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NOMINATIONS AND EUPHEMIZATION OF THE TOPIC OF VIRGINITY IN RUSSIAN AND UZBEK LINGUOCULTURES

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Abstract. This article examines the nominations and euphemistic ways of verbalizing the topic of virginity in Russian and Uzbek linguocultures. The relevance of the study is determined by the fact that virginity belongs to a semantically delicate sphere where language, morality, gender expectations, family reputation, and religious-ethical ideas intersect. In both cultures the topic is rarely reduced to a purely physiological meaning. It is usually transferred into the evaluative fields of purity, innocence, chastity, honor, dignity, shame, and social respectability. The study is based on dictionary definitions, stable collocations, culturally marked phrases, and illustrative examples from traditional and contemporary speech usage. The methods include comparative-typological analysis, linguocultural interpretation, semantic analysis, and componential analysis. The results show that Russian discourse tends to organize the topic through the chain virginity - innocence - chastity - purity - maiden honor, whereas Uzbek discourse more strongly activates the chain bokiralik/qizlik - poklik - iffat - nomus - or-nomus. The comparison demonstrates that euphemization does not simply soften a taboo subject; it also encodes cultural scenarios of evaluation, restraint, control, and social expectation. Therefore, the language of virginity is an important field for studying the relationship between nomination, taboo, gender norm, and cultural value.

Keywords: euphemism, nomination, virginity, innocence, chastity, linguoculture, Russian language, Uzbek language, gender, taboo, honor, purity.

Introduction

The topic of virginity belongs to the group of semantic domains that are seldom expressed in everyday communication in a fully direct way. This is explained not only by the intimate character of the concept itself, but also by its strong cultural loading. In many societies virginity is associated with moral purity, family honor, marriageability, female reputation, religious norm, and social control. As a result, the corresponding nominations do not function as neutral designations of a biological state. They become signs of a complex cultural code.

Euphemization is one of the central mechanisms through which this code is realized in language. Keith Allan and Kate Burridge define euphemism and dysphemism as important communicative strategies used when speakers need to speak about sensitive, unpleasant, or socially risky matters [1, p. 11]. In their later work on taboo and censorship, the same authors show that taboo is connected not only with prohibition, but also with politeness, social distance, the protection of face, and the regulation of interpersonal relations [2, p. 1]. Consequently, a euphemism is not merely a soft substitute for a “rough” word. It reveals which topics a culture prefers to avoid, mitigate, or translate into morally acceptable categories.

For Russian and Uzbek linguocultures, the topic of virginity is especially significant because it brings together family tradition, religious and ethical vocabulary, gender asymmetry, and modern changes in speech etiquette. In Russian, such direct and semi-direct nominations as devstvennost’ (virginity), devstvennitsa (virgin), nevinnost’ (innocence), tselomudrie (chastity), and neporochnost’ (purity, blamelessness) coexist with figurative and evaluative expressions: chistota (purity), devich’ya chest’ (maiden honor), sokhranit’ sebya (to preserve oneself), poteryat’ nevinnost’ (to lose innocence), and lishit’sya chesti (to lose honor). In Uzbek, relatively direct

nominations such as bokiralik, qizlik, and bokira qiz are closely connected with culturally powerful words such as poklik, iffat, nomus, or-nomus, and sha'n. These words are not complete equivalents, yet their interaction forms the euphemistic field of the topic.

The relevance of the present research is determined by the fact that euphemisms of gendered and intimate semantics allow us to see not only lexical preferences, but also deep cultural mechanisms of evaluation. Through the way a society names, avoids naming, or indirectly evaluates virginity, one can identify ideas about the permitted and the forbidden, the private and the public, female subjectivity and collective responsibility. From this perspective, linguocultural analysis makes it possible to move from the description of individual words to the reconstruction of value patterns in speech behavior.

The aim of the article is to identify the main nominative and euphemistic means of expressing the topic of virginity in Russian and Uzbek linguocultures. The tasks are as follows: to determine direct and indirect nominations of the semantic sphere under consideration; to identify the main groups of euphemisms; to describe cultural differences between Russian and Uzbek material; and to show how euphemization reflects gender and ethical norms in the compared linguistic worldviews. The hypothesis of the study is that in both linguocultures the topic of virginity is shifted from the physiological plane to the moral-evaluative plane, but Russian usage more often organizes it around the opposition innocence - guilt, while Uzbek usage more strongly activates the collective category honor - shame.

