

Expressing Gender Opposition in Kazakh Proverbs Through Metaphor

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Abstract—Despite the growing interest in gender differences reflected in proverbs, little attention has been paid to binary oppositions in the proverbial discourse. The paper aims to explore metaphorical gender representations in Kazakh proverbs. It focuses on how the gender oppositions in proverbs reflect the socio-cultural perceptions of gender relations in the Kazakh culture, and what new information about gender can be gained from the study of gender oppositions in proverbs. The research material was drawn from the dictionary *The Ancestors' Words* by purposive sampling. The study used a qualitative research design and focused on proverbs based on binary gender oppositions involving man- and woman-specific social actors. The cognitive representations of gender oppositions were examined using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. As a result, proverbs containing binary gender oppositions are shown to reflect a typical patriarchal worldview based on the image of a man as a provider for the family, warrior and defender possessing physical strength and higher social status, and the image of a woman as a guardian of the family hearth having a subordinate status. At the same time, they reveal the complementarity of the metaphorically expressed male and female binary oppositions. Thus, gender metaphors placed in opposition in proverbs highlight the multifacetedness of gender relations in the Kazakh family and society and the inseparability and importance of both genders in the family union. The paper suggests a fresh line of investigation into the metaphorical meaning of proverbs based on binary oppositions.

Index Terms—metaphor, gender, proverb, binary opposition, culture

I. INTRODUCTION

At present, in the study of a person in the linguistic picture of the world, an important place is occupied by the personal characteristics of a linguistic personality, including the category of gender. Gender metaphor is an important category that is included in the number of conceptual metaphors and expresses the uniqueness of the nation and culture. More recently, the term gender metaphor has been used to refer to any metaphorical meaning associated with gender (Denisova, 2002). According to Denisova (2002), gender metaphor refers to the alternation of all qualities accumulated in ideas of masculinity and femininity to objects that are not related to gender.

Gender discourse is a great ideological activity as it influences the dominant relations between different social groups. A set of appropriate qualities is imposed on each representative of the male and/or female sex, and they play an important role in the formation of male and female stereotypes in the public and personal consciousness. In this way, gender metaphor significantly contributes to transmitting the concepts of femininity and masculinity that are dominant

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in society (López Maestre, 2020). The mechanism of metaphor reveals patterns based on the principle of anthropomorphism arising from the personal and cultural experience of a person. Recent studies show that there is a significant discrepancy in the characterization of men and women in various cultures. While men are most often characterized in relation to their character, behavior and role in the society (Zhumasheva et al., 2022), the importance of women's appearance is frequently emphasized through metaphors in various languages and is treated as part of their sexuality (Vasung, 2020).

One of the ways to convey the image of special signs and evaluations in the national culture is to use metaphors in proverbs and sayings. According to Alefirenko (2008), 'the emotional and evaluative content of the language picture of the world is genetically linked to sociocultural concepts and indirectly verbalized by means of derived nominative signs (metaphor, phraseology, proverb and saying)' (p. 202). Proverbs containing a gender component constitute an important layer of the paremiological fund of any language. This layer is a meaningful material in the knowledge of the picture of the world in various linguistic cultures, and the study of proverbs and sayings, the main core of which is a man or a woman, is especially important from a modern linguistic and cultural point of view.

Recently, there has been an increase in the exploration of gender representations in the proverbial discourses relating to African (Baataar et al., 2023), Arab (Al-Zubaidi, 2019), Asian (Ghobadi & Heydaty, 2020) and European (Lomotey & Chachu, 2020) cultures. However, despite the growing interest in gender differences reflected in proverbs, little attention has been paid to binary oppositions in the proverbial discourse, when reference to both genders is made in the same proverb. The purpose of the present study is to explore the specificity of the metaphorical representation of binary oppositions in the Kazakh proverbial discourse, which has so far been little analyzed. In our paper, we set out to identify the main gender categories that are portrayed in opposition in the Kazakh proverbial discourse and ways in which the gendered meanings are metaphorically constructed in the Kazakh culture. We will show that the images of a man and a woman represented through various categories in binary oppositions are often complementary and cannot function without each other. We will also highlight traditions and specific aspects of the socio-cultural life in Kazakhstan that are metaphorically portrayed through binary gender oppositions in proverbs.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. *Conceptual Metaphor Theory*

