

## **An Ethnosemantic Study of Affinal Kinship Terms In Arabic and Arab Culture**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study explores the affinal (marriage kinship) relations and terminologies in Arab culture ethnosemantically. The affinal kinship terminologies represent the second basic taxonomy of kinship relations in every culture. The study includes a qualitative analysis by adopting the ethnosemantic or Cultural Domain Analysis (CDA) approach to fulfil the aims of this study. This approach helps researchers to identify and discuss the main terminologies of affinal kinship domain used in Arab culture. The study is based on data collected from the Holy Quran and some Arabic philology books. The study of this social domain in Arab culture is very useful to perceive and transfer people's culture to other communities. Moreover, recognizing and understanding certain culture's domains and norms may help people from other cultures avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding of other's cultures and help use the suitable items based on certain contexts. The findings of this study emphasised the importance of studying this domain as a socio-cultural phenomenon that may help distinguish the main terminologies of marriage relations in Arab culture.*

**Keywords:** ethnosemantics; Arabic kinship terms; marriage; Arab culture

## 1. Introduction

Many anthropologists, philologists and rhetoricians believe that each culture has its own way of classifying, describing and understanding concepts, terms and norms that are in close contact with everyday life of people. Thus, to understand each other better in a speech community, one needs to further investigate the cultural domains within that culture or society. This view is based on an approach in anthropology called Cultural Domain Analysis (CDA) which is considered as the late-model version of *ethnoscience* or *ethnosemantics*. Bernard (2011, p. 223) stated that “the goal of ethnoscience was to understand cultural systems of classification-that is, how people in a group think about lists of things that somehow go together”. These issues which are culturally specific may include different physical or emotional domains such as plants, food, kinship, colours, dreams, and emotions. Each domain of these specific classes has its own system of categories or items that may be different from culture to culture. The study of these domains in any culture is very valuable to perceive and transfer people’s culture to other communities.

According to Kephart (2006), ethnosemantics is defined as “the scientific study of the ways in which people label and classify the social, cultural, and environmental phenomena of their world” (p. 865). Kephart added that ethnosemantic studies are important to discover and “find universal constraints on the ways in which humans deal linguistically with their environments” (p. 865). In this context, Srivastava (2013) mentioned that ethnosemantics deals with “the study of meanings attached to specific classes or terms used by members of a group” (43). Srivastava (2013, pp. 43-44) pointed out that

ethnosemantics concentrates on the meaning of categories of reality and folk taxonomies to the people who use them as their basis of action. The underlying assumption of ethnosemantics is that the categories designated by a language adequately reflect the entire range of things

important to a people within a sociocultural system. This assumption is far from [a] universally accepted fact.

This indicates that ethnosemanticists aim to analyse and probe the meanings of the lexemes of certain social domains that people may use in their culture. Then, they designate some categories and taxonomies for these lexemes. Generally, one can say that ethnosemantics attempts to search the minute details of people's way of life, traditions and customs by classifying the lexemes used in their culture.

Scholars, such as Malinowski (1922), Sapir (1949), Hymes (1974), Srivastava (2005), Jourdan and Tuite (2006), Wardhaugh (2006) and Wodak, Johnstone and Kerswill (2011), mentioned that ethnosemantics is a concept that combines linguistic and anthropological disciplines. Sturtevant (1964) and Geertz (2003) pointed out that ethnosemantics mainly explores how social agents recognise, produce, and reproduce social behaviours and structures. Crystal (2008) added that ethnosemantics studies the way meaning of certain words is structured in different cultural settings (e.g. in relation to the expression of kinship terms (henceforth KTs), colour terms) and looks into the principles that govern the culturally conditioned semantic variations. Therefore, Geertz (2003, p. 313) stated that the main purpose of ethnosemantics "is to develop a cultural grammar based on formal, taxonomic and paradigmatic principles"; moreover, it seeks explanation rather than interpretation of facts. Generally, the study of ethnosemantics determines the regular semantic features of a cultural group.

One of the common domains that all languages and cultures may share is the domain of kinship. Thus, various studies have been adopted by anthropologists, linguists and ethnosemanticists in order to explore the lexemes people may use to address, describe or refer to their relatives. Most languages if not all may share certain common basic KTs, such as *father*, *mother*, *brother*, and *sister*; but societies may have different kinship systems. Ferraro and Andreatta (2010) affirmed that kinship system in each culture is at the heart of the social structure that helps regulate marriage relations, inheritance, social status and residence.

