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**SENSITIVE AREAS OF LANGUAGE:
TABOOS AND EUPHEMIZATION OF THE CONCEPT OF “WOMAN”
IN ENGLISH, RUSSIAN AND KAZAKH LINGUISTIC CULTURES**

Abstract. The article explores the linguistic mechanisms of tabooing and euphemization associated with the concept of “woman” in Kazakh, Russian, and English. The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that gender-marked vocabulary intersects with cultural prohibitions, etiquette norms, and cognitive schemas that influence the choice of speech strategies. Thus, studying the ways in which women’s physiological, age-related, and social realities are named and replaced, allows us to clarify the interaction between language, culture and thought. The purpose of the study is to identify the semantic, cognitive and pragmatic parameters of euphemistic and tabooed units in a comparative aspect. The work includes the following areas: analysis of lexico-semantic models of euphemization, reconstruction of frames and cultural scenarios, comparison of literary and corpus material, identification of universal and specific strategies in three linguistic cultures. The novelty of the research is determined by the combination of cognitive-framework analysis with corpus and discourse methodologies, as well as a focus on women’s issues as a sensitive linguistic and cultural area. The material includes literary texts J. Steinbeck’s “Of Mice and Men”, M. Bulgakov’s “The Master and Margarita” (“Мастер и Маргарита”), and A. Nurpeissov’s “Blood and Sweat” (“Қан мен тер”), corpus resources (BNC, COCA, NCRL, National Corpus of the Kazakh language). It has been established that English predominantly uses metaphorization and periphrases (for example, *expecting, those days*), while Kazakh demonstrates socio-role and etiquette strategies (e.g. *аяғы ауыр, ұятты сөз*). In both languages, euphemization is particularly active in the domains of physiology, age, and social roles. The results obtained confirm both the universality of the physiological content delineation and the cultural specificity of the methods of speech euphemization. The practical significance is related to the possibility of using data in intercultural communication, teaching foreign languages, lexicography, translation studies, and NLP tasks for processing sensitive vocabulary.

Keywords: taboo; euphemization; semantic domains; literary discourse; euphemistic strategies.**For citation:** Bauyrzhan, N., Burankulova, E. A Sensitive Areas of Language: Taboos and Euphemization of the Concept of “Woman” in English, Russian and Kazakh Linguistic Cultures. *Tiltany*, 2026. No.2 (102). Pp. 265-278.DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55491/2411-6076-2026-2-265-278>**Нұрханым Бауыржанқызы Бауыржан^{1*}, Элмира Темирбаевна Буранкулова²**^{1*}автор-корреспондент, докторант,

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**ТІЛДІҢ СЕЗІМТАЛ ТҮСТАРЫ:
АҒЫЛШЫН, ОРЫС ЖӘНЕ ҚАЗАҚ ТІЛ МӘДЕНИЕТІНДЕГІ
«ӘЙЕЛ» КОНЦЕПТІСІНЕ ҚАТЫСТЫ ТҢЫЙЫМДАР МЕН ЭВФЕМИЗМДЕР**

Аңдатпа. Мақала қазақ, орыс және ағылшын тілдеріндегі «әйел» концептісімен байланысты тыйым сөздер мен эвфемизмдердің лингвистикалық тетіктерін зерттеуге арналған. Тақырыптың өзектілігі гендерлік таңбаланған лексиканың сөйлеу стратегияларын таңдауға әсер ететін мәдени тыйымдардың, этикет нормаларының және когнитивтік схемалардың бір-бірімен байланыстылығында. Осылайша, әйелдердің физиологиялық, жас және әлеуметтік реалийлерін атау және ауыстыру әдістерін зерттеу тілдің, мәдениеттің және ойлаудың өзара әрекеттесуін нақтылауға мүмкіндік береді. Зерттеудің мақсаты – салыстырмалы аспектіде эвфемистік және тыйым салынған бірліктердің семантикалық, когнитивтік және прагматикалық параметрлерін анықтау. Жұмыс келесі бағыттарды қамтиды: эвфемизацияның лексика-семантикалық модельдерін талдау, фреймдер мен мәдени сценарийлерді қайта құру, көркем әдебиет пен корпустық материалдарды салыстыру, үш лингвомәдениетте әмбебап және нақты стратегияларды бөліп көрсету. Ғылыми жаңалық когнитивтік-фреймдік талдаудың корпустық және дискурсивті

әдіснамаға негізделіп, әйелдер тақырыбын сезімтал лингвомәдени аймақ ретінде тануынан көрінеді. Материалға көркем мәтіндер (Дж. Стейнбек «Of Mice and Men», М. Булгаков «Мастер и Маргарита», Ә. Нұрпейісов «Қан мен тер» шығармалары), корпусдық ресурстар (BNC, COCA, НКРЯ, Қазақ тілінің ұлттық корпусы) және сөздіктер кіреді. Ағылшын тілі негізінен метафоризация мен перифразаларды (мысалы, *expecting, those days*) пайдаланады, ал қазақ тілі әлеуметтік-рөлдік және этикеттік стратегияларды (мысалы, *аяғы ауыр, ұятты сөз*) көрсетеді. Екі тілде де эвфемизация, әсіресе физиология, жас және әлеуметтік рөл домендерінде белсенді. Алынған нәтижелер физиологиялық мазмұнды жұмсартудың әмбебаптығын да, сөйлеуді бүркемелеу әдістерінің мәдени ерекшелігін де растайды. Зерттеудің практикалық маңызы деректерді мәдениетаралық коммуникацияда, шет тілдерді оқытуда, лексикографияда, аудармада және сезімтал лексиканы өңдеу бойынша NLP тапсырмаларында қолдану мүмкіндігімен байланысты.

Тірек сөздер: тыйым салу; эвфемизация; семантикалық домендер; әдеби дискурс; эвфемистік стратегиялар.