According to Tair and Edwards (2006), the semantic complexity of proverbs is determined by their metaphorical basis that is initiated in the mind of the proverb's narrator. Based on this understanding, the cognitive basis of proverbs as metaphors can be well explained with the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993). This theory can also adduce a better understanding of the cognitive basis of gender oppositions in proverbs. According to the founders of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphor is perceptual and conceptual in nature, and it is essential to the structuring of human thought and language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) put it, the essence of metaphor consists in understanding and experiencing one object in terms of another (p. 5). In other words, in each metaphor, there are two mental representations. Through the use of language, metaphors can directly connect (or map) two conceptual domains: the source domain and the target domain.

Lakoff (1993) explains that metaphor can be defined as 'a cross domain mapping in the conceptual system' that is a projection from the source domain to the target domain where the latter uses the knowledge one has about the former (p. 203). Mapping is the comparison of two entities where one is abstract and the other one is concrete. The source domain, which is concrete, has literal entities and expressions being used to represent the target domain, which is an abstract concept, through a metaphorical link. The mapping of these two domains helps to conceptualize and comprehend different aspects that are being communicated. In the analysis of the metaphorical meaning of proverbs, it is essential to reveal the transition from the source domain, which is the literal content of the proverb, to the target domain, which is the content that is actually put in the proverb. In this regard, Gibbs and Beitel (1995) assure that proverbs are 'partly motivated by conceptual metaphors' (p. 139).

An essential component of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory is the Great Chain Metaphor (Lakoff & Turner, 1989), which is a largely unconscious cultural model where all the things and human beings as well as their properties are placed on a vertical scale dividing them into lower and higher ones. Thus, natural physical things occupy the lowest level, above them are complex objects, the next levels are occupied by plants and animals, and the highest level is occupied by human beings. The essence of the relationships between the various elements of the model is that each level is characterized by the presence of properties defining the lower levels, but it also includes some additional distinguishing feature. For instance, in the Kazakh language, the conceptual metaphor "WOMAN IS AN ANIMAL" within the metaphorical model "HUMAN BEING IS AN ANIMAL" is realized through the lexical unit *қыралai* /*quralay*/ 'a sweet, beautiful girl' to describe the outward beauty of a woman by referring to the wild animal saiga/antelope, which is considered beautiful in the Kazakh culture. In the present study, we will show how the Great Chain Metaphor model works to reveal the cognitive basis of the gender oppositions in Kazakh proverbs.

B. *Cultural Meaning of Proverbs*

Proverbs are defined as traditionally used semantically peculiar syntactic units having a certain sentence structure and conveying certain wisdom (Mukhtarova et al., 2020). They are believed to form a part of the cognitive system of the culture, in which they occur (Webster, 1982), as they express the well-known truth, social norms or moral concerns of a specific culture. The content of proverbs is full of social values, and through proverbs the nation's cultural code is revealed (Biray, 2017). Proverbs serve to represent the holistic view of a particular society toward a certain idea (Altohami, 2023), for example regarding gender relations. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state, metaphors define and link certain aspects of people's experience (p. 156). Hence, they have a linguistic and cultural aspect, allow for long-term storage of culturally significant information and are characterized by a relatively stable conventionalized meaning (Lemghari, 2019), which is transmitted through generations and applied to various states of affairs (Fayyazi, 2022). Proverbs are significant cultural products that represent 'an arc of vision and worldview of different classes in different periods' (Mieder, 2007, p. 21). Conceptual metaphors are embedded in the culture and reflect the nation's worldview (Kobia, 2016). In this respect, the study of proverbs and folk culture can provide profound insights into the ways representatives of a particular culture conceptualize the world (Golshaie et al., 2020; Gritsenko & Aleshinskaya, 2015). According to Zykova (2003), 'the phraseological space of the language as a reflection of the cultural life of a particular people can fully reveal the specifics of masculine and feminine concepts' (p. 18).