The researchers of this study attempt to investigate an important domain of ethnosemantics in Arab culture represented by the affinal KT's which are very sensitive and important in regulating the structure of Arab culture. The study includes a qualitative analysis by adopting the ethnosemantic or CDA approach to identify and discuss the main terminologies of affinal kinship domain that are used in Arab culture. It shows further the structure and the context of these terminologies and how they vary within the main domain or subdomains. Furthermore, the researchers intend to examine the affinal kinship terminologies in Arab culture in order to help people and scholars of other cultural backgrounds better understand these terminologies and facilitate cross-cultural communication.

The collected data are extracted from the Holy Quran and some Arabic philology books. The researchers have chosen these readymade data because they represent both the classical and Standard Arabic language in which all Arab communities may share and understand. Therefore, it is hoped that the results obtained from this study will provide detailed explanation of the semantic meanings of the affinal kinship domain in the Arab culture.

## **2. Kinship System**

Kinship is considered a major core in different fields, including anthropology, sociology and ethnosemantics because it elucidates the social relations among people. Anthropologists generally claim that KT's consist of three different basic relations namely, descent (vertical kin links between different generations), siblingship (kin links between brothers and sisters), and affinity (kin relation by and through marriage) (Parkin, 1997). Recent anthropological and linguistic studies have added another type of kinship, particularly in Islamic and Arab societies, that is, *milk kinship* (Clarke, 2009; El-Guindi, 2012).

Schusky (1965) explained that the study of kinship is important for anthropologists in different social means. First, most theories on human behaviour can be studied through kinship systems. Second, such study is related to historical reconstructions in which language cannot be constructed without knowledge on any particular kinship practices. Third, the study of kinship allows

anthropologists to explain the behaviour of people and how they can recognise their kinship system. Lastly, one cannot understand how people view the world or part of it without analysing the meaning of KT's (Schusky, 1965). Agha (2007) stated that the idiom of kinship may serve as a descriptive and analytic background in discussing the regularities of meaningful social behaviours, including marriage patterns, inheritance, co-residence and affiliation. All these aspects of life may form a kinship system that can be considered a genealogical foundation that underlies the patterns of behaviour in various spheres of social life.

Contemporary anthropologists in the twentieth century, such as Murdock (1965), Levi-Strauss (1963; 1969), Schneider (1984), Parkin (1997) and Read (2013) stated that in order to make the study of kinship terminology alive, there should be a systematic analysis of kinship. Thus, kinship system should be formulated not only from biological categories, but also from different social categories such as marriage system, descent system, gender, and age. Such social categories are typically related to each other in any given society. In this regard, Murdock (1965) defined a kinship system as "a structured system of relationships, in which individuals are bound one to another by complex interlocking and ramifying ties" (p. 92). Beattie (1964) stated that a kinship system is not a matter of gathering different and mutually exclusive terms of genealogical and social relationship. Moreover, relationships of kinship cannot be identified in isolation from other social domains such as religion, politics, and economics. Therefore, kinship system should provide a detailed framework of life, and this can be done only by a systematic study of the language, values and behaviour of the people who have such a system.

According to Schusky (1965), the basic element that is responsible for organizing kinship systems in any society is based on the "nuclear family", or the relationship between the parents of such a family and their children. Thus, the study of kinship system requires the investigation of the relationship of a particular individual, whether male or female is conventionally nominated as *Ego*, with other members of the society. The term *Ego* here refers to the central male or

female person from whom the series of relationships are established and seen (Haviland, Prins, Walrath and McBride, 2008). This indicates that the nuclear family may be regarded as the main foundation of all human societies. Within the domain of the nuclear family, sociologists and anthropologists have identified three central kinship domains represented by consanguineal or blood relationship, affinal or marriage relationship and fictive or metaphorical kin relationship. Morgan (1871) affirmed that the systems of kinship are mainly built on the nuclear family and without it kinship terminologies could not be formulated or understood.

