

A Sociolinguistics Study of Conversational Swearing in Iran

Mohammad Aliakbari (Corresponding author)

Dept. of English, Ilam University

PO Box 516, Ilam 69315, Iran

Tel: 98-918-341-3283 E-mail: maliakbari@hotmail.com

Zahra Heidarizadi

Dept. of English, Ilam University

PO Box 516, Ilam 69315, Iran

Tel: 98-918-844-1912 E-mail: zheidarizadi@gmail.com

Elham Mahjub

Dept. of English, Ilam University

PO Box 516, Ilam 69315, Iran

Tel: 98-917-337-5068 E-mail: mahjub.e@gmail.com

Received: March 12, 2013 Accepted: March 27, 2013 Published: June 24, 2013

doi:10.5296/ijl.v5i3.3899 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v5i3.3899>

Abstract

As a lingual feature, ‘swearing’ has been presented since long among different cultures with various conceptual and linguistic realizations. In this study an attempt has been made to represent a comprehensive taxonomy of swear expressions in contemporary Persian language. Data were collected from the actual performance of speakers in their daily conversations and undertakings. The corpus yielded itself to a taxonomy including 15 categories and 7 subcategories. From among more than 250 natural instances of swear expressions about 45 instances have been provided in the form of sentences in the body of the article and at a table in

the Appendix. The research findings made it clear that religious oaths, swearing by holy times, foods and meals, parts of body, and family members were respectively the top most frequent categories of Persian swear expressions in the context of research.

Keywords: Swearing, Speech acts, Conversational strategy, Swearing taxonomy, Persian swearing

1. Introduction

As an old communicative phenomenon, swearing has been a frequent speech act adopted in daily conversation as well as formal ceremonies in Iran. The loan word “Qasam” from Arabic and the old Avestan word “Sougand” are the equivalent terms for swearing in contemporary Persian language.

As Abdel-Jawad (2000) notes *Qasam*, a synonym of *yamiin* or ‘oath’ is the speech act by which an individual necessitates him/herself to do or not to do a particular physical or juridical act, by referring the name of God or one of the sacred powers. He continues that based on their domains, oaths can be classified into three groups: “judiciary oaths which are formally taken in the court of law; loyalty, constitutional or office oaths and pledges taken by senior officials when assuming office; and finally extra judiciary or conversational swearing uttered by people rather routinely in their daily interactions and dealings” (p.218).

In different eras, swearing has oriented toward different forms depending on the poets', writers', and critics' interests. As a result in one time the religious swearing has been prevalent and in another time the emotional swearing and still in the next time the dirty swearing expressions have been thrived. Today, swearing is a commonplace phenomenon among Iranian people to the extent that they often swear quit frequently without much attention being devoted to the fact that what they say is a swear expression.

From another perspective, swearing is a culturally loaded act. Iranians often accompany their wording with religious oaths to show its truth, simply because the holy oaths work as an emphaser to show the legitimacy of one’s saying. Being stimulated by the frequency and importance of the swearing in the Iranian Muslims' daily discourse and the paucity of linguistic studies on this kind of speech acts, the present study attempts to provide a relatively comprehensive index of this speech act among Persian speakers in Iran. Put it in different words, the present study is to investigate the conversational swearing (CS henceforth) speech act that is used as a communicative strategy in Iran. It, thus, intends to seek answer for the following question: What do Iranian speakers commonly swear by?

2. Review of the Related Literature

Swearing can be defined with regard to its two different meanings. The first type according to Simpson and Edmund (2010) occurs to confirm the correctness of ones' saying by adding a linguistic formula (which works as a formal desire to God or a divine power) to one’s saying. The other application, as noted by Strawson, (1986:7) is broader than the first one. It not only includes the act of oath taking but that of deploying taboo, bad, and profane language for disgracing others.

Though a number of studies have been done on swearing on its second sense, (e.g. Taylor, 1975; Strawson, 1986; Gray, 1993; Stein-Wilkeshuis, 2002; McEnery and Zhonghua, 2004; Rassin and Muris, 2004; Lyona and Doradob, 2008; Jay, 2009), very few research works have been conducted on its first meaning (Kiani, 1991; Abd el-Jawad, 2000; Mansouri, 2011).

As for swearing in the first sense, MC Eney (2004) considered swearing as a part of everyday language use and investigated swear words in English from demographic point of view (age, gender, and social class), and textual features (register, publication medium, and domain). Rassin and Muris (2005) also considered swearing as a considerable societal phenomenon which is forbidden under some conditions and is quite common on others. Their research findings showed that the most reason of swearing among their population was the expression of negative emotions. Besides, while swearing was associated with various other forms of aggression, it was not correlated with life satisfaction.

On the other hand, Abd el-Jawad (2000) investigated the variety of second application of swearing in Arabic. To present a general picture of CS in Jordan, he has brought a corpus of oaths exchanged by interlocutors in real-life contexts under analysis. The findings of his study made it clear that swearing has exhibited an exclusive degree of variation in form, usage and function, and that it has served a wide range of communicative functions. Additionally, it was suggested that oaths can be studied as a cultural index of a given community, since they reflected the cultural patterns, values, and themes that were dominant in Jordan. He further, maintained that they might also be studied in a strict linguistic setting, for example as moves to preface and modify speech act.

