Research article

Kinship terms as indicators of identity and social reality: A case study of Syrian Arabic and Hindi

Neelakshi SURYANARAYAN[1] and Amr KHALIL[2]

[1] Delhi University
New Delhi, India
[2] Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)
Moscow, Russia

Abstract
By displaying a certain fragment of reality in the linguistic consciousness of a person, socio-cognitive categories convey important information about the social structure of society, the lingua-cultural identity of its representatives and the values they share. This study focuses on kinship terms in the Syrian Arabic and Hindi languages. It is aimed at identifying similarity and the cultural specificity of kinship terms in two linguistic cultures and explaining the identified features through types of cultures and cultural values. The research is based on kinship terms that name consanguineal (blood) and affinal (non-blood) relatives in Arabic and Hindi. The material was collected through analysis of terms in dictionaries as well as anonymous questionnaires and observation. The collected material was systematized and analyzed using comparative, definitional, semantic and lingua-cultural methods. The results showed that both languages have a rich system of kinship terms, in which the line of kinship (paternal or maternal), the type of kinship (relatives by blood or through marriage), and age are recorded. They testify to the We-identity of the representatives of the cultures under consideration for whom family relations are of great value, and to the importance of determining the place of each member in society in the social system. The revealed features showed that age differences are more important in Indian society than in Syrian, although respect for elders is one of the most important values of both cultures. The results obtained once again confirm the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of language, which in turn provides new data for other areas of humanities.
Key words: *socio-cognitive category, kinship terms, lingua-cultural identity, Syrian dialect of the Arabic language, Hindi language*

Термины родства как индикаторы идентичности и социальной реальности: на материале сирийского диалекта арабского языка и хинди

Н. СУРЬЯНАРАЯН[1], А. ХАЛИЛЬ[2]

[1] Делийский университет
Нью-Дели, Индия
[2] Российский университет дружбы народов (РУДН)
Москва, Россия

Аннотация

Отображая определенный фрагмент действительности в языковом сознании человека, социокогнитивные категории несут в себе важную информацию о социальном устройстве общества, лингвокультурной идентичности его представителей и разделяемых ими ценностях. Данное исследование посвящено терминам родства в сирийском диалекте арабского языка и в языке хинди. Оно нацелено на выявление культурной специфики терминов родства в двух лингвокультурах и объяснение выявленных особенностей через типы культур и культурные ценности. Материалом исследования послужили термины, называющие кровных и некровных родственников в арабском языке и в языке хинди, собранные в ходе анализа словарей, анонимного анкетирования, а также включенного наблюдения. Собранный материал был систематизирован и проанализирован с привлечением сопоставительного, дефиниционного, семантического и лингвокультурологического методов. Результаты показали, что оба языка обладают богатой системой терминов родства, в которых фиксируются линия родства (отцовская или материнская), тип родства (родственники по крови или закону), а также возраст. Они свидетельствуют о Мы-идентичности представителей рассматриваемых культур, для которых семейные отношения являются большой ценностью, и о важности определения места каждого члена общества в социальной системе. Выявленные особенности показали, что возрастные различия имеют большее значение в индийском обществе, чем в сирийском, хотя уважение к старшим является одной из важнейших ценностей обеих культур. Полученные результаты в очередной раз подтверждают важность междисциплинарного подхода к анализу языка, что, в свою очередь, дает новые данные для других гуманитарных наук.

Ключевые слова: *социокогнитивная категория, термины родства, лингвокультурная идентичность, сирийский диалект арабского языка, язык хинди*

1. Introduction

Kinship is deemed as the relationship among society members based on lineage and by marriage. The former relations are called *consanguineal* and the latter ones are termed *affinal* (Stone 2014: 8). Rácz et al. (2020) define kinship systems as social and cognitive categories used by interlocutors of a specific language to distinguish, group and speak about their relatives. Kinship terminology systems are

recognised as systems of linguistic forms, available in a given language; they are designed for naming relatives (Trask 2007:128). Similarly, Passmore & Jordan (2020) define kinship terminologies as semantic systems of language that designate the kinship relationships among speech community members.

Both the use and distribution of kinship terms depend on the role that society assigns to each kinship term. Malone (2004: 203), for example, states that the roles of kinship terms are a component of social grammar that makes the interlocutors' communicative behaviours predictable and meaningful. In other words, categories of kinship terminology differ from one lingua-culture to another. Godelier (2012) states that all speech communities identify categories of kinship terminology in order to specify how people are related to one another. To put it differently, such categories are linguistically expressed by means of kinship terms, that is, words designed for addressing relatives or speaking about them.

The patterns of such categories vary from culture to culture though they exhibit prevalent typological convergence. Kinship terminologies with cultural norms regarding kin are core aspects of social diversity (Godelier 2012). Similarly, the categorisation of kinship is molded by the social structure organisation, specifically, inheritance types, lineage, marriage and residence (Jones 2010) (cf. Rácz et al. 2020). In addition, kinship systems are the bedrock of all human societies as they exhibit both cultural meanings and cultural values, i.e., the use of kinship terms is influenced by culture and relationships in family and society. According to Holmes (2013: 349), they explicate the complexities of language-culture relationship and reflect significant cultural relationships. For instance, a given kinship system may display how important the extended family is and the rights and obligations of family members toward one another (ibid.).

Moreover, kinship systems are linguistic systems that reveal how the speakers of different languages perceive their social life. Sharifian (2017) points out that any linguistic system exists in its speakers' minds and it is arranged among them in a way by which mutual understandings occur. In daily encounters, the linguistic behaviour of interlocutors reflects to a great extent their cultural conceptualisations. Gaby (2017), who investigates the relationship between cultural conceptualisations and lexical categories, asserts that understanding the cultural context enhances the analysis of kinship terms.