Pertaining to the Islamic and Arab system of kinship relations, Muslim and Arab scholars recognise four forms of kinship قرابة النسب او الدم *qarābah al-nasab or al-dam* (descent or blood kinship), قرابة السبب او المصاهرة *qarābah al-sabab or al-musaaharah* (marriage kinship), قرابة اللبن او ال رضاعة *qarābah al-laban or al-ridaa* (milk or breastfeeding kinship), and القرابة الوضعية *al-qarābah al-wad'iyah* (fictive or metaphorical kinship). The study of these forms of kinship is very important to identify and regulate some kinship matters such as incest taboo relations, inheritance, and adoption (Clarke, 2009; El-Guindi, 2012). This classification is based on the following Quranic verses which affirm this fact (Examples 1-4).

### Example 1: Forms of kinship in the Holy Quran (descent and marriage)

" وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا " (الفرقان: 54)

(It is He Who has created man from water: then has He established relationships of lineage and marriage: for thy Lord has power (over all things). [Sūrat al-fur'qān (The Criterion), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 25:54)]

### Example 2: Forms of kinship in the Holy Quran (descent, marriage and milk)

" وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاجِشَةً وَمَعْتًا وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا {22} حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأُخْتِ وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمْ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ مِنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبَائِبُكُمْ اللَّاتِي فِي حُجُورِكُمْ مِمَّنْ نَسَأْتِكُمُ اللَّاتِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَخَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا {23} ". (النساء: 22-23)

(And marry not women whom your fathers married,- except what is past: It was shameful and odious,- an abominable custom indeed{22}. Prohibited to you (For marriage) are:- Your mothers, daughters, sisters; father's sisters, Mother's sisters; brother's daughters, sister's daughters; foster-mothers (Who gave you suck), foster-sisters; your wives' mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in,- no prohibition if ye have not gone in;- (Those who have been) wives of your sons proceeding from your loins; and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past; for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful {23}). [Sūrat An-Nisā' (The Women), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 4:22-23)]

### Example 3: Forms of kinship in the Holy Quran (fictive)

”وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ“ ( الاحزاب: 5 )

(Nor has He made your adopted sons your sons. Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths. But Allah tells (you) the Truth, and He shows the (right) Way). [Sūrat al-aḥzāb (The Combined Forces), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 33:4)].

### Example 4: Forms of kinship in the Holy Quran (fictive)

”ادْعُوهُمْ لِآبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ“ ( الاحزاب: 5 )

(Call them by (the names of) their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah. But if ye know not their father's (names, call them) your Brothers in faith, or your maulas). [Sūrat al-aḥzāb (The Combined Forces), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 33:5)]

In Example 1, two forms of kinship have been recognised represented by the Arabic terms *nasab* (relation of blood) and *shihir* (relation of marriage). In Example 2, three forms of kinship are inferred as indicated by certain KT's. These forms that are explicated by the KT's for each form are shown in Table 1 below. In Examples 3 and 4, a fictive or metaphorical kinship form *al-qarābah al-wad'iyah* is implicitly indicated based on considering the adopted children as having unreal kinship relation. The adopted children should be metaphorically regarded as either brother/ sister in faith or *mawlā* (helper or a freed slave) (Badawi & Abdel-Haleem, 2008). The current study is restricted to study the affinal kinship domain within the Arab culture because of its various ethnosemantic aspects and importance in Arab communities.

**Table 1: Kinship forms in Example 2**

No.	Blood or descent terms	Affinal kinship terms	Milk kinship terms
1.	أَبَاؤُكُمْ <i>Abaokum</i> (Ego's fathers)	أُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ <i>Ommahatu nisa-ikum</i> (Ego's wives' mothers)	أُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ <i>Ommahatukumu allatee ardaanakum</i> (Ego's foster-mothers)
2.	أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ <i>Ommahatukum</i> (Ego's mothers)	رَبَائِبِكُمْ <i>Raba-ibukumu</i> (Ego's stepdaughters or wife's daughters)	أَخَوَاتُكُمْ مِنَ الرِّضَاعَةِ <i>Akhawatukum minal Arradaa</i> (Ego's foster-sisters)
3.	بَنَاتُكُمْ <i>Banatum</i> (Ego's daughters)	حَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمْ <i>Hala-ilu abna-ikum</i> (Ego's daughters-in law or Ego's sons' wives)	
4.	أَخَوَاتُكُمْ <i>Akhawatukum</i> (Ego's genetic sisters)	اِخْتٌ or تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ <i>Okhtal Alzawjha</i> (wife's sisters or sisters-in-law)	
5.	عَمَّاتُكُمْ <i>Ammatukum</i> (Ego's paternal aunts )	زَوَاجَاتُ آبَائِكُمْ <i>Zawja'at Abaokum</i> (fathers' wives or stepmothers)	
6.	خَالَاتُكُمْ <i>khalatukum</i> (Ego's maternal aunts)		
7.	بَنَاتُ الْأَخِ <i>Banatu al-akhi</i> (Ego's brother's daughters)		
8.	بَنَاتُ الْأَخْتِ <i>Banatu al-okhti</i> (Ego's sister's daughters)		