Mansouri (2011) in his Master Thesis studied swearing in Persian with a two-fold purpose; giving a typology of the lexical categories of oaths used by Kurdish speakers in Ilam province and exploring why such categories are used and the extent to which they are influenced by age, gender, education, place of living, and job. The findings of his study confirmed the existence of a strong relationship between the type and frequency of oath words and the variables of age, gender, level of education, employment, and place of living. His study, further, revealed that religious, death, and family members' oaths were the most frequent oath words, respectively, taken by the respondents to indicate and maintain trust in their interactions.

Kiani (1991) in a different attempt has brought under analysis different reasons of swearing and asserted that people swear to reach 21 targets in their mind. The major relevant functions include: 1). Emphasize a subject, 2). Prove the guiltiness and exoneration (it is seen more in swearing formula), 3). Make a speech believable, 4). Prove a claim, 5). Assure others, 6). Warn and threat others, 7). Excite and encourage others, 8). Chastise and correct ones, 9). Glorify ones, 10). Gain favor or access, 11). Negate a subject, 12). Complain and describe the adventures, and 13). Insist and urge for proving their claim.

3. The Study

Swearing by holy things and the dear ones has long been prevalent throughout the history of Iran. Pre-Islamic Iranians used to swear by wine, musical instruments, and the pulchritude of their lovers, but the Holy Quran changed the direction of swearing to substitute the religious concepts. The major intent in conducting the current research was to provide a sort of encyclopedic index of what Iranian speakers swear by.

To collect data, a wide range of people with different gender, age, social status, and

educational background in their actual performance of daily conversations and undertakings were encountered. The proper corpus was recorded during a period of three months. After eliminating the repeated swearings, it was possible to compile a corpus of data including more than 250 instances. Scrutinizing the Iranian speakers prevalent swearing in daily conversations, the corpus was classified into 15 categories. In the sections that follow examples of swearing for each category along with necessary explanation are presented. Due to the limitation of space, 75 instances have been provided in the form of sentences in the text and the rest are at Table 1 or in the Appendix.

3.1 Allah

Iranian speakers regardless of their age, gender and educational level generally swear by Almighty Allah, His great names, purity, magnificence, and created beings. They swear by both the Persian and Arabic name of God: *به خدا، والله، بالله، واللہ و بالله* all of them mean *by God*; by his attributes: *به خدای احد و واحد* *by the unique God*, *به خداوندی خدا* *by the divinity of God*, *به یکتایی خدا* *by the uniqueness of God*; by his actions: *به خدا که جان داده* *by the God who has created the soul*, *به گرداننده زمین و آسمان* *by the God who manages the earth and the sky*, *به صاحب روز و شب* *by the God who is the master of day and night*; and by witness of God: *خدا و کیله* *by the witness of God*. In praying, it can be repeatedly seen that swearing has been made by any of the 1001 Excellent Names of Allah, e.g. *Aziz, Jabber, Samad, Rahman*, etc. respectively Mean 'Almighty', 'Compeller', 'Not needy', and 'Kind'. The following examples can further clarify the issue:

1. *به خدا، سرم شلوغه.* By Allah, I'm busy.
2. *به یکتایی خدا، سر قولم می مانم.* By the uniqueness of Allah, I will do my promise.
3. *خدا شاهده، دروغ نمی گویم.* By the witness of Allah, I'm not lying.
4. *به یزدان یکرنگ، خیانت او قابل بخشش نیست.* By the achromatic God, her treason is not forgivable.
5. *به خدایی که گرداننده آسمون و زمین است، دیگه نمی تونم با این شرایط ادامه بدم.* By the God who manages the earth and the sky, I can no longer continue with this condition.

3.2 The Holly Book

Swearing by the Holly Quran is taken place in different ways, accompanying the term Quran by panegyric adjectives: *به قرآن مجید* *by the great Book*, *به قرآن کریم* *by the generous Book*; attributing Quran to the prophet Mohammad who is its bringer: *به قرآن محمد* *by the Quran of Mohammad*, *به قرآن سینه محمد* *by the Quran in the heart of Mohammad*; accompanying Quran by color adjectives: *به قرآن زرد* *by the yellow Quran*, *به قرآن جلد سبز* *by the green cover Quran*; swearing by the components of Quran: *به آیه قرآن* *by the verse of Quran*, *به سوره قرآن* *by the chapters of Quran*, *به سی جزء قرآن* *by thirty sections of Quran*; by the truth of Quran: *به حق قرآن* *by the truth of Quran*, *به حق یاسین* *by the truth of Yassin (a chapter of Quran)*; by referring to the holly Book: *به این کتاب مقدس، به این قرآن* that respectively mean *by Quran, by this Holly Book, by these words/verses of Allah*. The following true examples may better clarify the point:

6. By the verse of Quran, I studied the subject. به آیه قرآن، درس را خواندم.
7. By the truth of Quran, I painted the door. به حق قرآن، در را رنگ زدم.
8. By the great Book, I cleaned the table. به قرآن مجید، میز را تمیز کردم.
9. By the Quran of Mohammad, I will kill you. به قرآن محمد، می کشمت.
10. By the truth of Yassin, I could not study because my mother was ill.