A number of recent studies focus on the values of proverbs belonging to different cultures. Thus, Golshaie et al. (2020) explore the most prominent conceptual domains most frequently used in Turkish Azeri proverbs. Lu (2012) addresses cultural views expressed in Taiwanese, Japanese, and English proverbs related to eating. Mele (2013) examines the ways in which Kanuri worldviews reflecting particular attitudes to life and morality are conceptualized in proverbs. Opinions, values, and attitudes to life are analyzed on the material of water-related proverbs representing the Chinese and Indonesian cultures (Nirmala & Liu, 2022), as well as the Javanese culture (Noviana & Saifudin, 2021). In Persian culture, the metaphorical sense of the proverbs based on the concept FIRE is referred to destruction, while the metaphorical sense of those based on the concept WATER is referred to rotation and instability (Arman et al., 2021).

Being the essence of language and a mirror of reality, proverbs can reflect people's values, attitudes, perceptions and practices in their society (Nakhavaly & Sharifi, 2013). They reflect the lifestyles of members of a society and are part of the cultural heritage of previous generations (Ghobadi & Heydary, 2020). Being endowed with authority, they help to model people's roles and identities (Khan et al., 2017). In this respect, proverbs play a particular role in reflecting gender relations in society. In every language and culture, gender proverbs determine the social status of men and women and prescribe certain norms and behaviors that should be characteristic of the representatives of the both genders.

C. Gender Metaphor in Proverbs

Men and women may differ in certain characteristics called gender specificity. Gender is a concept denoting the features of male and female thinking, mind, behaviour. Brandt (1998) believes that the word sex denotes biological, physiological natural traits given by nature, while the term gender is a set of linguistic, behavioural and personality traits that spiritually distinguish men and women depending on cultural characteristics (p. 169). The content of gender concepts in various linguocultural communities can be viewed through linguistic structures, since gender cognition manifests itself at all levels of the language and expresses certain assessments. According to Fomin (2003), gender as a psycholinguistic category is a model, a multicomponent structure of social relations, shaped by the main social institutions and created by individuals themselves in connection with their gender identity, manifested in language and speech (p. 84).

Numerous studies have been devoted to the cultural specificity of metaphorical realizations of gender relations through proverbs. Thus, in African proverbial discourse, women have been presented in a degrading manner, entailing a 'downward' orientation (Aragbuwa & Omotunde, 2022), while masculine values have been over valued as the positive side of humanity (Salami, 2005). Men are also contrasted to women as 'self' to 'other' (Asimeng-Boahene, 2013). Often wise men are portrayed being brave, strong, resilient, as well as being defenders and providers of women and families, whereas women are viewed as weak and dependent on their husbands (Baataar et al., 2023). Most of American proverbs portray a woman as 'a long-winded, sharp-tongued, toy-like, and empty-headed creature who is untrustworthy to the male by whom she should be ruled' (Kerschen, 2012, p. 8). In European Spanish and French proverbs, demonstrate how men are represented as opposed to women in regards to physical, emotional, intellectual, financial, and leadership qualities (Lomotey & Chachu, 2020). In addition, metaphors in many proverbs reinforce a social justification for male structural power. Similar findings have been reached by Ennaji (2008), who studied Moroccan, Arabic and Berber proverbs. Al-Zubaidi (2019) shows Iraqi proverbs to encode the traditional ideals of hegemonic masculinity, patriarchal ideology and gender inequality. In the patriarchal ideology of Iraqi society, women are viewed as subordinate and marginal, and their role falls within their homes. Likewise, Sundanese proverbs describe women as being dependent on men and obedient, as well as being valued for their physical charm and domestic roles (Mubarok, 2017). In Laki's gender proverbs, men are portrayed in a superior social position and are assumed to have more intellectual and mental abilities than women (Ghobadi & Heydary, 2020). In Ossetian proverbs, women are depicted as creatures having a single-track mind (Parsieva & Gatsalova, 2018). Unequal characterizations are typical of Punjabi proverbs, in which women are depicted as dependent and weak-minded in contrast to intellectual, insightful, physically and mentally strong men (Khan et al., 2017).

