A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Oath Terms Used by Jordanian Youths

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Abstract

Objectives: The aim of the study is to investigate oath terms used by Jordanians in relation to different variables, such as gender and situation. The terms are analyzed based on their thematic associations concerning the two variables of gender (speaker and hearer) and situation (formal and informal), where the speaker is of a similar status in the informal situation and of a higher status in the formal one.

Methods: The data was collected through a Data Completion Task (DCT) involving 50 Jordanian university students as respondents. The questionnaire was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively, with the significance difference calculated at (α=0.08).

Results: The study found that religious terms are the most frequent in all cases, suggesting that changing the variables does not significantly influence their frequency. On the other hand, other categories of swearing terms are culturally bound and are influenced by the social variables of gender and situation in the Jordanian context.

Conclusions: Future research may focus on exploring other social variables that could influence the usage of oath terms, such as various age groups and levels of education. Additionally, the study could be expanded as a contrastive analysis, comparing the terms used by individuals from different languages and cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Oath terms, social differences, Jordanian community.

عبارات القسم المستخدمة من قِبَل الشباب الأردني: دراسة لغوية اجتماعية

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ملخّص

الأهداف: هدفت هذه الدراسة لاستكشاف العبارات التي يستخدمها الشباب الأردني للقَسَم، وعلاقتها بعدة متغيرات مثل الجنس والعمر والمستوى الاجتماعي. وربطت الدراسة العلاقة بين مضمون هذه العبارات بمتغير الجنس لكل من المتحدث والمخاطب من جهة والسياق (رسمي أو غير رسمي) من جهة أخرى حيث سيكون المتحدث بنفس مستوى المخاطب في السياق غير الرسمي أوبمستوى أعلى في السياق الرسمي.

المنهجية: جمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان شارك فيه طلاب جامعة أردنيون من كلا الجنسين وعددهم (50). وأجرى الباحث تحليلا إحصائياً ونوعيا للبيانات المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة، حيث تم احتساب الأهمية للإحصائية عند مستوى الدلالة.(α=0.08)

النتائج: وأظهرت النتائج أن العبارة الدينية هي الأكثر استخداماً في جميع الحالات أي أن اختلاف المتغير لم يؤثر في تغير تكرار العبارات الدينية. من ناحية أخرى تغيرت أنواع العبارات باختلاف المتغيرات المذكورة، على سبيل المثال عند اختلاف وفي السياق الرسمي كان استخدام عبارات القسم هو الأقل، والأكثر رسمية والعكس صحيح.

التوصيات: يمكن إجراء أبحاث بالمستقبل تتناول متغيرات أخرى تؤثر بعبارات القسم المستخدمة مثل العمر ومستوى التعليم أو إجراء دراسة مقارنة بين اللغة العربية ولغات أخرى أو ثقافات أخرى.

الكلمات الدالة: عبارات القسم، اختلافات اجتماعية، المجتمع الأردني.

1. Introduction

The language of persuasion can be found in the everyday speech of people in different contexts. The nature of the terms and language used in order to persuade depends on several socio-cultural values, which might be related to the speaker, the interlocutor or to the context in which the speech takes place. Therefore, people are expected to use different ways to swear based on the kind of the relationship with their interlocutor, the gender of both the speaker and the interlocutor and the formality of the situation.

Delia (1987) suggests that the main goals of persuasion are to change attitudes or gain compliance. As far as the issue of oath is concerned, the second aim of persuasion is the relevant one in this study. The term oath is defined differently in the literature; however, it is related to the language of persuasion in most of its definitions. Thayer (1996:44) states that to swear is "to affirm, promise and threaten with an oath". In the New Websters Dictionary, it is defined as "The invoking of God or some sacred or revered person or thing as witness of the truth of a statement". The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2006) refers to oath as" a solemn affirmation or declaration, made with reverent appeal to God for the truth of what's affirmed".

In any situation people always try to appear credible and persuasive. Even in informal situations when engaged in ordinary conversations with their friends and family members, people aim to convince others of what they are talking about. However, they differ in the way they attempt to achieve that. One of the means people follow in their speech is swearing (using oath terms) which is mainly religiously related. As in any religion people are found to swear by sacred things and basically God. However, things other than those related to religion can be noted in the people's oath. Such things are normally so valuable to people and that is the reason for which they are used in swearing contexts.

