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LINGUOCULTURAL EQUIVALENCE OF RITUAL VOCABULARY IN ENGLISH AND KARAKALPAK: FROM LEXICAL CORRESPONDENCE TO CULTURAL MEANING

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ABSTRACT

Ritual vocabulary reflects the cultural life of a community and is closely related to its traditions and practices. Words and expressions used in weddings, funerals, family relations, greetings, and condolences may carry meanings that cannot be fully understood from their dictionary meanings alone. This is essential when ritual vocabulary from two different languages is compared. The article examines the relationship between English and Karakalpak ritual vocabulary. There is a particular focus on the problem of linguocultural equivalence. The material includes examples related mainly to wedding and funeral traditions and considers their meanings in different contexts.

Semantic, functional, contextual, and linguocultural approaches are taken into consideration while comparing the two languages. The comparison shows that English and Karakalpak do not always have direct equivalents for ritual vocabulary. In some cases, the meanings are quite close, while in others, an expression may have a similar function but be connected with a different cultural practice.

Some Karakalpak terms, such as betashar, are closely connected with traditions and cannot be fully translated into English with one equivalent word. Therefore, the comparison of ritual vocabulary requires attention not only to language, but also to customs, social relations, religious beliefs, and the cultural context in which particular expressions are used.

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Introduction

Some words may seem easy to translate until they are considered in their cultural context. This is particularly important with vocabulary related to rituals. A word can have a clear equivalent in another language, but the words may be associated with different traditions, social relationships, or expectations.

Wedding and funeral vocabulary clearly illustrates the issue. Marriage and death are universal experiences, but the ways people celebrate a marriage, welcome or introduce a bride, express sympathy, bury the dead, and remember deceased family members vary from one culture to another. These practices are influenced by local tradition, beliefs, and social norms, and the vocabulary used in such situations reflects this cultural background.

The relationship between language and culture has been widely discussed in linguocultural studies. Language not only describes cultural practices but also carries and preserve knowledge about them (Maslov,

2001; Vorobyev, 1997). In this respect, ritual vocabulary is particularly important because it can reveal information about social relationships, beliefs, customs, and culturally accepted forms of behavior.

Recent research on ritual language shows that the meaning of an expression depends on the situation in which it is used. Kádár (2024) discusses ritual language in relation ot interaction and context. *The Oxford Handbook of Ritual Language* also includes studies that consider ritual speech as part of social and cultural practices (Tavárez, 2024). This is important for cross-linguistic comparison because people in different cultures may have their own ways of expressing the same life events.

The problem can be noticed in the English word *bride* and the Karakalpak word *kelin*. Both words can describe a woman who is getting married, so they may seem to have the same meaning. However, *kelin* has additional cultural associations in Karakalpak society. It can refer to a woman's new position in her husband's family, her relationship with older member of the family, and responsibilities and expectations connected with this position. The English word *bride* does not normally include all of these meanings.

The same issue can be found when comparing *wedding ceremony* with the Karakalpak word *toy*. A *wedding ceremony* in English usually refers to the ceremony at which a marriage takes place. The meaning of *toy* can be wider. In the Karakalpak context, it may include not only the marriage ceremony but also the gathering of relatives and guests, traditional customs, food, speeches, wishes, music, and other parts of the celebration. For this reason, the two expressions can refer to a similar event, but they do not have exactly the same cultural meaning.

The difference can be easier to see in a term like *betashar*. There is no English word that can give the full meaning of this Karakalpak term. *Betashar* is a traditional part of a Karakalpak wedding. During this ceremony the bride is introduced to the members of her new family and to other people present at the wedding. Her new position in the family is also recognized through this ceremony. In addition to the bride, other people take part in the ritual, and certain words and actions are traditionally used. Thus, *betashar*, refers to more than just introducing the bride. It is the name of a particular cultural practice, and this makes direct translation difficult.

