

Lacunar Units Of Kinship Terms In The Uzbek Language

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Abstract: This article examines the lexical and grammatical features of kinship terms in the modern Uzbek language. The author identifies lacunar units—concepts that lack direct equivalents in Russian—and explains their origins, semantics, and sociocultural meanings. Special attention is given to kinship terms distinguishing paternal and maternal lines, as well as their connection to Islamic culture, inheritance, and marriage traditions. The study is based on comparative-etymological and sociolinguistic analysis, including examples from Uzbek literary works and religious sources.

Keywords: Lacunar units, kinship terms, Uzbek language, etymology, Islamic culture, inheritance, lexical semantics.

Introduction: Kinship terminology represents a significant part of any language's lexical system, reflecting both the historical and cultural background of a people. In the Uzbek language, kinship terms have evolved under the influence of Turkic, Arabic, and Persian linguistic layers. This paper analyzes the specific lacunar units—terms that do not have exact equivalents in Russian—revealing their grammatical and semantic characteristics, as well as their cultural and historical functions.

1. Lexical Features of Kinship Terms in Uzbek

Uzbek kinship terminology can be divided into two groups:

1. Simple words — ona (mother), bola (child), qiz (daughter), aka (elder brother), opa (elder sister), jijan (nephew/niece), tog'a (maternal uncle), nevara (grandchild), bobo (grandfather), buvi (grandmother).

2. Compound terms — amnavachcha (child of father's sister), qayin ona (mother-in-law), qayin eghachi (sister-in-law), katta buva (great-grandfather), o'gay ona (stepmother), quda xola (aunt through in-laws).

Each of these terms reflects social hierarchy, gender distinction, and the structure of family relations deeply rooted in the traditional Uzbek worldview.

2. Lacunar Units and Their Meanings

Lacunar units are unique cultural concepts that cannot be directly translated into another language. Examples

include:

- Guletyim — an orphaned child who lost the father but lives with the mother.
- Shumetyim — a child who lost the mother but lives with the father.

Bug'doy ("wheat") and arpa ("barley") used metaphorically to describe grandchildren: the son's child (bug'doy) is perceived as more "valuable" than the daughter's (arpa), echoing socio-economic symbolism.

- Qutqaruvchi ("savior") and xabarchi ("messenger")—additional symbolic titles for grandchildren depending on their parental line.

These examples reveal how language mirrors societal perceptions of kinship and value systems.

3. Etymological Insights into Key Terms

- Xola (mother's sister): derived from the Arabic xalat(un), but some scholars, including M. Saidova, trace it to ancient Tungusic-Manchu roots meaning "elder mother."

- Amma (father's sister): from Arabic 'ammat(un) ("sister of the father").

- Tog'a (mother's brother): originated from the fusion of tay ("mother") and aga ("brother") in Old Turkic.

- Amaki (father's brother): derived from Arabic 'amm(un) with phonetic adaptation and suffixation in Uzbek.

Each of these words carries fine distinctions—unlike Russian “дядя” and “тётя,” which merge paternal and maternal sides into one term.

4. Sociocultural and Religious Context

Islamic law (Sharia) greatly influenced the kinship system in Uzbekistan. The Qur'an, particularly Surah An-Nisa, establishes a strict hierarchy for inheritance (tariq), differentiating between paternal and maternal relatives. For instance, amaki (paternal uncle) holds inheritance rights before tog'a (maternal uncle), reflecting both patriarchal lineage and religious doctrine.

Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad emphasized respect for xola (mother's sister), equating her to one's own mother in moral obligation and affection.

5. Reasons for Lacunae in the Russian Language

The Russian kinship system does not distinguish between maternal and paternal relatives. Historical Christianization and the patriarchal family model simplified kinship nomenclature, resulting in a smaller and less precise lexicon. In contrast, Uzbek terminology preserved the pre-Islamic Turkic distinctions, further refined under Islamic law, leading to multiple lacunar cases in translation.

CONCLUSION

The study of lacunar units in Uzbek kinship terminology reveals a deep intertwining of language, culture, and religion. These terms not only describe family relations but also reflect social hierarchy, moral norms, and religious law. Understanding such nuances is essential for accurate linguistic translation and cultural interpretation.

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