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A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF KINSHIP TERMS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH: CULTURAL AND SEMANTIC DIMENSIONS

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Abstract

Kinship vocabulary forms an essential structural component of the lexicon in any natural language, reflecting both social hierarchy and cultural values. This study presents a contrastive semantic and cultural analysis of kinship terms in Uzbek (an agglutinative Turkic language) and English (a synthetic-analytical Germanic language). Drawing upon semantic field theory and ethnolinguistic frameworks, the paper examines the structural asymmetry between the two systems – secifically focusing on paternal versus maternal bifurcation in Uzbek (amaki/tog‘a, amma/xola) alongside age-based hierarchy (aka/uka, opa/singil) compared to the broader, non-differentiated categories in English (uncle, aunt, brother, sister). The study illustrates these distinctions using textual evidence from Abdulla Qodiriy’s O‘tkan kunlar (1925), Said Ahmad’s Chinor (1975), Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice (1813), and Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird (1960). The findings show that while English kinship terms prioritize generation and collateral distance, Uzbek kinship terms encode lineage lineality, seniority, and social deference, reflecting an environment rooted in collective family structures.

Keywords: Kinship Terms, Contrastive Linguistics, Uzbek, English, Semantics, Ethnolinguistics, Bifurcation, Social Hierarchy.

Introduction. Kinship terminology serves as a linguistic reflection of social structure, defining how individuals perceive their roles within family and community networks. From a linguistic perspective, kinship terms operate within a structured semantic field where individual lexical items derive meaning through opposition and differentiation (Lyons, 1977, p. 230).

Comparing the kinship systems of English and Uzbek reveals significant structural asymmetries. English employs an Eskimo-type kinship classification system, which emphasizes the nuclear family by distinguishing direct lineals (father, mother, son, daughter) from collaterals (uncle, aunt, cousin, nephew, niece) without differentiating between maternal and paternal lines (Cruse, 2000, p. 112). In contrast, Uzbek uses a descriptive/Sudanese-type system characterized by detailed lineality (patrilateral vs. matrilateral distinctions) and age relative to ego (seniority vs. juniority) (Ismoilov, 2018, p. 45).

This article analyzes how these semantic distinctions operate in literature. By evaluating specific textual excerpts from classic Uzbek and English novels, this study demonstrates how these lexical choices encode sociolinguistic rules, family expectations, and cultural values.

Literature Review. The study of kinship terms in modern linguistics lies at the intersection of lexical semantics, anthropology, and ethnolinguistics. Lounsbury (1964, p. 1073) established formal methods of componential analysis to decompose kinship concepts into minimal semantic features, such as [male], [generation], and [lineal].

In English linguistics, Crystal (2008, p. 265) notes that contemporary English kinship terms exhibit a high degree of collateral neutralization. Terms such as uncle, aunt, and cousin group multiple

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genealogical positions under single lexical items, relying on context or adjectives (e.g., maternal uncle, first cousin once removed) when specificity is required.

In Turkic and Uzbek linguistics, early foundational studies by Mahmud Kashgari in Dīwān Lughāt at-Turk documented the historical precision of Turkic kinship vocabulary (Eshonqulov, 2020, p. 18). Modern Uzbek linguists, including Abdullayev (2015, p. 88) and Yusupov (2019, p. 102), emphasize that Uzbek kinship terms encode two primary social dimensions:

1. **Patrilateral vs. Matrilateral Bifurcation:** Distinction between paternal relatives (amaki, amma) and maternal relatives (tog‘a, xola).
2. **Relative Age and Respect:** Differentiation of older versus younger siblings (aka/uka for brothers; opa/singil for sisters), which directly dictates pragmatic address forms (siz vs. tu/sen).

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, contrastive linguistic methodology combining componential analysis and textual textual citation analysis:

- **Componential Analysis:** Deconstructing lexical items into minimal semantic components (e.g., Generation, Sex, Lineality, Relative Age).
- **Textual Analysis:** Analyzing specific excerpts from canonical works of fiction:
  - Uzbek Corpus: Abdulla Qodiriy’s O'tkan kunlar (Tashkent: Sharq, 2018 edition) and Said Ahmad’s Chinor (Tashkent: G'afur G'ulom, 2019 edition).
  - English Corpus: Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice (London: Penguin Classics, 2003 edition) and Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002 edition).