به حق یاسین، چون مادرم مریض بود نتوانستم درس بخونم.

3.3 The Prophets

Following the belief for the existence of 124000 prophets, Iranians mostly swear by the last prophet, Mohammad, in different forms: به همان پیامبری که به روح رسول الله، به جان پیامبر، به محمد به رسول الله respectively mean: by the dignity of the Prophet you have visited, by the life of the Prophet, by the soul of the Messenger of Allah, by the Prophet, by the Mohammad, by the Messenger of Allah. Whenever the general term prophet is used, Shia presupposes it as the Prophet Mohammad.

In a few cases, it has been observed that Muslims swear by another prophet 'David' as in: به داوود سپید سوار by the David who was rode on the white horse, به داوود زمان دار by the David who is time owner. The following examples also deserve notice:

11. By the majesty Mohammad, I can't do what you say.

به حضرت محمد، نمی توانم آنچه شما می گوئید را انجام دهم.

12. By the Davied who is time owner, I shall go. به داوود زمان دار، باید بروم.

13. By the dignity of the prophet you have visited, I promise to help you.

به همون پیغمبری که زیارت کردی، قول میدم به تو کمک کنم.

14. By the soul of the Messenger of Allah, I love your son as much as mine.

به روح رسول الله، پسر تو را مثل پسر خودم دوست دارم.

15. By the life of Prophet, all of us are aware of your good faith.

به جان پیامبر، همه ما از نیت خوب شما باخبریم.

3.4 Imams

Although Iranian speakers believe in all of the 12 Imams, they mostly swear by few of them like Imam Ali, Hassan, Hossein, Sajad, Reza, Mousa Alkazim, and Mahdi. Some of these tendencies has a root in people's belief; for instance, imam Ali has been attended to since he is the first and the most justice, Imam Hossein is the Iranian's bridegroom and was martyred oppressively, Imam Reza is the most alone one, and Mahdi is the last one anticipated to be the starter of a new monotheism era.

Also the Imams' and prophets' grandchildren, Imamzadehes, like Shahcheragh, Shah Ahmad,

Ali Saleh, Shahzadeh Ahmad and others are saint enough to swear by, mostly by the people living next to their shines. In addition, Imam Hossein's brother, Abolfazl, is one of the main figures sworn by in Iran. People widely believe in him because of his dignity, courage, and faith. Examples 16 to 20 also explain more:

16. By Imam Reza, I don't do so. به امام رضا، من این کارو نمی کنم.

17. By Imamzadeh Saleh, I will go. به امامزاده صالح، من می روم.

18. By the eighth Imam (Reza), what is between you and Amir is only a misunderstanding. به امام هشتم، آنچه بین شما و امیر اتفاق افتاده فقط يك سوء تفاهمه..

19. By Abolfazl, I will defend my fatherland till my death time.

به ابوالفضل، تا لحظه مرگم از وطنم دفاع می کنم.

20. By the thirsty lips of Hossein, I never accept your injustice.

به لبان تشنه امام حسین، بی عدالتی شما را قبول ندارم.

3.5 The Chaste Women

Like the Imams and Prophets, there are several chaste women who are considered saint enough to swear by; most of whom are the sisters, mother, daughter, or wife of Imams and Prophets. Like: حضرت فاطمه her majesty Fatemeh (the daughter of Prophet Mohammad, the wife of Imam Ali, and the mother of Imams Hassan, Hossein), her majesty Zeinab حضرت زینب her majesty Massomeh, حضرت معصومه , زینب her majesty Khadijeh(the wife of Prophet Mohammad), حضرت رقیه her majesty Roghayyeh (the daughter of Imam Hossein), حضرت مریم her majesty Maryam (Saint Mary, the mother of the Prophet of Christianity 'Jesus'), and ام البنین the Ommolbanin(the mother of Imamzadeh Abolfazl). The following examples will adequately convey the matter.

21. By her majesty Zeinab, you are lying. به حضرت زینب، دروغ می گویی.

22. By her majesty Ommolbanin, I won't forgive you. به ام البنین نمی بخشمت.

23. By her majesty Zahra, I promise to do my best.

به حضرت زهرا، قول می دهم نهایت تلاشم را بکنم.

24. By her Majesty Maryam, Ali is the brother of Mahdi.

به حضرت مریم، علی برادر مهدی است.

25. By her majesty Khadijeh, Sara could not remember the gist of Mari's saying.

به حضرت خدیجه، سارا نتوانست موضوع اصلی گفته مریم را به یاد آورد.