However, despite the widespread representation of the moral system and social grounds of the patriarchal society in the proverbial discourse in various cultures, there are still representations of "the fair side of the female origin as a source of life" (Gasanova et al., 2016). For instance, in Dagestan proverbs, the woman's image is shown to be multifaceted and to include positive connotations which may be explained by "the enigma of womanhood".

D. Gender Opposition in Proverbs

Most gender proverbs representing various cultures reveal differences between men and women, as they are opposed in their roles in society. However, despite the large interest in different realizations of male and female images in proverbial discourses, few studies have dealt with cases when reference to both genders is made in the same proverb. To the best of our knowledge, binary gender oppositions in proverbs have been analyzed only in relation to Ekegusii, a Bantu language spoken in the western part of Kenya (Otiso, 2019), and the Russian language (Djuraeva, 2023). Otiso (2019) identifies two types of such oppositions: those aiming at highlighting gender differences and those aiming at downplaying gender differences. Djuraeva (2023) adds that the gender binary opposition MAN – WOMAN has deep roots originating in ancient mythological and religious concepts and is fundamental in understanding the world through the proverbial discourse.

Oppositional pairs form the frame boundaries of the meaning of culture. The binary opposition shows that the human perception of the whole world has two sides. The opposite reflects its similarity and difference, forming two sides of a certain being. To say that a particular being is opposed to another, there must be a certain commonality between them, which can serve as a basis for comparison. The opposition is based not only on the distinguishing features of the members of the opposition from each other, but also on their common features. For example, we cannot explain the existence of a man without comparing him to a woman, or vice versa. The origin of fatherhood and motherhood are two sides of one substance, expressing spirit and matter in the system of the world: the creation, development and existence of the universe underlie this pattern. The opposition of the members of the MAN – WOMAN opposition, according to Tsivian (2009), represents their active, creative connection, and this connection reflects the essence of the creation of the world, its constant renewal, permanence and duration. The MAN – WOMAN opposition is one of the main binary systems that characterize the dualism of nature, in which two opposite parts complement each other.

In our investigation, we draw material from Kazakh proverbs containing the binary gender opposition MAN – WOMAN. We take into account various categories representing this opposition. We also look at the ways, in which binary gender oppositions expressed in proverbs metaphorically characterize gender relations in the Kazakh culture and represent the gender aspect of the Kazakh worldview.

III. DATA AND ANALYSIS

The present study used a qualitative research design, which had a focused sample drawn from three volumes of the dictionary *Бабаһар сөзі* (*The Words of the Ancestors*) containing Kazakh proverbs. The qualitative research was concerned with finding explanations of the metaphorical representations of gender oppositions in Kazakh proverbs. The investigation enabled us to gain a better understanding of the role of gender metaphors presented in binary oppositions in the construction of a language picture of the world.

In this research work, from the proverbs included in volumes 65, 66, 69 of the 100-volume series *Бабаһар сөзі* (*The Words of the Ancestors*, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), proverbs of the opposite meaning, transmitted through gender metaphors, were selected. The main method of data collection was purposive sampling. From approximately 16 thousand Kazakh proverbs listed in the three volumes of the dictionary of interest, we selected only proverbs that explicitly referred to gender (i.e. proverbs about males and females) and were expressed in the binary opposition MAN – WOMAN based on other representations of men and women as man- and woman-specific social actors, for example: HUSBAND – WIFE, FATHER – MOTHER, BOY – GIRL, SON – DAUGHTER, etc. Overall, the research corpus comprised 12 metaphors created in gender opposition.

The starting point of our analysis was to identify the social roles assigned to the generic terms *man* and *woman* and their related social actors in the research corpus. Our corpus showed four clusters of gender oppositions depending on their social roles: (1) FATHER – MOTHER, (2) HUSBAND – WIFE, (3) BOY – GIRL, (4) SON – DAUGHTER. As the third and fourth clusters contained similar proverbs in terms of the roles, it was decided to unite them in one cluster. Hence, our final research corpus comprised the following three basic clusters: (1) FATHER – MOTHER, (2) HUSBAND – WIFE, (3) BOY/SON – GIRL/DAUGHTER. The proverbs were divided into three groups in relation to these clusters.

