2.1 Preliminaries

Undoubtedly, taboo\textsuperscript{(1)}, the prohibition of uttering, or touching, or doing certain things in society, exists in all cultures. As a matter of fact, cultural and social, and even religious norms, traditions and acts should be observed while interacting or being part of a social event in order to avoid serious and dangerous barriers to access. In our everyday life, not all topics and issues are free to be talked about or be involved in, unless one feels that s/he is able or qualified enough to participate. Individuals in societies and cultures are not only fed and watered to have their bodies grown up, but they are also fed norms, habits, and values.

Children behave and act according to the rules and values they are advised to follow in their life. In case of violating or transgressing them, it would be the straw that broke the camel's back, this means it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to retrieve and maintain what has been violated. Avoiding what is forbidden helps the individuals to be safe and secure. The moment they start babbling, "Mamma" and "Dad", as titles to address the mother and father, children are taught manners and morals. Likewise, when they start perceiving things around them, especially dangerous ones like fire, they are warned not to come closer to or touch.

A number of words and expressions are prescribed as early as language is acquired. Cleansing up one's mouth from using or saying any undesirable expression is his/her duty. Children keep imitating what is said by the elders: and therefore this imitation of values and manners is reinforced. After committing a mistake, the child may be labeled as ill-mannered and being marked with such a label is shameful. The way of life is full of
signs, like traffic signals, for the safety of individuals to enable them to reach their destination. Hints and tips are given continuously to create such a polite group we dream of bringing up or living with, no matter what the situation or circumstances we are in. Families, in general and parents in particular, feel strongly that it is their responsibility to provide society with physically and morally integrated members. Nations are judged by their values and morals.

The danger and seriousness behind 'taboo' urge sociolinguists, pragmaticians, and semantists to pay more attention and focus to explore its aspects. These studies and researches pave the way to maintain polite ways of communication and interaction between participants, and make speakers and learners of languages (native and non-native) equip with sufficient understanding of their role in linguistic community. Mastering a language is the important step to ensure smooth and successful interaction through which problematic issues and misunderstanding can be avoided. Some areas related to language and culture need to be handled carefully and this requires sensitivity that develops during the process of socialization.

Native and non-native speakers should be aware of the cultural sides of language. It is easy to utter an expression in the language they learn. But it is uneasy to know the exact strength and effect that expression has in that language, how people are affected or even shocked, and in which circumstances and contexts the expression is used.

The present chapter is an attempt to focus on an important topic in sociolinguistics, i.e., 'taboo'. Its etymology, structure, semantic and
pragmatic sides are traced back. Cultural and social norms and traditions are investigated as well.

2.2 Previous Studies

It is necessary to review previous studies especially when a subject is investigated. This importance springs from the fact that more benefits can be obtained and it may help us to know the spaces focused on, procedures adopted and followed, and most importantly the results and findings these studies came up with. Subjects are sometimes reinvestigated, it is either because of the need for that or because their variables are subject to changes so that specialists are urged to do so. Here, some significant previous studies are discussed.

Naoum (1995) studies *Euphemism in Arabic with reference to English*. As a topic in Arabic language, euphemism is not well identified in most rhetorical works and differently viewed by Arab scholars. Although it is older than euphemism in other languages, it was used ambiguously and overlapped with many other rhetorical devices. He points out a similarity between Arabic and English. Naoum believes that euphemism is not fully culture-specific. Personal euphemistic expressions by some writers contributed to enhancing them to become conventionalized later.

He points out that in Arab society, areas like death, sex, illness, and excretion, are the most productive since they are considered too private to speak about directly. As far as fear of supernatural beings, darkness, and magic...etc are concerned, he shows that Arab people do not fear these things due to their beliefs and traditions. Unlike English, clipped euphemistic expressions refer to God in Arabic are considered as dysphemism. Some social issues (like talking about money) are taboo in
English whereas they are not so in Arabic. Naoum selects the Qur'an, poetry, and other literary works from different ages in Arabic literature (ancient, middle, and modern) as data for the study.

Al-Kuneibis (2003) focuses on taboo words in the Qur'anic expression. His study is analytical; he attempts to show how the Qur'an deals with taboo and serious issues. He depends mostly on the illustrations of the Qur'an and other related sources (books and dictionaries) in Arab rhetoric. It states how the Qur'an deals with taboo expressions while referring to the most important and sensitive areas like women, body parts, religious and social issues and body functions. Arabic language is rich with rhetoric devices that can be employed to address sensitive topics to save the dignity of the addressee and avoid embarrassment. The most prominent point is how to deal with divine and sacred subjects like mentioning the name of God, addressing Him, referring to His prophets…etc.

As the term 'taboo' was translated into Arabic from English, it is observed that some modern Arab linguists do not take it in its right sense. As far as the present study is concerned, when the study of Al-Kuneibus is read, the title and the abstract both refer to 'taboo'. But the content of his study deals with euphemism. In brief, it is a matter of misinterpretation of the term due to an imitation to the western linguists. Additionally, he does not differentiate between taboo and euphemism as two different linguistic phenomena though he has made a mention of the contributions of western linguists like Ullmann and Bloomfield in this field (2).

The Qur'an is full of various rhetorical devices existing in Arabic language to cover euphemism or what he calls taboo, as one of his
findings. The Qur'an plays a very significant role in reinforcing the vital use of rhetoric in Arabic, and is considered one of the significant sources in originating and flourishing linguistic studies in Arabic. The stories of the prophets like Noah and Joseph are presented politely in spite of the seduction event in Joseph's story. Reference to bad omen is addressed rhetorically; goodness is only attributed to God as a matter of His glorification.

Al-Rikabi (2004) studies the linguistic aspects of euphemism represented by motivations and formations in English. Her data is taken from Jane Austen's 'Emma'. In this study, she adapts Warren's (1992) model to investigate and analyze data. According her study, she points out that certain devices are employed in English to create euphemisms, and the model that Warren's model is insufficient to cover the data collected so that she suggests a modified one. Euphemisms can be a vital source for enriching language by words and expressions, new forms, and abbreviations. Metaphor and metonymy are the most common figures of speech employed by Austen in her novel 'Emma" to create euphemistic expressions.

2.3 Definition of Taboo
Taboo is a very vital topic in all linguistic communities and as old as human society. It is practised and manipulated by the members' in their day to day communication. Due to the place it occupies among them, it is so attractive that it can be explored from different visions. Specialists in various fields talk and investigate it. Thus, definitions of taboo have appeared in the literature of many fields. A list of some definitions will be given and then a discussion will made for them.
1. In his *Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases*, Manser (2010:401) defines taboo as "a social convention or often prohibition against saying or doing something (originally because of fear of punishment by the supernatural)".

2. Taboo is "an action or word avoided for a religious or social reason", *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2003:148).

3. Taboo is "a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding associations with a particular person, place, or thing". *Oxford Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases*. (1997:334).

4. Taboo is "a prohibition against touching, saying, or doing something for fear of immediate harm from supernatural force, or it is a prohibition imposed by social custom", according to Carnog (1998).

5. Taboo is "a social custom to avoid doing that (tabooed) activity or talking about that subject because people find them embarrassing or offensive". *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* (1983: 1472).

6. Taboo words are "any expressions that allude too directly to sensitive subject such as copulation, death, old age, swear, and any other topics that are avoided as embarrassing and for which people resort to euphemism". Flavell and Flavell (1995:234).

7. Taboo can be defined as expressions for referring to any forbidden behaviour that may result in punishment for religious or social reasons

Apart from the above definitions, there are many other definitions in other fields like psychology, sociology, and anthropology; all of which talk about taboo words. It is clear that one can come up with some points. Firstly, all of these definitions use words whose roots are avoided, prohibited, forbidden, and banned. Secondly, definition (1) focuses on
the social aspects of taboo under which a reference is made to supernatural. This means that some societies have beliefs in powers such as gods, animals or other creatures. In (2), both social traditions and religions are taken into account as laws and norms of people are derived from their customs and beliefs.

Both (3) and (4) concentrate on the social sides affecting the use of taboo words. Unlike (3) which makes taboo acts open and associated with the reasons or things that ban something, Carnog's definition explains in detail the variety of acts done and the role of social and religious restrictions on them. However, it confines human activities to "saying", "doing" and "touching", it seems clear there might be other ones not under them like symbols.