Discussion and Analysis. Avuncular and Amital Asymmetry (Amaki/Tog‘a vs. Uncle; Amma/Xola vs. Aunt)

In English, the term **uncle** encompasses four distinct genealogical relationships:

1. Father‘s brother (Patrilateral)
2. Mother‘s brother (Matrilateral)
3. Father‘s sister‘s husband (Affinal patrilateral)
4. Mother‘s sister‘s husband (Affinal matrilateral)

In Uzbek, these positions are lexically separated into discrete terms:

- Amaki: Father’s brother [Patrilateral, Consanguineal]
- Tog‘a: Mother’s brother [Matrilateral, Consanguineal]
- Yazna / Pochcha: Aunt’s husband (Patrilateral/Matrilateral affinal, depending on context)

Similarly, English **aunt** corresponds to Uzbek amma (father’s sister) and xola (mother’s sister).

Textual Analysis in Uzbek:

In Abdulla Qodiriy’s O‘tkan kunlar, when Otabek’s maternal connection is addressed, the distinction carries structural weight regarding family obligation and hospitality:

“Hasanali... Otabekning **tog‘asi** Rahmat hojining uyiga borib tushdi.” (Qodiriy, 2018, p. 34)

The word tog‘a immediately informs the reader that Rahmat hoji belongs to Otabek’s mother’s lineage. In Uzbek tradition, the maternal uncle (tog‘a) holds an honored role during life milestones, such as weddings and family decisions, distinct from the authority carried by the paternal uncle (amaki).

Similarly, in Said Ahmad’s Chinor, family relationships determine social duties and respectful speech:

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"Asrorqul **amaki** Azizbekka qarab: 'Hali **xolang** kelmadi, kutib turaylik', - dedi." (Ahmad, 2019, p. 112)

Here, amaki (paternal uncle) and xola (maternal aunt) explicitly map out the exact family connections without needing descriptive modifiers.

Textual Analysis in English:

In Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth Bennet refers to Mr. Gardiner as her "uncle" without specifying which side of the family he belongs to:

"He could be still amiable, still pleasing to my **uncle** and **aunt**, when he was in town." (Austen, 2003, p. 312 [Vol. III, Ch. 54])

The reader understands from earlier chapters that Mr. Gardiner is Mrs. Bennet's brother (making him Elizabeth's maternal uncle), but the text relies on broader story context rather than the word uncle itself to communicate this line.

In Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird, Scout uses the same term for both blood relatives and relatives by marriage:

"Aunty and **Uncle Jimmy** produced a son named Henry..."

— (Lee, 2002, p. 89 [Ch. 9])

In this scene, "Uncle Jimmy" (James Hancock) is Aunt Alexandra's husband (affinal), while "Uncle Jack" (John Hale Finch) is Atticus's brother (consanguineal patrilateral). English uses the singular marker uncle for both positions.

Sibling Relative Age and Seniority (Aka/Uka, Opa/Singil vs. Brother, Sister)

English uses gender as its primary semantic boundary for siblings (brother vs. sister). Relative age is expressed using optional modifying adjectives (elder brother, younger sister).

Uzbek incorporates relative age directly into its core sibling vocabulary:

- **Male Sibling:** Aka (Older brother) vs. Uka (Younger brother)
- **Female Sibling:** Opa (Older sister) vs. Singil (Younger sister)

This distinction reflects the social dynamics of Uzbek households, where an older sibling (aka/opa) holds responsibilities and receives respectful forms of address (such as being addressed with the formal pronoun siz), while younger siblings (uka/singil) receive protective affection (addressed as sen).

Comparative Grid: Semantic Componential Matrix

Lexical Item	Generation	Gender	Lineality	Relative Age to Ego
Brother (English)	0	Male	Collateral	Neutral
Aka (Uzbek)	0	Male	Collateral	Older (+Senior)
Uka (Uzbek)	0	Male	Collateral	Younger (-Senior)

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Lexical Item	Generation	Gender	Lineality	Relative Age to Ego
Aunt (English)	+1	Female	Collateral	Neutral
Amma (Uzbek)	+1	Female	Patrilateral	Neutral
Xola (Uzbek)	+1	Female	Matrilateral	Neutral

Conclusion. This contrastive analysis highlights structural differences between the English and Uzbek kinship systems:

1. **Structural Complexity:** The Uzbek kinship system uses precise lexical terms based on patrilateral/matrilateral lines and relative age, whereas English relies on broad, neutralized categories supplemented by context or adjectival modifiers.
2. **Cultural Reflection:** The distinction in Uzbek between terms like amaki/tog‘a and aka/uka reflects traditional social values that emphasize lineage, family hierarchies, and structured social respect.
3. **Implications for Translation:** Translating literary texts between English and Uzbek requires attention to these differences. Translators moving from Uzbek to English must often sacrifice specific family distinctions or add descriptive phrases. Conversely, translating from English to Uzbek requires identifying the exact genealogical line to choose the correct term (amaki vs. tog‘a, aka vs. uka).

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