The further analysis of the data was carried out on the basis of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993) and the Great Chain Metaphor model (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). The theoretical concepts of gender opposition and the apparatus of cognitive semantics were also used for data analysis. The cognitive representations of gender oppositions were examined by exploring the source domains including *animals*, *complex objects* and *natural physical things* projected through mappings with the target domains represented by the clusters of gender oppositions. As a result, the proverbs selected for the study contained the following conceptual metaphors: MAN/WOMAN IS AN ANIMAL (e.g., MAN IS A HORSE, MAN IS FISH, WOMAN IS A SWAN), MAN/WOMAN IS A COMPLEX OBJECT (e.g., MAN IS A FLAG, WOMAN IS PAINT, WOMAN IS TREASURE, WOMAN IS A BEAVER

COLLAR), MAN/WOMAN IS A NATURAL PHYSICAL THING (e.g., MAN IS A STAR, MAN IS A MOUNTAIN, WOMAN IS A SPRING, WOMAN IS A FIELD, WOMAN IS A RIVER). Based on Kövecses (2002), we also included such metaphors as MAN/WOMAN IS PART OF BODY (e.g., MAN IS A HEAD, WOMAN IS A NECK), MAN/WOMAN IS A MALE/FEMALE RELATIVE (e.g., MAN IS A BROTHER-IN-LAW). The source domains in reference to different social actors were compared and contrasted to highlight positive, negative or neutral representations and to enable the comprehension of the cognitive basis of the selected proverbs.

IV. RESULTS

As a result of the qualitative analysis, we were able to identify the following gender oppositions that are metaphorically represented in the Kazakh proverbial discourse. The FATHER – MOTHER opposition was found only in two proverbs:

(1) *Ата – асқар тау, ана – бауырындағы бұлақ.* /*Ata – asqar tau, ana – bawırındağı bulaq.* / 'Father is an impregnable mountain, mother is a spring at the foot of the mountain.'

(2) *Әке – жезде, ана – қазына.* /*Äke – jезде, ana – qazına.* / 'Father is a brother-in-law, mother is a treasure'.

The first proverb is based on the conceptual metaphor HUMAN BEING IS A NATURAL PHYSICAL THING, where both target domains (father and mother) are natural physical things and occupy the same level in the Great Chain Metaphor model. However, the mountain (father) stands high, and the spring (mother) runs at the mountain's foot. This two-fold metaphor highlights different social roles performed by parents in the patriarchal society, yet they are shown inseparable, being complementary to each other to form a family union.

The second proverb combines two conceptual metaphors HUMAN BEING IS A RELATIVE and HUMAN BEING IS A COMPLEX OBJECT, which occupy different levels in the Great Chain Metaphor model. In this proverb, it is not the level in the model that determines the higher role of a woman as a mother. Metaphorisation is used for praising a woman as a mother through the comparison with treasure and somewhat degrading a man as a father by lowering his status to a brother-in-law. Based on this gender opposition, it is possible to conclude that motherhood is highly respected in the Kazakh culture. Table 1 summarizes the metaphorical realizations of the gender opposition with the target domains FATHER and MOTHER.

TABLE 1
METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF FATHER – MOTHER OPPOSITION

Source domain	Target domain: father	Target domain: mother
(Male) relative	<i>жезде</i> / <i>jезде</i> / 'brother-in-law'	-
Complex object	-	<i>қазына</i> / <i>qazına</i> / 'treasure'
Natural physical thing	<i>тау</i> / <i>tau</i> / 'mountain'	<i>бұлақ</i> / <i>bulaq</i> / 'spring'

The HUSBAND – WIFE opposition was found in the following four proverbs:

(1) *Еркек – бас, ұрғашы – мойын.* /*Erkek – bas, urğaşı – мойын.* / 'The husband is a head, the wife is a neck.'

(2) *Әйел – дария, ер – балық.* /*Äyel – dar ға, er – balıq.* / 'The wife is a river, the husband is a fish.'

(3) *Ұятсыз қатын – тұзсыз ас, Әдепсіз жігіт – жүгенсіз ат.* /*Uyatsız qatın – tuzsız as, Ädepsız jigit – jügensız at.* / 'A shameless wife is food without salt, a rude husband is a horse without a bridle.'