Like some other definitions, the definition of Flavell and Flavell (1995) focuses on the psychological side of taboo when indicating embarrassment as a result of offensives. It gives the types or areas of taboo. Then, it becomes open to include what is absent or what will be added. It describes the disease and the treatment when taboo and its opposite, euphemism, is mentioned.

2.4 History of Taboo

The history of taboo can be investigated from two perspectives: the first is with the etymology of the word itself; how it was introduced into English and by whom. The second is the taboo acts with historical hints about the first forbidden acts.

History of the Word 'Taboo'

Beyond dispute, the word 'taboo' came into English in the eighteenth century. Partridge (1983:690) explains the meaning of taboo; it anglicized
tabu, means "sacred". Verma (1998:339) adds that the word 'taboo' was borrowed in the English language from the Polynesian 'tabu' meaning "marked as holy", or prohibitions against the use or the mention of certain things related to religious beliefs that would invoke the anger of the gods. The gradual extension in use of this word covered all types or areas of prohibition based upon sacred or religious norms and traditions.

How did this word enter English? Radecliffe-Brown (1939:5) tells that the Tongan tabu came into notice towards the end of the eighteenth century to mean "forbid", "forbidden" and can be applied to any sort of prohibition. The person who brought it to English was Captain James Cook (3) in his first voyage of 1768-1771. Cook wrote of the Tahitians:

The women never upon any account eat with the men, but always by themselves. What can be the reason of so unusual a custom, 'tis hard to say especially as they are a people in every other instance, fond of society and much so of their women. They were often asked the reason, but they never gave no other answer. But that they did it because it was right, and Express'd much dislike at the custom of men and women Eating together of the same victuals. We have often used all the intreatys we were Masters of to invite the women to partake of our Victuals of our tables, but then never was an instance of the one of them doing it in public, but they would often goe 5 or 6 together into the servants apartments and then eat heartily of whatever they could find, nor were they in the least disturbed if any of us came in while they were dining, and it hath Sometimes hapned that when a woman was alone in our company she would eat with us, but always took care that her own people should not know what she had donn, so that whatever may be the reason, it certainly affect their outward manners more than their Principle: (Cook:1893:91). In his entry of 17 July 1777, he mentions the word taboo as a word of extensive signification, Human Sacrifices are called Tangato Taboo, and when any thing is forbid to eat, or make use
of they say such thing is Taboo: … if the king goes into a house belonging to a subject, that house would be taboo and never more be inhabited by the owner.

Allan and Burridge (2006:4) illustrate that what Cook mentioned above was to describe the behaviour of Polynesians towards things that were not to be done, entered, seen, or touched. And such taboos are universal. Fowler and Fowler (1995:234) agree with other linguists upon the history and meaning of the word. They add that taboo is a Tongan adjective tabu, a term of prohibition to indicate that a particular article, word or action had been declared sacred and is consecrated uniquely for royal or religious purposes, or was forbidden to a particular section of the community. So, taboo words in this respect means any expression that too directly to sensitive subjects such as copulation, death, old age, swearing and any other topics which are viewed as embarrassing and for which people resort to euphemism.

**Taboo in History**
Taboo is as old as human society existed or man was created. Exploring the existence of taboo and how cultures and societies practised and imposed restrictions and laws upon certain things should start with the story of Adam and Eve in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. When God created Adam and Eve, He forbade them to eat the fruits or even touch what is called in the Bible and the Qur'an "the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" or the Tree of Eternity respectively, it was a tree in the middle of the garden. Though they were commanded by God not to do that, they listened to Satan's whisper that it would make them immortal and live in an eternal kingdom. Then, they ate from the forbidden tree and were aware of their nakedness. As a result of their disobedience, God
banished them from Eden and sent them down to the earth. This story is described in the Qur'an\(^4\) as follows:

"Verily, you have (a promise from Us) that you will never be hungry therein nor naked. And you (will) suffer not from thirst therein nor the Sun's heat. Then shaitan (Satan) whispered to him, saying: "O Adam! Shall I lead you to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that will never waste away?" Then they both ate of the tree, and so their private parts became manifest to them, and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of the Paradise for their covering. Thus did Adam disobey his Lord so he went astray. Then his Lord chose him, and turned to him with forgiveness and gave him guidance. He (Allah) said" Get you down from the Paradise to the earth, both of you, together, some of you are an enemy to some others. Then if there come to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My Guidance he shall neither go astray, nor shall he be distressed".

(20:118-23)

The conclusion from this story in the Qur'an is that taboo acts are very old in the history of human kind. Moreover, the forbidden acts and areas are in the human nature, the results of not following guidance are seen too. These holy books tell us stories about forbidden sexual acts like that in the story of Lot, according to Mundinger-Klow (2010:15).

Ancient civilizations, depending on their remains and literature, covered such issues too. In the time of Greek and Romans, taboo acts were either organized or allowed: brothers and sisters, and parents and children married and bred to keep their blood line pure, (Mundinger-Klow, 2010:15). As far the Romans and taboo are concerned, Clarke (2003:12) starts his book with this question, why a book is written on Roman and sex (as a forbidden act)? The images, pictures, paintings, and good translations of sexual graphic poets are enough to depict this side of life at
that period of time. These images presented pictures of Roman 'erotic', paintings, mosaic, metal works, and sculpture, although all illustrated books ignored ancient Romans' attitudes toward sexual imagery. The surprising matter is that these remains (books or whatever), found in the ancient houses dealt with them like modern pornographic photos. They did not require illustrations or explanations; they portrayed sex as it was because of what has been referred to earlier.

Another question comes to the mind whether to consider them sexually exciting or were they hidden away from women and children? Which social class was allowed or permitted to possess it? In addition to that, much of what was written was by the elites. The voices of women and men of the lower classes were not heard! Clarke (2003:13) comments that even the term 'pornai' was passed down from the Greek literature to describe men who write about famous pronai- highly skilled women who entertain men at drinking parties with music, dance, and sex. This motivated early social scientists to borrow the word "pornography" which has the same meaning it had in the time of the Greek writing about prostitution. Turner and Maryanski (2005:5) assert the existence of conflict-reducing alliance by forcing individuals to marry into other kin groups and communities; it was ascribed by the Roman historians to the forbidden marriage.

In the course of time, regardless of the emergence of the word taboo in English, debates and linguistic attempts with taboo-related issues can be traced to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries similar to what was called "flyting", which was around in the Anglo-Saxon times. It was defined as "the fine art of savage insult". The language can be complicated, compassionate, very foul, and highly charged, depending on the situation
participants are in. "Ancient Germanic flyting make anything that comes out of the modern-day locker room sound like positive politeness", as (Burridge, 2002:230) illustrates.

The seventeenth century witnessed a contest between English and Dutch as the latter was the commercial and military rival of the former. The huge number of the anti-Dutch expressions was spawned at this time due to the strong contempt in which the English held the Dutch. It was fortunate that the strong negative feelings did not last long. In today's everyday usage and the ordinary in particular, only few of these early derogatory expressions was alive.

In the nineteenth century, especially in the Victorian age, more attention focused on expressions related to taboo. Burridge (2002: 223) asserts that though Oxford English Dictionary contained swear words related to religion and races, but sexual obscene words were omitted. The following decades witnessed mounting pressure on lexicographers to drop or change political and racial definitions of words. Lexicographers and editors made what was called "Cleaning Up" literary works to reproduce them to be read and used by all people.

Wardaugh (1986: 235) sheds light on the rise of the twentieth century because of the social change and other aspects of life that affected linguistic subjects, of which was taboo. The restrictions in social life and society were subsided. However, this was encountered by a considerable increase in the use of euphemistic expressions. As the task of language is to cope with the needs of society, individuals attempt to dress up in language certain fields and areas to label and name unpleasant things to be more speakable, attractive, and presentable. The process is constant
and unstable so that language is bent whenever we are in unpleasant situations to meet our needs through which smooth and flexible interaction can be maintained\(^{(3)}\).

