad, L. (1935). Der Kumpan in der Umwelt des Vogels. Der Artgenossealsauslösendes Moment sozialer Verhaltensweisen [The Companion in the World of Birds.*The Conspecific as the Triggering Moment of Social Behaviour]*. *Journal für Ornithologie*, *83*, 18-21.

McLeod, S. A. (2018, Oct 31). *Konrad Lorenz's imprinting theory*. https://www.simplypsychology.org/Konrad-Lorenz.html

Merot, P. (2016). From One Myth to the Other: From Totem and Taboo to Overview of the Transference Neuroses. *Research in Psychoanalysis, 21*, 70-84. https://doi.org/10.3917/rep1.021.0070

Morin, E. (1999). *Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future*. Unesco Publishing.

Quinion, M. (2006). *World Wide Words*. Retrieved on March 3, 2022, from https://www.worldwidewords.org/topicalwords/tw-blo1.htm

Rahmayani, D. P., & Fitrawati, F. (2018). Analysis Types and Functions of Taboo Words in the Wolf of Wall Street Movie. *E-Journal English Language and Literature, 7*(3).

Smith, W. R. (1995). *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*. Second and Third Series. Edited with an introduction by John Day. Sheffield Academic.

Steiner, F. (1956). *Social anthropology*. Cohen and West Publishing House.

Wagner, M. J. (2018). The many origins of totemism. Critical analysis of theories of James G. Frazer, Émile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud. *Maska*, *40*(4), 45-57.

Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Fifth Edition. Blackwell Publishing.