The cultural background of people cannot be separated from the language they use. In the attempt to convince others, the speaker implies in his/her oath things that are culturally valuable. Therefore, when speaking to an Arab for example, the speaker may use terms that are related to religion and honor because they are highly respected and valued in this culture. The example of an Arab speaker demonstrates that the use of swearing is a socio-cultural phenomenon rather than a religious one. This can be proved as the religions there (i.e., Islam and Christianity) both restrict the oath to be only by Allah (God), but Arabs and specifically Jordanians, use many other expressions to swear than Allah; such as honor. On the other hand, in the English culture the act of swearing is not restricted to the context of persuasion through the use of sacred or valuable referents, but it extends to include innocent and taboo terms in situations such as anger or surprise.

Based on that, this paper addresses the following Questions:
1.   What are the oath terms used by youths in the Jordanian context?
2.   How do the variables of gender and situation influence the swearing terms as they are used in Jordanian contexts?

2. Literature Review

The word swearing is studied in the literature based on two, somehow irrelevant, meanings. The first is used to refer to the use of taboo or bad language used impolitely to cause offence or disgrace as in McEnery (2006) the other one is associated with oath terms that are used as a means of persuasion or confirmation of what the speaker is saying, as used by Simpson and Edmund (2010). The terms used in each case are different from each other; in the first case the used words or expressions are taboo in status, and the reason for which their function is perceived as being offensive. The second one is usually used to prove the truth referring to highly valuable things for the speaker as holy things or concepts.

Sharp (1979) claims that swearing is a universal phenomenon that can be found all over the world even though it might be wrong or unacceptable in certain situations. He asserts that all communities and all people of different ages and genders swear by precious things, but they differ in the way they imply swearing and in the things by which they swear. He mentions examples of things Jewish people swear by as spiritual, natural, personal spheres, one's own head and one's own life; in addition to swearing by God or things that involve Him as heaven, earth and Jerusalem. Sharp (1970) provides different reasons for which he thinks people should not swear or at least avoid swearing regardless of the thing they swear by. Moreover, Sharp (970) views false swearing as a kind of lying that cannot be justified by any means.

Swearing can be found in all communities and used by all people in different ways (Echols, 1980). Echols (1980) provides instances of oath terms in Romanian culture as swearing by the planets. One of the most common oaths in all human communities, as he states, is "I swear by all that's holy" (111). On the other hand, he argues that the things that are sworn by are not meant literally or intentionally and the literal meaning is not of a high significance. Language in this regard can be utilized for deception and the involvement of lying.

Using oaths for the purpose of persuasion in conversation is studied in drama dialogues by Leslie (2002). Leslie studies the play "The Reign of Edward the Third" and introduces examples of the oaths used by the king in order to convince people that he respects his words and keeps his promises and so he deserves their admiration. For example, he swears by the power he has been given and by heaven, as heaven is a sacred thing for him or related to God.

This topic is also studied in religious ceremonies by Ted (2007) who discusses different views about the oath that made formally in courtrooms as an example, using the Quran (the holy book in Islam) or other sacred books. Ted (2007) states that some courts in the U.S. allow oaths on the Quran while others accept only the Bible. However, some people reject oath made on Holy Scriptures irrespective of the case. Swearing by and using holy books is not acceptable in some countries in formal court situations as in France (Binsayoud, 2013), though this was a common strategy in the past. Another context in which the use of oath is studied is in business. de Bruin (2016) explores the professional oaths in business, in addition to investigating oaths in terms of their content and functions; he examines oaths influence and contribution to business ethics managements indicating that oaths may foster professionalism, facilitate moral deliberation and enhance compliance.