### 2.5 Areas of Taboo

Clearly, reading the literature on taboo results in the conclusion that this topic in language has undergone a sort of expansion in its areas. The reasons behind that are the following:

Firstly, definitions of taboo, if examined closely, are focusing on the religious and social aspects in this topic, so all of the earlier literature written about it helped reflect this fact. The second is because of the change in lifestyle and culture, this change was coped with a linguistic one. A kind of increase in aspects related to culture appeared due to what media and politics did in these societies. These are the suggested types and fields to deal with. The procedure used here is to present the most taboo words and expressions in each area to the reader with some notes, if needed.

#### 2.5.1 Taboo and Sex

To prove what has been said regarding the increase in focus on taboo, this section shows the difference in the various issues related to sex especially sexual acts. For example, the earlier writings did not talk of homosexuality and incest with reference to taboo. It is an attempt to shed light on all these cases. Historically, sex was one of the most sensitive issues in taboo. The reference to sex in general appeared in literature quite early. But using it in public appeared much later. This shows how serious it would have been when mentioning it. Taboo sex is the reference
to acts, organs, or illegal relations related to sexual matters and came as a shock to people.

**Sex Organs**

We shall begin with forbidden sex organs. It is observed that the closer we get to the body's trunk, the more we are reduced to some kind of body talk. *Vagina*, as Allan and Burridge (1991:96) state, has no parallel anywhere in the degree of synonymy it gained, compared with any other vocabulary in English. There are more than 1200 terms, whereas *penis* has 1000 with or without testicles. It is enough evidence to prove our earlier claim over this issue. *Vagina, anus*, and *penis* are unmentionable by people except doctors, lovers, relatives, or close friends, or similar people. Also, individuals vary in the way that they refer to them. In contrast to men, women are circumspect when talking of these body organs. It is an indication about how the woman or her status is viewed, that is derived from her physiology, and as Ortner (1974:70-75) describes, as self-evidently true to occupy secondary status in society. The physiological and biological activities and functions made women more associated with all that.

Studying the history for the use of these terms in public helps us understand what made them prohibited and embarrassing when uttered. Silverton (2009:76) states that *vagina* is Latin in origin and first recorded in English in 1682. However, *cunt* was a lot longer than it. *Cunt*, on the other hand, the first time appeared in 1230. Silverton (2009:72) explains the debate over using or including it in the dictionaries; lexicographers and dictionary makers were involved in marathon talks and heating discussion for their inclusion. Since then, it came at the top and heart list of English vaginal slanguage. It took a long time to appear in modern
dictionaries. Moreover, restrictions were imposed to allow the full word from being written, it was written C***. Wachal (2002:197) refers to this point evidently that dictionaries did not cope with the change in usage of some forbidden words that signify body organs and functions. Thus, cunt and prick are the most taboo human sex organs in English.

Sexual Acts
As far as the sexual acts are concerned, much of what mentioned above is applicable here: sexual acts are rare to be mentioned and even could not be printed or used or broadcast in public speech. Substituting or replacing them by other words was the solution, as Swan (2005:574) explains. Although its history in English is vague and mysterious, fuck, for example, is believed to have emerged in English around the turn of the fifteenth century, was derived from either the Germanic verb ficken, which means oscillate more quickly back and forth, the borrowing of Italian fico and its translation fig, or the English verb firk. All these opinions paved the way to its current meaning, see Allan and Burridge (1991:92-5). The first modern appearance was in 1891, along with cunt that appeared in the same work too. Silverton (2009:135) parades the background of its use in public. The cost for that was that the user was fired.

Finally, Fairman (2009:6) briefs that in the western society and culture, the majority of these taboos are related to sex, due to the negative feelings toward sex.

Prostitution
Prostitution is defined as an illegal sexual relationship. This word is taboo because it refers to a bad and reluctant sexual intercourse. The place
where such an act is done is called the *house of prostitution* or *fuckery* and women who work there are called *whore* or *prostitute* or *bitch*. Rape is another type of sexual act, when a woman is raped means she was forced to do so (someone forced her to make love with her), (Funk, 1978:77). All these expressions are tabooed. Compared with women in rape acts, prostitution or woman works (works based on sex) or both, according to Fernandez (2008:104), are associated with commercial terms like any other job.

**Homosexuality**

Beyond dispute, a direct reference to homosexual relations, having a same-sex relation or having a same-sex love, is absolutely taboo. It triggers a sort of reluctance and abhorrence. Not only is that taboo in language, it is even forbidden in religion and culture. Individuals who practise it are rejected, and should alter their ties and bonds to patriarchal culture, see Hopcke, Carrington, and Wirth (1993:3-4).

The Biblical text quoted by Silverton (2009:159) refers to the story of Lot and sodomities. All of them and their cities were destroyed by God for committing this taboo sexual act. In spite of this old story, homosexual sods entered English around the mid of the nineteenth century. As an act, it was forbidden by culture and religion. Yet, freedom movements appeared, got activated and spread in the second half of the twentieth century which pressurized to allow these acts to be practised even in public with the support of governments like that in Britain\(^5\), as a result of their demands. Words like *queer* and *homosexual* which refer to this act are forbidden to be uttered.
Incest
First of all, not enough literature has been found on incest which means "sex between certain closely related individuals" as Spain (1988:285) defines. However, this type of sexual relation exists, and is, as Batra and Messier (2005:10) state, taboo in all cultures. We used references deal with; some information will be checked with English native speakers too. Anyhow, this fact is raised by Meigs and Barlow (2002:42), when referring to the obstacles a person encounters to discuss incest: "research on incest and culture understanding requires extreme caution on several fronts: with respect to linguistic and analytic ethnocentrism, with respect to the high potential for embarrassment and shame for participants in the discussion, and with respect to the problem of inferring psychological process from cultural and social data."

Confirming that fact, Turner (1984:19-20) indicates the role of language in the process of taboo; taboos themselves form a kind of language. However, he contradicts with the way theories place avoidance and prohibition at the heart of society and vice versa. Allan and Burridge (1991:134) give the justification that incest has no euphemistic expressions because the topic is rarely mentioned, and is true taboo. Touching a child in an incident way or abusing a child are taboo in this field. Moreover, motherfucker is the only incestuous epitaph in English. Speakers can think of another word, daughterfucker.

2.5.2 Taboo and Religion
Linguistically speaking, swearing means to "take an oath", when someone resorts to that. In all cultures (whether primitive and civilized), oaths are used and practised to verify something and bind oath-takers to speak only the truth, see Agyekum (2004:218). If one is not telling the truth after
solemn declarations invoking God as a witness to what is said or testified, and using the name of God to swear falsely, it invokes a divine wrath or curse or a punishment that is believed in according to the nature of culture where oath is taken, Agyekum (1999:370).

Religious names, like God and Jesus which are used when people interact and in oaths, should not be taken in vain because they are sacred and taboo. These names are used literally and appropriately when swearing lest people are shocked and wounded.

Similar is the use of epitaphs or address forms, of which the religious forms are the essence. Fasold (1990:1-2) defines them as "the words speakers use to designate the person they are talking to while they are talking to them". Address forms are the titles (T) and names (either first names (FN) or last names (LN)) given when addressing others. Religious forms are the ones that indicate religious figures or certain positions of religious authority like the 'Pope', bishop, priest, clergyman…etc. Generally speaking, it seems that these forms differ according to the religious sect. Mencken (1960: 547-48) states that the Pope is usually addressed with Your Holiness or Most Holy Father since there is no informal style to address him. A 'patriarch' in the Eastern Orthodox Church is usually addressed Your Holiness, Your Eminence or Cardinal +LN for a cardinal, Bishop (Archbishop) + LN or Your Excellency for a catholic bishop or archbishop outside and inside respectively. English archbishop is Your Grace, and My Land Bishop for an English bishop. Swan (2005:575) points out those swearwords are the only ones in language that have a distinctive grammatical range.
The other side here is to take these words and expressions in another way to express cursing or insults, which is called the abusive and the social functions of swearwords. By abusive is meant to insult or wound the others by their misuse. Various words in different spheres are employed for this purpose. God, Jesus, bloody, damn and hell are religious. Fuck and shit are related to human body. Dog-based insults are widely and popularly used in English. Dog and bitch are good examples, (Berliz, 1982:60). The reference to your mother in a certain context is abusive when someone says 'your mother'. The social function diminishes what gets tough, i.e., when things grow stressful and disappointed. They help to categorize people and show the social status, meaning how people are distant from each other. The less solidarity persons have, the less swearing is used.