### 3. Affinal Kinship Domains in Arabic

Affinal kinship domain is established through marriage or what anthropologists call *affinal relationship* when a husband and a wife are tied by a marital union to produce a nuclear family. In this relation, the husband establishes new kin relatives with other family members of his wife such as his wife's parents, brothers, sisters, and many other members. The wife is also obtaining new kin relatives that are related to her husband's parents, brothers and sisters according to this affinal relation. Thus, marriage relation is a fundamental process in all human societies, particularly in Arab culture whereby it is always connected with the legitimization and distribution of children within these societies. Nanda and



Warms (2012) defined marriage as the most important social institution that “refers to the customs, rules, and obligations that establish a socially endorsed relationship between adults and children and between the married couple’s kin groups” (p. 154). Thus, the main function of marriage with regard to this definition is to create social relationships between the two families, regulate sexual relations by defining the rights and duties of each party, and to legitimise the newborn children resulting from this marriage relation. In this regard, Parkin (1997) stated that marriage relation is not only a matter of a prototypical or an institutionalised relationship between a man and a woman, but it forms the axis of an alliance relationship between families, communities, descent groups, or other social, religious, political, and economic groupings. Thus, Arab rhetoricians, philologists and linguists have named this form of kinship as مصاهرة *musaaharah* which literally means *to melt down or to make an alliance between two parties, groups or families*.

Levi-Strauss (1969) stated that a kinship system of any society is merely resulted from a set of marriage rules. It represents the base of all social organisations of all societies. In addition, Kronenfeld (2001) mentioned that understanding kinship systems in any language is very vital “to an understanding of the broader social, political, economic and symbolic issues that concern today’s anthropology”(p.148). In discussing kinship systems, anthropologists use different basic terminologies of kinship that are used to define familial relationships in a given society. In this paper, the researchers attempt to identify the affinal kinship terminologies with the interrelated subdomain of *polygamy* in Arab culture to study their ethnosemantic meanings and structures. In the next subsections, the researchers will discuss the basic affinal KT and the affinal KT that are related to *polygamy*.

### **3.1 Basic Affinal Kinship Terms**

Generally, the act of marriage in Islamic and Arab culture is denoted by different terms and expressions. Thus, the noun phrase الزواج *al-Zawaaj* (marriage) which denotes an act of marriage in Arabic language may have different

synonymous terms that are used in the Arab culture. The use of these terms which refer to marriage relationships depends on the setting of an utterance (Husam al-Deen, 2000). These terms that are often used in the Arab culture include:

1. القرآن *al-Qiran* (marriage, literally means conjugated or coupled with): this term may be used in certain situations to refer to the marriage contract as عقد القرآن *Aqd al-Qiran* (marriage contract). That is to say when a person connects between two things or persons by one bond.

2. النكاح *al-Nika'h*' (marriage): this term is interchangeably used with the term الزواج *al-Zawa'aj* (marriage) when conducting marriage contracts in the Arab culture. Thus, marriage contract is called عقد النكاح *Aqd Al-Nika'h*, particularly in a social and religious marriage ceremony (Al-Tabrasi, n.d.; Al-Najafi, n. d.).

3. الأملاك *al-Emla'ak* (marriage, literally make her owned by): this term is seldom used by some Arabs; it is used here to indicate that a man will be the owner of the wife and he should treat her kindly since she will be under his ownership (Husam al-Deen, 2000).

4. البضع *al-Buḍa'* (means an act of marriage and a sexual relationship): this term is of a very little use among the Arabs. It is mainly used to denote a sexual relationship between a man and his wife (Husam al-Deen, 2000).

5. الوطاء *al-Waṭa'a* (means marriage, literally sleep with or sexual relationship): this term refers to the act of preparing a bed for marriage with an agreement of both man and woman to have a marriage relationship (Husam al-Deen, 2000).