3.6 Important People

There are always the enormous figures whose existence have had an influence upon the politic, economy, literature, or science, of their homeland, say, Imam Khomeini (the late leader of Islamic Republic of Iran), leader Khameneie, Sayed Ahmadi, and Sayed Hassan

Sayed who are descendants of holy Imams are sworn by frequently. The following examples may illustrate the point.

26. By the pure soul of Khomeini, I haven't broken the glass.

به روح پاک خمینی، من لیوان را نشکستم.

27. By the majesty Khameneie, I will tell you the truth.

به حضرت خامنه ای حقیقت را بهت می گم.

28. By the great grandfather of Sayed Hassan Sayed, I made it by myself.

به جد سید حسن سید ، من خودم تنهایی اونو ساختم.

29. By the great grandfather of Sayed Ahmadi, Farhad was not at home.

به جد سید احمدی، فرهاد خانه نبود.

30. By Imam Khomeini the Great, Amir did not give Reza the birthday gift.

به خمینی کبیر، امیر به رضا هدیه تولد نداد.

3.7 Family Members

It was observed that the love, feeling, affection, and sincerity among the family members make the individuals to swear by the life, death, head, and honor of each other even when the sworn person is absent or departed. Swearing by the life of children is very common as well. Iranian children swear also by the life of their grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, and uncles. The following examples can be considered for more clarification:

31. By the soul of my grandfather, I tell the truth. به روح بابا بزرگم، راست می گویم.

32. By the life of my mother, I am very tired. به جون مامانم، خیلی خسته ام.

33. By the youth of my brother who is in trip, I didn't annoy her.

به جوانی داداشم که در سفره، من اذیتش نکردم.

34. By the death of my son, Akbar has seen Ahmad's brother in the party.

به مرگ پسر من، اکبر برادر احمد را در مهمانی دیده است.

35. Daddy! By the life of my uncle, I did not break it. بابا! به جان عموم، من نشکستمش.

3.8 Parts or Attributes of the Body

In our search for the general index of swearing, we noticed that parts of body like neck, mustache, beard, hair, and eyes are the objects of so many swearing since they are considered as the symbol of manhood, greatness, chastity, etc, like: به تار سیبیل by your hair قسم، by a hair of your moustache, به سرت قسم، by your head. In addition, since mother is the symbol of purity, generosity, and kindness, her hair, milk, and pure skirt are the objects of swearing, like: به گیسوی مادرم: besides, in the memory of the soldiers who endangered their life to save their nation, there are the reminiscence of their

comrades in arms so that in their daily conversations soldiers swear by the blood of their comrades e.g. به خون همرزمانم by the blood of my comrades in arms, or به خون هر چه شهیده by the blood of every martyr. The following examples elucidate the issue:

36. By your hair, I will bring together your money. به مویت قسم پول را جور می کنم.

37. By the milk of my mother, it was not my mistake. به شیر مادرم، من مقصر نبودم.

38. By the soul of my comrades in arms, I will defend Islam in my long life.

به خون همرزمانم، تمام طول عمرم از اسلام دفاع می کنم.

39. Sadaf! By your eyes, I will take you to park. صدف! به چشمتا قسم، می برمت پارک.

400. Father! By your white beard, I will find the thief.

بابا! به ریش سفیدت قسم، دزد را پیدا می کنم.

3.9 Holy Places

Due to religious orientation, Persian speakers occasionally swear by holy places like the house of God, mosques, and the holy shrine of the Prophet and Imams. These sacred places are always the center of attention for people's swearing, though most of them are not in their hometown. For instance, they say: به شاه چراغ by the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza's brother, به همان کعبه که بوسیدم by the Ka'abe that I kissed, به زمین قیامت by the land of Resurrection. In fact this practice can extend to any mosque or any other place of religious significance.

Consider the given examples below:

41. By the Ka'abe, I tell the truth. به کعبه قسم، من راستشو می گویم.

42. By the land of Resurrection, he is not guilty. به زمین قیامت قسم، او بی گناه است.

43. By the plain of Karbala, I shall see him before my trip.

به دشت کربلا، من باید قبل از سفرم او را ببینم.

44. By the house of God, all of the sixth employees have been retired.

به خانه خدا، همه شش کارمند بازنشست شده اند.

45. By the six-angle tomb of Hossein, we spoke about our project.

به قبر شش گوشه امام حسین، ما در مورد طرحمان حرف زدیم.

3.10 Holy Times

In Muslims yearly calendar, there are sanctity times to swear by. People swear by the new year, the month of Ramazan, Sha'aban, Moharram, the days of Prophet's or Imams' birthdays, the holy days of Fetr, Qorban, the death day, the Resurrection day, and the hours` of sunrise, sunset, Azan, (the time of calling for praying), etc. Follow the examples for more instances:

46. By this time of calling for praying, I have no information about it.

به این وقت اذان از ماجرا خبر ندارم.

47. By this sunset of Morteza Ali, let me alone. تو را به این غروب مرتضی علی، تنهام بذار.

48. By this Friday night, I saw her in my dream with shiny face.

به این شب جمعه، او را با صورت نورانی در خواب دیدم.