2.5.3 Taboo and Human Body
Talking of taboo and body requires more focus on two sides in this area; body parts and body functions or any other acts related to body like menstruation and masturbation.

Body Parts
Two generations ago, even in America women wore long skirts, sleeves, high collars, and they did not show even their ankles in public. If they bathed in the ocean, they wore a full dress, stockings, and even some sort of a hat. Moreover, they did not cut their hair; a good woman would never cut her hair. It has been mentioned when discussing sex and sexual organs, the closer we get to the body's trunk, the more we are reduced to some kind of baby talk. Not only is it taboo to refer to sex organs, it is even prohibited while referring to other organs like breast, leg, belly, and buttocks. Funk (2004:77) states terms like leg and breast were never used
even when asking for a piece of chicken. This use extended to cover even the words 'white meat' and 'dark meat' that were used in order to get out of this embarrassing use. In brief, loins and groins are the taboo body zones these days. It is worth mentioning that the recent change in culture regarding what has been explained in this paragraph can be seen clearly. Unlike sex organs, body parts and functions are included in dictionaries.

**Body Functions**

Talking about the variety of substances excreted by the body, especially those people do not like to use can be uncomfortable. These functions are associated with the elimination of bodily wastes represented by such words as *shit*, *piss* and *pee*. The history of the use of these words appears in Bryson (1990:216,220). The prohibited use of these words extends to cover the place where these substances are wasted and discharged because they are considered dirty like 'lavatory' or 'toilet'.

**Menstruation and Masturbation**

Historically, when hunting and gathering ages were succeeded by farming, it made a sort of stability that allowed man to manipulate different ways to isolate women, particularly menstruating woman. In this way, she was considered taboo and excluded from social and sexual intercourse. This case was a source of threat and danger for every primitive society. It had been known that the role of taboo was to protect man from dangers. This image of menstruating woman dominated for centuries and ages in history. Menstruating woman, during her periods, was prohibited to contact with men of her community and was banned to touch even the food with her hand, (Buckley and Gottlieb, 1988:3).
This was reinforced by religions also, Allan and Burridge (1991:3) quote from the Bible what the Lord said to Moses and Aaron "when a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening". Menstruation was considered an "outrageous denigration of womanhood". Like child-bearing, menstruation was once a source of envy to men, according to Delney, Lupton and Toth (1988:9). Due to the same, woman in the western society was viewed physically and emotionally handicapped, regardless of the magical nature that the menstruating blood had been believed to treat some diseases like leprosy, birth-making, warts, gout, and headache. Even literature kept its eyes closed to address menstruation till freedom was given to all individuals including women who brought it out of the dirty places.

Similarly, masturbation was absolutely unmentionable, and if mentioned, the reference should be indirect and veiled. Allan and Burridge (1991:87) add that it was described as the 'self-pollution' or the 'solitary/secret vice'. But the popular name given to it in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was 'onamia/onanism'. This explains the motivation behind making them taboo.

2.5.4 Taboo and Death

Rofes (1985:20) states that death is the end of everything. Man lives to die and everybody alive now will die eventually. Death was a beginning of a new life. The journey of life begins with birth and ends with the final stage of growth, i.e. death. In spite of all these beliefs dominated in the past, talking about death has become synonymous to invoking death, as modern people also have this belief. Anyhow, death has passed through a very distinctive history that it was perceived in different ways. It became
taboo, not to mention it in a normal daily conversation, when the culture of death has changed.

From the beginning of Christianity till the Middle Ages, death was not that an objectionable area to talk about. Laungani (2007:220) depicts the dominant role religion played in the lives of people at that time. Influenced by these teachings, man was certain of heaven and hell as his inevitable destination or fate. Therefore people stopped talking of death. Some centuries later, because of the high infant and child mortality rate that literature helped mirror and record, it was a normal topic to mention. By contrast to all that, and especially in the twentieth century, as a result of the decrease and decline in mortality rate, the tendency of society to be secular rather than religious, and some institutions like hospitals rather than homes that deal with dead people, all these factors made a change in death culture that affected language simultaneously.

Words like funeral, die, corpse or body, morgue, coffin, undertaker, laying-out room, showroom, stillborn, dead, hearse, shipping box, flower truck, ashes, shroud, and parlour, all became taboo words in the field of death, See Gibson and Zaidman (1991:232-3) and Allan and Burridge (1991:164-66).

2.5.5 Health and Taboo
If taboos are the symptoms of the ill or diseased conditions of language in societies, the reference to certain fears and diseases is the symptom of death and uncomfortable situation. People may get teased if you talk to them of a disease. When an area is hit by a certain disease or epidemic, it would, as Agyekum (2004:338) describes, become taboo for people to
mention this tragedy, especially the families who already knew how that epidemic destroyed their entire family, they will not mention this plague.

Manser (2007:239) reports that English speakers can be very squeamish about mentioning serious and lethal illness. In the history of Europe, especially in the Middle Ages and after, it was hit by measles and tuberculosis where thousands of people were victims of such epidemic. Because of the fear and terror resulting from it, people labeled the most feared of diseases with the names of saints. To alleviate themselves, the sufferers violated the sacredness of the church and the saints. In the mind of sufferers when a disease is associated closely with the name of the saints, the saints became the source of the sickness not as comforters and protectors, (Burridge, 2002:252).

There are many serious and terrible diseases that death is associated with. Rofes (1985:21) identifies cancer out of these diseases. Speakers manipulate different ways to avoid the superstitious reluctance to utter the word cancer. Like cancer of today, tuberculosis was both linguistically and medically the nineteenth-century counterpart of cancer. AIDS, on the other hand, was acronym of GRID (Gay Related Immuno-Deficiency), not only did it denote a serious disease; it even characterized and featured its patients as being associated with homosexual community or same sex. Most importantly, the prohibitions and social taboos surrounding AIDS are severe. It is the disease that changed the world or Age.

Allan and Burridge (1991:177-8) tackle another serious disease; leprosy which was viewed as a divine punishment. Because of its seriousness and bad connections being impossible to be medically treated, it was a sign to prove Jesus as a prophet when he healed diseased people infected with it.
Even the name was derived from Lazarus who was the victim of a skin disease.

Similarly, it was considered for supernatural and moral failure of the affected to have such a state of mind, i.e. madness. As the reasons were unknown in the past, it was a great shame to have this disease which made even insane asylum, where its patients were kept, taboo too. Consequently, talking of certain diseases, like AIDS and cancer while referring to a certain person, is taboo. Likewise, words like *mad* and *idiot* are taboo when speaking of a mad individual.

### 2.5.6 Taboo and Social Issues

Some social issues should be handled carefully in certain situations because of the social and psychological attitudes behind them. When addressing these issues, attitudes have to be changed towards the new names given in a slightly different frame of mind. On the contrary, if a social change can be introduced quickly and overnight, linguistic change cannot happen that way. Taboo of delicacy, a general human tendency to avoid direct reference to unpleasant or embarrassing subjects or hurting others' feelings, is the domain that deals with what will be discussed below.

Discussing old age or advancing age and its accompanying disadvantage is often a source of much unease. Before discussing that, one has to be armed with rich expressions to avoid the horrors of failing physical and mental health that are associated with the latter phases of life, (Manser, 2007:237). The expressions *Old, old age,* and *old person* are taboo to be used in this aspect, according to Postman (1976:211). Handicapped persons are not referred to directly in order not to hurt their feelings, like
that with disabled. If someone has a mental problem that affects his/her learning, s/he is not referred to as stupid or mentally retarded. As a matter of delicacy, in sanitary works, people who work in are not called as garbage collectors or dustmen.

Burridge (2002:233) explains that handism (handist language), a type of -ist language views the left side as weak, feeble, worthless (at best) and untrustworthy, shameful, even evil (at worst). Left now indicates the meaning of incompetence and inefficiency such as 'with the left eye', 'work with the left hand', and 'take it by the left ear'. Palmer (1972:324) asserts that certain articles of clothing should not be mentioned directly in polite society. Drawers, under garment, and underwear are our examples in this field. If a girl is seen putting them off, she is never naked, (Funk, 1978:77). Some body figures are not used when describing women. When a woman is so thin, she is not described as skinny or scrawny. The same is applicable with fat.