The same kind of problem can be found in words and expressions related to funerals. English speakers may say *My deepest condolences, We are sorry for your loss*, or *Rest in peace*. In Karakalpak, expressions such as *Kóńilińizge ortaqpız*, *Alla sabır bersin*, and *Alla raxmet etsin can be used in similar situations. They all express sympathy or address someone who has lost a relative. However, they are not identical in meaning. Some Karakalpak expressions are closely connected with religious beliefs, especially with the belief in Allah and prayers for the deceased. This part of their meaning is not necessarily present in the English expressions.*

For this reason, it is not always enough to compare ritual words only by their dictionary meanings. Two words may be used in a similar situation but still have different meanings for the people who use them. This is one of the main issues that needs to be considered when English and Karakalpak ritual vocabulary are compared.

This article examines different types of equivalence between English and Karakalpak ritual vocabulary. It pays particular attention to cases where a seemingly direct equivalent does not have the same cultural meaning. This article considers four main questions:

1. What types of equivalence can be found between the two languages?
2. Why do apparently equivalent words sometimes have different cultural meanings?
3. How does the ritual situation affect the way these expressions are used?
4. How can Karakalpak culture-specific terms be explained when English does not have a direct equivalent?

Materials and methods

The research is based on a qualitative comparison of selected English and Karakalpak ritual expressions connected mainly with weddings and funerals. The examples were selected because they

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illustrate different relationships between lexical meaning and cultural meaning.

The study follows a qualitative approach and focuses on selected ritual expressions in English and Karakalpak. It does not use a statistical corpus or questionnaire. The material was examined mainly through examples related to wedding and funeral traditions. The purpose was to understand what they mean, how they are used, and what cultural information they carry. The analysis was based on four main approaches.

1) Semantic analysis:

The first stage was to look at the basic meaning of the selected words and expressions. The analysis considered what or whom a particular unit refers to, such as a person, object, action, event or situation. The comparison then looked at meanings go beyond this basic level. For instance, *bride* and *kelin* can both refer to a woman who is getting married. However, *kelin* can be associated with her new place in the husband's family, her relationship with older relatives, and the expectations based placed on her in this position.

2) Functional analysis:

The second stage focused on how the expressions are actually used in ritual situations. This is especially important when dealing with congratulations, greetings, an condolences. For example, *Congratulations!* and *Qutlıqlaymız! are not direct lexical equivalents, but they can serve the same purpose when people congratulate someone ona wedding. The same can be said about My deepest condolences* and *Kóńilińizge ortaqpız. Their wording is different, but both expressions can be used to show sympathy to someone who has experienced a loss.*

3) *Linguocultural analysis:*

The third stage dealt with the cultural meanings of the selected units. Here, attention was given to customs, social role, religious beliefs, symbolic meanings, and forms of behavior connected with the expressions. This part of the analysis is particularly important when a word refers to a practice that is specific to one culture. For example, understanding betashar requires some knowledge of the Karakalpak wedding tradition because the meaning of the word is closely connected with the practice itself.

4) *Contextual analysis:*

The final stage considered how the expressions are used in their particular ritual context. A word may have a general meaning in everyday language but take on a more specific meaning when it is part of a ritual expression. For example, ring can refer to any ring, while wedding ring identifies a ring connected with marriage. In the same way, rest has a general meaning, but in Rest in peace, it forms part of a conversational expression used in situations related to death and remembrance.

Results and Analysis

Some English and Karakalpak ritual expressions refer to similar things and can therefore be considered relatively close equivalents. One example is ***wedding ring – neke júzigi*. Both expressions refer to a ring associated with marriage. They can also be related to ideas of marriage, commitment, and the relationship between spouses. In this sense, the two expressions correspond quite closely. However, their cultural associations are not necessarily the same, so they should not automatically be treated as complete equivalents.**

A similar case can be found with *bride – kelin*. Both words refer to a woman who is getting married, but the word *kelin* has some additional cultural associations in Karakalpak. It can refer to the woman's new position in her husband's family, her older family members, and the responsibilities that may come with this position. These meanings are not normally included in the English word bride. Thus, the basic reference is similar, while the wider cultural meaning is different.