6. البناء *al-Bina'a* (to consummate the marriage (with a woman), literally house or building a home): when a man marries a woman, he builds on her, i.e., wife, which means *he marries her* (Cowan, 1976; Husam al-Deen, 2000).

As for the affinal KTs that are resulted from an act of marriage, the following is a list of the basic affinal KTs that are mentioned in the Holy Quran and Arabic philology books. The researchers identified 17 affinal terms that are mainly used by the Arabs.

### 1. زَوْج *zawj* (husband)

Linguistically, the term *zawj* (husband) is mainly used to refer to a male husband in the Arab culture. It is derived from the root noun زَوْجَ (z-w-j) *zawaja* which has

five morphological forms. The root of this term has different semantic meanings such as "pair, double, two things which are connected in some way; spouse, one of a pair; a species, type" (Badawi & Abdel-Haleem, 2008, p. 405). When the term زَوْج *zawj* (husband) is mentioned in a plural form as أَزْوَاج 'azwaaj (spouses), it refers to both زوج *zawj* (husband) and زوجة *zawjah* (wife) (Badawi & Abdel-Haleem, 2008). Thus, the term أَزْوَاج 'azwaaj (spouses) is a neutral term that refers to married males and females, and to two things or entities that are connected in a certain way. The meanings of this term can be clarified in the following Quranic verses (Examples 5-8):

**Example 5: The term زَوْج *zawj* has a meaning of a *husband***

"قَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِي تُجَادِلُكَ فِي زَوْجِهَا" (المجادلة: 1)

(Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with thee concerning her husband). [Sūrat al-mujādilah (She That Disputeth), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 58:1)]

**Example 6: The term زَوْج *zawj* has a meaning of a *wife***

"وَيَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ" (الاعراف: 19)

(O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden). [Sūrat al-a'rāf (The Heights), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 7:19)]

**Example 7: The term زَوْج *zawj* has a meaning of a *pair***

"وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا" (النبا: 8)

(And (have We not) created you in pairs). [Sūrat al-naba (The Great News), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 78:8)]

**Example 8: The term زَوْج *zawj* has a meaning of a *kind or type***

"وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ" (لقمان: 10)

(We send down rain from the sky, and produce on the earth every kind of noble creature, in pairs). [Sūrat luq'mān, (Ali, Trans., 1937, 31:10)]

Structurally, the KT **زَوْجِ *zawj*** (husband) is a monolexic term that is composed of one lexeme and is indivisible. Functionally, this KT is mainly used as a term of reference; it is rarely used as a term of address in Arabic language (Yassin, 1977).

The KT **زَوْجِ *zawj*** (husband) can be denoted and substituted by the use of other terms that indicate a male husband. These terms that refer to this KT have been mentioned by different Quranic verses as well as some other Arabic philology books. These terms include the following:

- a. **رَجُلٍ *rajul* (man)** [pl. رجال *rijāl* (men)]: this term literally refers to a man, manhood, and masculinity. It is interchangeably used by Arab people to refer to the husband of a woman in everyday speech as exemplified in this Quranic verse:

**Example 9: The term رَجُلٍ *rajul* (man) that denotes a husband**

"الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ" (النساء: 34)

(Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard). [Sūrat al-nisāa (The Women), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 4:34)]

- b. **الْبَعْلِ *al-Ba'al* (husband)**: this term is mainly used to refer to a husband as indicated in the following Quranic verse below. However, it may have other meanings such as “unirrigated palm trees, a male palm tree; a husband, a wife; to marry; courtship; master, deity” (Badawi & Abdel-Haleem, 2008, p. 103).

**Example 10: The term بَعْلِ *Ba'al* that denotes a husband**

"قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتَىٰ أَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا" (هود: 72)

(She said: "Alas for me! shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man?). [Sūrat hūd (Hud), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 11:72)]

- c. **السيد** *al-Sayyid* (the master): this term literally refers to master, notable man and leader. In certain contexts, this term is used to indicate a husband in order to focus on the superior status of the husband within a family (Cowan, 1976; Husam al-Deen, 2000). This term has been mentioned in the Holy Quran to indicate this fact as seen in the following Quranic verse:

**Example 11: The term **السيد** *al-Sayyid* (the master) that denotes a husband**

"واستبقا الباب وقدت قميصه من دبر وألفيا سيدها لدى الباب" (يوسف: 25)

(And they both raced to the door, and she tore his shirt from the back, and they found her husband at the door). [Sūrat yūsuf (Joseph), (Sahih International, Trans., 1997, 12:25)]