Materials and Methods

The material of the study consists of lexical units, collocations, and speech formulas connected with the verbalization of virginity, chastity, and female moral reputation in Russian and Uzbek. The Russian material includes the nominations devstvennost', nevinnost', tselomudrie, neporochnost', chistota, devich'ya chest', sokhranit' chest', poteryat' nevinnost', lishit'sya chesti, byt' chistoy, and sokhranit' sebya. The Uzbek material includes bokiralik, qizlik, bokira, bokira qiz, poklik, pokiza, iffat, nomus, or-nomus, sha'n, o'zini asrash, nomusini saqlash, pokiza qiz, and iffatli qiz. These units are not considered in isolation, but as elements of a semantic field in which direct naming, metaphorical transfer, moral evaluation, and cultural implication interact.

The study uses several complementary methods. First, comparative-typological analysis makes it possible to identify structural similarities and culturally specific differences between Russian and Uzbek nominations. Second, the linguocultural method is used to interpret lexical meanings as carriers of cultural values. This approach is close to Anna Wierzbicka's view that key words of a culture can reveal important fragments of national and social experience [4, pp. 1-3]. Third, semantic and componential analysis helps separate such components as "physical state," "moral purity," "innocence," "modesty," "honor," "shame," "social reputation," and "family dignity." Fourth, contextual interpretation is used to show how the meaning of a nomination changes depending on discourse, speaker intention, and communicative situation.

The theoretical basis of the research is formed by works on euphemism, taboo, politeness, metaphor, and cultural semantics. Allan and Burridge's theory is useful because it treats euphemism as a linguistic shield and as a social strategy rather than as a purely stylistic ornament [1; 2]. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is relevant because indirect speech and mitigation often help speakers avoid threatening the face of interlocutors in delicate situations [3]. Lakoff and Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphor is important for the analysis of such metaphorical models as purity, stain, preservation, loss, and damage [6]. Crespo-Fernandez's research on sexual euphemism demonstrates that metaphor is one of the most productive ways of speaking about tabooed sexuality in socially acceptable forms [5].

The analysis is limited to the linguistic and cultural level. It does not aim to give a medical, legal, or religious definition of virginity. The article studies how the topic is named and interpreted in language, how direct nomination is replaced by indirect designation, and how these replacements reflect cultural expectations. This limitation is important because the same lexical unit can be neutral in one context, polite in another, and evaluatively controlling in a third. Therefore, euphemization is treated as a pragmatic and cultural process, not as a fixed property of a word once and for all.

Results

1. The topic of virginity is rarely verbalized as a neutral physiological fact.

In both Russian and Uzbek linguocultures, the topic is transferred into broader evaluative categories. Russian nominations such as nevinnost' and tselomudrie connect virginity with innocence, moral discipline, and the absence of guilt. Uzbek nominations such as iffat, poklik, nomus, and or-nomus connect the same sphere with modesty, purity, honor, shame, and family dignity. This shows that the semantic field is not limited to the body. It is organized as a cultural model of social evaluation.

2. Russian nominations are structured around innocence, chastity, and maiden honor.

The Russian word devstvennost' can function as a relatively direct designation, but in many contexts it is replaced by nevinnost', tselomudrie, chistota, neporochnost', or devich'ya chest'. These substitutions soften the directness of the topic and shift attention from sexual experience to moral quality. The phrase poteryat' nevinnost' constructs the situation through the metaphor of loss, while devich'ya chest' introduces the category of social reputation. Thus, the Russian field combines personal morality and external evaluation.

3. Uzbek nominations more strongly emphasize honor, modesty, and collective reputation.

In Uzbek, bokiralik and qizlik may directly refer to virginity or maidenhood, but euphemistic usage often relies on iffat, poklik, nomus, or-nomus, and sha'n. These words have a wider moral and social meaning. Nomus and or-nomus are particularly important because they may include honor, shame, conscience, dignity, and the reputation of the family. As a result, the intimate sphere is linguistically linked with the collective image of the household and community.

