

SYNONYMOUS METHODS OF NAMING THE IMAGE OF WOMAN IN ENGLISH PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

Gozzal Sailaubaeva

2nd Year Doctoral of Karakalpak State University

gozzalsailaubaeva@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines how the image of a woman is conveyed through various nominative units in English proverbs. The main goal of the research is to determine the role of semantically related units such as girl, maid, bride, wife, mother, daughter, widow, lady in the nomination of the image of a woman. The article distinguishes between the concept of synonymy and nominative-semantic proximity. Because not all of the indicated units can be considered fully lexical synonyms: each of them adds components such as age, marriage, kinship, social status, or family role to the meaning of "woman." Authentic English proverbs and sayings were used as material. As a result of the analysis, several models of female image naming are identified: general gender nomination, age nomination, marital status, family role, kinship role, and marital-social status. This model shows that in English paremiology, the image of a woman is not limited to a single name, but is represented through a semantically branched nominative system.

Keywords: English proverbs, female image, gender, nomination, synonymy, paremiology, woman, girl, wife, mother, widow.

Introduction

Proverbs and sayings are linguistic units that preserve the historical experience, social views, moral norms, and cultural values of the people in a concise and figurative form [4;10]. The peculiarity of paremiological units is manifested not only in their content, but also in the name of a certain social image. N. R. Norrick, considering proverbs as a traditional, communicative, and didactic genre, notes that they express a generalized meaning [1, pp. 31-65]. His work examines the literal and figurative aspects of proverb meaning, as well as the relationships between units within the proverb inventory [1, pp. 81-101, 145-168].

From a gender perspective, proverbs can reflect the traditional manifestations of male and female characters in society. Karapetyan and Danukhyan, studying the gender component of over 400 proverbs in English, have shown that the image of a woman is conveyed through various units such as daughter, girl/maid, bride-to-be, wife, mother, daughter-in-law/mother-in-law, widow, old unmarried lady [2, pp. 73-79]. It is problematic to call all these units synonyms. For example, woman is a common feminine term, wife represents a married woman, mother represents maternal status, daughter represents childhood, widow represents a widow whose husband has passed away, and girl represents a sign of youth. Therefore, there is a semantic-nominative proximity between them rather than complete synonymy.

The relevance of this article lies in the fact that in English proverbs, it is necessary not only to list the units representing the image of a woman as "synonyms," but also to determine on the basis of what semantic features they branch out from each other.



1. General nomination of the female image. The most common form of naming a woman is the female/women lexeme. This unit generally refers to a woman from a biological and social perspective, regardless of age, marital status, or kinship. In English proverbs, the units "woman" are used not only to denote a woman but also to attribute a certain social and moral quality to her. For example: "A woman's strength lies in her tongue." [2, p. 75] In this example, woman refers not to a specific woman, but to a common characteristic interpreted as feminine.

Similarly: "A woman's counsel is sometimes good." [2, p. 76]

Here, the units "woman" express an evaluation related to a woman's advice and opinion.

Thus, woman is the semantically basic nomination of the female image. The remaining units can be considered as specific nominative units derived from this base name.

2. Woman - girl - maid: nomination based on age. The first way to concretize the image of a woman is through age. In this case, the units girl, maid, maiden are used.

For example: "The more the girl runs, the harder the boy chases." [2, p. 74]; "A girl worth kissing isn't easy to kiss." [2, p. 74] In these examples, the girl is distinguished from the general name woman by the sign of youth. While "girl" denotes a young woman, "maid"/ "maiden" is associated with the concept of an unmarried young woman in the traditional language:

"A maid that laughs is half taken." [2, p. 74]; "Maidens should be seen and not heard." [2, p. 74] In these proverbs, not only the woman's gender but also her age and social status permeate the island.

Thus: woman → girl → maid/maiden nomination narrows semantically. Woman - a common woman, girl - a young woman, maid/maiden - an unmarried young woman in the traditional sense. Rather than calling these units synonyms, it is more accurate to evaluate them as hierarchically nominally related units.

3. Woman - bride - wife: nomination by marriage status. The second type of female image is named after her marital status.

In this series, the units "bride" and "wife" hold a special place. For example: "A sad bride makes a happy wife." [2, p. 74] In this proverb, two different social statuses of one woman are contrasted: bride - a woman during marriage, wife - a woman after marriage.

So: woman → bride → wife. The marital status component is added to the general gender characteristic [6]. Bride represents the stage of a woman's marriage, wife represents the status of a married woman. This approach demonstrates that the female image answers not only the question of "who?" but also the question of "what social status does she hold?"

4. Woman - wife: nomination through a family role. Wife is one of the productive nominative units used in English gender paremiology. In Karapetyan and Danukhyan's work, several proverbs are cited with the use of the word "wife" [2, p. 77].

For example: "A good wife and health are a man's greatest wealth." [5] In this proverb, wife doesn't just mean a woman. It depicts the image of a family partner in the husband's life. But the image of the wife is not only positive:

"The cunning wife makes her husband her apron."; "He who takes a wife finds a master." [2, p. 77]. In these examples, the units wife are associated with governance, family, or household power. Another contradictory example: "He who has a good wife has an angel at his side; he who has a bad wife has a devil at his elbow." [2, p. 77] Here, the nomination "good wife"/"bad wife" has two different connotations through the opposition "good wife"/"bad wife."