Words associated with some races or nations are prohibited like the third nations, negro, and black, especially when they are used to demean a certain group of people. Crystal (2006:129) explains when black was condemned in the 1980s as insulting and demeaning to African Americans, there was a campaign that left people afraid of using it even in unrelated contexts and situations like 'blackboards'.

Allan and Burridge (1991:138) add that giving characteristics of a woman to a man means he is downgraded and insulted, according to the social traditions and norms. By contrast, a woman is not abused or downgraded when attributes of a man are ascribed to her. The former example is an insult for a man, whereas the latter is to praise her strength of character. It
seems that the context and the situation are decisive factors to govern this use. Moreover, Rawson (1989:13) states how people are demeaned when a reference is made to them in terms of their apparatus for excretion and procreation, especially women who are frequently described purely as sexual objects. "Beaver, cunt, piece (of ass), pussy, quim, snatch, tail, and twat are among the words which are used to denote a woman and her genitals." We are not to say that a girl committed adultery so that she had an abortion, these two expressions are not permissible. If you hire a person to work at your home, s/he should not be called maid/servant.

2.5.7 Politics and Taboo
The last few decades witnessed dramatic transformations in society and attitudes. These transformers were subject to social, political, economic, and religious changes that literature helped mirror and depict them in its history. Liberalization emerged to the surface as a reaction or a by-product of the right of freedom of speech that paved the way not only to ensure social and political changes, but also a linguistic one. This is why taboo words, as a part of culture, are affected and presented in public. Whereas it was avoided to talk about. Slotkin (1994:200) starts his article with these lines. "Probably nothing shows the way linguistic attitudes have liberalized in the past few decades the media's use of obscenities. Where only the most free-thinking and daring publications … would have printed the normally tabooed "four-letter" words relating to sexual activity."

Wachal (2002:77) confirms this fact when pointing to the acceptability of using vulgar sexual terms and dramatic values in language used on network televisions. Traditions and values of societies help individuals use these terms. Literature, in fact, mirrors and depicts society. As a
result, talking of taboo topics in general can be seen, the role of readers is
to realize how things have been changed in the course of time. Wachal
(2002:197-201) concludes that it is disappointing that dictionary-makers
do not reflect properly the change in usage of some taboo words relating
to human body and functions. Surprisingly, dictionaries fail to cope with
the increasing use of taboos in the mass media. For more details and
history when these words were presented and used in media, readers are
recommended to see Silverton (2009).

Politics, on the other hand, played the same role in ornamenting and
flowering issues for political causes. Political correction that Burridge
(2002: 227) defines as "conformity to correct beliefs about correctness of
language and behaviour with regard to politics on sexism, racism, and
ageism …etc.", does the polite thing and moves outside the political
arena. It seems it is overused by politicians due to the sensitive issues
they handle on a daily bases, they are urged and pressurised to give names
that make their people see something that is not true or distract their
attention from something that is unpleasant. To clarify that, Postman
(1976: 210) gives the issue of the hydrogen bomb that kills and nothing
else it does to cite an example; cruel politicians under the disguise of
attractive titles such as "Operation of Sunshine" serve their own selfish
purpose.

As a strategy in shaping language and social attitudes towards certain
undesirable areas, more examples and explanations will be presented
when discussing euphemism later. Decision-makers can do much, as the
social change can happen overnight by a legislative act, legislation for
language change cannot. However, sooner or later, the linguistic change
would come as a by-product when thinking of sanctions taken over by racism and sexism.

2.6 Language, Culture, and Taboo

It is believed that discussing any linguistic topic requires reference to the important role language plays in the linguistic community. Block and Trager (1942:5) define language as "a system of arbitrary vocal systems by means of which a social group co-operates". This definition puts all the emphasis on the social function of language that aims at making a social relation in linguistic communities and linking members who have already acquired social and linguistic traditions, norms, habits, and customs. Mastering these norms and traditions is the most reliable source to ensure effective and informative interaction.

Culture of taboo is a part of all languages without which interaction would be at risk because avoided and forbidden subjects, ideas and things …etc may be violated, and would result in the abuse or hurting of the feelings of others. The concept of taboo is subject to the culture where it is practised and what norms, ideas, thoughts, and beliefs the people share. As far as culture is concerned, it is possible to find a difference in their application and use of taboo words between two linguistic societies speaking the same language. Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2003: 476) state that taboo words or expressions permissible in America are not acceptable in England and vice versa although they speak the same language and their culture, in general, somehow descended from the same origin. What is forbidden to do is forbidden to talk about too. These taboo acts or expressions mirror the views of society. So what is socially approved in one country is not applicable in other countries.
Burridge (2002:222) notes that the western-style taboos typically rest on traditions of etiquette and are clearly linked to social parameters like age, education, sex, and social status. Taboo topics are avoided not because people believe that any physical or metaphysical harm will come to them. But because their use is regarded as distrustful with a particular social context.

Non-Christian and illiterates of Akan in Ghana, for example, frequently use pagan oaths compared to Christians and literates because the latter do not believe in the power of these deities; they believe that invoking the deities implies the worship of idols. It is possible to find a similarity in the use of a certain taboo issue in spite of the differences in the culture these people share. The reference to the names of certain animals, according to Emeneau (1948:63), is attributed to religious taboo and the attitudes of societies towards these animals. He adds that "any application of the taboo-principle to the Indic words for 'snake' will have to take into account the religious attitude of the Hindus towards snakes". Spaniards avoid the use of the word culebra (serpent) because of a superstition that it will appear if they mention it. Old Italians colubra disappeared because of the same reason. However, other words for "snake", as Pei (1949:249) says, have crept in.

The context and user can affect the process of using words; two or more words or expressions sometimes have the same linguistic meaning, one is permissible and the other objectionable because it is the source of horror and embarrassment. Compared to their native Anglo-Saxon counterparts which are forbidden, English taboo words borrowed from Latin sound scientific, and therefore appear to be technical and "clean". This makes Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2003:478) wonder why the word 'vagina'
is clean whereas 'cunt' is dirty or why 'prick' is taboo but 'penis' is acknowledged as referring to part of male anatomy. Meanwhile, there is no linguistic reason behind this acceptability and use.

The cycle of generations, on the other hand, is an important and vital player in taboos. Their use differs within the same community due to the change in beliefs and thoughts. Death, for instance, passed through a cycle of changes in the course of time since the Middle Ages till now.

In the Middle Ages, their notion of physiology and medical doctrine rested on imagination and superstition. People were guided by the Christian teachings and guidance from birth to death. There was a strong belief in heaven and hell so that death was a way to future bliss; it created a sort of stability in society: guided behaviour, promoted rituals, and assailed doubts were enshrined by religious teachings. These beliefs enabled people to attach some sort of meaning of death, it was at least understandable, see Laungani (2007:220-221).

In the eighteenth century, there was a sort of similarity in the values people had in the Medieval age, taking into account the incredibly high infant and child mortality rates increased. Literature of that age was full of themes that portrayed diseases, death, and disasters.

The attitudes and values of the past centuries were confronted by their counterparts in the twentieth century because life expectancy has increased enormously, infant mortality dropped down to a low level, in other words life is very much better than it used to be. These changes in society, beliefs, values, and attitudes resulted in a linguistic change that
made death taboo and unspeakable. For more details, see Allan and Burridge (1991).

When looking at taboo words from a historical point of view, it is to acknowledge the unbelievable change in taboo\(^6\). This is attributed to the significance of culture and the way people think of them. It has already been referred to culture and religion. In the course of history, there were certain words that could not be uttered or mentioned in front of a girl. Now they can be uttered or said but you cannot say *girl*. Vulgar sexual expressions have become permissible in the last decades while the racial and ethnic ones have become unspeakable. This gives the justification why dictionaries abstained to include these expressions all the time till the twentieth century.