4. The metaphor of purity is common to both linguocultures, but its pragmatic accents differ.

Russian expressions such as chistaya devushka, neporochnaya, and nezapyatnannaya and Uzbek expressions such as pokiza qiz and pokligini saqlagan qiz are based on the symbolic opposition of purity and impurity. This metaphor seems universal, but it functions differently in each cultural context. In Russian it may be associated with moral innocence, religious chastity, or poetic idealization. In Uzbek it is more closely connected with modesty, upbringing, family honor, and public respectability.

5. Euphemization performs a double function: it protects delicacy and reproduces control.

On the one hand, euphemistic nomination allows speakers to discuss a sensitive topic tactfully and avoid communicative discomfort. On the other hand, when virginity is named through honor, purity, or family dignity, personal experience becomes an object of collective evaluation. Therefore, euphemism may soften direct speech while simultaneously strengthening social pressure. This ambivalence is one of the key findings of the comparison.

Discussion

The results show that euphemization of the topic of virginity cannot be understood only as a matter of politeness. It is also a way of organizing cultural meaning. The same concept may be interpreted as a bodily state, a moral quality, a religious norm, a symbolic value, or a sign of family

reputation. Which interpretation becomes dominant depends on the linguocultural system and on the communicative context.

In Russian linguistic consciousness, the lexeme devstvennost' is relatively direct, but it often gives way to more abstract and evaluative words. Nevinnost' is especially important because it has a semantic structure wider than virginity: it may mean innocence, naivety, the absence of guilt, or moral unspoiledness. This semantic breadth makes the word convenient for euphemistic usage. When the intimate topic is expressed through nevinnost', the bodily meaning is hidden behind a moral and psychological interpretation. The same tendency is visible in tselomudrie, which does not merely name a condition, but evaluates a person's conduct as restrained, disciplined, and morally correct.

The phrase devich'ya chest' occupies a special position. It combines an individual and a social dimension: the expression refers to a girl, but the evaluation belongs to the community. Historically, ideas of premarital chastity in traditional societies were connected with public reputation and gendered expectations. Natalya Pushkareva's research on women in Russian history shows that female reputation was often shaped within family, religious, and social hierarchies [10, pp. 85-90]. In modern Russian, many direct traditional practices have lost their former power, but the language still preserves traces of earlier value models in expressions such as poteryat' chest', zapyatnat' imya, and oporochit' sem'yu. These units show that euphemism can preserve cultural memory even when social practice changes.

In Uzbek linguoculture, the key point is the close connection between personal conduct and collective dignity. The word bokiralik can directly name virginity, but it is not the only or even always the preferred word in tactful communication. Words such as iffat, poklik, nomus, or-nomus, and sha'n help speakers move from direct sexuality to a broader moral and social frame. In particular, nomus cannot always be translated simply as honor. Depending on the context, it may include shame, conscience, dignity, moral responsibility, reputation, and social self-respect. Or-nomus intensifies this field by connecting a person's inner sense of dignity with external social evaluation.

The difference between Russian and Uzbek usage can be described as a difference in the distribution of the individual and the collective. Russian nominations often emphasize innocence, chastity, and personal moral purity, although social reputation is also important. Uzbek nominations more strongly include the family and community as evaluative subjects. This does not mean that Russian culture is purely individualistic or that Uzbek culture is only collective. Rather, the comparison shows which semantic components are foregrounded more regularly in the lexical and phraseological organization of the topic.

The metaphor of purity deserves special attention because it is central to both systems. In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is not simply a decorative figure of speech; it structures how people conceptualize experience [6, pp. 3-6]. In the material under analysis, purity turns a delicate sexual topic into a visual and moral image. A person is imagined as pure, untouched, unstained, preserved, or damaged. The metaphor is powerful because it seems natural and transparent, but it also carries a hidden evaluative logic: if virginity is purity, then its loss may be interpreted as stain or damage. This explains why euphemism can be emotionally softer than a direct word and at the same time socially stricter.

Another productive model is the metaphor of preservation and loss. Russian poteryat' nevinnost' and Uzbek nomusini yo'qotmoq do not merely report a change of state. They present the event as the disappearance of a valuable possession. The semantic structure includes three components: there was something valuable; it belonged to the person or family; it has now been

lost. Such language is not neutral. It imposes a scenario of irreversibility and moral consequence. In this sense, euphemization is not only a way to avoid a taboo word, but also a way to interpret an event before it is discussed openly.

