

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MARRIAGE TERMINOLOGY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LINGUOCULTURE

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Abstract

This article examines the linguocultural features of marriage and wedding terminology in English and Uzbek. Using a contrastive linguocultural framework, the study analyzes lexical domains, ritual vocabulary, kinship terms, and performative speech acts to reveal how language encodes cultural values, gender roles, and social structures. Data are drawn from dictionaries, descriptive grammars, ethnographic descriptions, and native-speaker consultations. Findings show both universal patterns (ritual stages and kinship salience) and culturally specific lexicalizations reflecting Islamic influence, Central Asian customs, and differing matrimonial ideologies. The article concludes with implications for language teaching, translation, and further research.

Key words

wedding, lexical domains, ritual vocabulary, kinship terms, performative speech acts.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage rituals and the vocabulary that surrounds them offer a rich site for exploring the interplay between language and culture. Terminology associated with weddings captures social norms, gender expectations, religious beliefs, and community structures. A contrastive study of English and Uzbek wedding lexis helps reveal how two linguistic communities lexicalize similar life-cycle events while encoding distinct cultural meanings.

THEORETICAL-FRAMEWORK

This study draws on linguocultural and anthropological linguistics frameworks (Sapir, Whorf; Hymes, Duranti) and on ritual theory (van Gennep; Turner). Linguocultural analysis treats vocabulary as socially meaningful: lexical choices are indexical of values, identity, and social roles. Ritual studies provide a template – separation, liminality, incorporation – useful for organizing wedding terminology.

METHODOLOGY

The research employs a contrastive descriptive method. Sources included contemporary dictionaries of English, descriptive grammars, ethnographic overviews of Uzbek customs, and consultations with native Uzbek speakers for authentic contemporary usages. Lexical items were collected across domain categories (kinship, ritual acts, garments, food, speech acts, ritual formulae) and analyzed for semantic range, metaphoric extensions, and cultural loading.

ANALYSIS

1. Kinship and relational terms. Kinship vocabulary is central in both languages but shows different focal points. English wedding discourse frequently uses terms emphasizing legal/status relationships—'bride', 'groom', 'in-law(s)', 'spouse'—reflecting a Western emphasis on the couple as a legal unit. Uzbek discourse includes parallel terms (o'g'il, qiz, kelin, kuyov) but places stronger salience on extended family roles and honorifics. Terms such as 'kuyovning ot-onasi' (groom's parents) and 'kelinning oilasi' (bride's family) carry culturally loaded expectations about hospitality, gift exchange (sovg'a), and negotiation.

2. Ritual vocabulary and stages. Both languages lexicalize ritual stages—pre-wedding negotiations, the wedding ceremony itself, and post-wedding celebrations—but the lexical items differ in specificity. English employs general terms ('engagement', 'wedding ceremony', 'reception', 'bride price' when used in anthropological contexts) while Uzbek has specialized lexemes and compounds for local practices: 'nikoh' (Islamic marriage rite), 'to'y' (wedding celebration), 'kuyov oshi' (groom's feast) and ritualized gift terms like 'sovg'a', 'dasturxon' (ceremonial table/cloth and the set-up for hospitality).

3. Clothing and material culture. Attire-related vocabulary reveals cultural priorities. English wedding lexicon contains items such as 'wedding dress', 'veil', 'tuxedo', and 'bridesmaid', often indexed to fashion and ceremony roles. Uzbek wedding lexis includes 'atlas', 'adras' (traditional fabrics), 'poqva' (headgear), and 'kuyovlik liboslari', indexing textile traditions and symbolic colors. The persistence of culturally specific textile names in Uzbek vocabulary demonstrates how material culture is lexicalized and preserved.

4. Speech acts and formula. Performative utterances—vows, blessings, proverbs, and formulaic speech—play a central linguistic role. English vows ('I do', 'to have and to hold') are relatively standardized, often influenced by Christian liturgy and civil ceremony templates. Uzbek wedding speech acts frequently incorporate Quranic blessings, traditional proverbs, and set phrases that invoke collective memory and religious legitimacy (e.g., formulaic invocations during 'nikoh' that reference God and familial duty). Such formulae function to legitimate the union within both religious and communal frameworks.

5. Metaphor and semantic extensions. Marriage vocabulary uses metaphor to map social relations—'tie the knot', 'join hands', 'bridge two families'. Uzbek uses parallel metaphors that emphasize unity and hospitality—'uy birlashishi' (the house becoming one), 'dasturxon urushmasi' (sharing the table), metaphors grounded in household and communal sharing. These differing metaphoric patterns reflect culturally salient domains: in English metaphors often rely on legal/joining imagery, while in Uzbek they foreground domestic integration and communal reciprocity.

6. Gendered language and indexicality. Terms for male and female participants carry distinct connotations. English terms like 'bride' may evoke youth, beauty, and ceremonial display; 'groom' often indexes masculinity linked to provision or status. In Uzbek, 'kelin' (bride) and 'kuyov' (groom) are embedded in broader roles and expectations—'kelin' is often associated with adaptation into the husband's household, while 'kuyov' is linked to responsibilities towards his natal and marital families. Honorifics and diminutive forms further encode respect, age, and social hierarchy.

DISCUSSION

The contrastive analysis shows both convergences and divergences. Universally, marriage vocabulary indexes life-cycle transition and kinship centrality; both languages lexicalize stages, roles, and material culture. Divergences arise from differing religious histories (Christian/ secular civil frameworks vs. Islamic-influenced Uzbek practices), family organization (nuclear emphasis in Anglophone contexts vs. extended kin prominence in Uzbek contexts), and material culture that yields language-specific lexemes. Translators and language teachers must be sensitive to untranslatable cultural terms and to the pragmatic functions of formulaic speech in context.

CONCLUSION

Marriage terminology in English and Uzbek provides a window onto how language encodes cultural models of kinship, gender, religion, and material practices. While both languages share structural similarities in mapping ritual stages, the lexicon reflects distinct cultural emphases—legal and individualistic in many English contexts, communal and ritualized in Uzbek contexts. Future research should include larger corpora, diachronic perspectives, and more extensive native-speaker ethnographic interviews to trace ongoing change in wedding lexicon under globalization.

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