On a similar note, Wierzbicka (2013), in her work "Kinship and Social Cognition in Australian Languages: Kayardild and Pitjantjatjar", deems that words including kinship terms are significant as their meanings reveal the interlocutors' ways of thinking and they shape their understanding of reality including the social and cognitive one. In addition, Wierzbicka (2016), referring to kinship terms, indicates that lexical semantics of kinship terms is significant for cultural anthropology since their meanings offer very reliable guides to how the speakers of a specific language conceptualise their social relationships.

The present paper assays to highlight cultural specificities of the Syrian Arabic and Hindi kinship systems. It also sets out to elucidate how individuals of these

lingua-cultures perceive their cognitive and social reality. It is worth mentioning that our paper is a part of an ongoing research project that investigates how cultural differences, socio-cultural context and cultural values exert an influence on address forms and communicative ethno-styles (Khalil & Larina 2018, Khalil, Larina & Suryanarayan 2018, Larina, Suryanarayan & Yuryeva 2019).

2. Kinship terminology and socio-cognitive reality across cultures

Many scholars have analysed kinship systems from different perspectives, taking into consideration the semantics of kinship terms, different cultural variables and social settings, etc. (e.g. Gaby 2017, Godelier 2012, Kronenfeld 2009, Larina & Suryanarayan 2013, Passmore & Jordan 2020, Sharifian 2017, Suryanarayan & Larina 2012, Trask 2007, Wierzbicka 1992, 2010, 2013, 2016, to mention a few). The results of these scholars' Works show that there are different social categories reflecting cultural norms, beliefs, values, social contexts and how individuals of a specific speech community perceive their reality.

Culture is seen as a tool that helps people act according to socially acceptable values, and prototypical practice (Triandis & Gelfand 2012). The importance of cultural values is ascribed to the fact that they are influential in dictating the communicative behavior of interlocutors and are embedded in the language system (e.g. Besemeres & Wierzbicka 2007, Bogdanova 2017, Bromhead & Ye 2020, Gladkova & Larina 2018a,b, Larina 2015, Lewis 2019, Sharifian, Farzad 2017 and many others). People of different cultures construct their own socio-cultural reality in the form of different categories.

The choice of kinship terms depends on the categories of social organisation. Social categories are culture specific and culturally influenced. Socio-cultural context influences the categorisation process, resulting in different meanings of social categories in different cultures. Hughson (2009: 123) defines social categorisation as a basic cognitive tool used by human beings to define themselves and the world as well. Kinship terms are a good embodiment of this definitionIn some cultures, kinship categories (consanguineal, affinal or fictive[1]) are frequently used to address an adult, who is status-superior to avoid the disrespect brought by using first names (see e.g. Yoon 2007, Ahn 2017). This can be illustrated through an example from the Korean culture where *Eomeoni* (mother) is used to address one's mother, one's friend's mother, or a female adult to show respect, in addition, *Samchon* (paternal uncle) might be employed to substitute *abeoji* (father) to express solidarity (Ahn 2017).

In cultures that are characterised by long vertical and short horizontal distance, such as the Indian and Chinese cultures, cultures, kinship terms are frequently used in a fictive manner. In China, for instance, men, who are older than one's father, are addressed as Bóbo (father's elder brother) and the addressee, who is younger than the father is called Shūshu (father's younger brother) though the addressee is

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[1]Using kinship terms to address or refer to those who do not belong to the family.

not the paternal uncle of the speaker (Geng 2015). In India also it is not uncommon for speakers to make use of kinship terms to address strangers (Larina & Suryanarayan 2013). The most widely used terms are *Uncle/ Aunty* (which are now an integral part of the Indian English communicative culture) to address much older people and *Behen* (sister), *Didi* (elder sister), *Bhaiya* (brother) to address people who are a bit older (Khalil, Larina & Suryanaryan 2018: 4).

Likewise, cultural specificities of kinship terms reflect the peculiarities of social categorisation and the differences in the socio-cultural relationships in society. For instance, the Arabic terms *Ammi* (my paternal aunt) and *Ammati* (my paternal aunt) are often used to unflatteringly address or refer to a distinct group of people who are somewhat marginalised (Khalil & Larina 2018: 303). This furnishes us with evidence of the culture-specific fictive use of kinship terms.

When age is paramount to a speech community, kinship system reflects it clearly. Geng (2015) asserts that the Chinese get confused when encountered by ambiguous English terms, such as *Brother, Sister, Son, Daughter, Grandfather, Grandmother, Uncle,* and so on since in Chinese such terms define the exact relationship in their culture and also indicate age differences. Simply put, if a person says, '*This is my sister'* only, the Chinese people would ask if the sister is younger or older because the term *Sister* has two concepts, either younger or older in the Chinese culture while the English *Sister* means both older and younger without distinguishing the age difference.

Correspondingly, Yoon (2007: 121–122) provides an illustrative example using the interaction between her two sons who are brought up in a Korean family that lives in Australia. Her younger son, Emmanuel, switches from the Korean language to the English language when he wants to be equal to his older brother by addressing him as John and switches from English to Korean by addressing John as *hyeng* (older brother) when he wishes to appeal to his brother's good will to show respect. The two brothers choose the language based on the way they need to relate to one another in a given situation.

3. Data and methodology

As has been stated above, the present paper explores Syrian Arabic and Hindi kinship terms and aims to reveal their specificities through their construction in the language system. Both Syrian Arabic and Hindi consist of a big range of kinship terms, and almost all relationships, close family and others are identified through a specific term. For a start, the data of the study were drawn from dictionaries which enumerate these kinship terms. Additionally, the method of observation and open-ended questionnaires with the participation of 70 respondents each of Syrian Arabic and Hindi were also used. Our respondents were mainly representatives of the educated middle class aged from twenty to eighty-five. They were asked to indicate if their language has a term to name a specific relation.

Since the terms under study fall into two categories, blood (consanguineal) and non-blood (affinal) relatives, the collected data have been divided into two sections.

Each section has further been divided into four sub parts for the sake of convenience of understanding.