- d. **القرين** *al-Qarin* (husband or spouse): this term means a close companion but in certain contexts this term is used to indicate a husband or a spouse.
- e. **القيم** *al-Qaim* (curator): this term is literally used to refer to a person who is responsible for, take care of or in charge of somebody else. Thus, this term is mainly used to refer to a husband because he is responsible for and take care of his wife. This fact is indicated in Example 9 by the use of the word **قَوَّامُونَ** (pl. of **قيم** or **قَوَّام**) which means that husbands are in charge of their wives (Badawi & Abdel-Haleem, 2008).
- f. **الحليل** *al-ḥalil* (a lawful man): this term refers to a person (husband) who is religiously and legally lawful for a woman (wife). This is indicated in the following Quranic verse:

**Example 12: The term **الحليل** *al-ḥalil* (a lawful man) that denotes a husband**

«فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ» (المتحنة: 10)

(if ye ascertain that they are Believers, then send them not back to the Unbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the Unbelievers, nor are the (Unbelievers) lawful (husbands) for them). [Sūrat al-mum'taḥanah (The Woman to be examined), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 60:10)]

g. **العشير *al-'ashir* (companion)**: this term refers to the husband who accompanied his wife during his marriage life with her (Husam al-Deen, 2000). This term is mentioned in the following Prophetic Hadith by referring to *العشير al-'ashir* as a husband.

**Example 13: The term *العشير al-'ashir* (companion) that denotes a husband**

«عن ابن عباس، قال: قال النبي صلى الله عليه واله سلم: «أرأيت النار فإذا أكثر أهلها النساء، يكفرن» قيل: «يكفرن بالله؟ قال: « يكفرن العشير، ويكفرن الإحسان، لو أحسنت إلى إحداهن الدهر، ثم رأيت منك شيئا، قالت: ما رأيت منك خيرا قط» (صحيح البخاري: الفصل 19، حديث 29)

(Narrated Ibn Abbas: The Prophet said: "I was shown the Hell-fire and that the majority of its dwellers were women who were ungrateful." It was asked, "Do they disbelieve in Allah?" (or are they ungrateful to Allah?) He replied, "They are ungrateful to **their husbands** and are ungrateful for the favors and the good (charitable deeds) done to them. If you have always been good (benevolent) to one of them and then she sees something in you (not of her liking), she will say, 'I have never received any good from you.'" [(Sahih Bukhari: Chapter XIX: 29, On [women's] ingratitude to their husbands, and ingratitude after ingratitude).

h. **العروس *al-'arus* (bride and groom)**: this term is used in certain contexts, particularly at the time of a wedding ceremony to refer to both husband and wife in Arab culture (Al-Zubaidi, 1966; Cowan, 1976).

## 2. زوجة *zawjah* (wife)

Linguistically, the term *zawjah* (wife) is derived from the masculine base noun *زوج zawj* (husband) and indicated by the addition of the suffix *المربوطة (-ة)* *taa' almarbuuta* to form and refer to the *zawjah* (wife) (Badawi & Abdel-Haleem, 2008, p. 405). The feminine form of this term can be also indicated by the

term **زَوْج** *zawj* (husband) in certain contexts. The plural form of this term is either to use the plural feminine form **زَوَاجَات** *zawjat* (wives) or the neutral plural form **أَزْوَاج** *'azwaaj* (spouses).

Structurally, the KT **زَوْجَة** *zawjah* (wife) is a monolexic term that is composed of one lexeme plus the suffix **التاء المربوطة (ة)** *taa' almarbuuta*. Functionally, this KT is mainly used as a term of reference; it is sometimes used as a term of address in Arabic language (Yassin, 1977).