49. By this dark night, you will be regretted. به این شب تار، پشیمان می شوی.

50. By this yellow sunset, I will defeat the problems.

به این غروب زرد، من از عهده مشکلات بر می آیم.

3.11 All Allah's Creatures and Creation

In His holy book Quran, God has sworn by almost any creature created by Him, say, به تین, by the fig, به زیتون, by olive, به انسان, by the mankind, حوا و آدم, by Adam and Eve, به روح انسان, by the undulating sea, به دریای موج, by the rain, به باران, by the cloud, به ابر, by the soul of mankind, به باد, by the wind, به قلم, by the pen, به خلقت کائنات, etc. Though people here access to a wide range of Quranic swears, they only use a limited range of them like: by the earth in which we are to be buried, به این خورشید, by this shinny sun. Follow the examples:

51. By the bright sun, I won't speak with you hereafter.

به خورشید تابناک، از این به بعد باهات حرف نمی زنم.

52. By the heavily clouded sky, we had not high income from our last year's product.

به این آسمان تنگ ابری، از محصول پارسال درآمد زیادی عاید ما نشد.

53. By the blue sky, domestic fowls were at rain, I made a fowl-run for them.

به آسمان آبی قسم، مرغ و خروس ها در باران بودند، من یک مرغدانی برای آنها ساختم.

54. By the yellowness of the sunset, we bought this car twice as much as its usual price.

به زردی غروب، ما ماشین را دو برابر قیمت عادی خریدیم.

55. By this rain, the human kind is always ungrateful to his God.

به این باران قسم، انسان همیشه نسبت به پروردگارش ناسپاس است.

3.12 Foods and Meals

People use articles of food as swear words especially when they gather around a dining table for a meal and discussing a matter. The salt, liquids, bread, and votives can be put in this category. The following examples help a better understanding:

56. By this salt, I will remain faithful to you. به حق این نمک، من به شما وفادار خواهم ماند.

57. By the Imam Hosseins' juice, I promise to improve my behavior.

به شربت امام حسین، قول میدم رفتارم را عوض کنم.

58. By the truth of this votive food, I agree with this trade.

به حق این نذری، من با این معامله موافقم.

59. By the truth of this blessing, we waited two hours for the train.

به حق این برکت، ما دو ساعت منتظر قطار بودیم.

60. By these seeds of pomegranate, Akbar went to the trip.

به این دانه های انار قسم، اکبر به سفر رفت.

3.13 Moral Values

In every culture there are some moral and respectable values that people admire. Such concepts are always objects of swearing among people in Iran. Swearing can take place just by these values themselves: به قول درست by the right promise; by attributing these values to the first person, one of his relatives, one important person, or Imams,....: به شرافتم by my gentility, به شرافت پدرم by my father's gentility, به شرافت امام رضا by Imam Reza's gentility; or by attributing these values to the second person: به صداقتت by your honesty. The common swears of this category have been shown in examples that follow:

61. By the dignity of brotherhood, I will help you as far as I can.

به جان برادری، تا آنجایی که امکان داشته باشد به تو کمک خواهم کرد.

62. By the essence of friendship, I will remain faithful to you to eternity.

به رفاقت قسم، تا ابد به تو وفادار خواهم بود.

63. By your dearness, I invoke your health and success.

به عزیزیت قسم، من سلامتی و موفقیتت را آرزو مندم.

64. By my generosity, I will protect you against his threats.

به مردانگی ام قسم، من از شما در مقابل او حمایت می کنم.

65. By our truthfulness, Ali was saved from a certain death.

به صداقتمان قسم، علی از مرگ حتمی نجات یافت.

3.14 Sanctities

In addition to moral values which are abstract ideals in the mind of the swearers, the sanctities are concrete or holy objects swearing by which is common. The common formulas of them are: به تمام مقدسات عالم by *all of the world sanctities*, به قبر برادرم by *the tomb of my brother*, به سکه درست by *the accurate coin*. The examples below are notable for this category.

66. By my religion, no one can answer the questions.

به دینم، هیچکس نمی تواند به سوالات پاسخ دهد.

67. By the dead in the grave, I have no idea. به خفتگان خاک، من هیچ نظری ندارم.

68. By the Azan (the time of calling for praying) of Mohammad, I did not disappoint Sara.

به اذان محمد، من سارا را ناامید نکرده ام .

69. By the martyr's tomb, everything has frozen. همه چیز یخ بسته .

70. By my fortune, this plan cannot meet our needs.

به بختم، این نقشه نمی تواند نیازهای ما را برآورده کند.

3.15 Conditional Swearing

This category of swearing is often performed when a person wants to show his serious intention. In this category, the swearer wishes a condition to take place if s/he does not do what s/he promises. For example one says:...خدا کورم کنه اگه... *the God makes me blind if...*, ...عزیزم را کفن کنی اگه... *you enshroud my darling if I* More examples are followed for clarifying the issue.