These sub parts are divided according to seniority and have been given the following headings: Part 1 – Senior generation (grandfather, grandmother), Part 2 – older generation (father, mother, uncles, aunts), Part 3 – Younger generation (sons, daughters, siblings, cousins, spouses of children), Part 4 – Junior generation (grandchildren, nephews and nieces)). We have named the terms and expanded on their meaning, functions, and specific features and also illustrated them through tables.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Kinship terms in Syrian Arabic

Social life and identity in Syria are family-centered. The Syrian family is an extended type of family and comprises those who are related to each other by either lineage (blood relations) or marriage (non-blood relations). Kinship in Syria can be grouped as consanguineal kinship (blood relations) and affinal ones (non-blood or by marriage). Hence, the Syrian Arabic kinship system exemplifies the use of Sudanese terminology which is entirely descriptive and maintains a separate designation for almost every distinct relative based on their relation to the speaker and their gender.

It is worth mentioning that the Syrian Arabic kinship terms listed in the study were collected from the point of view of the speaker adding the lexical suffix *-i,* and *-o* (used for first person singular possessive) as it is difficult for some terms to stand by themselves without reference to an individual. For example, *Sid* (grandfather) cannot be used to indicate a grandfather without the first person singular possessive suffix *-i* and *–o* (the term, therefore, manifests as Sidi). Moreover, most of the Syrian Arabic kinship terms listed have more than one variation as they represent different phonetic inflections of such terms.

4.1.1. Consanguineal kinship terms in Syrian Arabic

Although the Syrian Arabic kinship system distinguishes between relatives from father's and mother's sides, it has no distinctions when it comes to grandmothers and grandfathers. In other words*, Sidi, Jeddi* and *Jeddo* (my grandfather) refer to both father's father and mother's father and *Sitti, Jedditi* and *Teitei* (my grandmother) indicate father's mother and mother's mother (see Table 1).

Table 1

Consanguineal kinship term in Syrian Arabic: Senior generation (grandparents)

Relation	Consanguineal kinship term
Grandfather	Sidi/Jeddi/Jeddo
Grandmother	Sitti, Jedditi or Teitei

Except for grandparents in addition to the gender distinction, the Syrian kinship system distinguishes between matrilineal and patrilineal relatives, i.e. relatives from mother's and father's sides. This means that there are distinct terms assigned to father, mother, uncles, aunts and their children. Good examples include *Baba, Abi* or *Yaba* (my father) and *Mama, Emmi* or *Ummi* (my mother). Kinship terms for parents' brothers and sisters include *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle), *Khali/Khalo* (my maternal uncle), *Amti/Amto* (my paternal aunt) and *Khalti/Khalto* (my maternal aunt).

The Syrian family is a hieratical entity where older family members occupy a higher status than those who are younger. However, as our analysis has shown, when it comes to aunts and uncles, it does not really matter whether they are older or younger than one's parents, e.g. a paternal uncle is addressed and referred to as *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) whether he is older or younger than one's parents. Therefore, we did not include such terms in our table; for example, father's younger brother versus father's older brother as they have the same kinship term. To put it differently, there are no specific kinship terms to indicate whether the uncles and aunts are older or younger than one's parents. Table 2 exhibits in detail the Syrian consanguineal kinship terms assigned to members of the older generation, namely fathers, mothers and parents' brothers and sisters.

Table 2

Consanguineal kinship terms in Syrian Arabic: Older generation (parents, uncles and aunts)

Relation	Consanguineal kinship term
Father	Baba, Abi or Yaba
Mother	Mama, Emmi or Ummi
Father's brother (paternal uncle)	Ammi/Ammo
Mother's brother (maternal uncle)	Khali/Khalo
Father's sister (paternal aunt)	Amti/Amto
Mother's sister (maternal aunt)	Khalti/Khalto

Taking a quick look at table 2, one can observe that the Syrian kinship system distinguishes between relatives based on gender and their lineage, that is, paternal and maternal relatives. These differences can be observed in other kinship terms. As a result, the Syrian kinship system includes eight different terms for cousins based on gender (male and female) and lineage (maternal or paternal) characteristics. To put it differently, the English term 'cousin' may confuse the Syrians because according to their understanding 'cousin' should be defined as male or female and patrilineal or matrilineal. The cousin category consists of paternal cousins and maternal ones. Paternal cousins are *Ibn ammi/ammo* (my paternal uncle's son), *Ibn amti/amto* (my paternal aunt's son), *Bent ammi/ammo* (my paternal uncle's daughter) and *Bent amti/amto* (my paternal aunt's daughter). Maternal cousins are *Ibn khali/khalo* (my maternal uncle's son), *Ibn*

khalti/khalto (my maternal aunt's son), *Bent khali/khalo* (my maternal uncle's daughter) and *Bent khalti/khalto* (my maternal aunt's daughter) (see table 3).

Consanguineal kinship terms in Syrian Arabic: Younger generation (sons, daughters, siblings, cousins)

Relation	Consanguineal kinship term
Son	Ibni
Daughter	Benti
Brother	Akhi/Akhoi
Sister	Ukhti/ Ekhti
Father's brother's son (paternal uncle's son)	Ibn ammi/ammo
Father's sister's son (paternal aunt's son)	Ibn amti/amto
Father's brother's daughter (paternal uncle's daughter)	Bent ammi/ammo
Father's sister's daughter (paternal aunt's daughter)	Bent amti/amto
Mother's brother's son (maternal uncle's son)	Ibn khali/khalo
Mother's sister's son (maternal aunt's son)	Ibn khalti/khalto
Mother's brother's daughter (maternal uncle's daughter)	Bent khali/khalto
Mother's sister's daughter (maternal aunt's daughter)	Bent khalti/khalto

As has been mentioned above, though age is a very significant social factor for the Syrians, i.e., the older people are, the more respect they get, the Syrian kinship system does not reflect it in the case of siblings and cousins. For example, terms such as *Akhi/Akhoi* (my brother) and *Ekhti/Ukhti* (my sister) have no reference to age and can be used to address both older and younger brother and sister. The same principle applies to cousins unless one of them (the addressee) is the same age of the speaker's parents though it is very rare[2]. Therefore, older/younger siblings and cousins are not included in table 3 that displays kinship terms assigned to members of the younger generation, i.e., sons, daughters, siblings and cousins in Syria.