This KT is mostly substituted by using some other terms that refer to a wife. The substituted terms are used in certain contexts for social or euphemistic purposes. Arabic language scholars stated that it is not customary for men to call or use the names of other men's wives or to refer to them explicitly; it is regarded a taboo act. Thus, in the Arab culture men tend to use some euphemistic words or expressions to refer to these women. These terms include the following:

- a. **امراة** *'imra'ah* (woman): this term is mainly used to refer to a man's wife instead of using the term **زَوْجَة** *zawjah* (wife) as in the following Quranic verse:

**Example 14: The term **امراة** *'imra'ah* (woman) that denotes a wife**

"قَالَتْ **امْرَأَتُ** الْعَزِيزِ الْآنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ" (يوسف: 51)

(Said the 'Aziz's **wife**: "Now is the truth manifest (to all) ). [Sūrat Yūsuf (Joseph), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 12:51)]

- b. **الاهل** *al-'ahl* (wife or kinsfolk): this term refers to different familial relations such as family, household, people, kin, inhabitants, and wife. Badawi and Abdel-Haleem (2008, p. 61) affirmed that this term is primarily used as a euphemistic term to refer to a wife as mentioned in the following Quranic verse:

**Example 15: The term **الاهل** *al-'ahl* (wife) that denotes a wife**

"قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَنْ يُسْجَنَ" (يوسف: 25)

(She said: "What is the (fitting) punishment for one who formed an evil designed against thy wife, but prison ...?". [Sūrat Yūsuf (Joseph), (Ali, Trans., 1937, 12:25)].

According to Cowan (1976) and Husam al-Deen (2000), there are other terms used in Arabic that refer to the KT زوجة *zawjah* (wife). These include the following ones:

- c. العقيلة *al-'aqilah* (man's wife)
- d. الجارة *al-Jarah* (wife, literally the neighbouress)
- e. القعيدة *al-Qa'idah* (wife, literally woman companion)
- f. الرَبَضُ *al-Rabaḍu* (wife, literally a place where a person lie down to rest)
- g. الشاعية *al-Sha'a* (man's wife, literally the follower or supporter)
- h. العروس *al-'arus* (bride)
- i. الحليلة *al-Halilah* (wife)
- j. ام العيال *umm al-'iyal* (wife, literally the mother of children)
- k. القرينة *al-Qarinah* (wife or spouse)
- l. الطَّلَّة *al-ṭallah* (wife, literally dew or light rain)
- m. الحَنَّة *al-Hanatu* (man's wife, literally compassion)
- n. الفراش *al-Firaash* (wife, literally bed or cover)
- o. البيت *al-Bait* (wife, literally house or family)
- p. الإزار *al-Izaar* (wife, literally loincloth or cover)
- q. الخلة *al-ḥullah* (wife, literally dress or clothing)
- r. اللباس *al-Libas* (wife and woman, literally dress)

Generally, the meaning of most of these words depicts marriage relationship in a way that is based on respect, sympathy, love, and intimacy



between the husband and his wife. Therefore, these terms that refer to women in the Arab culture have emotional and psychological connotative meanings that reflect the context and the environment of the Arab culture (Cowan, 1976; Husam al-Deen, 2000). The researchers believe that these meanings and their emotional associations are used to honour the status of the women in the Arab and Muslim societies.

3. أبو الزوجة أو الزوج (father-in-law/ father of one's husband or wife): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes أبو *abu* (father) plus الزوج *zawj* (husband) or زوجة *zawjah* (wife) to denote or refer to a specific relative, i.e., father of one's spouse. This term may be substituted by other monolexic KTs by using the terms الحمو *alhamuu* (father-in-law) (literally means a protector), الصهر *al-ṣīhir* and العم *al'amm* (paternal uncle). The substituted KT العم *al'amm* (paternal uncle) is used as a term of address and reference at the same time based on certain contexts.

4. أم الزوج أو الزوجة (mother-in-law/ mother of one's spouse): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes أم *'umm* (mother) plus الزوج *al-zawj* (husband) or زوجة *zawjah* (wife) to denote or refer to a specific relative, i.e., mother of one's spouse. This term may be substituted by other monolexic KTs by using either the term الحماة *alhammat* (mother-in-law) or العممة *al'ammah* (paternal aunt). The substituted KT العممة *al'ammah* (paternal aunt) is used a term of address and reference at the same time based on certain contexts (Yassin, 1977).

5. أخ الزوج أو الزوجة (brother-in-law/ spouse's male sibling): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes أخ *akh* (brother) plus زوج *zawj* (husband) or زوجة *zawjah* (wife) to denote or refer to a specific relative, i.e., brother of one's spouse. This term may be substituted by other monolexic KTs by using either the term الحمو *alhamuu* (brother-in-law) or النسيب *al-naseeb* (Davies, 1949).