Oath expressions and their syntactic structures have been extensively studied in Classical Arabic. Making oath has special syntactic structures in Standard Arabic and restrictions on the element that constitutes it. Three main elements must be found in oath structure i.e., an oath particle (*harf alqasam*), the thing sworn by (*almaqsum bihi*), and the thing sworn for (*jawaab alqasam*); each of these has certain syntactic configurations and position in the sentence. Some grammarians add to these elements of the settings in which the utterance takes place i.e., place and time; and the interlocutor (*almuqsam indahu*) as in Ibn-Khalawyh (1985)

Swearing is described by Abdel-jawad (2000) as a communicative strategy which is used by the speaker for its different functions. He examines the functions of swearing in general, and in Jordanians' communication in particular shows that it can serve different functions as emphasizing a proposition, intensifying a promise and pledges, suggesting, apologizing, inviting, complaining, praising and blaming. On the other hand, Jordanians swearing functions and structures are related to the Jordanian cultural values as honor, dignity, honesty, chastity among others observed in this work. These values according to him are highly esteemed by both the speaker and the hearer.

Abdalla (2018) explores different aspects related to oath terms in Saudi Arabia such as their functions, forms and meanings. He finds that the main purpose of swearing is to be trusted of saying the truth. He also does not notice a significant difference between old and young people regarding using God's name most frequently. Concerning the variable of gender, his analysis indicates that men are more likely to swear, by God, than women.

Yetkiner (2004) investigates the influence of situation on the use of oath terms in Turkish and finds that two terms represent the difference between formal and informal situations i.e., *valla* (By God) and *gerÇekten* (really) and they are analyzed syntactically, semantically and pragmatically. *Valla* is used in formal situations and reflect a religious tendency. *gerÇekten*, On the other hand, is used in informal situations and when the topic is related to a personal matter. The two terms are used to assert sincerity and defend against a face threat; moreover, they serve as response particles, delay devices and solidarity devices.

In the Islamic Persian community, Aliekbari and Heidaizadi (2013) examine oath terms as used by Iranian people. They compare between the terms used by Iranians in pre-Islamic time and the terms used now. In relation to pre-Islamic era, people used oath terms that almost no longer exist. They provides examples as swearing by wine, their lovers and musical instruments. The Islamic culture has influenced the terms used by Muslims especially trough adding religious expressions and stopping using others. The authors classify the expressions into 14 categories and other subcategories. The most used ones are those related to religion as revealed by his study even though some of them are prohibited in Islam.

Cultural differences associated with oath are not only related to the terms used but they are also reflected in the way people perform while saying an oath (Binsayoud, 2013). For example, French people raise their right hand when swearing to emphasize that they are saying the truth; the same gesture was found in the Greek culture in addition to saying the oath while standing. Another gesture was found in the French, Greek and Arab cultures is putting the right hand on the chest. Putting the right hand on the holy books was followed in ancient Christianity but now it no longer exists as claimed by Binsayoud (2013). However, this way is still used by Muslims but only in specific situations as when the interlocutors cannot believe the speaker or cannot check for the truth. Binsayoud (2013) mentions various types of swearing oath depending on the action involved. If the action or situation has taken place, the oath in this case aims to assert or prove its occurrence to remove any suspension related to it. But if it is a future situation the oath is called promising since the aim is to guarantee the occurrence of the situation.

3. Methodology

A DCT was designed to collect data from the participants who were 50 male and female Jordanians. It was validated by three judges and their suggestions were taken into consideration. The DCT dealt with four questions related to the way the participants use to swear when they talk to a person from the same or different gender, in formal or informal situations. Assuming that the person is a friend in the formal situation and a university instructor or a boss in the job may influence the participants' linguistic behavior depending on their gender or status indifferent statuses. All questions were written in Arabic and the respondents gave their answers in Jordanian Arabic, see appendix I.

The collected data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively (the significance difference is calculated at (α=0.08) in order to find the most common swearing terms, and to identify the differences between the two genders. The study also compares the influence of different situations (formal and informal) where the interlocutors would be of a similar status in the informal situation and of a higher status in the formal one.

The population of the study consists of 50 Jordanian young persons whose first language is Jordanian Arabic, and the majority of them are Muslims and a small minority of them are Christians. The subjects of the study are university students, including both males and females.