Due to the fact of being entirely descriptive, there are four types of grandchildren distinguished in the Syrian Arabic kinship system indicating gender and lineage differences. They are *Ibn ibni* (my son's son), *Ibn benti* (my daughter's son), *Bent ibni* (my son's daughter) and *Bent benti* (my daughter's daughter). However, the system also contains two terms that correspond to the English terms *grandson* and *granddaughter* – *Hafidi* (my grandson), and *Hafidti* (my granddaughter).

Furthermore, this system distinguishes between two types of nephews and two types of nieces which also indicates gender and lineage. They are *Ibn akhi/ akhoi* (my brother's son), *Ibn ukhti/ ekhti* (my sister's son), *Bent akhi/ akhoi* (my brother's daughter) and *Bent ukhti/ekhti* (my sister's daughter). Table 4 displays the Syrian kinship terms assigned to junior generation, that is, grandchildren, nephews and nieces.

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[2] If a paternal male cousin is of the same age of his cousin's father, the older cousin in this case, though it is very rare, would be addressed as Ammi/Ammo (my paternal uncle).

Consanguineal kinship terms in Syrian Arabic: Junior generation (grandchildren, nephews, nieces)

Relationship	Consanguineal kinship term
Son's son	Ibn ibni
Daughter's son	Ibn benti
Son's daughter	Bent ibni
Daughter's daughter	Bent benti
Brother's daughter	Bent akhi/akhoi
Sister's daughter	Bent ekhti/ukhti
Brother's son	Ibn akhi/akhoi
Sister's son	Ibn ekhti/ukhti

4.1.2. Affinal kinship terms in Syrian Arabic

We have mentioned earlier that the Syrian Arabic kinship system makes a differentiation between relatives, namely, blood or consanguineal and non-blood or affinal relatives. Affinal kinship terms reserved for parents-in-law are *Hamayi* (my father-in-law) and *Hamati* (my mother-in-law) regardless of whether they are the parents of the husband or the wife.

Spouses of uncles and aunts have their own affinal kinship terms. These kinship terms comprise *Mart ammi/ammo* (my paternal uncle's wife) for father's brother's wife, *Jouz amti/amto* (my paternal aunt's husband) for father's sister's husband, *Mart khali/khalo* (my maternal uncle's wife) for mother's brother's wife and *Jouz khalti/khalto* (my maternal aunt's husband) for mother's sister's husband.

It is interesting to mention that other distant affines such as uncles and aunts of spouses have distinct affinal kinship terms as well. Instances of these affines include those who belong to husband's and wife's sides. Affines from the husband's side include *Am jouzi* (my husband's paternal uncle) for husband's father's brother, *Ammet jouzi* (my husband's paternal aunt) for husband's father's sister, *Khal jouzi* (my husband's maternal uncle) for husband's mother's brother and *Khalet jouzi* (my husband's maternal aunt) for husband's mother's sister. On the other hand, affines from the wife's side include *Am marti* (my wife's paternal uncle) for wife's father's brother, *Ammet marti* (my wife's paternal aunt) for wife's father's sister, *Khal marti* (my wife's maternal uncle) for wife's mother's brother and *Khalet marti* (my wife's maternal aunt) for wife's mother's sister. Table 5 shows affinal kinship terms indicating older generation affines.

Affinal kinship term in Syrian Arabic: Older generation (parents-in-law, uncles/aunts-in-law)

Relation	Affinal kinship term
Father-in-law	Hamayi
Mother-in-law	Hamati
Father's brother's wife	Mart ammi/ammo
Father's sister's husband	Jouz amti/amto
Mother's brother's wife	Mart khali/khalo
Mother's sister's husband	Jouz khalti/khalto
Husband's father's brother	Am jouzi

Relation	Affinal kinship term
Husband's father's sister	Ammet jouzi
Husband's mother's brother	Khal jouzi
Husband's mother's sister	Khalet jouzi
Wife's father's brother	Am marti
Wife's father's sister	Ammet marti
Wife's mother's brother	Khal marti
Wife's mother's sister	Khalet marti

It is worth noting that consanguineal kinship terms can be used fictively to refer to or to address the affines in Syria. For example, *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) for fathers-in-law, *both Amti/Amto* (my paternal aunt) and *Khalti/Khalto* (my maternal aunt) for mothers-in-law. Moreover, consanguineal kinship terms can be used to address or refer to spouses of uncles and aunts. Such terms comprise *Amti/Amto* (my paternal aunt) for father's brother's wife, *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) for father's sister's husband, *Khalti/Khalto* (my maternal aunt) for mother's brother's wife and *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) for mother's sister husband.

In addition, other affines are addressed or referred to similarly. Affines from the husband's side, for example, include *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) for husband's father's brother, *Amti/Amto* (my paternal aunt) for husband's father's sister, *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) or *Khali/Khalo* for husband's mother's brother and *Khalti/Khalto* (my maternal aunt) or *Amti/Amto* (my paternal aunt) for husband's mother's sister. Other affines from the wife's side include *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) for wife's father's brother, *Amti/Amto* (my paternal aunt) for wife's father's sister, *Ammi/Ammo* (paternal uncle) or *Khali/Khalo* (my wife's maternal uncle) for wife's mother's brother and *Amti/Amto* (my paternal aunt) or *Khalti/Khalto* (my maternal aunt) for wife's mother's sister.