The comparison between *wedding ceremony* and *toy* shows the difference more clearly. In English, wedding ceremony usually refers to the formal ceremony connected with marriage. The Karakalpak word *toy* can cover a much wider event. Depending on the situation, it may include the preparation or the *wedding*, the participation of relatives and guests, traditional customs, food and hospitality, congratulatory speeches, music and other forms of celebration and family interaction. For this reason, *wedding ceremony*

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and *toy* overlap in meaning, but they cannot always be treated as exact equivalents. In a simple comparison, *wedding ceremony* refers mainly to a particular ceremonial event, whereas *toy* can refer to a wider wedding celebration and the different activities connected with it. This difference is important in translation and comparative research. If *toy* is translated only as wedding ceremony, some of the cultural meaning of the Karakalpak term may be lost.

Similar difficulties can be seen in expressions such as *quda túsiw*, *sırǵa salıw*, and *kelin túsiriw*. These terms are connected with particular practices in the Karakalpak marriage tradition. It is possible to explain them in English using more general expressions, such translations may not include all the cultural information carried by the original terms. In many cases, a short English expression can describe what happens, but it cannot fully explain the tradition behind it.

At the same time, equivalent expressions do not have to be similar in their form. For example, ***Congratulations!*** **and** ***Qutlıqlaymız!*** look quite different linguistically, but when they are used at a wedding they have a similar purpose. Both are used to congratulate people and to express a positive attitude towards the occasion.

The Karakalpak expression *Oń bolsın!* provides another example of a culturally conventional positive wish. Its literal form is different from *Congratulations!* yet its use in appropriate situations can perform a similar supportive and congratulatory function.

These examples show why context is important in comparing ritual expressions. If the comparison is based only on the dictionary meaning of individual words, it is easy to overlook the function that an expression has in real communication. In ritual language, the situation in which a phrase is used can be just as important as its literal meaning.

Funeral vocabulary shows the same relationship between lexical meaning and cultural function. The expressions, ***My deepest condolences – Kóńilińizge ortaqpız***, are not literal translations of each other, but both can be used when expressing sympathy to a bereaved person. The difference becomes more visible in expressions containing religious references: ***Rest in peace – Alla raxmet etsin, We are sorry for your loss – Alla sabır bersin.*** The expressions may occur in similar situations, but their cultural content differs. *Alla raxmet etsin* directly refers to God. *Alla sabır bersin* also expresses a religious understanding of consolation. English expressions such as *We are sorry for your loss* can be used in religious or non-religious contexts and do not necessarily contain the same explicit reference. This means that functional equivalence does not necessarily mean cultural equivalence.

Another point worth considering is the people avoid direct reference to death. English has several expressions for this purpose, including *die*, *pass away*, *lose someone* and *rest in peace. These expressions are not interchangeable in every situation. For example, pass away is often preferred to die when speaking about someone's death because it sounds softer and is generally considered more appropriate in sensitive situations. Thus, the choice between these expressions is influenced not only by their dictionary meanings but also by the social situation and the feelings of the people involved.*

Karakalpak also uses indirect ways of talking about death. One example is dúnyadan ótiw, which is literally refers to leaving this world. Such expressions are often used instead of a direct word for death, especially when speaking about someone who has died. The choice of an indirect expression can be related to the sensitive nature of the topic and to the way people are expected to speak about the dead and their relatives.

This can also be seen in funeral conversations more generally. People usually choose their words carefully when talking to a bereaved family. A direct can expression may sound too harsh in such a situation, while an indirect or more respectful expression can make the conversation less painful. In this sense, funeral vocabulary is not only about the meaning of individual words. The situation, the relationship between the speakers, and cultural expectations all have an influence on how people express themselves.

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Discussion

The examples discussed above suggest that equivalence in ritual vocabulary cannot always be described simply as either present or absent. In many cases, the relationship between two expressions is more gradual. One expression may be close to another in its basic meaning, but differences can become noticeable when we consider how it is used and what it means within a particular culture. For this reason, the comparison in this study moves from lexical form and basic meaning to ritual function, cultural meaning, and finally the context in which the expression is used.