Сілтеме жасау үшін: Бауыржан Н.Б., Буранкулова Э.Т. Тілдің сезімтал тұстары: ағылшын, орыс және қазақ тіл мәдениетіндегі «әйел» концептісіне қатысты тыйымдар мен эвфемизмдер. *TiltanyM*, 2026. №2 (102). 265-278-бб. (ағыл. тілінде)

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ДЕЛИКАТНЫЕ ОТТЕНКИ ЯЗЫКА:

ТАБУИРОВАНИЕ И ЭВФЕМИЗАЦИЯ КОНЦЕПТА «ЖЕНЩИНА» В АНГЛИЙСКОЙ, РУССКОЙ И КАЗАХСКОЙ ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРАХ

Аннотация. Статья посвящена изучению лингвистических механизмов табуированных слов и эвфемизации, связанных с понятием «женщина», в казахском, русском и английском языках. Актуальность темы заключается во взаимосвязи культурных табу, норм этикета и когнитивных схем, влияющих на выбор речевых стратегий гендерно-маркированной лексики. Таким образом, изучение методов наименования и замены физиологических, возрастных и социальных реалий женщин позволяет прояснить взаимодействие языка, культуры и мышления. Цель исследования – определение семантических, когнитивных и прагматических параметров эвфемистических и табуированных единиц в сравнительном аспекте. Работа включает следующие направления: анализ лексико-семантических моделей эвфемизации, реконструкция фреймов и культурных сценариев, сравнение художественных и корпусных материалов, выделение универсальных и специфических стратегий в трех лингвокультурах. Научная новизна определяется сочетанием когнитивно-фреймового анализа с корпусной и дискурсивной методологией, а также акцентом на теме женщин как чувствительной лингвокультурной области. Материал включает литературные тексты (Д. Стейнбек «Of Mice and Men», М. Булгаков «Мастер и Маргарита», А. Нурпеисов «Кровь и пот»), корпусные ресурсы (BNC, COCA, НКРЯ, НККЯ) и лексические источники. В английском языке преимущественно используются метафоры и перефразирования (например, *expecting, those days*), в то время как в казахском языке проявляются социально-ролевые и этикетные стратегии (например, *аяғы ауыр, ұятты сөз*). В обоих языках эвфемизация особенно активна в областях физиологии, возраста и социальной роли. Полученные результаты подтверждают как универсальность смягчения физиологического содержания, так и культурную специфику методов обхода речи. Практическое значение связано с возможностью использования данных в межкультурной коммуникации, преподавании иностранных языков, лексикографии, переводе и задачах NLP для обработки деликатной лексики.

Ключевые слова: табу; эвфемизация; семантические домены; литературный дискурс; эвфемистические стратегии.

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Introduction

Linguistic taboos and euphemisms are not only lexical phenomena, but also socio-cultural mechanisms through which linguistic communities manage sensitive topics in speech. In this context, language acts as a tool not only for transmitting information, but also for reflecting norms, values and

prohibitions specific to a particular culture. We can see it in the gender-labeled vocabulary. The term “woman” and related phenomena to it (body, role identity, social functions) is traditionally full of taboo forms and euphemistic substitutions, which shows a deep connection between linguistic strategies and cultural patterns of behavior (Ismailova, 2023).

Existing English literature reveals the semantic changes of euphemisms and their pragmatic functions are studied within the dynamics of social norms and communicative practices. Thus, an analysis of the semantic changes of English euphemisms demonstrates that they are used not only to soften strong expressions but also to reflect changing social expectations in public speech. Taboo vocabulary, particularly in the area of female anatomy, reflects cultural filters and represents the ways in which a language community avoids directly naming sensitive objects (Guzzetti, 2023). Moreover, euphemisms emerge as a response to the desire to avoid insults, maintain social propriety or conform to normative expectations, which is evident in both media texts and advertising communications (Monakhova et al., 2023).

In studies focused on Slavic and Turkic languages, there is an interest in the cultural and semantic description of women’s images through stable phraseological, paremiological and metaphorical structures. Comparative works on Russian-English and Karakalpak-English materials record differences in the ways of conceptualization and evaluative semantics of nominations related to culturally conditioned ideas about the role and behavior of women. These studies confirm that language mitigation strategies are closely linked to cultural codes, regional attitudes, and historical patterns of social interaction.

Nevertheless, an analysis of current research indicates several significant limitations. Most of the works focus on a particular linguistic culture without deep cross-cultural comparison. Next is descriptive and lexicographic approaches prevail over methods that could combine corpus analysis, cultural semantic interpretation, and pragmatic description. At last, conclusions about the gender aspects of euphemisms remain contradictory, which highlights the need for a more structured and comparative approach. Despite extensive research the scientific gap remains in the lack of a comprehensive linguistic-cultural model of tabooing and euphemism in relation to women, one that takes into account both structural and cultural-social factors. Existing research rarely identifies the specific mechanisms underlying the choice of a particular euphemistic strategy and how these mechanisms relate across different linguistic communities.

The research objectives and questions guiding this study are: 1. What semantic and pragmatic categories characterize taboo and euphemistic expressions referring to women in English, Russian and Kazakh linguistic cultures? 2. What cultural and social factors determine the choice of certain euphemistic strategies in the compared languages? 3. How universal are the mechanisms of euphemisms and taboo in different linguistic cultures, and what differences are revealed at the level of semantics and pragmatics?

The hypothesis of the study is that despite the existence of common principles of taboo, cultural codes and ideological contexts significantly influence the specificity of euphemistic strategies, which is manifested in the differences between English, Russian and Kazakh linguistic cultures.

Materials and methods

This study examines how taboo and euphemistic expressions related to the concept of “woman” are represented in English, Russian, and Kazakh linguistic cultures. The analysis combines corpus-based observation with discourse and linguo-cultural interpretation, which makes it possible to trace both recurrent lexical patterns and their cultural motivations.