(4) *Еркек семіз болса – есек, қатын семіз болса – төсек.* /*Erkek semiz bolsa – esek, qatın semiz bolsa – t ösek.* / 'If the husband is fat – a donkey, if the wife is fat – a bed.'

The conceptual metaphors HUSBAND IS A HEAD and WIFE IS A NECK in the first proverb belong to the same level of the Great Chain Metaphor model. But although the head occupies a higher position than the neck in the human body, the role of the neck is still very important as it is what the head is literally based on. In this respect, the head (husband) cannot function without the neck (wife). The conceptual metaphors HUSBAND IS FISH and WIFE IS A RIVER belong to different levels of the Great Chain Metaphor model. Although animals (birds and fish) occupy a higher position in the model, the river, which is a natural water object, is the environment in which a fish exists. In other words, a wife creates and maintains the atmosphere and comfort in the family, and in such a favourable environment a husband can achieve a lot. Thus, the first two proverbs are somewhat similar to the first proverb containing a gender opposition based on the conceptual metaphors FATHER IS A MOUNTAIN and MOTHER IS A SPRING, as they assume different social roles performed by a man and woman in marriage, still these social roles are complementary and emphasize the strength and inseparability of the union of husband and wife.

The next two proverbs show a negative side of marriage as they are endowed with negative connotations. The image of a husband who loses his qualities (when he is rude or fat) is created by means of the conceptual metaphor MAN IS ANIMAL, and the comparisons with a donkey and an unbridled horse reveal the man's inability to effectively fulfil his functions. The negative connotations in the depiction of a wife are expressed via the conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS AN OBJECT. The image of a shameless wife is depicted through the comparison with food that loses its taste without salt. Interestingly, the negative meaning of a wife as a bed does not seem straightforward, as a bed may also refer to the family's comfort and sexual pleasure. In our opinion, this proverb highlights the multifacetedness of a woman's image. The metaphorical realizations of the gender opposition with the target domains HUSBAND and WIFE are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2
METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF HUSBAND – WIFE OPPOSITION

Source domain	Target domain: husband	Target domain: wife
Part of body	<i>бас</i> /bas/ 'head'	<i>мойын</i> /моуым/ 'neck'
Animal/Bird	<i>жүгенсіз ат</i> /j ügensiz at/ 'unbridled horse'; <i>балық</i> /balıq/ 'fish'	-
Complex Object	-	<i>ас</i> /as/ 'food'; <i>төсек</i> /t ösek/ 'bed'
Natural physical thing	-	<i>дария</i> /dar ıya/ 'river'

The SON/BOY – DAUGHTER/GIRL opposition is most frequently used in our research corpus and is expressed in the following six proverbs:

(1) *Қыз қуыршақ дейді, бала құлыншақ дейді.* /Qız qwırşaq deydi, bala qulınşaq deydi./ 'A girl is called a doll, a guy is called a foal.'

(2) *Жақсы қыз – жағадағы құндыз, жақсы жігіт – көктегі жұлдыз.* /Jaqsı qız – jağadağı qundız, jaqsı jigit – köktegi juldız./ 'A good girl is a beaver on the collar, a good boy is a star in the sky.'

(3) *Ұл – орнықты алтын ту, қыз – айдыннан ұшатын қу.* /Ul – ornıqtı altın tu, qız – aydınnan uşatın qu./ 'The son is a stable golden flag, the daughter is a swan flying away from the lake.'

(4) *Ер бала ата-анаға таяу, қыз бала – үйге жаққан бояу.* /Er bala ata-anağa tayau, qız bala – üyge jaqqan boyau./ 'The son is close to his parents, the daughter is house paint.'

(5) *Қыз өріс емес пе, ұл қоныс емес пе?* /Qız öris emes pe, ul qonıs emes pe?/ 'Isn't the daughter a field, isn't the son a settlement?'

(6) *Ұл өссе, ұрпақ, қыз өссе, өріс.* /Ul össe, urpaq, qız össe, öris./ 'If a son grows up, it's a generation, if a daughter grows up, it's a field.'