The Syrian repertoire of kinship terms contains affinal kinship terms for sons, daughters, brothers and sisters-in-law. Such affinal kinship terms comprise *Ukht/Ekht jouzi* (my husband's sister), *Akhu jouzi* (my husband's brother), *Mart Akhu jouzi* (my husband's brother wife), *Akhu marti* (my wife's brother), *Ukht/Ekht marti* (my wife's sister), *Jouz ukhti/ekhti* (my sister's husband), *Mart akhi/akhoi* (my brother's wife), *Mart akhu marti* (my wife's brother's wife), *Jouz ukht/ekht marti* (my wife's sister's husband) and *Jouz ukht/ekht jouzi* (my husband's sister's husband). Older brothers and sisters-in-law were not included in our table, as the Syrian kinship system does not indicate age differences. Table 6 exhibits affinal kinship terms that indicate younger generation.

Table 6

Affinal kinship terms in Syrian Arabic: Younger generation (brothers/sisters-in-law)

Relation	Affinal kinship term
Husband's sister	Ukht/Ekht jouzi
Husband's brother	Akhu jouzi
Husband's brother's wife	Mart akhu jouzi
Wife's brother	Akhu marti

Relation	Affinal kinship term
Wife's sister	Ukht/Ekht marti
Sister's husband	Jouz ukhti/ekhti
Brother's wife	Mart akhi/akhoi
Wife's brother's wife	Mart akhu marti
Wife's sister's husband	Jouz ukht/ekht marti
Husband's sister's husband	Jouz ukht/ekht jouzi

It is important to note that there are some general terms for the above-mentioned category that include *Silfi* (my spouse's brother), *Silfti* (my spouse's sister), *Adili* (my spouse's sister's husband), *Sehri* (affinal male of my generation or younger, e.g., my sister's husband, my sibling's daughter's husband, my daughter's husband and my parent's sibling's daughter's husband).

The Syrian kinship system also has distinct kinship terms to indicate affines such as the spouses of children. These terms include *Mart ibni* and *Kenti* (my son's wife) for daughters-in-law and *Jouz benti* (my daughter's husband) for sons-in-law.

Table 7

Affinal kinship terms in Syrian Arabic for spouses of children

Relation	Affinal kinship term
Son's wife	Mart ibni
	Kenti
Daughter's husband	Jouz benti

4.2. Kinship terms in Hindi

Just like in Syria, social life and identity in India are also family centered. India is a multilingual, multicultural country and consists of twenty-eight states and eight union territories. The Indian Constitution recognises 22 languages officially, though there are many more. Hindi is the official language of many states and is spoken by the people of the northern and central belt. By and large, the family system in all parts of India is extended, and relationships are formed through either blood relations or marriage (non-blood relations). This relationship is maintained through the specific terms that are used to define the relationship with the speaker.

4.2.1. Consanguineal kinship terms in Hindi

The Hindi language has distinct terms assigned for grandparents, father, mother, uncles and aunts. Some English terms have also crept into the daily usage since English is widely spoken in India because of its history of British colonialism. However, in order to study these terms more as a system we are confining ourselves to Hindi terms only. The Indian kinship system distinguishes between matrilineal and patrilineal relatives as in the case for the terms for grandfather and grandmother. Father's father is *Dada* or *Dadu*, mother's father is *Nana* or *Nanu* Grandmother also has different terms in Hindi depending on the lineage. They are *Dadi* (father's mother) and *Nani* (mother's mother).

It is especially important to mention the use of the honorific *ji* in the kinship system. *Ji, Jee-* it is not a kinship term but is used as a marker of respect when addressing people of the older generation or even younger ones, if there is a need to convey respect (see Table 1). At times, some kinship terms cannot be used without this honorific, so it becomes a part of the kinship term. For example: *nana ji, dada ji, mata ji, babu ji, pita ji.*

Consanguineal kinship term in Hindi: Senior generation (grandparents)

Relation	Consanguineal kinship term
Father's father	Dada, Dadu (ji)
Mother's father	Nana, Nanu (ji)
Father's mother	Dadi (ji)
Mother's mother	Nani (ji)

The Hindi terms for father vary from *Pita (ji), Abba, Abbu, Baba, Babu (ji)*, for mother – *Maa, Maa(ji), Ammi, Amma, Mata (ji)*. The brothers and sisters of the parents also have different words – *Taya* and *Chacha* (paternal uncle), *Mama* (maternal uncle), *Bhua*, *Phupi, Kaki* (paternal aunt) and *Masi* (maternal aunt) (see Table 9).

The Indian family follows a strict hieratical entity where older family members occupy a higher status than those who are younger. This is particularly marked by the presence of different words to indicate father's older brother *Taya, Tau* and younger brother *Chacha, Chachu.* However, it is interesting to note that no such distinct words exist to indicate mother's older or younger brother, or father's and mother's older or younger sister. If there is a necessity to indicate the difference, the speaker must resort to using the adjectives for younger (*Chote*) and older (*Bade*) respectively: *Mama* (mother's brother), *Bade mama* (mother's older brother), *Chote mama* (younger brother – may or may not be younger than the mother, but is younger than the brother).

Consanguineal kinship terms in Hindi: Older generation (parents, uncles and aunts)

Relation	Consanguineal kinship term
Father	Pita (ji), Abba, Abbu, Baba, Babu (ji)
Mother	Mata, Amma, Ammi, Maa (ji)
Father's older brother (older paternal uncle)	Taya, Tau (ji)
Father's younger brother (younger paternal uncle)	Chacha, Chachu, Khaka (ji)
Mother's brother (maternal uncle)	Mama, Mamu (ji)
Father's sister (paternal aunt)	Bhua, Phupi, Kaki(ji)
Mother's sister (maternal aunt)	Masi (ji)

Hindi language has several terms to denote brothers and sisters (siblings), and age is a determining factor, so the terms are differentiated according to older brother or older sister. *Behen* (sister), *Didi* (older sister), *Bhaiya* (brother), *Bhai saab*, *Dada*

(older brother) (see Table 6). Sometimes the term *Chota bhai* is used to indicate younger brother and the term *Choti behen* is used to indicate younger sister if it is necessary.