Swan (2005: 575) gives a vivid description of the role of transformations in the twentieth century and their impact on taboo words:

"Linguistic taboos in English speaking countries are less strong than they used to be. Most taboo words and swearwords shock less than they did, say twenty years ago. And increasingly, people are using informal taboo words which are felt to be amusingly "naughty" rather than shocking".

This asserts that this period, the 20\(^{th}\) century compared to the past time, witnessed a dramatic shift in which certain social inhibitions and restrictions have loosened. Claire (1998:97) explains that people are subject to laws that reach into their private bedrooms. Consenting adults can engage in any sexual act they choose and are free to do it, whereas it is prohibited to do the same with children or non-consenting adults because the practice is considered a serious crime. In many Russian
regions, when people met at evening parties, boys and girls played with lights off and the party led to an orgy, this was in Slavic folk culture, (Gura, 2005:136). Touching others in English culture is organized, since it signifies socio-economic status of people: the higher in status and older in age, the greater freedom to touch they have. Also, women are touched more and they do less touching, (Gramley and Patzolo, 1992:279).

Pedagogically speaking, learners of foreign languages should be aware of all that (using taboo words) because it is easy to utter them, but it is difficult to realize the impact these expressions have in the target language. Moreover, they should know what type of people are shocked by and under what circumstances.

Therefore, to discuss taboo in a language, factors like language, culture, and society should be taken into account. They work together to shape the way taboo issues are viewed in their linguistic society.

2.7 Dysphemism and Taboo
The use of words and expressions to convey emotional state varies because of the variety of ways to achieve that. Dysphemism is one of these ways, defined as the opposite of euphemism and, by and large, it is tabooed. The similarity between dysphemism and euphemism is in the motivation of fear and distress, and hatred and contempt, as Allan and Burridge (2006:31) note. When speakers are annoyed and frustrated, dysphemism becomes a resort to talk about people or things that frustrate or annoy them. The expressions expected to vacuum or outlet these emotions will be harsh, rude, and offensive because they are intentionally used.
Allan and Burridge (2006:31) add that these expressions and words are characterized by their offensive connotations either about the denotatum and/or to people addressed or these overhearing the utterance. Dysphemism is the verbal resource people can use to be offensive and abusive when they get annoyed or disappointed. For instance, the dysphemistic expression for *have a period* is *bleed* and for *Lord is Christ* (blasphemy). As an impolite choice, dysphemism is seen as taboo. Many of the huge variety of sexual metaphors are dysphemistic such as *bedpressing*.

Dysphemisms are offensive and crude without necessarily using four-letter words. It is also against the nobility and dignity of language. Another example drawn from the sensitive and embarrassing topics is to *have a bun in the oven* for *to be pregnant*. Diez (2001) describes that there may be a humorous tone: *old banger* (to talk about a luxury car). They can be cruel: Last night *that thing* (my mother's boyfriend) came to have dinner. In brief, dysphemism is somehow the synonym of taboo and the antonym of euphemism. (7)

2.8 Four-letter Words

This term is used interchangeably with 'taboo' or Anglo-Saxon. This equivalence, according to Hughes (2006:184), is based on a popular misconception because only about half of the “four-letter” words actually derive from Anglo-Saxon. The motivation behind this use, as Holder (2007:185) tells, was at the time when this term appeared there were only eight among the set of obscenities which contained four letters such as *cunt, shit, piss, hell, fart, damn, fuck*, and *cock*. The exact history when this term was coined and by whom is unknown. But it was in the first half of the twentieth century. Another justification for the "four-letter" claim is
the fact that a large number of English "swearwords" are incidentally four character monosyllables. Now, this term indicates any number of bad words written with or without four letters which are considered profane or offensive, including common popular or slang terms. For the sake of politeness, when the most unpleasant words are written, especially in newspapers or magazines, four asterisks are used to denote them, or the first and last letter are written with two asterisks in the middle such as (f**k) or (C**t). In addition to avoid the word "taboo", four-letter is used as an adjective to denote this topic. Kahlenberg and Dann (1999:6) give an idea about the use of this expression as synonymous to taboo when they say that "because four-letter words are an integral and sometimes interesting part of the English language, it is worthwhile to contemplate whether their use has changed over the past few decades."

2.9 Structure of Taboo Words
Taboo words are expressed by people in different items and linguistic structures. Though no explanations and discussions have been found on the structure of taboo words, at least according to the literature we have read. This section is an attempt to lay a foundation to show the structure that people employ to utter forbidden words.

The most widely used expressions are depicted by words especially a single word which is defined by Matthews (2007:436) as "the smallest of the units that make up a sentence". Whether these units are spoken or written, taboo words are uttered in different ways, for example, either they are single words shit, fart, death …etc, or they form compound words which means the combination of two single words to give a new word like motherfucker and asshole.
Within the words themselves, the class of words differs in expressing taboo words so that they can be either used as a noun which is defined as one of the four classes whose members fill the headword slot in the noun phrase, Kolln and Funk (2006:378). Words like *ass, death*, and *butt* are good examples. They can occupy the position of adjective (like *bloody, pussy,* and *potty*) which means "the main set of items which specify the attributers of noun." See Crystal (2008:10). The place of verbs can be filled out by a taboo word too like *die, shit, fart …etc.* Taboo words occupy the position of adverb as in *bloody sick* and *fucking soon.*

Table (1) can help understand the structure of taboo words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type of word</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Breast, prick, fuck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Compound</td>
<td>Motherfucker, asshole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (1) shows the structure of taboo words

Taboo words occupy certain grammatical classes in English as shown in table (2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Piss, shit, die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>Fuck, death, damn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Bloody, pussy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>Bloody</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (2) shows grammatical positions taboo words occupy

### 2.10 Semantics and Taboo Words
Language contains different levels of analysis: phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic …etc. Each level is concerned with a certain angle in language. Semantics is concerned with the meaning that
entities have in a language. In his book *Semantics*, Saeed (2009:3) defines semantics as "the study of meaning communicated through language."

Speakers of language have their knowledge about their language, how words, phrases, and sentences are constructed, how to pronounce them, and how to use them in their context. The knowledge of a speaker is shown by linguistic description. The job of the semantist is to describe semantic knowledge represented by the meaning of language. This section sheds light on semantics of taboo words, i.e., their meaning in language. Or, let us say to deal with the internalized components of linguistic competence that the speakers of a linguistic community share and its internal semantic competence, (Davis and Gillon, 2004:3).

Semantics is the description and explanation of the way in which linguistic expressions have meanings. It is, according to Reiner (2010:2), one of the richest and most fascinating parts in linguistics because of the issues it deals with. Before dealing directly with taboo words, it is necessary to explain some related topics in semantics and then to focus on this field.

**Denotative Meaning**

This term is used interchangeably with conceptual and cognitive meaning. The denotation of an expression is an immortal part of reality that the expression is linked with. For instance, the word 'blue' denotes the colour blue. This means that denotative or conceptual meaning is what the word refers to in reality, or it is the lexical meaning in dictionaries. This kind of meaning is stable and constant regardless of ages and societies.

As far as taboos are concerned, the words associated with sex or health are not considered fearful or horrible when the literal meaning is
indicated or referred to. The strength of these words lies behind or consists in the way these words are used whether literally or for insulting or degrading …etc, Kearns (2000).

**Connotative Meaning**

Connotative meaning, on the other hand, is defined by Leech (1981:12) as "the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it refers to over and above purely conceptual content." Unlike the denotative one, this type of meaning has the characteristic feature of being unstable and changeable. It is apt to vary from one society to another, from age to age, and even from person to person. It is indeterminate and open-ended in the same way our knowledge and beliefs about the universe are so. To make it clear, consider the following: the red colour is popular in China, as He (2009:151) states. It signifies success, progress, and revolution. On the contrary, it stands for an evil omen, or danger steaming from the spirits of bullfighters for Westerners. For Americans, red has the association of fire, blood, cruelty of war, violence, and revolution.