The study is based on the work of Delia (1987) in which she deals with persuasion from the perspective of seeking agreement to gain compliance especially in direct spoken communication between a speaker and an interlocutor. The data of the study was analyzed by classifying the oath terms according to their thematic associations that are determined socially and culturally in the Jordanian culture as explained in the following section.

3.1 The Thematic Associations of the Terms

The terms collected in the study can be divided into 9 categories based on their thematic association. Moreover, these categories can be, in some cases, subdivided into other subcategories:

3.1.1 Religion

The first one is religion and it is the most common strategy of swearing in the Jordanian community. Since the majority of the people in Jordan are Muslims, the terms of Islamic faith, people and place are the used ones and the most common of which is using the name of God (*Allah*). These terms include the following:

1- God, as *wa allah*, *w rabbi*, *wi alrrab* (by God);

2- religion itself as *w dini* (by my religion);

3-holy books as *w ialquraan* (by the Quran), *w ialinjil* (by the Bible),

4- prophets e.g., *w muhammad* (by Muhammad), *w hayat Muhammad* (by the life of Muhammad), *wi lʕathra* (by the virgin Mary);

5- holy places as *wi alkaʕbi* (by Ka'ba), *wi alquds alshareef* (by Al-Quds);

6- religious rituals e.g., *wi syaami* (by my fasting) *w salaati* (by my prayer).

The name of God (Allah) is mostly and automatically used by people because in Islam, Muslims are only allowed to use this way and the other ways are prohibited. These terms are sometimes used in a full swearing structure as *ʔuqsim bi-llaah*(I swear by Allah) or *qasaman bi-llah* which is used to emphasize the oath and seems more serious and faithful. These terms might be used while touching the Quran but, in this case, it would be more serious and some consequences may result from this oath such as in a court context.

3.1.2 Honor

The second is honor and this one includes two types i.e., it is either the honor of the speaker him/herself such as *w sharafi* (by my honor), or the honor of his/her female relatives (mother, sister or daughter), for instance, *w ʕardxawati* (by the honor of my sisters), *w ʕard ʔummi* (by the honor of my mother).

3.1.3 Marital Relationship

There is a common practice in the Jordanian community of using terms associated with their wives and marriage. Swearing by divorce is the most common one in this regard such as *bi-ttalaaq* (by divorce) or *ʕalayyittalaaq* (by divorce) in this case the oath term means if the speaker is not saying the truth, he will divorce his wife.

3.1.4 Surrounding Objects

The fourth one is to swear by any surrounding objects. The expressions in this category refer to things available or exist in front of the speaker, sometimes the speaker selects valuable things as *wialniʕma* (by food), *wihyat halsayyara* (by the life of this car) they may also refer to anything even if it has no value such as *wihyat halshariʕ* (by the life of this street).

3.1.5 People

This category involves people, usually speaker's relatives, whether alive or dead. When they are alive the speaker often uses *wihiyat* (by life) as in *wihyat abuy* (by my father's life) and when they are the term used is *wrahmit* (by the mercy) *w rahmit abuy* (by my father's mercy). It is noted in the data that the subjects use non-deictic references as *w rahmit alamwaat* (by the mercy of the dead), *w rahmit elxawaali* (by the merci of my precious people).

3.1.6 The Interlocutor

The sixth is swearing by the addressee and, in this one, it is either the addressee's life, love or body parts e.g., *wihyatik* (by your life), *w ghalaawtik* (by your love), *wihyaatʕyuunik* (by your eyes). This strategy, in addition to be swearing, it expresses a kind of love to the interlocutor.

3.1.7 Prayers against Oneself and Precious People

Using prayers against the speaker or his/her precious people to mean that may bad things happen to them if the speaker is not saying the truth e.g., *yigtaʕ lsaani* (may God cut my tongue) and *yiʕdamni ʔibni* (may my son die).

3.1.8 Unreal People

Eighth, unreal people or things refers to using names of people randomly as in *wihyaat xalti firyaal* (by my aunt Firyal's life) here the name Firyal does not refer to a real person nor a real aunt is meant. These terms might be used just because Jordanian people use to swear and swearing is just part of their communicative strategies that is not to be taken seriously, as suggested by Echoles (1980) oath terms are in most cases not meant literally.