Therefore, wife is not a direct synonym for woman. She adds the component "married woman" to the meaning of woman.

5. Woman - mother - daughter: nomination through kinship relations. Another model for naming a woman's image is based on a kinship relationship. Mother indicates maternal status, daughter indicates filial status. For example: "God could not be everywhere, therefore He decided to make a mother." [2, p. 77] In this proverb, mother generalizes the woman's role as a mother.

Also: "If you take the child by the hand, you take the mother by the heart." [2, p. 77] In this example, the units "mother" represent the image of a woman emotionally connected to her child.

Daughter units:

"Daughters are brittle." [2, p. 74]

"First a daughter, then a son, and the family's well-being began." [2, p. 74]

In these examples, the daughter represents a woman's role in childbearing.

Thus, in the context of woman → mother / daughter, a kinship-semantic component is added to the gender attribute.

6. Woman - widow - lady: marital and social status. Another way to nominate a woman's image is to show her social status related to her husband.

Widow - a special nominative unit denoting a woman whose husband has passed away.

For example: "Never marry a widow unless her husband was hanged." [2, p. 78]; "You cannot marry a widow, for the widow will marry you." [2, p. 78]; "She that is a widow is a lady." [2, p. 78]. The last example is particularly interesting. A woman can be called a widow and a lady at the same time. But these two designations are not the same:

widow - marital status;

lady - social status

So, here the image of one woman is nominated according to two different semantic criteria.

The main theoretical issue here is not to confuse synonymy with nominative proximity. For example, there is a certain semantic similarity between woman and wife, because every wife is a woman. But not every woman is a wife. Therefore, this is an asymmetric semantic relationship.

Likewise:

every mother is a woman, but not every woman is a mother;

every widow is a woman, but not every woman is a widow;

every girl is a female person, but not every woman is a girl.

Therefore, it is advisable to consider these units not as absolute synonyms, but as nominative units that concretize the same gender concept with different semantic features.

8. Connotative features in nomination. The difference between synonymously related units is evident not only in their denotative meaning but also in their connotation. For example, the units "mother" often reflect kindness, protection, and the emotional connection between mother and child. In Karapetyan's and Danukhyan's materials, the majority of proverbs involving mother demonstrate this trend [2, pp. 77-78].

The units "wife" are used in two directions: on the one hand, the image of a good, loyal, and valued couple, and on the other hand, the image of a mistress, a ruler, or a force against a husband [2, p. 77]. The "widow" is associated with negative social stereotypes in a number of proverbs [2, p. 78]. These facts demonstrate that the meaning of a nominative unit is not limited to its dictionary definition but is also revealed through the connotation arising in the paremiological context.



Conclusion

Naming the image of a woman in English proverbs is not limited to a single woman lexeme. A woman's age, marital status, family role, kinship, and social standing are expressed through various nominative units. As a result of the research, it was found that the units girl, maid, bride, wife, mother, daughter, widow, lady are semantically related to woman. However, it is incorrect to consider all of them as complete synonyms. They add various additional semantic components to the common noun "woman."

Thus, the nominative system of the female image in English proverbs is modeled as follows:

woman → girl/maid → bride/wife → mother/daughter → widow/lady

This model demonstrates the branching of the female image from gender commonality to specific social, family, and kinship status. The main scientific conclusion of the article is as follows: rather than grouping units such as woman, girl, wife, mother, daughter, and widow in English proverbs together as "synonyms," it is more accurate to consider them as semantic-nominative units that concretize gender nomination. Such an approach makes it possible to reveal how the image of a woman is constructed in language and how a single gender concept can be divided into various social meanings.

References

1. Norrick, N. R. (1985). *How Proverbs Mean: Semantic Studies in English Proverbs*. Berlin/New York: Mouton. 213 pp.
2. Karapetyan, L., & Danukhyan, L. (2023). Linguistic Expression of Gender Distinctions in English Proverbs and Sayings. *Armenian Folia Anglistika*, 19(2), 62–83. DOI: 10.46991/AFA/2023.19.2.062.
3. Speake, J. (Ed.). (2015). *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (6th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 416 pp.
4. Mieder, W. (2004). *Proverbs: A Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 328 pp.
5. Kirsanova, M. (2018). Androcentrism of English proverbs and anti-proverbs with gender components. *Journal of Language and Education*, 4(2), 68–77. DOI: 10.17323/2411-7390-2018-4-2-68-77.
6. Schipper, M. (2006). *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet: Women in Proverbs from Around the World*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
7. Hazlitt, W. C. (1996). *English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases*. London: Reeves and Turner.
8. Mieder, W., & Litovkina, A. T. (2002). *Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs*. Burlington: University of Vermont.
9. Litovkina, A. T. (2017). *Teaching Proverbs and Anti-Proverbs*. Komárno: J. Selye University.
10. Taylor, A. (1931). *The Proverb*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
11. Coates, J. (2004). *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language* (3rd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.
12. Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper & Row.