71. The Quran breaks my back, if I deceive you. قرآن به کمرم بزنه اگه گولت بزnm.

72. I die, if I believe the rumors about you. این تن بمیره اگه شایعه های در مورد تو را باور کنم.

73. You enshroud my darling, if I let Ahmad to come with you.

عزیزم را کفن کنی اگر بذارم احمد با شما بیاد.

74. The God makes me blind, if I sign the contract. خدا کورم کنه اگه قرارداد را امضا کنم.

75. This body dies, if I do not help you. این تن بمیره اگه کمکت نکنم.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study especial attention has been paid to present a relatively comprehensive taxonomy of swearing speech act by Persian speakers in Iran. Developing 15 broad categories, 7 narrower subcategories, and more than 250 natural instances of swear words, we can strongly claim for the richness of Persian language regarding this speech act. Put it in nutshell, the above mentioned categories or classes of what Persian speakers swear by are schematically presented in Table 1 bellow.

Table 1. A schematic preview of Iranians' swearings

God	By God, by the unique God, by the divinity of God, by the uniqueness of God, by the God who has created the soul ، by the God who manages the earth and the sky ،by the God who is the master of day and night, by the witness of God.
Quran	By the great book, by the generous book, by the Quran of Mohammad, by the Quran in the breast of Mohammad, by the yellow Quran, by the green cover Quran, by the verse of Quran, by the chapters of Quran, by thirty sections of Quran, by the truthness of Quran, by the truthness of Yassin (a chapter of Quran), by Quran, by this Holly Book, by these words/verses of Allah.

Prophets	By the dignity of the Prophet you have visited, by the life of the prophet, by the soul of the messenger of Allah, by the prophet, by Mohammad, by the messenger of Allah, By the David who is time owner.
Imams and Innocents	By Ali, Hassan, Hossein, Sajad, Mousa Alkazim, Reza, and Mahdi. Shahcheragh, Shah Ahmad, Ali-Saleh, Shahzadeh Ahmad, Abolfazl.
Chaste women	By her majesty Fatemeh, her majesty Khadijeh, her majesty Roghayyeh , her majesty Maryam, her majesty Massoomeh, her majesty Zeinab, and the Ommolbanin.
Important people	By Imam Khomeini the Great, the majesty Khameneie, the great grandfather of Sayed Hassan Sayed, and the great grandfather of sayed Ahmadi.
Family members	By the soul of my grandfather, by the life of my mother, By the youth of my brother.
Parts of the body	By your hair, by the hair of your moustache, by your head ,by the tress of my mother, by the blood of my comrades in arms, by the blood of every martyr, by the milk of my mother, by your eyes.
Holy places	By the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza's brother, by the Ka'abe, by the land of Resurrection.
Holy times	By the new year, the month of Ramazan, the month of Sha'aban, the month of Moharram, the days of Prophet's or Imams' birthdays, the holy days of Fetr, Qorban, the death day, the resurrection day, the hours` of sunrise, sunset, Azan or the time of Calling for praying.
Creatures	By the fig, by olive, by the mankind, by the undulating sea, by this heavily clouded sky, by the earth in which we are to be buried, by this shinny sun, by this rain.
Foods and meals	By this salt, by Imam Hosseins' juice, by the truthness of this votive food, by the fruits of paradise, by the countless seeds, by the salt.
Moral values	By the right promise, by my gentility, by my father's gentility, by Imam Reza's gentility, by your honesty, by the power of brotherhood, by the essence of friendship, by your dearness.
Sanctities	By all of the world sanctities, by the tomb of my brother, by the accurate coin, by my religion, by the dead in the dust.
Conditional swearing	The God make me blind, if..., you enshroud my darling, if , the Quran breaks my back, if...., I die, if.....

However, With respect to the dynamic characteristic of all languages in general and Persian language in particular swear words have taken different forms and the scope of their richness may changes. Another important point which is worth mentioning is the great degree of similarities between the taxonomies provided by Abd el Jawad (2000) in Jordan, Mansury (2011) among Iranian Kurdish speakers, and the types of swearing presented here. Though these studies report research findings from Arabic, Kurdish, and Persian languages

respectively, their similar religious environment may account for the similarity observed. Therefore, it is right to claim that swearing is originally and mostly religious in nature. From the presented taxonomy it is clear that after religious swearing which form a significant part of swear words, swearing by holy times, foods and meals, parts of body, and family members are more frequent respectively.

It deserves notice that swearing as a linguistic performance has a distinctive role in introducing the culture of the swearers by referring to the moral values, sanctities, religion, family relations, and other attributes in the form of swear. Besides, the cultural and lingual relations of the speakers in different countries may expand the lexicon of the target language and brings about a type of loan words. The presence of Arabic loan words among Iranian swear words (*بِالله* و *بِالله* و *بِالله*, *بِالله*, *بِالله*, all of them mean by God, *به غروب الغاربيين* by the sunset of those who have been departed from their hometown, *به غريب الغربا* by the most alone one (Imam Reza) , *به سيدالشهدا* by the master of martyrs(Imam Hossein), *به مهدي موعود*, by the promised Mahdi, *به صاحب الزمان* by the owner of time(Imam Mahdi)) show the footprints of cultural and lingual relations of one or both sides of an interaction.