The research is based on data from four corpora: the British National Corpus (BNC), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the National Corpus of the Russian Language (NCRL), and the National Corpus of the Kazakh Language. These selected resources include a variety of genres such as fiction, journalism, spoken discourse, and media communication, allowing to compare euphemistic usage across different communicative settings. The BNC includes nearly 100 million words of written and spoken British English (late twentieth century), the COCA contains over one billion words from American English from 1990 to the present, the NCRL involves roughly 600 million token of Russian words across several centuries. The National Corpus of the Kazakh Language currently

contains 150 million indications of written Kazakh. All inquiries were performed through each corpus's online interface (corpus.byu.edu for BNC and COCA, ruscorpora.ru for NCRL, qazcorpus.kz for the National Corpus of the Kazakh Language) using the native correspondence search functions. In Russian and Kazakh, where morphology is relevant, analysis using lemmatized searches were run.

The selection of material focused on lexical units connected with four semantic domains: *anatomy, reproductive processes, age and appearance, and social or family roles*. Search queries included both direct nominations and indirect euphemistic forms. The analysis in the English was limited to *women, ladies, in the family way, expecting, those days, private parts, time of the month, lady parts, backside, derrière*. Russian corpus material included constructions like *женщина, дама, в положении, беременная, эти дни, критические дни, интимные места, эти места, почтенный возраст, в хорошей форме*. In the National Corpus of the Kazakh Language, special attention was paid to forms such as *әйел, қыз, ана, келін, апай, аяғы ауыр, ұятты жерлер, ұятты сөз*.

Only contexts containing gender-related euphemistic or taboo functions were included in the final sample. Purely medical uses without pragmatic mitigation were excluded, as were irrelevant homonymous examples. Since the corpora differ substantially in size and genre composition, the study does not attempt direct quantitative comparison of raw frequencies. Instead, the analysis focuses on recurrent semantic tendencies, collocational behavior, and culturally preferred strategies of indirect nomination.

The initial extraction generated nearly 1200 concordance lines from the BNC and COCA combined, approximately 900 from the NCRL, roughly 650 from the NCKL. Manual screening was carried out on all lines. A given context satisfies two criteria: 1. The target unit must perform a euphemistic or taboo-avoidance function, i.e. it substitutes or mitigates a direct sensitive reference. 2. The referent must be clearly gendered, relating to female physiology, age, social role or appearance.

Contexts were eliminated on the following:

- Purely clinical or medical usage in which no pragmatic reduction was noticeable, e.g.: anatomical terms in medical case reports without euphemistic framing.
- Homonymous or polysemous cases where the target string is not related to the appropriate semantic field, for instance: "those days" when denoting an era but not the menstrual cycle.
- Contexts in which the gender reference was ambiguous or absent.

The final analytical sample included nearly 320 units from the English corpora, 270 from Russian and 210 from Kazakh. Three corpora differ substantially in size, genre balance and historical period; raw frequency counts are not directly comparable across languages. The frequency indicators reported in Table 1 reflect the proportional distribution of euphemisms across the four semantic domains within each corpus separately. They were calculated as the percentage share of domain-specific units. This proportional measure enables meaningful structural comparison of domain silence across linguistic cultures.

The study distinguishes several related concepts as taboo, euphemism, periphrasis, metaphorization, desemantization, and social-role nomination. They are often treated interchangeably in euphemism research, but it is important to provide clear definitions of each term in addition to delineating their logical connections and distinguishing one from another. In this paper, taboo is understood as a culturally motivated restriction on direct verbalization. Euphemism refers to a mitigating substitute used to avoid explicit naming. Paraphrasing is defined as descriptive reformulation. Metaphorization involves figurative semantic transfer. Desemantization refers to the gradual weakening of literal meaning in frequently repeated euphemistic expressions. Social-role nomination denotes the replacement of physiological reference by socially meaningful relational categories.

In this paper a taboo is understood as a socio-cognitive prohibition against speaking directly about a referent deemed sensitive, polluted, or offensive to the norms of the speech community in question. It is a restriction that exists at the level of culture, not at the level of language structure. The distinction is important because it highlights why taboo and euphemism cannot be regarded as interchangeable terms. Taboo refers to the prohibited domain, while euphemism refers to the linguistic strategy used to avoid naming it.

Euphemism refers to either a word or a phrase that replaces a taboo or dispreferred expression to lessen the impact of what is being said to save face, uphold register, or follow etiquette conventions. Euphemism represents the superordinate concept, covering any utterance whose main aim is to avoid referring to something while referring to it at the same time. Periphrasis, metaphorical expression, and social role designation are all subordinate to euphemism. They represent the three major ways of realizing euphemism within the corpora analyzed here. They are not synonymous with euphemisms. Euphemisms are realized using one of these forms (or sometimes combinations), but not the other way around.

Periphrasis, which may also be called descriptive reformulation, is a strategy of replacing an offending lexeme with a more elaborate description, using multiple words and referring to the identical semantic entity. The process takes place at the level of sense extension. It means that the periphrastic phrase expresses typical properties, conditions, and roles of the referent rather than simply naming it. Periphrastic constructions examples in English are “in the family way” as a substitute for “pregnant” and “time of the month” instead of “menstruation”. Russian examples include “в положении” and “интимные места”. A periphrasis must be clearly differentiated from a metaphor on the basis of its literality.