3.1.9 Oath Word Only

Ninth, the last one is using oath term without any associate word for example, *bihliflak* (I swear to you) *ʔuqsim* (I swear). These empty formulas are expected to have a holy word deleted such as *allah* (God) or *dini* (my religion), or it

might be other thing such as the pre-mentioned ones depending on the situation in which these terms are produced.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1 Social Variables Influence

The data are analyzed in terms of the category to which the oath terms belong based on three dimensions; first, the gender of the speaker irrespective of the hearer, second, the gender of both the speaker and the hearer, third, the formality of the situation. The total in all of the tables below is not shown because more than one term can be used in the same situation and these terms may belong to more than one category.

4.1. 1 The Gender of the Speaker

The terms used by each gender irrespective of the situation and interlocutor's gender are analyzed in Table (1) bellow. In other words, the following analysis involves the data of the answers for the four questions in the DCT.

The calculations in Table (1) represents the terms used by each gender irrespective of the other factors. It shows that the most frequently used terms by both genders are the religious ones which demonstrate 100% in both of them. Apparently, this similarity reflects religious tendency, yet the majority of these terms are prohibited in both Islam and Christianity, as the terms appear in the data subsume these religions. The only allowed oath Islam is swearing by Allah and so the other terms related to holy things are not allowed.

On the other hand, Table (1) clearly shows differences in the frequencies in each category and for each variable. For example, the lowest frequency appeared with male subjects is using words of swearing without mentioning anything sworn by, such as the words *ʔuqsim, qasaman*, *bihliflak* which all mean (I swear). In contrast, the least frequent terms within the female participants are the ones related to the marital status which appear only one time. But this is expected to be used sarcastically or as a kind of kidding because it is unusual for girls to use it in this way. Other discrepancies are shown through the analysis such as the terms of honor that are highly used by males representing 76% while females usage demonstrates 12%. This might be associated to the Jordanian culture in which women's honor is related to their men relatives' honor and must be protected by them.

Table(1) frequencies and percentages of terms based on speaker's gender

Category	Male		Female	
	num	%	num	%
Religion	25	100	25	100
Honor	19	76	3	12
Marital relationship	10	40	1	4
Surrounding objects	4	16	2	8
Precious people (alive and dead)	14	56	18	72
The interlocutor	3	12	5	20
Prayers against oneself and precious people	9	36	11	44
Unreal people and things	9	36	7	28
Oath words only	2	8	7	28

4.1.2 Informal Situation (similar status)

The data in this section are analyzed based on the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor and their genders in an informal situation.

4.2. The Gender of both Speaker and Hearer

Table (2) introduces the data for male participants in same and cross-gender communication in informal situation in

which their interlocutors are suggested in the DCT to be their friends.

Most of the male participants change the kind of terms they use in cross-gender communication. A notable difference in the frequency of the terms appear in the categories of honor, marital relationship and unreal things wherein the are most used with males and less with females. Honor and marital relationship are sensitive and personal topics, this may be the reason for which they are less used with the females. The frequent categories are surrounding objects with females and the interlocutor with males. For surrounding objects, it is already not frequent with males and so disappears when talking to females. On the other hand, the least frequent one in same gender communication is using the interlocutor's category. This category is used more with females and this might be because it is used as a kind of endearment showing that the addressee is a precious to the speaker.

Three categories demonstrate higher usage with females than the males the first is the interlocutor representing (12%). Second, precious people or things, demonstrating (36%), and this is may be intended to get their sympathy. The last one is Oath words only (8%) and this way is somehow a formal direct way of swearing.

Table(2) frequencies and percentages of terms of male participants.

Category	Male-male		Male-female	
	no	**%**	**no**	**%**
Religion	25	100	25	100
Honor	19	67	3	12
Marital relationship	10	40	1	4
Surrounding objects	2	8	0	0
Precious people (alive and dead)	7	28	9	36
The interlocutor	0	0	3	12
Prayers against oneself and precious people	8	32	3	12
Unreal people and things	9	36	2	8
Oath words only	1	4	2	8

On the other hand, females' highest used category of terms is religion which is used by all participants demonstrating 100%. The lowest frequency of the terms used among females are those belong to the category of marital relationship, only one term is used in one by one of the participants. Using terms of marital relationship is not acceptable by girls in Jordanian community and is not usual to be used, therefore, it can be said that it is used sarcastically or as a kind of kidding but not seriously. On the other hand, the least frequent category used across gender is the category of unreal things and this might be the case because it is highly informal way of swearing.