Compared to 'red', 'white' in Chinese culture is basically taboo because it shows the Chinese's material and spiritual disgust. Traditionally, it makes people of China tend to think of solemn mourning, which originated from ancient times for colour of superstitions. Whereas for Westeners purity, elegance, and frankness are signified by white. Being discussed elaborately as a taboo word by Burridge (2002:231), *bloody* has simply the idea of blood that it had unpleasant and violent connotations which would make it very suitable to be used as an intensifying word. Additionally, it would give rise to lurid association of bloodshed and murder especially when it is used with expressions like *bloody battle* and
It was believed that it would be associated with the underworld. Apparently, the connotations of both red and white, as colour terms, given above, are of value to reflect how people or societies differ in the way connotative meaning works. How taboos work in language is perceived in the same way as their connotations which hold tabooness.

**Social Meaning and Meaning Change**

The role language plays in society has already been referred to when interacting with others to maintain social relations. This function of language is called phatic communion by Malinowsky (1972:151). Identities, social markers, and social expressions, as Grimshaw (1971:12) emphasizes, are used through interaction to determine and identify people involved in this process. This helps express the fact that the social meaning of the items are picked up by the participants. To a great extent, it fulfills the social aspects of language. Thus, Leech (1981:14) defines the social meaning as "a piece of language conveying about the social circumstances of its use." Elements represented by geographical or social origins of the speakers, level of style, and the social relationship between the speaker and listener are encoded to form the social meaning. Lessig (1995:956) notes that social meaning is subject to some other elements like the social background of participants, words and their uses, and the time when a word is used (8). In the respect of talking of taboo words and social meaning, as taboos are a part of social components in language, the above criteria will be discussed with reference to their social use and meaning.

It is clear that death is a taboo topic, it was discussed earlier in (2-5-4) with reference to its expressions at different periods of time. If social meaning exists, they are to be used as tools and means to ends,
individually or collectively selected. People vary in the way these expressions are selected; one uses an insult to oppress others; others use an expression to endear. A certain language is employed to identify one meaning rather than another. The task of the sociolinguist is to understand these meanings and how they are signaled in language.

As far as social meaning and taboo words are concerned, Lober (2002) draws a comparison between the Japanese language which forces its speakers into their hierarchical social thinking and the Westerners into observing sexual taboo. Because of the difference in social sides of these two cultures, language reflects social structure and cultural standards. Referring directly to sexuality is impossible if language does not provide appropriate words. The sexual revolution in the Western culture revealed that speech communities rapidly developed acceptable expressions in society when taboo loses its force.

The social background is an important factor. The social meaning reflects the status of participants in society and their background. For instance, Hunter and Gaines (1938:106) point out that women show greater restraint than men while using taboo words. The freedom of the seniors to use taboos is only less remarkable. The social background is noticeable even between children of the same age; let us say peers, it depends on the values accepted in the family or a group in which the child grows up.

**Semantic Change and Taboo**

Semantic change is studied under historical semantics which means the study of the change of meaning of expressions through time, in particular, the changes of the meaning of words. Regardless of the historical, geographical, political, and any other reasons cause semantic change; it is
to focus on the relationship between semantic change and taboo words. Cultural influences change the language. The background image that motivates the figurative shift is an aspect of the culture of a given linguistic society. One of the powerful sources for semantic change is taboos. In fact, semantic change in general is concerned directly with the connotations of expressions rather than their denotations. Connotations, as Leech (1981:12) refers to, are the viewpoints adopted by an individual or a whole society. These viewpoints are represented by the attitudes, beliefs, images, and feelings towards words used by people. This fact is emphasized by Palmer (1981:92-3)"

It is true that people will change names in order to avoid such connotations, and there is a natural process of change with taboo words.... Because the word is associated with a socially distasteful subject, it becomes distasteful itself, and another word a 'euphemism', takes its place. But the process is, of course unending since it is essentially the object and not the word that is unpleasant. Words even become taboo when the distasteful object is referred to be the word in a different sense .... Thus we are unwilling to take to intercourse to mean social or commercial relationships, and it has been often pointed out that it is for similar reasons that in America the male domestic fowl is a rooster.

To make it clear, a word does not change, what has changed is the connotative meaning of these words. The componential analysis which is defined by Wootton (1975:28) as "setting up the distinctive features of items which differentiate them from other items at any particular level of analysis", can illustrate this case. These features are semantic like what phonology does when digging deeply into words, classify them, and showing their relationships. Consider the word *girl*
to explain that. The distinctive features of this word in terms of semantics are shown in table (3) below, when compared to its gender counterpart *boy*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Girl</strong></th>
<th><strong>Boy</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ human</td>
<td>+ human</td>
<td>+ human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ adult</td>
<td>+ adult</td>
<td>+ adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+unmarried</td>
<td>+unmarried</td>
<td>+unmarried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- male</td>
<td>+ male</td>
<td>+ male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (3) componential analysis of "girl" vs. "boy"

Regarding gender, the difference between *girl* and *boy* is axiomatic. What is illogical in the social process is the social attitudes towards the word *girl* and what it denotes. See the following features shown in table (4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Girl</strong></th>
<th><strong>Boy</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ human</td>
<td>+ human</td>
<td>+ human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ adult</td>
<td>+ adult</td>
<td>+ adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+unmarried</td>
<td>+unmarried</td>
<td>+unmarried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- male</td>
<td>+ male</td>
<td>+ male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+taboo</td>
<td>- taboo</td>
<td>- taboo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4) the analysis of "girl" and "boy" with reference to taboo

The question is why 'girl' is taboo whereas 'boy' is not. The beliefs and attitudes in perceiving and using the word *girl* makes it taboo.
Historically, it was not taboo before some decades ago when some words were prohibited to be uttered in front of a girl. Now they are speakable, but girl itself is unspeakable. This fact was found out by Schulz (1975:65):

…in the history of language, one finds that a perfectly innocent term designating a girl or woman may begin with totally neutral or even positive connotations, but that gradually it acquires negative implications, at first perhaps only slightly disparaging, but after a period of time becoming abusive and ending as sexual slur.

The pair penis:vagina is another example in the context. Both of them are body organs relating to sex. Anatomically speaking, the analysis shown in table (5) states it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Penis</th>
<th>Vagina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ human</td>
<td>+ human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ sex organ</td>
<td>+ sex organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ male</td>
<td>- male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- taboo</td>
<td>- taboo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (5) shows analysis of "penis" and "vagina" with reference to taboo

This table shows that the distinctive features for these two words are axiomatic when (-male) is associated with vagina. Now, let us replace penis with cunt and see the difference in table (6):
Surprisingly, there is no linguistic justification behind what makes cunt taboo whereas vagina is not. The connotations of society and its speakers towards these two words place them in this position. Vagina is a word that refers to female sex organ from an anatomical side that makes it viewed as clean and not taboo. It will be the same when comparing between penis and prick.

This discussion brings to the attention another case; that is gender-related differences between males and females in society as a part of culture and the role of taboo in this issue. Generally speaking, when people talk to each other, certain titles and forms of address are used to label them. This use is controlled by their status, age, and solidarity (how intimate they are to each other). Male Vs. female is an issue in all societies: male-specific forms differ from that of female counterparts, the latter are used to denote someone of lower status and sometimes having an overpowering sexual connotation.

Surprisingly, their current meaning is so far apart from their original connection. Some terms like courtier vs. courtesan, the meaning of the first is still retained to denote someone attached to court, whereas the latter or its female counterpart (courtesan), as Mills (1995:84)
describes, has the meaning of a sexual servant or prostitute. Likewise, in the case of spinster and bachelor, "spinster is now rarely used; it seems to have acquired the insulting meaning of 'old maid' referring to someone who is unable to find a husband, by implication because they are too ugly or too sour." Connotations of bachelor, on the other hand, are positive as they refer to freedom, independence, and that all choices are open to you. Consider another example in this area, it is lord and lady. Unlike lady which can be used to refer to any adult female in certain contexts and to refer politely to any adult female stranger, the meaning of lord is prestigious and has all its status; it is not applicable to refer to any adult male stranger with this title. Such type of change in connotations and meaning is employed in gender-based insults.

The point that has just been mentioned above leads to another observation that how gender-based insults are used via titles or epithets. Animal names like the female harridan, jade, and nag of equine origin and bitch are used to insult women. Birds, according to Rawson (1989:13), are more common in "the lexicon derogation, especially as insults for the human female… and for anyone who is lacking in brains."