Moreover, it should be noted that this study has only addressed the question of what do Iranian speakers commonly swear by, while, there is still a vast number of questions left unanswered. They can be the subjects of further research. Additionally, further research seems necessary to examine if oath taking phenomenon is influenced by the context of the communication. Similarly, exploration of whether age, gender, educational status, social class, personality, and religious orientation affect the application of swear words is another avenue for research. Still, investigation of different functions and purposes laid behind the application of swear words in Persian is a new line of research waiting for scholarly studies.

Reference

- Abdel-Jawad, H, R. S. (2000). A Linguistic and Sociopragmatic and Cultural Study of Swearing in Arabic. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 13(2), 217-240. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07908310008666600>
- Gray, P. (1993) Oaths and language speech. *Language & Communication*, 13(4), 311-325.
- Jay, T. (2009). Do offensive words harm people? *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 15(2), 81-101. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0015646>
- Kiani. H. (1992). *Oath in Persian language and literature*. Tehran University publication: Tehran.
- Lyona, D. T., & Doradob J. S. (2008). Truth induction in young maltreated children: The effects of oath-taking and reassurance on true and false disclosures. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32, 738–748. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016>
- Mansoury, A. (2011). *The Relationship between Language and Social Capital in Ilam Kurdish: A Sociopragmatic Approach*. Unpublished Master Thesis. Ilam University, Iran.
- McEnery, A., & Zhonghua, X. (2004). swearing in modern British English: the case of fuck

in the BNC. *Language & Literature*, 13(3), 235–268.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0963947004044873>

Rassin, E. & Muris, P. (2004). Why do women swear? An exploration of reasons for and perceived efficacy of swearing in Dutch female students. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 38, 166. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016>

Simpson, J., Edmund, W. (2010). *The Oxford English Dictionary*. (2 Ed, 20). New York: Oxford University Press.

Stein-Wilkeshuis, M. (2002) Scandinavians swearing oaths in tenth-century Russia: Pagans and Christians. *Journal of Medieval History*, 28, 155–168. PII: S 0 3 0 4 - 181(02)00003-9.

Strawson, G. (1986) *Freedom and Belief*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Taylor, B.A. (1975). Towards a structural and lexical analysis of ‘Swearing’ and the language of abuse in Australian English. *Linguistics*, 13, 17–43. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/10.1515/>

Appendix

<p>به خدا، والله، والله و بالله، به حق خدا، به حق حق ، به خدای احد و واحد، به جلال حق، به یکتایی خدا، به خداوندی خدا، به خدای بالای سر، به خدای بیبا و شنوا، به خدایی که جان داده، خدا وکیل، خدا شاهده، خدا به سر شاهده، به صاحب روز و شب، به گرداننده زمین و آسمان، به صاحب چرخ آبی، به یزدان یک رنگ، به بزرگوار، به سید کائنات، به خدای لایتناهی، به خدای لایزال، به خدایی که میپرستی، به هر کی که می پرستی، به هر دینی که می پرستی، والله علی، به خدای حبیب نجار، به اسامی الهی (عزیز، جبار، صمد، رحمان، کریم،...).</p>	خدا		
<p>به حضرت محمد ، به نور محمد، به روح رسول الله، به رسول الله ، به پیر و به پیغمبر، به همون پیغمبری که زیارت کردی، به جان پیامبر، به داوود کبک سوار، به داوود زمان دار.</p>	پیامبر(ص)		
<p>به علی، به امیر المومنین، به مولی علی، به جان مولا، به شاه نجف، به اولاد علی ، به عدالت علی، به شرافت علی، به فرق شکافته علی، به شاه مردان علی، به امیر عرب، به شاه خیبر علی، به علی مرتضی، به شمشیر دو لب علی، به شیر عرب، به پسر علی، به خانه علی، به عزت علی، به شیر خدا، به یکه سوار نجف، به ذوالفقار علی، به باطن علی ، به منظر سبز حضرت علی.</p>	امام علی		
<p>به جگر پاره پاره حسن.</p>	امام حسن		
<p>به گلوی بریده امام حسین، به شربت امام حسین، به سر بریده امام حسین، به سیدالشهدا، به شهید کربلا، به خون به ناحق ریخته امام حسین، به لب تشنه امام حسین، به تربت پاک امام حسین، به شاه مظلومان، به آبروی امام حسین.</p>	امام حسین	امامان	مذهبی
<p>به تن تبار امام سجاد، به بیمار کربلا.</p>	امام سجاد		
<p>به امام هشتم، به سلطان خراسان، به ضامن آهو، به غریب الغربا، به ناله های غریبانه امام رضا.</p>	امام رضا		