Only two categories demonstrate percentages higher than 50 i.e., religion and precious people which shows a significant difference at (α=0.08 in comparison with the other categories. The other categories are either not used at all as honor, marital relationship and surrounding objects or used with low frequency such as unreal and Oath words only. The terms belong to these categories are not that prestigious and sophisticated terms that can be used freely with anyone or in any situation. This result goes in line with Labov (1990) who finds that women use lower level of prestige when communicating with women and higher level when talking to men. The fact that females notably change the kind of terms they use in cross gender communication reflects awareness of the cultural constraints on the nature of language they use.

Table(3) frequencies and percentages of terms of females.

Category	Female-female		Female- male	
	no	%	no	%
Religion	25	100	25	100
Honor	3	12	0	0
Marital relationship	1	4	0	0
Surrounding objects	2	8	0	0
Precious people (alive and dead)	18	72	15	60
The interlocutor	5	20	3	12
Prayers against oneself and precious people	11	44	3	12
Unreal people and things	5	20	1	4
Oath words only	5	20	2	8

4.2.1 Formal Situation (higher status)

In this section the data are analyzed based on formal situation communication n both same and cross gender communication. The situation is suggested to be formal in the DCT and the interlocutor is assumed to be a university instructor, higher in status than the speaker as the speaker is a student.

4.2.2 The Gender of Speaker and Interlocutor

Table (4) reveals the frequencies and percentages of male participants' usage of the different categories when contacting with male and female instructors.

Similarly, the most commonly used terms are those belong to the category of religion with both male and female interlocutors. On the other hand, the least frequent category in same gender communication is unreal people or things which is used only by one subject representing 4% of the overall data. In comparison, the least frequent terms used with female instructors are the ones belong to the category of the interlocutor. In this category, as mentioned before, the terms are sometimes intended as a kind of endearment especially when talking to female interlocutor. Therefore, these terms do not appear in cross gender communication in this formal situation as their usage would not be acceptable by the female instructor. The differences in all of these cases are significant at level 0.08.

Table(4): the frequencies and percentages of the terms of males

Category	Male-male		Male-female	
	no	%	no	%
Religion	25	100	25	100
Honor	7	28	1	4
Marital relationship	5	20	1	4
surrounding objects	3	12	3	12
Precious people (alive and dead)	6	24	7	25
The interlocutor	2	8	0	0
Prayers against oneself and precious people	3	12	4	16
Unreal people and things	1	4	1	4
Oath words only	5	20	5	20

Regarding the difference in comparison with the informal situation of male responses, the frequency of the most categories, specifically those which are personally related, are less in the formal which shows a significant difference between the two situations. On the other hand, the terms related to religion and no reference demonstrate almost the same

frequency i.e., 10% and 20% respectively (in same gender) while no reference category represents higher frequency in the cross gender formal situation which is 20% in comparison with 8% in the informal. These findings support the study of Yetkiner (2004) whose study reveals that certain terms as *Valla* are used in formal situations while others like *gerÇekten* are used in informal situations and when the topic is related to a personal matter.

The analysis in Table (4) are highly contrastive to their informal counterparts, with an expected exception to the category of religion. In the formal situation and when communicating with a higher status person, the female's strategies reduced and the number of the used terms decreased. As in all other situations, the religion category is the most used one. In comparison, two categories are not used at all, demonstrating 0%, in same gender communication i.e., honor and marital status and the potential justification for this is provided in the discussion above. A clear change in the frequency of the other categories can be seen in the category of unreal things which decreased from 20% (in the informal situation) to 4% (in the formal) and this is might be due to the informality and casualty of these terms which restricts their usages in certain situations.