There is no direct word for 'cousin' in Hindi, rather phrases like uncle's/aunt's son/daughter, are used to regard a cousin when there is a need to be specific, if not, then simply they are regarded as just *Bhai/Behan* (brother/sister). One may mention here that many families still live in the joint family structure, so cousins occupy an important place in each other's lives. There is almost no distinction at times between real brothers/ sisters and cousins. Therefore, they are easily referred to as just *Bhai/ Behen/ Didi/ Bhaisaab*. Table 10, however, is indicative of the specific terms that exist in the language to show the specific lineage of the cousin. This explanatory adjective is formed from the root word indicating the main relation. Example: *Chachera bhai* – cousin, father's brother's son. *Chachera* is formed from the word *Chacha* meaning father's younger brother. The table is illustrative of the various terms indicating relations at the level of the generation of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and cousins.

Table 10

Consanguineal kinship terms in Hindi: Younger generation (sons, daughters, siblings and cousins)

Relationship	Consanguineal kinship term
Son	Beta, Putr
Daughter	Beti, Putri
Brother	Bhaiya
Older brother	Bhai saab, Dada
Sister	Behan
Older sister	Didi, Behan ji
Father's brother's son (cousin)	Chachera bhai
Father's brother's daughter (cousin)	Chacheri behan
Father's sister's son (cousin)	Phuphera bhai
Father's sister's daughter (cousin)	Phupheri behan
Mother's brother's son (cousin)	Mamera bhai
Mother's brother's daughter (cousin)	Mameri behan
Mother's sister's son (cousin)	Mausera bhai
Mother's sister's daughter (cousin)	Mauseri behan

The Hindi language clearly demarcates kinship terms for grandchildren which consider the gender factor as well. However, if age needs to be indicated, then the adjectives *chota/ choti* (younger) or *bada/ badi* (older) need to be added. *Pota* (grandson), *Bada pota* (older grandson).

It should be mentioned that there are separate terms for the children of the son and daughter: son's son – *pota*, daughter's son – *nati/ nawasa*. Similarly, we can see different terms indicating nieces and nephews. (see Table 11).

Consanguineal kinship terms in Hindi: Junior generation (grandchildren, nephews and nieces)

Relationship	Consanguineal kinship term
Son's son	Pota
Daughter's son	Nati, Nawasa or Dohata
Son's daughter	Poti
Daughter's daughter	Natin, Nawasi or Dohati
Brother's daughter	Bhatiji,
Sister's daughter	Bhanji
Brother's son	Bhatija,
Sister's son	Bhanja

4.2.2. Affinal kinship terms in Hindi

As in the Syrian Arabic kinship system, affinal or non-blood relatives occupy an important place in the kinship system in Hindi as well and have specific terms for each relation. Whereas parents-in-law of the husband and wife are marked by the same term: *Sasur* (father-in-law of husband and wife), *Saas* (mother-in-law), the other relatives – daughter-in-law, son-in-law, spouses of aunts and uncles, etc. have their own specific affinal kinship terms. These kinship terms are indicative of a clear system coming down from generations and can best be illustrated through a table.

Affinal kinship terms in Hindi: Older generation (parents-in-law, uncles/aunts-in-law)

Relation	Affinal kinship term
Father-in-law (for the wife and husband)	Sasur
Mother-in-law (for the wife and husband)	Saas Saasu ma
Father's older brother's wife	Tai (ji)
Father's younger brother's wife	Chachi (ji)
Father's sister's husband	Phupha Phuphad (ji)
Mother's brother's wife (Maternal uncle's wife)	Mami, (ji)
Mother's sister's husband (Maternal aunt's husband)	Mausa (ji)
Husband's father's older brother(Husband's paternal uncle)	Taya, Tau (ji)
Husband's father's younger brother (Husband's paternal uncle)	Chacha, chachu (ji)
Husband's father's sister (Husband's paternal aunt)	Bhua (ji)
Husband's mother's brother (Husband's maternal uncle)	Mama, mamu
Husband's mother's sister (Husband's maternal aunt)	Mausi, masi (ji)
Wife's father's older brother Wife's paternal uncles	Taya, Tau (ji)
Wife's father's younger brother	Chacha, chachu (ji)
Wife's father's sister (Wife's paternal aunt)	Bhua (ji)
Wife's mother's brother (wife's maternal brother)	Mama, mamu
Wife's mother's sister (Wife's maternal aunt)	Masi

The above table indicates the specific terms for each relation. However, unlike the Syrian family system where the name for the husband's side of relations differ

from those of the wife's, the Hindi terms for them are the same (are not lexically distinguished). Husband's father's sister and wife's father's sister are both called *Bhua. Mama* or *Mamu* is used for husband's maternal brother and wife's maternal brother. Similarly, *Masi* is a husband's mother's sister and wife's mother's sister. In other words, in some cases relatives of a husband and wife are not distinguished lexically.

However, other affinal kinship terms change according to the relationship. They differ in lineage and age distinguishing older and younger brothers and sisters of husband and wife, e.g. *Jeth* (husband's older brother), *Jethani* (husband's older brother's wife), *Bhai saab* (wife's older brother), *Saala* (wife's younger brother), etc. (see Table 13). Brother's and sister's spouses also have their terms. It is interesting to note that in this case it is not their age but the age of one's brother or sister that is relevant e.g. *Bhabhi (ji)* (elder brother's wife), *Bhayo (*younger brother' wife), *Jija (ji)* (elder sister's husband), *Behnoi* (younger sisters' husband), etc. (see Table 13 for more details).