	امام زمان	به حضرت مهدی، به امام زمان، به صاحب الزمان، به مهدی موعود.
پاکدامن زنان		به بی بی فاطمه زهرا، به زهرای اطهر، به سوز دل فاطمه زهرا، به عصمت فاطمه زهرا، به پهلوی شکسته فاطمه زهرا، به دامن پاک فاطمه زهرا، به حضرت مریم، به حضرت زینب، به حضرت خدیجه، به حضرت معصومه، به ام البنین.
امامزادگان		حضرت عباس ← به حضرت عباس، به عباس علمدار، به ابوالفضل عباس، به قمر بنی هاشم، به دست بریده ابوالفضل، به تیغ برنده حضرت عباس. به شاه چراغ، به شاهزاده محمد، به پیر محمد، به شاه احمد، به علی صالح، به جابرین انصار، به پیر کتک، به حاجی بختیار، به پیر حسین، به شیخ الیاس، به سید عبدالله، به حاجی وتیار، به امام قاسم، به عباس شیروان.
قرآن		به قرآن مجید، به قرآن کریم، به قرآن محمد، به قرآن سینه محمد، به آیه قرآن، به کلام خدا، به سوره سوره قرآن، به حق یاسین، به حق قرآن، به قرآن جلد زرده، به قرآن جلد سبزه.
قسمهای موجود در قرآن		به تین، به زیتون، به انس، به جن، به آدم، به حوا، به پیامبران، به ماه، به خورشید، به ستارگان، به تبر، به باد، به باران، به سپیده دم، به خلقت بشر، به روز قیامت، به اسماء الهی، به زمین، به آسمان، به سختی جان کندن، به روح انسان، به قلم، به جان پیامبر، به دریای موج، به کشتی، به عصر، به روز و به شب، به اسبان دونده مجاهدان، به کوه طور، به بیت المعمور، به مکه، به مستی کفار، به کوری و گمراهی کفار، به شفع و به وتر.
مکان		به مکه ای که مشرف شدم، به شش گوشه قبر امام حسین، به دشت کربلا، به قتلگاه حسین، به خانه خدا، به کعبه، به زمین قیامت.
زمان		به این سحر، به این روشنایی، به گلبانگ شفق، به سوای صالحان، به سفته صالحان، به مغرب حسن و حسین، به سو چراغ، به وقت اذان، به زردی غروب، به آفتاب زرین، به غروب مرتضی علی، به غروب الغاریین، به شب جمعه، به وقت عزیز، به شب سیاه، به تاریکی شب، به این ماه (محرم، شعبان، رمضان)، به این سال و ماه نو، به این عید (قربان، فطر، نوروز، غدیر)، به روز مرگ، به روز قیامت.
اجزای بدن		به موت قسم، به جفت سیبیلات، به تار سیبیل، به سر مبارک، به سرت، به چشمت، به چشم راستم، به گردنم، به ریشم، به گیس مادرم، به شیر مادرم، به جون هر دو تامون، به روح پدربزرگم، به مرگ بچه ام، به مرگ خودم، به خون همهرانم، به خون عزیزانم، به خون هر چه شهیده.
غذا و خوراکی		به نان، به نان حلال، به نان و نمک، به نمک، به قند، شکر، به نمک، به آب گوار، به دانه انار، به دانه های بی شمار، به حق این سفره، به حق این برکت، به برکت مولی، به شربت امام حسین، به شربت قاسم، به دانه قل هوالله، به میوه بهشت، به حق این نذری امام ...
ارزشها		به قول درست، به شرافتم، به مردانگیم، به صداقت، به رفاقت، به عزیزیت، به گیس سفیدت، به ریش سفیدت، به جان برادری، به جوانی (ام، ات)، به آبروی امامان.
مقدسات		به دینم، به بختم، به تمام مقدسات عالم، به دعای مومنان، به زمین قیامت، به دیوان عدالت، به گنبد زرد امامان و امامزادگان، به خاک دامن پاک دامنان، به اذان محمد، به همان حجری که بوسیدم، به خاک پدربزرگم، به قبر برادرم، به کفن مادربزرگم، به سکه راست، به قبر هر چه عزیزه، به خفتگان خاک، به روح عزیزم، به روح مرده ام، به هر چه امامه، به هر چه شهیده.

به آسمان تنگ ابری، به آسمان آبی، به همین خورشید، به زردی خورشید، به باران، به باران رحمت، به همین زمین که در آن خاک میشویم.	مخلوقات
به جان یکدانه فرزندم، به جان تنها پسر، به جان بابام، به جان مامانم، به جان بچه ام، به جان برادرم، به جان خودم، به جان عزیزترین کسم، به جان عزیزم (جان کسی دیگر که برایم عزیز است)، به جان برادرم که در سفره، به جان مامان بزرگ، به جان بابابزرگ، به جان دایی، به جان عمو،...	خانواده
این تن بمیره، این تن را کفن کنی آگه...، خدا کورم کنه آگه...، عزیزم را کفن کنی آگه...، قرآن به کمرم بزنه آگه...، قرآن را شسته ام اگر دروغ بگویم.	قسمهای شرطی
به امام خمینی، به جد خمینی، به روح خمینی، به خمینی کبیر، به حضرت خامنه ای، به جد سید حسن سید، به جد سید احمدی.	اشخاص مهم