Metaphorization is defined as euphemization achieved through a transfer of the word from the non-salient source domain to the taboo target domain based on some analogy between these two domains. The resulting expression is semantically double: while retaining its meaning as denoting an item of the source domain, the lexical unit obtains a new taboo meaning. In the investigated corpora, metaphorization occurs most frequently in English. For instance, “expecting” (source domain is anticipation) is transferred to pregnancy. “Those days” (source domain is temporal deixis) is transferred to menstruation. Unlike periphrasis, which involves the use of a descriptive structure within the domain of the referent, metaphorization involves semantic displacement across conceptual fields. Metaphorization is different from metonymy because both processes involve euphemization and semantic substitution within the conceptual field of the referent. While metaphorization uses a lexical item of a different conceptual domain to denote a referent, metonymy substitutes for the referent a contiguous or related item (e.g., “the cradle” for childbirth).

A third strategy is *social-role nomination*, especially common in the corpora of Kazakh language and, to some extent, the Russian one. This technique implies the use of another lexical item for naming a physiological or anatomical reference by a term of an expression that conveys the social role of a referent person, rather than his/her physiology. In contrast to euphemism and periphrasis, there is no shift between domains. The referent loses its physiological properties and gains the characteristics of a social being. Such lexemes as *ана* (“mother”), *келін* (“daughter-in-law”), and *апай* (“aunt, old woman”) serve as substitutes for physiological terms denoting female reproductive organs. The referent is not described or associated with something else. Its social identity is highlighted because it is considered socially acceptable to name a person in relation to his/her social role rather than physiology. Therefore, the analysis of terminology shows that social-role nomination implies a culturally defined hierarchy of identity prominence in which relational status is more important than biological one.

Finally, *desemantization* is not a synchronic strategy but rather a process occurring diachronically on established euphemisms. The term denotes the gradual erosion of the primary literal or figurative meaning of a euphemism as it continues to serve as an avoidance term. In the course of time, acquires the status of a quasi-direct name through semantic bleaching (loss of any meaning association). An example of desemantization can be found in the Russian corpus material. “Эти дни” (these days/those days) has become so firmly entrenched as a euphemism for the word “menstruation” that its deictic-temporal source meaning ceases to have pragmatic value in most cases. Therefore, desemantization is not a euphemistic strategy. It creates no new avoidance terms but euphemistic doom because it explains the development of euphemisms. As a euphemism becomes totally meaningless and fails to fulfill its euphemizing purpose, it is replaced by another euphemism created by the community. It is called the *euphemism treadmill*. Metaphorization and periphrasis should not be confused with desemantization because they are euphemistic formation strategies rather than fates.

In addition to corpus material, the study analyzes literary discourse represented by John

Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, and Abdijamil Nurpeissov's *Blood and Sweat*. These texts were selected because they illustrate different cultural models of representing women through indirect naming, evaluative characterization, and social-role framing.

The combination of corpus and literary analysis makes it possible to examine euphemization not only as a lexical phenomenon but also as a broader cultural mechanism shaping representations of gender, bodily experience, and social identity.

Literature review

In the modern scientific paradigm, taboo and euphemism are recognized as analytically distinct but functionally interrelated phenomena. Taboo is defined as the socio-cognitive prohibition which regulates what can be expressed by means of naming directly in a particular socio-cultural framework. Euphemization is a linguistic reaction to that prohibition. The mechanism which compensates for such tabooed expression by creating appropriate substitutes. The interrelationship between the two notions is asymmetrical. Euphemization cannot be a homogeneous phenomenon because different kinds of taboo are reflected in various linguistic procedures and strategies. There exist three principal euphemizing mechanisms: periphrasis, metaphorization, and social role nomination. Each of them have a different relationship with its referent and resulting in different collocations and stylistic distribution. The literature review is based on the differentiation between the English-speaking, Slavic, and Turkic-Kazakh research traditions respectively.

In the English-speaking tradition, the dynamics of euphemistic transformations is caused by the transformation of social norms of correctness. A study of Guzzetti's English-language lexicography confirms the systematic avoidance of nouns denoting female anatomy in dictionary representations. In advertising communications, euphemisms are used strategically to adapt texts to the gender expectations of the audience.

The methodological transition to statistically reliable generalizations in the study of euphemisms was provided by the principles of Biber's representativeness and the analysis of Sinclair's collocation models (Biber, 1993; Sinclair, 1991).

The Slavic tradition is characterized by the predominance of descriptive mechanisms of euphemization. Salata establishes the priority of descriptive periphrasis over metaphorical reinterpretation in the nomination of gender-labeled units in the Russian language. Ong'arbaeva fixes stable evaluative stereotypes in the phraseological representation of the concept of "woman" in Russian and English (Ongarbayeva, 2024).

The Turkic and Kazakh linguistic material is dominated by ethnocultural determination and the priority of social roles. Ramanova et al. prove the cognitive rootedness of gender meanings in Kazakh paremias, where the opposition of the sexes is rigidly mediated by social semantics (Ramanova et al., 2024). Abdimaulen et al. confirm the predominance of socio-relational characteristics over biological parameters in Kazakh proverbial discourse (Abdimaulen, 2022). The concept of "әйел" in Kazakh and Turkish paremiology is structured through culturally relevant social functions. Vakhitova et al. identify linguistic and cultural gaps in the system of kinship terms of the Kazakh and Russian languages.

The existing research gap is characterized by the absence of a comprehensive model describing the semantic, cognitive and pragmatic functioning of the euphemisms of the concept of "woman" simultaneously in English, Russian and Kazakh cultures. Most of the work is limited to binary comparisons and descriptive methods without a systematic corpus verification of the distribution of euphemisms in real discourse.

First of all, most of the works are focused on a single linguistic culture or on binary comparisons, while comprehensive studies covering English, Russian and Kazakh languages simultaneously remain isolated.

Furthermore, a significant portion of publications rely primarily on descriptive, phraseological, or lexicographic methods without systematic corpus verification, resulting in an insufficiently comprehensive modeling of the distributional behavior of euphemisms in real discourse.

A separate problem is that gender-focused studies more often document evaluative images of women but do not provide a comprehensive explanation of the semantic-pragmatic mechanisms

underlying the selection of specific euphemistic strategies.