In short, it is uncertain to maintain the same constituents or attitudes (connotations) of a given word because types of these word change, as the language changes, what might be acceptable and speakable to a certain generation turns out to be the opposite to another. It is expected that norms or expressions are acceptable in one part of a
Slang and Vulgarity

The term 'slang' in language refers to any vocabulary which is at the extremely informal end of continuum, (Trudgill, 1983:83). This means that, compared to literary language that refers to written and formal vocabulary or the language of literature, slang vocabularies form a group of lower or less dignified status. Nonstandard or unpleasant words and phrases can be included in slang because they are not suitable to express formal matters although slang expressions are used as synonyms for standard ones. Slang expressions are avoided when talking to a person of higher status.

Moreover, it is used to indicate membership in social groups where business is not conducted in the standard language. When used by outsiders, empathy is indicted with subgroups like the young. Its expressions are considered as short-living so that they change from one group to another and from one generation to another. They are not expected to survive for a long time although some expressions do, (Crystal, 2010:55).

Similarly, vulgarity occupies the same position at the informal level in language that slang does. Taboo words, in this respect, that indicate the undesirability of body parts and functions are labeled as "vulgar", "coarse slang", "rude", "taboo" or "not in descent use" when listed in
dictionaries, Wachal (2002:197). As a result, most of taboo expressions are associated with slang or vulgar expressions.

### 2.11 Strategies and Taboo

Pragmatically speaking, certain strategies are employed when using taboo words. These are the significant strategies which are used while mentioning and speaking of taboo expressions.

**In-Group Strategy**

When people interact with each other, speakers interact with hearer by using as many ways as possible to convey in-group membership. It depends on the definition of the group. As it has been explained that taboo words are not to be used in public unless they are in their appropriate context. The reason is due to the fears and embarrassments that they bring with them.

Consider the use of religious words. These words should be used appropriately and respectfully because they are considered sacred by the people. When the rules of their usage are violated, this sometimes indicates in-group identity markers. Crystal (2006:131-2) mentions that taboo words cannot be forbidden to some people. It is subject to the setting, the participants, and what their relationship is to each other. Swearing among young people is as much a matter of maintaining rapport as giving offence. He described it as "gang-building behaviour".

Swan (2005:575) supports this idea; the use of this sort of language in general indicates how people are linked to each other: one most often swears in the company of people s/he knows well, and who belong to
one's social group or circle. He brings to the attention the danger behind this use by a foreigner who uses swearwords to give the impression of claiming membership of a group he or she does not belong to.

**Face-Threatening Act**

Members of society interact with each other and show relations of respect and co-operation that maintain sustainable interaction. Politeness is the means employed to show awareness of other person's face which can be accomplished in situations of social distance, (Yule, 1996:60). Face is defined by Brown and Levinson (1987:61) as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" negatively or positively.

What is important here are the face threatening acts (FTA). These acts threaten the positive face wants by indicating that the speaker does not care about the addressee's feelings, wants …etc, that in some aspects he (the speaker) does not want the hearer's wants. These wants are represented by many aspects; the speaker has a negative evaluation of the hearer's positive face when the speaker expresses disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusation or insults. This means the speaker does not care about the hearer's beliefs or values, (Brown and Levinson (1987: 66).

Taboos, as definitions reflect, are avoided acts or sayings because people find them embarrassing and offensive. Restrictions and prohibitions of use are imposed socially or religiously. The relationship that organizes members of a society is imposed by customs, conventions, values and traditions. We can consider taboos to see how this relation works.

Let us have a look at the use of names and epithets to gauge this issue with reference to taboos. Names and epithets are exchanged by people
according to the nature of relationship between them, whether they are closely related to each other or not. Some people are powerful in society, while others are not. The powerful ones can practise control over the behaviour of their subordinates like officer-soldier, teacher-pupil, parents-children and so on. This power is reflected by the way names and epithets are exchanged; some give titles and receive names and vice versa. For more details, see Brown and Gilman (1968:254-266).

Obviously, participants use their skills and potentials by selecting certain linguistic structures to maintain informative interaction and avoid misunderstanding. Epithets and names are of these forms and are utilized to achieve this goal. Bernardy (1996:74-77) stated that"

It is possible to make socially significant distinction … with various permutations of names and titles and that such distinctions are useful in examining the relation of power and solidarity involved in people's interaction."

The following example can help understand it completely. The conversation below is between a bishop and his old friend who wants to congratulate him when he became a bishop.

- The Bishop of Connecticut is speaking.
- Walter, this is Henry.
- The Bishop of Connecticut is speaking.

The usual answer through telephone has been used by the Bishop without knowing who talks to him. His partner uses the FNs as they are used by perceived peers, there is no resistance unless age and former relationship intervene and the addressee becomes annoyed, (Hook,1984:185). Being
formal in his answer, the Bishop intends to tell that their relation has already changed in response to the change in his status. So he repeated his answer twice and formally. It indicates that the Bishop felt he has been annoyed and insulted as rules of addressing him were violated. Language tends to respond to social changes in the position and status of people. Although the inferior attempts to shift from power relation to intimacy to consider his addressee at least equal to him in rank and status, he has no right to do so; it is the superior who has the right to shift from power to solidarity. The superior can give title (T) with formal tone to rebuff this violation; it is the polite manner to rebuke his addressee, (Brown, 1965:65) and (Brown and Gilman, 1968: 260).

Briefly, Bolinger and Sears (1981:213) point out that these forms (epithets and names) are used to insult others. To address someone with "Hey, You" is an insult. Consequently, violating the appropriate use of taboo expressions is considered as FTAs.

**Summing Up**

This chapter discusses taboo in English as an important topic in sociolinguistics. The history of the term *taboo* as well as the attention paid to the topic are presented. Areas, like sex, religion, human body, health, politics, and social issues, are focused on. The most important relevant notions such as dysphemism and four-letter words are explained. It gives an idea about cultural, structural, semantic, and pragmatic sides of this topic in English.
Notes on Chapter Two


3- Captain James Cook (7 November 1728 – 14 February 1779) was a British explorer, navigator and cartographer, ultimately rising to the rank of Captain in the Royal Navy. Cook made detailed maps of Newfoundland prior to making three voyages to the Pacific Ocean. In his first voyage (1768-1771), though his expedition was to observe the transit of Venus across the Sun in Tahiti, it was a chance to make contact with the aboriginals of that area, where tribesmen used to use the word *tabu* in their everyday communication, this word in their language means forbidden, then it entered into English in the eighteenth century, as Cook listed this word in his diaries and record.

4- The translated version of the Glorious Qur'an by Khan and Al-Hilali (1996) is adopted for the sake of this study.

5- The British government announced, according to yahoo news on 8 Oct. 2010 a same-sex public area in London to be featured on the list of good places to go "dogging", to have sex in public. It was seen unhappily by the residents of that area. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/08/world/Europe/08puttenham.html/?_r=1ahp.

6- The researcher remembers that a British Ph. D. student sent an email asking for help on her topic: Address Forms. He was
surprised to know that she did her M. A. on 'address forms' too. He asked why all that happened, her answer was that it was due to the social and cultural changes her society underwent.

7- Miquel Molina Diez (2001) personal correspondence. He sent an email to the researcher on Tue, October 26, 2010, his article can be viewed and read on:
http://www.polseguera.com/collaracion/english/6en.htm

8- Swearwords are various and in the different aspects of life, they are employed for insulting, offending, expressing anger or frustration. Some words are widely and permanently used, especially the words associated with sex or body functions. Their ranks are subject to change, it helps understand how they are perceived and how culture changes. Leigh and Lepine (2005:29) refer to two surveys conducted to know how swearwords are perceived, the change in their rank is significant and of valuable. Table (7) below shows 15 swearwords out of 35 ones according to the surveys mentioned above:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Swearword</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Cunt</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Motherfucker</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fuck</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Wanker</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Nigger</td>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bastard</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Prick</td>
<td>7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bollocks</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Arsehole</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Paki</td>
<td>17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Shag</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td></td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Whore</td>
<td>13th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>Twat</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th</td>
<td>Piss off</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th</td>
<td>Spastic</td>
<td>14th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (7) shows the 15 worst swearwords in English and how their perception has changed in 3 years.