Table (5): the frequencies and percentages of the terms of males

Category	Female-female		Female- male	
	no	**%**	**no**	**%**
Religion	25	100	25	100
Honor	0	0	0	0
Marital relationship	0	0	0	0
Surrounding objects	2	8	0	0
Precious people (alive and dead)	14	56	10	40
The interlocutor	3	12	1	4
Prayers against oneself and precious people	10	40	2	8
Unreal people and things	1	4	1	4
Oath words only	5	20	5	20

On the other hand, the categories involved in cross gender formal situation are more formal than their same gender counterparts. Three categories demonstrate 0% of the whole data i.e., honor, marital status and surrounding objects. The first two represents the same frequency in same gender communication indicating that they are not used by females in formal situations at all. The third one i.e., surrounding thing represents a restriction related to gender as it appears with a higher frequency when communicating with female instructors yet, its more frequent in informal situations. Two other categories show no difference in their frequency i.e., unreal things or people; and oath words only but they are also less frequent than the informal situation.

Comparing these results with the strategies of male participants (in Table (4) above), significant differences can be noted. Except for the categories of religion and Oath words only which show similar frequencies, the other ones demonstrate significant difference at level (α= 0.08). All the relevant categories in same and cross gender communication are less frequent in the case of males than females. This reveals more commitment to the formal situation by male participants than females, as the most formal categories are religion and no reference and the others (in which females represent higher frequencies).

The analyzed categories are associated with religious referents such as the ones mentioned in the first category (religion) or have social associations such the ones related to (honor, people, martial relationships, interlocutors and prayers). However, other terms do not have any association such as (surrounding objects and oath words only) which may reflect the incuriosity of the speaker about the topic he/she is swearing about. The qualitative data reveal that the most common terms are those have religious association this could indicate a kind of seriousness and formality or it may reflect a religious faith or beliefs since in Islam, for instance, swearing by Allah is the only acceptable oath term. In comparison, the least serious

ones are the least used in most situations such as swearing by surrounding objects, unreal people or things, and martial status when used by women. In addition, the interaction between the pre-mentioned variables plays a vital role in the different frequencies in different situations.

5. Conclusion

The data of the DCT are classified into nine categories based on their thematic association, the categories and elaborations related to them are explained in section 4.1. This categorization might be different from any other one that is found in other communities because it is culture specific. When examining these categories, it can be noted that their themes are mainly cultural ones, their usage is also affected by social variables such as gender, situation, status and the interaction between them, the result that goes in line with Abdel-jawad, (2000).

One of the most salient results is the high frequency of the category of religion in all the relevant situations, this finding is also revealed by the study of Iranian oath terms by Aliekbari and Heidaizadi (2003). Apparently, this shows a religious tendency in this community, however, this might not be the case because swearing by any other thing than Allah is prohibited in Islam even if that thing or person is highly valuable or sacred. Accordingly, this supports the idea that they are culturally bound rather than religiously.

Furthermore, the analysis that is based on the gender of the speaker away from the interaction with the other factors reveal that male participants use more terms than females in general. The least frequent category in this case is Oath words only for male (8%) in comparison to 28% for females which indicate a significance difference. Whereas the least frequent for females is marital relationship 4% compared to 40% for females which also represent a significant difference. In relation to gender differences in informal and similar status communication, the least frequent category for males in same gender communication is the interlocutor and in cross gender is surrounding objects category. In contrast, in the case of females, marital relationship demonstrates the least frequency in same gender interaction, whereas in cross gender three categories demonstrate 0% i.e., honor, marital relationship and surrounding objects. Gender differences in relation to language is sometimes clear in the data which supports the study of Lakoff (1973), and in some cases they are unexpected and so unpredictable as suggested by Kaplan (2018).

The formality of the situation reveals significant differences with the informal situation and similar status interlocutor. Moreover, it arises the differences between males and females significantly. It is elaborated above that the terms related to religion or no reference show the highest frequency for females especially in cross gender communication and those are described as so personal as honor, precious people, and marital relation are the least frequent. For males, in comparison, using honor and unreal terms decreased significantly especially when interacting with females. However, religion category and precious people identified as the most frequent.

In conclusion, the social variables and the interaction between them cannot be ignored when it comes to a sociolinguistic phenomenon as oath terms especially that they are culturally related.

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