Finally, the integration of cognitive frame analysis with large-scale corpus data and literary discourse remains methodologically underdeveloped, despite the clear demand in modern linguistics for multi-level models of interpretation.

Thus, we can state the existence of a clearly defined scientific gap: in modern science there is no comprehensive linguistic and cultural model that would simultaneously explain the semantic, cognitive and pragmatic functioning of taboos and euphemizations of the concept of “woman” in English, Russian and Kazakh language cultures.

This study aims to fill this gap by integrating corpus-based analysis, cognitive frame modeling, and a discourse approach. This methodological synthesis allows us to identify both universal mechanisms of euphemization and culturally specific strategies for their implementation, expanding the theoretical foundations for the cross-cultural study of gender-sensitive vocabulary.

Results and discussions

This section presents the results of an analysis of euphemistic and taboo forms associated with the concept of “woman” in comparative corpus data and literary texts of English, Russian and Kazakh languages. The analysis focuses on identifying lexico-semantic, pragmatic, and discursive patterns, which makes it possible to integrate descriptive findings into a broad linguistic model of euphemization as a linguistic mechanism.

The analysis demonstrates that euphemization associated with the concept of “woman” is present in all three linguistic cultures, although the preferred linguistic mechanisms differ considerably. Across the examined corpora, euphemistic usage is concentrated mainly in four semantic areas: anatomy, reproduction, age-related characteristics, and social roles. At the same time, the ways these themes are verbalized reflect different cultural attitudes toward gender, propriety, and public communication.

Table 1 illustrates proportional distribution of euphemistic units across four semantic domains. They were calculated separately for each language on the basis of analytical samples described above. Each figure shows the percentage share of domain-specific units within the total euphemistic sample for that language. Values provide a measure of the importance of the specific semantic field in relation to a particular linguistic culture rather than the frequency of any euphemism in general within the corpus.

Table 1 – Proportional Distribution of Euphemistic Units Across Semantic Domains

Кесте 1 – Эвфемистік бірліктердің семантикалық топтар бойынша пропорционал бөлінісі

Таблица 1 – Пропорциональное распределение эвфемистических единиц по семантическим областям

<i>Domains</i>	<i>English (COCA/BNC, % of all euphemisms)</i>	<i>Russian (NCRL, %)</i>	<i>Kazakh (Kazakh National Corps, %)</i>
Anatomical	29	34	31
Reproductive-physiological	35	30	28
Aesthetic-age	18	20	21
Family-role	18	16	20

The data show that in English corpora, the euphemization of reproductive themes is somewhat more common than in Russian and Kazakh materials, which is consistent with international observations on the widespread linguistic fixation of reproductive euphemisms in English-language media and journalism (Ismailova, 2023). The proportion of anatomical euphemisms in the Russian corpus is slightly higher, which may reflect a tendency to a descriptive avoidance strategy, especially in everyday and artistic discourses (queries such as these places, intimate areas). In the Kazakh data, the family-role domain is more pronounced, which is consistent with the pragmatic parameters of the nomination of family roles through euphemisms (*келін, анай*, etc.) (Abdimaulen et al., 2022).

The analysis of COCA and BNC shows stable patterns of substitution of taboo anatomical lexemes for peripheral and metaphorical forms. Typical contexts:

vagina → “private parts”, “lady parts” (COCA News, spoken).

buttocks → “*backside*”, “*derrière*” (BNC Fiction, magazine).

These constructions are found in stable collocations: “talk about private parts”, “feel uncomfortable mentioning lady parts” which confirms their high frequency of use in situations where direct reference may be perceived as undesirable (Ostrosko, 2016).

Direct medical terms such as *vagina* retain high frequency in scientific/media registers, but peripheral equivalents are becoming widespread in colloquial speech.

For reproductive processes, euphemization is manifested through metaphorization and periphrasis:

pregnancy → “*expecting*”, “*in the family way*” (COCA, BNC).

menstruation → “*time of the month*”, “*those days*” (BNC, COCA Spoken).

These forms are recorded mainly in informal registers, confirming that it is in everyday and semi-official contexts that languages seek ways to avoid direct physiological vocabulary (Salata, 2020).

There is a wide variability of euphemisms in the NCRL, especially in literary and journalistic texts. *Интимные места* (often in journalism and everyday storytelling), *эти места* (an expression with point desemantization).

The contexts of use of models of the type *intimate places* or *these places* demonstrate the descriptive nature of euphemization, which is consistent with cultural-semantic models of softening direct physiological nominations.

The NCRL data reveals the two genre-stratified patterns that can be shaped by two different historical factors affecting Russian verbal culture. First, the periphrastic expression “интимные места” occurs almost exclusively in journalistic and autobiographical prose texts, while the semantically bleached version “эти места” has gained prominence in spoken language and online writing. Here, the original semantic content of the expression was completely lost. The separation between genres is associated with the interaction of two historical factors: The Orthodox Christian notion of the body modesty (целомудрие) which established periphrasis avoidance as the rule of the formalized and literary style, and the Soviet era of physiological language taboo that promoted further desemantization process in colloquial style. The NCRL corpus shows a strong preference for evaluative periphrasis “женщина в возрасте” and “дама в годах” in journalistic and literary writing to lexemes such as *старая* (old). The preference can be explained by the norm of courteous address (вежливость), favoring esthetic evaluation over clinical description, reinforced by nineteenth-century literary tradition and Soviet ideology of the respectable woman’s image.

In Russian, the euphemism “*в положении*” is widely used in journalistic and literary speech as a substitute for the direct expression “pregnant”. Corpus examples:

- After the long-awaited news, she was pregnant (NCRL, in prose).
- It is not customary to talk about unpleasant sensations on such days (NCRL, in a digital forum).