In the first proverb, the metaphorical models BOY IS A FOAL and GIRL IS A DOLL conceptualize the social roles of men and women in the society: men are providers, warriors and defenders of their family and land, while women take care of the house and children. At the same time, men have a higher social status, as animals are situated higher than objects in the Great Chain Metaphor model. The metaphors BOY IS A STAR and GIRL IS A BEAVER COLLAR highlight the value of both the members of the binary opposition. The comparison with the beaver collar is similar to the comparison with treasure, and the comparison with the star emphasizes the high social status of men, despite belonging to a lower level in the Great Chain Metaphor model. Of interest is the fact, that in these two proverbs the first element of the opposition is a girl, which is not common for gender oppositions in the proverbial discourse in general (Djuraeva, 2023).

The next four proverbs metaphorically contrast the stability and constancy of the son as the future support of the family (SON IS A FLAG, SON IS A SETTLEMENT), on the one hand, and the temporary presence of the daughter in the family (DAUGHTER IS PAINT, DAUGHTER IS A SWAN, DAUGHTER IS A FIELD), on the other. Sons traditionally stay closer to their families and take the responsibility for their family and land. The metaphors describing daughters in these proverbs are very specific: swans are beautiful migrant birds; house paint is bright only for some time and loses its color at some point; fields are wide, meaning that girls contribute to the expansion of the family, i.e. the emergence of new relatives from the future husband. In other words, the social roles described in these proverbs are as follows: sons remain in their family, whereas daughters are temporary guests who are destined to leave their parental home after getting married. Table 3 summarizes the metaphorical realizations of the gender opposition with the target domains SON/BOY and DAUGHTER/GIRL.

TABLE 3
METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF BOY/SON – GIRL/DAUGHTER OPPOSITION

Source domain	Target domain: boy/son	Target domain: girl/daughter
Animal/Bird	<i>құлыншақ</i> /qulınşaq/ 'foal'	<i>қу</i> /qu/ 'swan'
Complex Object	<i>қоныс</i> /qonıs/ 'settlement'; <i>ту</i> /tu/ 'flag'	<i>жағадағы құндыз</i> /jağadağı qundız/ 'beaver collar'; <i>үйге жаққан бояу</i> /üyge jaqqan boyau/ 'house paint'; <i>қуыршақ</i> /qwırşaq/ 'doll'
Natural physical thing	<i>жұлдыз</i> /juldız/ 'star'	<i>өріс</i> /öris/ 'field, pasture'

From the above metaphorical usages in binary oppositions, several metaphorical models can be distinguished that describe a man and a woman. These metaphorical models in the evaluative and descriptive terms show the image of a man and a woman in various aspects. If the metaphorical models BOY IS A STAR, BOY IS A FOAL, SON IS A FLAG, SON IS A SETTLEMENT, FATHER IS A MOUNTAIN, HUSBAND IS A HEAD characterizing men determine their dominating role in the family and society as representative of the family, support, earner and protector of the family and country, then the metaphors FATHER IS A BROTHER-IN-LAW and HUSBAND IS FISH highlight the specific character and behaviour of men. If the conceptual metaphors GIRL IS A DOLL, GIRL IS A BEAVER COLLAR, DAUGHTER IS A FIELD, MOTHER IS TREASURE, MOTHER IS A SPRING, WIFE IS A NECK, WIFE

IS A RIVER in general terms characterize the position of women (girls, mothers, wives) in the family and society and describe their contribution to creating comfortable conditions in the family and caring for children, and their value as a source of procreation, then the metaphorical models GIRL IS A SWAN and DAUGHTER IS PAINT suggest that in the understanding of the Kazakh people a girl is a guest in the parental home as at some point she is destined to leave her parents' home for her husband's home.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of the qualitative analysis show that there are two main types of gender binary oppositions in the research corpus – those based on parallelism (e.g., *A shameless wife is food without salt, a rude husband is a horse without a bridle*) and those based on contrast (e.g., *The son is a stable golden flag, the daughter is a swan flying away from the lake*). Parallel or contrastive descriptions of men and women are among the most common gender features in Kazakh proverbs (Shoqym, 2009). However, in the given corpus, parallelism seems to be most often preferred to refer to male and female images. This can be explained by the tendency to define the status of men and women in a family and society in relation to one another (Ghobadi & Heydary, 2020). Of great significance are proverbs making reference to both genders with the aim of downplaying the differences and showing that both men and women are valuable members of society, thus implying that their roles are complementary (Otiso, 2019).

