



CULTURAL SEMANTICS OF KINSHIP TERMS

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Abstract. *The kinship terminology system stands as one of the most genetically integrated word groups which exists in every language because it expresses both biological ties and social relationships together with cultural beliefs and mental classifications that differ among language groups. The research investigates theoretical frameworks from ethnolinguistics and cognitive semantics and anthropological linguistics to show that kinship terms function as cultural artifacts which preserve and transmit social organization principles and gender roles and hierarchical structures and collective identity markers.*

Keywords: *kinship terms, cultural semantics, ethnolinguistics, lexical semantics, linguistic anthropology, cognitive categorization*

Аннотация. *Терминология родства представляет собой один из наиболее культурно укорененных лексических доменов в любом языке, отражая не только биологические отношения, но также социальные структуры, культурные ценности и когнитивные категоризации, которые существенно различаются в разных языковых сообществах. Исследование анализирует теоретические рамки этнолингвистики, когнитивной семантики и антропологической лингвистики, чтобы продемонстрировать, что термины родства функционируют как культурные артефакты, которые сохраняют и передают принципы социальной организации, гендерные роли, иерархические структуры и маркеры коллективной идентичности.*

Ключевые слова: *термины родства, культурная семантика, этнолингвистика, лексическая семантика, лингвистическая антропология, когнитивная категоризация*

Annotatsiya. *Qarindoshlik terminologiyasi har qanday tildagi eng chuqur madaniy ildizlarga ega bo'lgan leksik sohalardan biri bo'lib, nafaqat biologik munosabatlarni, balki turli til jamiyatlarida sezilarli darajada farqlanadigan ijtimoiy tuzilmalar, madaniy qadriyatlar va kognitiv kategorizatsiyalarni aks ettiradi. Tadqiqot etnolingvistika, kognitiv semantika va antropologik lingvistikaning nazariy asoslarini tahlil qilgan holda, qarindoshlik atamalarining madaniy artefaktlar sifatida ijtimoiy tashkilot tamoyillarini, gender rollarini, iyerarxik tuzilmalarni va kollektiv identifikatsiya belgilarini saqlovchi va uzatuvchi funktsiyalarini ko'rsatadi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *qarindoshlik atamalari, madaniy semantika, etnolingvistika, leksik semantika, lingvistik antropologiya, kognitiv kategorizatsiya*





INTRODUCTION

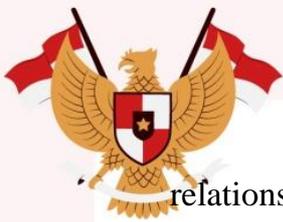
Linguistic anthropology and ethnolinguistics have maintained their focus on kinship terminology since it functions as a core element for social relationship organization and cultural knowledge system encoding. Kinship terms function as complex linguistic systems which blend actual biological relationships with socially constructed elements and culturally determined meanings, making them ideal research materials for studying how languages express and shape cultural worldviews according to [1]. The semantic structure of kinship terminology reveals culture-specific principles of social organization, including patterns of descent, residence, inheritance, and authority that may not be explicitly articulated in other aspects of cultural practice. Cross-linguistic variation in kinship systems demonstrates that different societies carve up the domain of family relationships in fundamentally different ways, privileging certain distinctions while collapsing others that might seem essential from alternative cultural perspectives [2]. The study of cultural semantics in kinship terms thus provides critical insights into the relationship between linguistic categories and cultural cognition, contributing to broader theoretical debates about linguistic relativity, conceptual universals, and the cultural specificity of semantic systems.

METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The study uses systematic literature review and comparative semantic analysis to research through established frameworks that originate from ethnolinguistics and cognitive semantics and anthropological linguistics. The literature review presents essential theoretical foundations of kinship studies which include traditional anthropological studies of kinship systems and modern cognitive linguistic research on semantic categorization and studies of kinship terminology across different linguistic traditions [3]. The research investigates three main theoretical approaches which include componential analysis to break down kinship terms into their basic semantic elements and prototype theory to study how kinship categories operate and ethnographic semantic research which examines how people organize their understanding of kinship terms through cultural frameworks [4]. The literature shows that kinship systems exhibit multiple fundamental dimensions which differ between languages through their system of classification and description and their methods of marking gender and generation and their handling of marital and blood relationships and their system of indicating age and social standing.