The data confirm that direct terms dominate in specialized discourses, while euphemistic forms are more common in heterogeneous registers, where direct naming is perceived as overly intimate.

The euphemisms of NCKL demonstrate an entirely new euphemistic system, which is based on two historically developed trends converging together, Islam modesty norms of shame or modesty (ұят) and the pre-Islamic practice of Turkic nomads of avoiding names of one’s relatives (қайын жұрт), a daughter-in-law was culturally required to avoid naming the in-laws directly and developed substitutive kinship vocabulary as a social obligation. As a result, this double historical substrate explains why Kazakh national corpus data give preference to social roles naming as opposed to periphrases or metaphors. As for the euphemistic language of reproduction, the phrase “аяғы ауыр” (literally “a heavy-footed person” or “someone whose feet are heavy”) can be found in the subcorpus of spoken language as well as in the subcorpus of informal texts. For example, “Апайдың аяғы ауыр екен, қуанышты хабар” (NCKL, spoken subcorpus). However, the phrase cannot be found in medicine or any other type of specialized text. The metonymic construction of the term directly incorporates the principle of “ұят” in its form instead of hiding the principle behind a metaphor. The metonymic nature of the term incorporates “ұят” (shame) directly into its lexical form instead of obfuscating the meaning using cross-domain metaphor, as in English. Within the anatomical field, “ұятты жерлер” (literally “places of shame”) embeds the Islamic concept of bodily modesty directly in its morphology. It possesses consistent collocates within the corpus that indicate a restriction on its use, “айтуға

болмайды” (one must not say) and “қолданба” (do not use), manifesting the taboo in the speech acts themselves, a property absent from English and Russian counterparts. Within the social role field, family relationship terms as *келін* (daughter-in-law) and *анай* (address for an elderly woman) function as the dominant referential category in mixed-registers of speech, serving as euphemisms for any direct addressing of women based on their own names. This substitution is not simply a polite strategy. It stems from the historical structure of the Kazakh patrilineal household, wherein women were identified by their relational social roles in the family and community rather than individual identity. A practice which was codified linguistically by “қайын жұрт” tradition as obligatory verbal practice. Euphemism in Kazakh is not a face-saving act (as in English) nor regulated descriptive property (as in Russian), but a structurally encoded expression of communal religious and social identity.

Table 2 – Relative Frequency of Individual Forms in the National Corpus of the Kazakh Language
Кесте 2 – Қазақ тілінің Ұлттық Корпусындағы таңдалған формалардың салыстырмалы жиілігі
Таблица 2 – Относительная частота отдельных форм в Национальном Корпусе казахского языка

<i>Words</i>	<i>Relative frequency (% of sample)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
әйел	38.7	neutral
ана	22.4	family role
аяғы ауыр	6.1	euphemistic
ұятты жерлер	3.5	euphemistic

According to Table 2, the relative frequency of each form shows a percentage share of Kazakh samples ($n \approx 210$ units). The neutral form “әйел” reports the largest share and is marked as the basic nomination. “Ана” as the socially evaluative form shows family-role nomination. As for the rest, they show pragmatically marked distribution. Corpus materials reflect that euphemistic forms functionally equivalent to English and Russian structurally different in Kazakh. The Kazakh language is full of descriptive euphemization through metonymy and functional social role descriptions. In English periphrastic or metaphorical strategies are dominant.

10 main euphemisms were chosen for a collocation analysis for each corpus:

1. English language (COCA): For “Those days” collocations are *talk, mention, avoid, discuss*. For “expecting” collocations are: *baby, family, due, excited*.

2. Russian language (NCRL): the collocations for “В положении”: *официально, радостно, объявил*. “Эти дни” collocations: *избегают, не обсуждают*.

3. Kazakh language (KazNC): collocations of “Аяғы ауыр”: *қуанышты, маңызды*. Collocations of “ұятты жерлер”: *қолданба, айтуға болмайды*.

Such stable collocation chains act as indicators of the functional stability of euphemisms in the corresponding registers.

The comparison showed that in English, euphemization is constructed through metaphor and periphrasing, especially in the colloquial register. In Russian, descriptive euphemization is combined with the phenomenon of partial desemantization (“these days”). In the Kazakh language, euphemistic forms are often based on descriptive metonymy and functional descriptions (ана, келін).

Table 3 summarizes the distribution of strategies across the four semantic domains and three languages.

Table 3 – Comparison of Euphemization Strategies
Кесте 3 – Эвфемизация стратегияларын салыстыру
Таблица 3 – Сравнение стратегий эвфемизации

<i>Domains</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Russian</i>	<i>Kazakh</i>
Anatomy	Paraphrasing-metaphorization	descriptive	descriptive/ role-playing
Reproduction	Paraphrasing	paraphrasing	metonymy
Age	Positivization	descriptive	role positioning
Roles	Historical euphemisms	descriptive	functional description

Returning to the terminology presented in the methodology section above, it is possible to describe the cross-linguistic situation observed in our corpus in terms of these three euphemistic strategies and their corresponding diachronic processes. First, English relies mostly on metaphorical construction (“expecting”, “those days”) and periphrasis (“in the family way”, “private parts”). Russian, by contrast, tends strongly towards descriptive periphrasis (“в положении”, “интимные места”) and shows a pronounced tendency towards desemantization (“эти дни”). Lastly, Kazakh relies on social-role nomination as its main euphemistic strategy. This strategy is formally different from metaphorization and periphrasis, since it avoids figurative mapping and literal description in favor of replacing biological reference altogether with an identity-related term (ана, келін).

English corpus data indicates a significant prevalence of euphemistic modifications driven by changing standards of communicative propriety. Systematic avoidance strategies characterize the representation of female anatomy in English lexicography. Strategic euphemistic devices in advertising registers further align texts with contemporary gender attitudes.