Table 13

Affinal kinship term in Hindi: Younger generation (brothers/sisters-in-law)

Relation	Affinal kinship term
Husband's sister	Nanad
Husband's older brother	Jeth
Husband's older brother's wife	Jethani
Husband's younger brother	Devar
Husbands younger brother's wife	Devarani
Wife's older brother	Bhai saab
Wife's younger brother	Saala
Wife's sister	Saali
Elder Sister's husband	Jija (ji)
Younger sisters' husband	behnoi
Elder brother's wife	Bhabhi (ji)
Younger brother' wife	Bhayo
Wife's brother's wife	Sehlaj
Wife's sister's husband	Saand or Humzulf
Husband's sister's husband	Nandoi

Son's wife and daughter's husband have the terms: *Bahu* and *Damad* or *Jamai* (Table 14). Parents of the son's wife and daughter's husband also have their specific terms. However, in this paper we have limited ourselves to those mentioned from Table 1 to 14.

Table 14

Affinal kinship terms in Hindi for spouses of children

Relation	Affinal kinship term
Son's wife (daughter-in-law)	Bahu
Daughter's husband (son-in-law)	Damad or Jamai

The above tables display an exhaustive list of all the terms that exist in the language structure in Hindi to clearly mark each relationship.

5. Discussion

The analysis of Arabic and Hindi kinship terms reveals that both languages have an elaborate system of such terms which indicate/specify each relationship. This may be explained by the fact that social life and identity in Syria and India are family-centered. Both Arabic and Hindi speaking families belong to the extended type of families. Besides parents and children, they comprise many other relatives and consist of those who are related to each other by either blood (consanguineal relations) or marriage (affinal relations).

The Syrian and Hindi kinship systems have distinct terms for paternal and maternal uncles, aunts and their children (see Tables 2, 3, 9 and 10). However, these systems do not always coincide. The Hindi kinship system distinguishes between paternal and maternal grandfathers and grandmothers while the Syrian kinship system lacks this distinction. To put it differently, in Syria, grandfathers, no matter whether they are father's father or mother's father, have the same kinship term, *Sidi/Jeddi/Jeddo* while in Hindi father's father is *dada* or *dadu* and mother's father is *nana* or *nanu*. It is interesting to note that lineage differences in both Syrian Arabic and Hindi can be observed on different levels. These differences are reflected on not only patrilineal and matrilineal lines but also on the daughter's, and son's, sister's and brothers' lineage. In both Syrian Arabic and Hindi, there are eight different terms for cousins, two terms for nephews and two terms for nieces (see Tables 3, 4, 10 and 11).

Though the age factor is important and showing respect to the elderly is one of the most important cultural values in both cultures, the Syrian kinship system is entirely age neutral, i.e., it does not reflect age difference, e.g., paternal uncles in Syria are addressed or referred to as *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) whether they are older or younger than one's father, and the same applies to other kinship terms. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Hindi kinship system seems to be very strict in terms of differentiating seniority levels and explicitly using the terms containing age differences in their semantics. Hindi has several terms denoting brothers, sisters, uncles and other relatives indicating age differences: *Behen* (sister), *Didi* (older sister), *Bhaiya* (brother), *Bhai saab* or *Dada* (older brother)**,** *Taya* or *Tau* (father's older brother), *Chacha, Chachu, Khaka* (father's younger brother), *Jeth* **(**husband's older brother), *Devar* (husband's younger brother), *Jethani* (husband's older brother's wife), *Devarani* (husband's younger brother's wife), etc. If there is no a specific term, an adjective *Bade* (older) or *Choti* (younger) is added, e.g. *Choti behen* (younger sister). Moreover, as was mentioned earlier, kinship terms are usually accompanied by the particle *ji, jee* which can also be considered their suffix, for conveying respect. Although it can be used in relation to everyone, for those who are older, it is obligatory.

As has been stated by scholars, the terms indicating older age are used to express "honorific politeness" (Leech & Larina 2014: 28) which are socially constrained and dependent on convention (ibid. 28–29). In other words, the Hindi kinship system demonstrates the tradition of observing the family hierarchy and expressing respect for the elder family members, which is deeply rooted in Indian society. However, at the same time, our findings let us assume that age differences between male relatives seem to be more important than between female relatives. E.g., if for paternal uncle there are two terms *Taya, Tau (ji)* (father's older brother) and *Chacha, chachu, Khaka (ji)* (father's younger brother), for paternal aunt there is only one term *Bhua* (father's sister).

The Syrian family is also hierarchical and showing respect to older family members is obligatory. Nevertheless, this respect is shown by the use of age neutral kinship terms. For instance, the use of *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) conveys both respect and closeness without any age indicating linguistic forms. It is worth mentioning that the suffix *-i* or *-o* (my) embedded in lexemes implies closeness and might be seen as an expression of politeness in Syrian Arabic.

As our findings show, affinal relatives are also an important part of the Syrian and Hindi speaking family relations. There are distinct terms for almost each relation in their kinship systems. While parents-in-law of the husband and wife's sides are marked by the same term in Syrian and Hindi, other relatives, such as daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, spouses of aunts and uncles, etc., have their own specific affinal kinship terms. These kinship terms are indicative of a clear system of kinship coming down from generations.

It is worth noting that consanguineal kinship terms can be used fictively to refer to or to address the affines in Syria. We attribute this practice to different reasons. Firstly, since acquaintances or even relatives who belong to the same generation of one's parents are addressed by kinship terms (e.g. maternal aunt), it is normal to find consanguineal kinship terms to address or refer to affinal relatives in order to show more closeness and respect. Secondly, it is normal for cousins to get married in Syria, i.e. parents-in-law can be also the actual uncles and aunts of sons and daughters-in-law. For example, *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) can be used for fathers-in-law and both *Amt/Amto* (my paternal aunt) and *Khalti/Khalto* (my maternal aunt) for mothers-in-law.

To some extent the Syrian Arabic kinship system seems to be more detailed than the Hindi system, at least concerning the terms indicating the husband's and wife's side of relations. Here are some examples to confirm this idea. While there are two terms in Syrian Arabic *Khalet Jouzi* for husband's mother's sister and *Khalet Marti* for wife's mother's sister, in Hindi there is one term Masi for both relatives. The same applies to the Syrian terms *Ammet Jouzi* for husband's father's sister and *Ammet marti* for wife's father's sister whereas the Hindi kinship system has one term only, *Bhua*, for husband's father's sister and wife's father's sister.