Russian linguistic research has concentrated on studying how kinship terms express cultural value systems which define proper ways to show respect and develop personal relationships and maintain social distance and fulfill duties to others [5]. The semantic structure of extended family relationships in Uzbek Turkic kinship systems presents unique characteristics which show how people use different terms to describe their maternal and paternal relatives while inventing new words to describe





relationships with in-laws who follow traditional family patterns [6]. The comparison of various linguistic groups shows that all societies share a common pattern for classifying kinship relationships which uses a basic rule to differentiate between direct and indirect blood relatives together with distinct kinship systems that exist only in specific cultural groups. The study of cognitive semantics has provided valuable findings about how people use kinship terms to create metaphors which they use to comprehend their political power and religious connections and their social ties with other people in society [7].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the existing research shows multiple essential results which demonstrate systematic trends of cultural meanings for kinship terms across different languages while the study shows particular semantic details which belong to specific cultural traditions. First, kinship terminology exists as a universal system which shows how different cultures define social bonds through their biological links and their social obligations and their rules of inheritance and their systems of authority and their emotional ties [8]. The different levels of lexical expansion in kinship terms establish cultural values which different languages use to develop extensive vocabulary for important social aspects but they reduce their vocabulary for less significant cultural elements. Most languages which follow patrilineal descent practices develop complex words to describe paternal kin while using broader terms to describe maternal relatives, but matrilineal cultures display the opposite pattern.

The dimension of relative age represents a particularly significant cultural variable, with many Asian linguistic systems including Uzbek, Korean and Vietnamese requiring obligatory marking of relative age among siblings and extending this principle to cousin terminology, which reflects cultural values about birth order and hierarchy and respect that people use in their social interactions. Affinal kinship terms demonstrate especially rich cultural semantic content, as they encode not only the relationship created through marriage but also expectations regarding social distance, reciprocal obligations, avoidance behaviors, and integration into the spouse's family network [9]. The study of different languages shows that cultures treat affinal relationships differently because some cultures consider them to create actual kinship bonds that match blood relationships while other cultures keep a clear distinction between blood relatives and in-laws that shows through their different terminology and semantic extensions and practical usage patterns.

The gender dimension in kinship semantics operates at multiple levels, which include sex of referent and sex of speaker and sex of linking relative, while different languages choose different combinations of these parameters to represent them as semantically essential. The analysis of semantic change in kinship terminology demonstrates that modernization and globalization processes create a dual pressure which drives languages to adopt nuclear family-based terminology, yet languages





persist to exist as separate entities because they preserve distinct cultural elements, which show permanent social values, even when extended family customs become less important in daily life [10]. The widespread use of kinship terms across different languages demonstrates their essential cultural value, because family relationship concepts extend into religious discourse and political terminology and commercial relationships and nationalist ideology, which shows that kinship acts as a basic mental framework for people to understand social structures outside their home environment.

The study of kinship term vocatives and referentials demonstrates that cultural semantics exists at multiple levels of operation. The same relationship exists between two people but different kinship terms must be used based on whether the speaker directly addresses a relative or speaks about them to someone else. The study results demonstrate that kinship terminology functions as a cohesive semantic unit because its terms acquire meaning through their specific reference functions and their interconnections with other terms in the complete terminological system, which means that any changes to one system component will create demand for network-wide adjustments.

CONCLUSION

The investigation of cultural semantics in kinship terminology demonstrates that family relationship terms represent far more than simple labels for biological connections, instead functioning as complex cultural artifacts that encode social organization principles, value systems, cognitive categorizations, and historical continuities. The cross-linguistic diversity in kinship semantic systems provides compelling evidence for the cultural specificity of conceptual categories while also revealing certain universal tendencies in how humans organize kinship domains. The literature review and analysis presented here establish that kinship terms merit continued scholarly attention as sites where language, culture, and cognition intersect in particularly transparent and consequential ways. Understanding the cultural semantics of kinship terminology contributes not only to theoretical linguistics and anthropology but also to practical domains including cross-cultural communication, translation studies, and sociolinguistic documentation of endangered languages whose kinship systems preserve unique cultural knowledge.

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