The Russian linguistic tradition prioritizes descriptive paraphrasing over metaphorical reinterpretation that softens gender-marked nominations. These descriptive mechanisms frequently generate functional and translational difficulties when processing gender-sensitive vocabulary.

The Kazakh linguistic system prioritizes social-role nomination over biological parameters. Within the paremiological foundation, gender opposition is metaphorically encoded but strictly mediated by social roles. The concept “әйел” (woman) is structured specifically through culturally relevant social functions rather than physiological characteristics.

1. Euphemization functions as a universal linguistic mechanism for mitigating and circumventing direct names in taboo areas.

2. All three languages have stable domains of euphemization, but each linguistic culture implements them through different semantic and morphological strategies.

3. Corpus data confirm frequency contrasts, collocation networks, and structural models consistent with the hypothesis of culturally determined differences.

Within the framework of artistic discourse, euphemization and taboo associated with the concept of “woman” manifest themselves not only as communicative strategies of politeness, but also as cognitive and semantic mechanisms for structuring meaning. Analysis of three works as “Of Mice and Men” (J. Steinbeck), “Мастер и Маргарита” (M. Bulgakov) and “Қан мен тер” (A. Nurpeissov) allows us to identify differences and similarities in the linguistic representation of taboo realities related to physicality, reproduction, age and social roles.

1. *English literary discourse based on J. Steinbeck’s literary work (Of Mice and Men)*

In English-language prose, the tabooing of physiological and sexually charged meanings is traditionally realized through periphrases and metaphor, rather than direct designations of objects or states. In “Of Mice and Men”, female characters are described not through physiological characteristics, but through socially evaluative formulas, which correlates with observations about how euphemisms in English-language literature function as a social filter for taboo realism.

For example, the character “Curley’s wife” is not present in the text as an independent name. She is referred to through a possessive phrase, which already contains a euphemistic strategy. The individual is reduced to a social role (a possessive construction), thereby bypassing direct anthroponomical naming. Moreover, the description of her behavior and appearance focuses not on physiology but on social characteristics (e.g., “she’s got the eye”). It is consistent with findings that euphemization in English fiction often shifts the subject from the biological to the socially evaluative.

In Steinbeck’s prose, euphemism operates not as a straightforward substitution of taboo lexemes but as a process of semantic re-filtering. Physiological content is conveyed indirectly through socio-evaluative framing.

2. *“The Master and Margarita” by M. Bulgakov for Russian literary discourse*

In the Russian literature, evaluative and descriptive aspects are used rather than explicit physiological euphemisms. In “The Master and Margarita”, character description relies on qualifiers like “sweet”, “beautiful” and “middle-aged woman” which recast physical reference into broad qualitative traits. This pattern corresponds to the Russian linguistic tendency to mitigate gender-marked

nominations via descriptive paraphrase instead of metaphorical recoding. Expressions like “at an elegant age” (в почтенном возрасте) or “in excellent condition” (в хорошей форме) function as preferred substitutes for direct age-related terminology. Through repeated use, these descriptive devices reduce semantic sharpness and facilitate the gradual neutralization of euphemistic forms.

In Russian literary tradition, the euphemization of the female body takes place through the evaluative and aesthetic description, not through substituting an anatomy with euphemism. It is determined by the intersection of two factors from Russian history: Orthodox Christian modesty regarding the body and the suppression of physiological descriptions in the literary tradition of the Soviet period in preference to social depiction. In his novel “The Master and Margarita” Bulgakov systematically channels characterization through the lens of aesthetic language. Margarita is depicted as “красивая женщина” (a beautiful woman) with her body being portrayed through the emotional and social frames, without resorting to any physiological description of the character. Female secondary characters in the text are introduced through evaluative nominations as “милая девушка” (a sweet girl) and older women, in terms of their age, using periphrastic nomination of “в почтенном возрасте” and “в хорошей форме”.

Such periphrasis is not descriptive but semantic and evaluative. It does not define physiological traits but reframe them within a scale of societal merit. The cultural background is the aesthetic idealization of gender in Russian literature, influenced by the Soviet literary censorship culture, which privileged social representation over physiological substance. It shapes a unique euphemizing style known as euphemization through elevation. Through repeated use in the prose literature during the Soviet period, this stylistic device became desemanticized, as in the case of the contemporary Russian periphrasis “в хорошей форме” as “not visibly old”.

3. *Kazakh literary discourse was based on “Blood and Sweat” by A. Nurpeisov*

Kazakh literary practice prioritizes social-role designations like *әйел* (woman), *қыз* (girl), *келін* (daughter-in-law), *ана* (mother) as the primary nominative framework. These labels encode functional and relational status rather than physiological traits. The predominance of socio-relational semantics over biological description supports the broader Turkic tendency toward social-role nomination. The concept *әйел* (woman) is structured through culturally salient functions. Gender contrast is metaphorically present but tightly regulated by role hierarchy.

The social-role language for the female characters in “Blood and Sweat” by A. Nurpeisov is established exclusively within the context of the male-dominated family structure in Kazakhstan. The protagonist’s wife, in particular, appears under the designation “келін” from the first chapter to the last, with her name suppressed and her social identity emphasized. Older female characters are designated either as “ана” (mother) or “апай” (auntie). Even a reproductive status of a woman is hinted at obliquely when a woman “for whom a cradle will be needed” (бесік кеpek үй) is mentioned. There are three possible reasons why this language prevails among the Kazakhs. First, the Turkic household of the nomadic house determined women’s roles through their relations to other family members. Second, the Islamic term “ұят” precluded the use of direct physical terms, especially in relation to elderly women. Third, there is a Kazakh oral epic tradition (жырай) that has formed an image of women as socially heroic individuals. This leads to the conclusion that the euphemism process in Kazakh literature does not involve replacement of one tabooed word with another word, softer in its connotation. The meaning of the word “әйел” emerges in the context of the cultural function of the word. Gender contrast exists in terms of the established system of roles. No terminology related to reproductive or anatomical functions can be found there.