Another important observation concerns the structure of gender binary oppositions. Djuraeva (2023) defines gender binary oppositions as those consisting of 'two parts, the left part of which contains a gender positively marked lexeme, and the right part is a gender negatively marked word' (p. 77). In such an opposition, the lexeme *woman* is located on the right side (or second in order), which implies that in a patriarchal society women normally have a lower social status than men (Bletsas, 2020). However, in our corpus nearly half of the proverbs contained the lexeme *woman* referring to woman-specific social actors in the left part, i.e. in the beginning of the proverb. This observation adds to the idea of complementarity in the Kazakh proverbial discourse.

In the course of the analysis, our special attention was drawn to the use of two conceptual metaphors, which are revealed in Kazakh proverbs in special ways that are different from other cultures. Through the conceptual metaphor HUMAN IS FISH the image of a man can acquire various characteristics: from an unfriendly, strange and dishonest person (Goatly, 2006) to an unintelligent, incompetent or bumbling person (Saralamba, 2021). Yet, in the Kazakh proverb *The wife is a river, the husband is a fish* the source domain FISH portrays intelligence, courage, abundance and fortune, and it is linked to steadfast movement in water (river), which has a strong connection to the idea of life.

The conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD is also understood differently in the selected proverbs. Usually this model, especially in its variant WOMAN IS DESSERT, expresses the comparison of a woman with sweet things like honey, cheesecakes, tarts (Hines, 1994), sugar, sweets and tasty traditional vegetables (Akuno et al., 2018). Through this metaphor, characteristics of women, such as kindness and faithfulness, are portrayed by means of characteristics of food (Nguyen, 2021; Fayyazi, 2022). However, when a shameless wife in the Kazakh proverb is portrayed through the metaphor FOOD WITHOUT SALT, this model assumes lack of taste in food hence lack of positive qualities in the wife. Unflavoured food has not so far been analyzed as the source domain in the conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD.

In our study, we treat gender metaphors in the Kazakh proverbial discourse as cultural conceptual metaphors as they are full of cultural symbols. According to Kövecses (2005), the metaphorical entailment potential of the same source domain can be used differently in various languages and cultures. In the definition of metaphorical models from the point of view of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Turner, 1989), it can be seen that a man and a woman in the Kazakh proverbial discourse are often transmitted through animals and natural phenomena. These results are in agreement with previous studies into gender representations in the Kazakh discourse (Shokym et al., 2022; Zhumasheva et al., 2022). This can be viewed as a reflection of the experience of the Kazakh people to live in unity with nature. It can be concluded that the metaphors in the proverbs under consideration are a reflection of the nation's worldview and life experience.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present paper explored the specificity of metaphorical representations of gender categories in Kazakh proverbs. The analysis enabled us to describe the cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity in the Kazakh society. When grouping metaphorical applications of gender in proverbs, it turned out that the comparison of a man and a woman with the help of metaphors is reflected in a worldview based on a strict binary understanding. The proverbial discourse based on gender oppositions emphasizes the position of men and women in society. Despite the contemporary changes in gender role, proverbs based on binary gender oppositions are shown to create and maintain the patriarchal discourse promoting a masculine view of the world. However, the analysis of the research material revealed a specific feature of gender relations in the patriarchal society, which is based on the complementarity of the metaphorically expressed male and female binary opposition. The parallelism and order in the description of male and female categories in proverbs means that, to a certain extent, the social roles of men and women in the Kazakh worldview are evaluated equally, being complementary to each other. Thus, the gender metaphors found in the proverbs under consideration are shown to occupy an important place in this linguistic and cultural community by emphasizing the importance of the family union.

This study has a lot of research potential because it suggests a fresh line of investigation into the metaphorical meaning of proverbs.

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