The euphemistic field can be divided into several types according to the mechanism of formation. The first type is synonymic substitution: devstvennost' is replaced by nevinnost' or tselomudrie, while bokiralik is replaced by iffat or poklik. The second type is metaphorization: purity, stain, preservation, loss, and unspoiledness. The third type is periphrasis: a girl who has preserved herself; a girl who has preserved her honor; qiz nomusini saqlagan; sha'nini toza tutgan. The fourth type is moral generalization: a concrete bodily meaning is replaced by a broader ethical category. The fifth type is silence or contextual implication, when the topic is not named at all but is understood through hints, pauses, or evaluative adjectives. These types demonstrate that euphemization is a systematic means of regulating delicate information.

The pragmatic function of these euphemisms depends on the situation. In polite family conversation, they may protect the interlocutor from embarrassment. In literary discourse, they may create psychological depth or preserve stylistic delicacy. In religious and moral discourse, they may support norms of restraint. In everyday gossip or social judgment, however, the same euphemisms may become instruments of pressure. This variability confirms Brown and Levinson's idea that indirectness is closely connected with face and social relations [3, pp. 61-64]. The same indirect expression can be polite, protective, ironic, accusatory, or controlling depending on who speaks, to whom, and in what situation.

Modern usage also shows gradual change. In educational, medical, psychological, and media discourse, more neutral and direct terms may be used, especially when the topic is discussed as part of health education, gender studies, or social analysis. At the same time, traditional euphemisms do not disappear. They remain in family speech, religious-ethical texts, fiction, folklore, proverbs, and everyday evaluations. Therefore, the contemporary situation is best described not as the replacement of old language by new language, but as the coexistence of several registers: scientific, medical, traditional-moral, religious, family, literary, and conversational.

Translation between Russian and Uzbek requires particular caution. Nevinnost' is not always equivalent to bokiralik, because the Russian word may also express naivety or the absence of guilt. Tselomudrie is not identical with iffat in every context, although both words may be associated with chastity and moral restraint. Nomus and or-nomus are especially difficult to translate because they combine emotional, ethical, and collective meanings. A literal translation may lose the evaluative force of the word. Therefore, comparative analysis should take into account not only denotative meaning, but also connotation, pragmatic function, and cultural scenario.

Thus, nominations and euphemisms connected with virginity are valuable material for linguocultural research. They show what a culture chooses to foreground: the body, morality, religion, family honor, public reputation, or personal dignity. They also reveal gender asymmetry. In both languages, the most developed euphemistic field is connected with the girl and female reputation. This indicates that language does not merely reflect cultural norms; it also participates in their reproduction. The study of such nominations therefore requires a combined semantic, pragmatic, gender-oriented, and cultural approach.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Russian and Uzbek linguocultures has shown that the topic of virginity forms a special euphemistic field where direct nominations coexist with moral-evaluative, metaphorical, and periphrastic designations. In Russian the central units are devstvennost', nevinnost', tselomudrie, chistota, neporochnost', and devich'ya chest'. In Uzbek the key units are

bokiralik, qizlik, bokira qiz, poklik, iffat, nomus, or-nomus, and sha'n. These words are not full equivalents because each of them carries its own cultural and pragmatic shades of meaning.

The main similarity between the compared linguocultures is that the intimate topic is shifted from direct bodily naming to the fields of ethics, honor, purity, and preservation. This shift makes euphemization productive. It allows the speaker not to name the tabooed subject directly while still expressing social evaluation. The main difference lies in the balance between personal and collective meaning. Russian linguoculture more often connects virginity with innocence, chastity, moral purity, and individual reputation, whereas Uzbek linguoculture more strongly emphasizes family honor, shame, dignity, and public opinion.

The study also confirms the existence of gender asymmetry. In both languages, the most elaborated euphemistic nominations concern the girl and female reputation. This shows that language both reflects and reinforces cultural norms. Euphemisms perform a double function: on the one hand, they soften a delicate topic and help maintain speech etiquette; on the other hand, they may support social control by transforming the private intimate sphere into an object of public evaluation.

Further research may expand the material by including fiction, family discourse, religious-ethical texts, modern media, and translation practice. It is especially important to study how young Russian and Uzbek speakers reinterpret traditional nominations and what new neutral or euphemistic forms appear in contemporary communication. Such research would make it possible to trace the dynamics of cultural norms and speech etiquette in the field of gender-sensitive vocabulary.

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