The comparison with the literary practices of the English and Russians further highlights this analytical framework. In Steinbeck’s euphemism, the social-evaluation shift occurs at an individual, subjective level (evaluation rather than naming of the person takes place). In Bulgakov’s case, it occurs at the aesthetic level (beautification rather than specification of the person takes place). In Nurpeisov’s case, the process involves categorical social incorporation. The person stops existing biologically and becomes incorporated in the network of relations in which he/she exists socially. This is not only a stylistic choice. It is rather the cognitive-cultural aspect of the phenomenon – within Kazakh literature, the category of personhood refers to social roles, rather than biological traits. Lexical fields of the

Kazakh language related to the concepts of marriage and kinship function as both primary nominative system and primary euphemistic system. They simultaneously name and protect the subject by placing biological identity inside the protective frame of social role. This observation agrees with the results regarding the prioritization of socio-relational characteristics over biological parameters in Kazakh gender cognition (Abdimaulen et al., 2022; Yelubai et al., 2023) and proves that the literary traditions under discussion offer different structural solutions to the common task of referring to physically sensitive female referents.

A cross-cultural comparison of the literary representation of the concept “woman” reveals both shared mechanisms and culture-specific strategies:

1. In the English pattern, preference for periphrastic and socio-evaluative constructions that minimize direct physiological reference, consistent with documented dynamics of English euphemism.
2. In the Russian pattern, a descriptive euphemism emphasizes aesthetic and behavioral traits over bodily reference, aligning with observations on the functional profile of Russian euphemistic usage.
3. In the Kazakh pattern, extensive reliance on social-role nominations and metonymic encoding, reflecting culturally grounded models identified in studies of Kazakh linguoculture (Karabekova et al, 2024).

These differences suggest that euphemization and tabooing are not simply lexical substitutions, but rather cognitive and cultural mechanisms. They activate specific mental models. In the English context, this mechanism shifts physiological content to social content. In Russian, it shifts to descriptive evaluation. In Kazakh, it integrates social roles as ways to circumvent physiological taboos.

Conclusion

A combined analysis of corpus data and literary texts demonstrates that euphemistic and taboo units associated with the concept of “woman” form a systemic, multilayered structure that integrates lexical – semantic, pragmatic, and cultural – cognitive parameters. A comparison of English, Russian, and Kazakh reveals both universal patterns and culture-specific patterns of euphemization.

First of all, the corpus data confirms the existence of stable domains in which euphemistic and taboo strategies unfold as anatomical, reproductive-physiological, aesthetic-age and social roles. Their repetition in three linguistic cultures suggests a high degree of universality of cognitive triggers that cause taboo and the need to mitigate direct nominations. It is consistent with common observations in modern linguistics. At the same time, the quantitative and structural characteristics of the domains differ. English material demonstrates an increased frequency of reproductive euphemism, Russian – a more pronounced descriptive substitution of physiological realities, Kazakh – a tendency to metonymic and role translation of meaning.

Following from that, the collocation networks identified in the corpora show that euphemisms do not function as autonomous units, but are embedded in stable contexts through which their pragmatic properties are consolidated. English constructions like “expecting” or “those days” form emotionally softened contexts. Russian structures like “в положении” and “эти дни” serve a zone of socially sensitive communication. As for Kazakh forms “аяғы ауыр” and “ұятты жерлер”, they are fixed in discourses where the value and ethical aspect is important. These models confirm that the mechanism of euphemization is not related to the abstract avoidance of taboos, but to the redistribution of meanings within certain genre and register domains.

Next, literary texts demonstrate a different discursive level of euphemization, where cultural filters are embedded in the representation of female characters. Steinbeck exhibits a social shift in meaning as physiological characteristics disappear, and the emphasis shifts to role, status and perception, illustrating the model of social screening of taboo meanings described in the English language material. Bulgakov shapes the image through evaluative and aesthetic markers, bypassing physiological detail, thereby implementing the Russian strategy of descriptive euphemism. Nurpeisov uses role categories (әйел, ана, келін, қыз), confirming a culturally ingrained metonymy as female physiology is secondary to social purpose. Thus, literary discourse captures not direct euphemisms, but the cognitive consequences of tabooing.

Moreover, comparative data indicate that the structural mechanism of euphemization in relation to the concept of “woman” is not reduced to a simple substitution of a direct lexeme with a softened

equivalent. English is dominated by periphrasis and metaphorization, Russian by descriptive desemantization and evaluative, Kazakh by functional role reconfiguration of meaning. This typological divergence is compatible with research on the culturally distinctive dynamics of euphemisms and demonstrates that euphemization is a cognitive-linguistic mechanism entrenched in a system of collective representation (Vakhitova et al., 2024).

Ultimately, the findings validate that taboos and euphemisms concerning female corporeality, fertility, and aging serve a coherent pragmatic function. They serve to reduce the explicitness of physiological content, uphold norms of social propriety and modulate perceptions of sensitive topics. The Kazakh material further strengthens this process through an ethical-role component, which reflects the uniqueness of national discourse and aligns with studies on gender conceptualization within the Turkic tradition.

In general, obtained results allow us to formulate three general propositions:

1. Euphemization associated with the concept of “woman” is a universal tool for discursive control over physiologically and socially sensitive meanings, but its methods of implementation vary typologically.

2. Corpus and literary data consistently demonstrate that, in the area of female taboo realia, meaning-shifting strategies predominate. In English it focuses on the social, in Russian on evaluative qualities, and in Kazakh on role functions.

3. The observed patterns substantiate the theory of the cognitive-cultural determinism of euphemization and its systemic characteristics, rendering this domain pertinent to descriptive lexicology, cognitive linguistics, gender semiotics, and intercultural studies.

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Әдебиеттер

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