In this study we limited ourselves to the analysis of kinship terms denoting relatives. However, it is worth mentioning that the semantics of these terms is much

broader as they also denote people beyond the family circle. As indicated in dictionaries as well as by scholars (see, e.g., Mehrotra 1985: 43), the terms below are polysemantic, e.g. *Bhai sahab* (or *sahib*), *Bhaiya* can indicate elder brother, friend's elder brother, wife's elder brother, and elder man (of the society); *Didi* relates to elder sister, female teacher, elderly woman (of the society); *Kkaaka*/*Chachaa* to father's younger brother (uncle),father's friend, friend's father, and elderly man (of the society); *Kaakii*/*Chaachii* to father's younger brother's wife (aunty), friend's mother, father's friend's wife, and elderly woman (of the society), etc.

The same can be seen in Syrian Arabic, where kinship terms have extended their meanings and included those who are not family members, e.g., *Akhi* means, my brother, a male friend, brother's friend (male), male neighbor of the same age, and also male stranger of the same age; *Ukhti/Ekhti* means my sister, sister's friend (female), female friend, female neighbour of the same age and also female stranger of the same age; *Ammi/Ammo* (my paternal uncle) and *Khali/Khalo* (my maternal uncle) also mean a male of the same age of one's parents or older such as a parents' friend, neighbour, stranger, etc.; *Amti/Amto* (my paternal aunt) and *Khalti/Khalto* (my maternal aunt) can denote a female of the same age of one's parents or older such as a parents' friend, neighbour, stranger, etc.

We suppose that this phenomenon is rooted in the collectivist nature of the cultures under study where people are identified as members of a group rather than independent individuals. Being representatives of WE-culture and having WE-identity (Larina & Ozyumenko 2016, Larina et al 2017), they look at others as members of their big family.

The results have shown that kinship terms reflect identity, social position, gender, and represent the relationships reflected in the whole family or speech community (cf. Godelier 2012, Holmes 2013, Jones, 2010 and Rácz et al., 2020).

Concluding remarks

This study explores kinship term systems in the Syrian Arabic and Hindi languages. The findings have shown that both languages have an elaborate system of kinship terms which specify each relationship distinguishing between matrilineal and patrilineal relatives, consanguineal (blood) and affinal (non-blood) relatives. This indicates a collectivist type of culture (Hofstede 1984, 1991), with an extended family and high value assigned to close family relations. Therefore, such cultures need to identify the type of their relations. This fact also indicates that Syria and India are high-context cultures in terms of Hall (1976), which are relation-oriented and make a great distinction between insiders and outsiders. In the Indian culture, it appears to be crucial to specify also age differences, indicating a person with a higher status. Thus, the findings confirm the idea that "culture is one of the key determinants of sociolinguistic systems (i.e. systems of interpersonal communication within societies)" (Smakman 2019: 210).

The results of the present study have also confirmed that Syrian Arabic and Hindi belong to the largest terminology system, namely, the Sudanese kinship

system in which a separate designation for almost each relative is maintained[3]. Such types of systems are typical of cultures with status-oriented cultures (Ember & Ember 2011).

Our contrastive analysis has revealed both similarities and differences in the two language systems and shown that categories of kinship terminology have culture specific features based on cultural values and organisation of a society. They illustrate that kinship systems exhibit how the speakers of different languages perceive their social life and conceptualise their reality (Sharifian 2017, Wierzbicka 2013). The results confirm the idea that kinship terms are a component of "social grammar" (Malone 2004: 203). They exhibit both cultural meanings and cultural values, and are part of lingua-cultural identity.

Furthermore, the present paper illustrates the value of culture as a means in terms of examining the semantic structure of lexical categories of a given language. This approach might represent an implied manner by which culture influences not only language use, i.e. pragmatics, but also the word meaning, i.e. semantics (Gladkova & Larina 2018a, Wierzbicka 1992).

We have limited ourselves to an analysis of two systems of kinship terms. Exploring how these terms are used in communication could be the further prospects of our research.

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Bionotes:
Neelakshi SURYANARAYAN is Professor of Russian Language and Literature at the University of Delhi, Department of Slavonic and Finno-Ugrian Studies. Her research interests include language, culture and cognition, intercultural communication, cross-cultural pragmatics, address forms in different cultural contexts.

Contact information:
Delhi University
North Campus, Delhi, 110007
e-mail: nsuryanarayan@sfus.du.ac.in; s.neelakshi@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-6657-2533

Amr KHALIL is a postgraduate student at Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. His research interests include language, culture and communication, intercultural communication, (im)politeness theory, identity and address forms.
Contact information:
RUDN University
10/12 Miklukho-Maklaya, Moscow, Russia, 117198
e-mail: 1042185145@pfur.ru, windfall.roc13@hotmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-7012-8809

Сведения об авторах:
Нилакши СУРЬЯНАРАЯН – профессор кафедры славянских и финно-угорских языков Делийского университета. Ее исследовательские интересы включают взаимодействие языка, культуры и сознания, межкультурную коммуникацию, кросс-культурную прагматику, а также формы обращения в разных культурных контекстах.
Контактная информация:
Delhi University
North Campus, Delhi, 110007
e-mail: nsuryanarayan@sfus.du.ac.in; s.neelakshi@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-6657-2533

Амр ХАЛИЛЬ – аспирант Российского университета дружбы народов. Его исследовательские интересы включают взаимосвязь языка, культуры и коммуникации, межкультурную коммуникацию, теорию (не)вежливости, идентичность, формы обращения.
Контактная информация:
Российский университет дружбы народов
Москва, 117198, ул. Миклухо-Маклая, 10/12
e-mail: 1042185145@pfur.ru, windfall.roc13@hotmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-7012-8809