The comparison of *bride* and *kelin* is a good example. At the basic level, both words refer to woman who is getting married. The two words have a shared basic reference, but *kelin* can activate a wider cultural understanding of family and social position. The pair *wedding ceremony – toy* shows a different problem. Here, the main difference concerns the scope of the event represented by the words. The Karakalpak term can cover a larger cultural complex than the English expression. The pair *Congratulations! – Qutlıqlaymız!* demonstrates functional equivalence. The expressions do not have the same structure, but they can perform the same social action in a wedding context.

A ritual expression cannot always be understood correctly when removed from the situation in which it is used. The word *ring*, for example, is not automatically a wedding term. It becomes part of wedding vocabulary when it occurs in a relevant expression such as *wedding ring* or within a wedding context. The same applies to words such as *dress*, *blessing*, *reception*, and *rest*. Context determines whether they have an ordinary meaning or a culturally specific ritual interpretation. This observation is consistent with recent research on ritual language, which emphasizes the relationship between linguistic form, interaction and ritual context (Kádár, 2024; Tavárez, 2024).

Another important point is that comparison should work in both directions. It would be inappropriate to describe Karakalpak words as culturally specific while treating English words as culturally neutral. English also contains vocabulary that reflects particular cultural practices.

For example, *bridesmaid*, *best man*, *wedding vows*, *wedding reception*, and *memorial service* are not simply neutral descriptions. They are connected with particular social practices and cultural expectations. Therefore, both linguistic systems should first be examined within their own cultural contexts. Only after this should the researcher establish similarities and differences between them. This approach is consistent with research on cultural scripts and intercultural communication, where linguistic practices are understood as culturally situated rather than measured against a single universal model (Gladkova & Larina, 2018; Wierzbicka, 2002).

If a language contains a word for a particular ritual practice and another language does not, this tells us something about the way the two communities organize and represent social experience. *Betashar* is a useful example. The absence of a single English word with exactly the same meaning does not mean that English cannot describe the practice. It means that the practice is not lexicalized in English in the same way. The researcher can therefore use an explanatory phrase, retain the original term, or combine both approaches depending on the purpose of the text. This is particularly important in translation. A translator should not always try to force a culturally specific term into a single target-language word. Sometimes explanation is the more accurate solution.

Ritual vocabulary can also preserve traces of cultural history. Traditional practices may change over time, but the words associated with them can remain in the language. For this reason, terms such as *betashar*, *quda túsiw*, *sırǵa salıw*, and *kelin túsiriw* are valuable not only for linguistic research but also for understanding cultural memory. Research on ritual more generally shows that rituals help communities maintain social relationships and transmit culturally meaningful practices (Xygalatas, 2022). Language is an important part of this process because ritual practices are often accompanied by conventional words, formulas, wishes, blessings, and expressions of sympathy.

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Conclusion

The comparison of English and Karakalpak ritual vocabulary shows that linguistic equivalence and cultural equivalence are not always the same thing. Two words may refer to a similar person, object, or event while carrying different cultural associations. Conversely, two expressions that look completely different may perform a similar function in a ritual situation.

The analysis identifies four useful types of correspondence: relatively close equivalence, partial equivalence, functional equivalence, and cultural lacunae.

The examples of *bride – kelin* and *wedding ceremony – toy* demonstrate that cultural meaning may extend beyond the basic dictionary meaning of a word. *Congratulations! – Qutlıqlaymız!* shows that similar ritual functions can be expressed through very different linguistic forms. Funeral expressions such as *My deepest condolences* and *Kóńilińizge ortaqpız* demonstrate a similar relationship between communicative function and cultural form.

The findings suggest that ritual vocabulary should be studied through several connected levels: **meaning, function, context, cultural associations, and social significance.** A comparison that stops at dictionary equivalence risks losing precisely the cultural information that makes ritual vocabulary valuable. For this reason, the study of English and Karakalpak ritual vocabulary should move from a simple question of "What is the equivalent of this word?" to a broader question: **"What cultural meaning and ritual function does this word carry in its own linguistic community?"**

Such an approach can contribute to comparative linguistics, translation studies, intercultural communication, and the documentation of Karakalpak cultural vocabulary. It also demonstrates that culture-specific words are not merely difficult translation items. They are linguistic evidence of how communities understand family, marriage, death, social relationships, and other important parts of human life.

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