6. أخت الزوج أو الزوجة (sister-in-law/ spouse's female sibling) ): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes أخت *okht* (sister) plus زوج *zawj* (husband) or زوجة *zawjah* (wife) to denote or refer to a specific relative, i.e., sister

of one's spouse. This term may be substituted by other monolexic KT by using either the term *الحماة alhammat* (sister-in-law) or *النسيب al-naseebah* (Davies, 1949).

7. **زوجة الإبن** (daughter-in-law/ wife of one's son): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes *زوجة zawjah* (wife) plus *الإبن al-'ibn* (son) to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., son's wife). This term may be substituted by other monolexic KT by using the term *الكنة alkannah* (One's son's wife).

8. **زوج البنت** (son-in-law/ husband of one's daughter): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes *زوج zawj* (husband) plus *البنت al-bint* (daughter) to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., husband of one's daughter. This term may be substituted by other monolexic KT by using the terms *الصهر al-ṣahir*, *الختن al-khatin* and *السلف al-silf* (One's daughter's husband) (Davies, 1949).

9. **زوج الأخت** (brother-in-law/ sister's husband): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes *زوج zawj* (husband) plus *الأخت al-okht* (sister) to denote or refer to a specific relative, i.e., brother-in-law. This term may be substituted by other monolexic KT by using either the term *الصهر al-ṣahir* or *النسيب al-naseeb*.

10. **زوجة الأخ** (sister-in-law): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes *زوجة zawjah* (wife) plus *الأخ Al-akh* (brother) to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., wife of one's brother. This term may be substituted by a monolexic KT by using the term *النسيب al-naseebah* (sister-in-law) (Husam al-Deen, 2000).

11. **زوجة اخ الزوج** (sister-in-law/ wife of one's brother): this term is a trilexic affinal KT that is composed of three lexemes *زوجة zawjah* (wife) as a monolexic head plus dilexic KT *اخ akh* (brother) and *الزوج al-zawj* (husband) as modifier to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., wife of one's brother. This term may be substituted by other monolexic KT by using the term *النسيب al-naseebah* (sister-in-law) (Davies, 1949).

12. **زوجة الاب** (father's wife/stepmother): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes **زوجة** *zawjah* (wife) plus **الاب** *al'ab* (father) to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., father's second wife.

13. **زوج الام** (mother's husband/stepfather): this term is a dilexic affinal KT that is composed of two lexemes **زوج** *zawj* (husband) plus **الام** *al-'umm* (mother) to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., mother's second husband.

14. **ابن زوجة الاب** (wife's son/stepson): this term is a trilexic affinal KT that is composed of three lexemes **ابن** *'ibn* (son) as a monolexic head plus dilexic KTs **زوجة** *zawjah* (wife) and **الاب** *al'ab* (father) as modifiers to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., stepson. This term may be substituted by using the monolexic KT **ربيب** *rabeeb* (stepson).

15. **بنت زوجة الاب** (wife's daughter/stepdaughter): this term is a trilexic affinal KT that is composed of three lexemes **بنت** *bint* (daughter) as a monolexic head plus dilexic KTs **زوجة** *zawjah* (wife) and **الاب** *al'ab* (father) as modifiers to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., stepdaughter. This term may be substituted by using the monolexic KT **ربيبة** *rabeebah* (stepdaughter).

16. **ابن زوج الام** (husband's son/ stepson): this term is a trilexic affinal KT that is composed of three lexemes **ابن** *'ibn* (son) as a monolexic head plus dilexic KTs **زوج** *zawj* (husband) plus **الام** *al-'umm* (mother) to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., stepson. This term may be substituted by using the monolexic KT **ربيب** *rabeeb* (stepson).

17. **بنت زوج الام** (husband's daughter/ stepdaughter): this term is a trilexic affinal KT that is composed of three lexemes **بنت** *bint* (daughter) as a monolexic head plus dilexic KTs **زوج** *zawj* (husband) and **الام** *al-'umm* (mother) as modifiers to denote and refer to a specific relative, i.e., stepdaughter. This term may be substituted by using the monolexic KT **ربيبة** *rabeebah* (stepdaughter).

One can detect from the above mentioned affinal KTs that most of them revolve around two basic KTs **الزوج** *al-zawj* (husband) and **الزوجة** *al-zawjah* (wife).

This means that without these two vital elements, societies cannot build coherent familial kinship relations among families and communities.

### 3.2 Affinal Kinship Terms Related to Polygamy

As mentioned earlier, marriage kinship relations are associated with the issue of *polygamy*. Thus, this study will investigate the affinal KT's that are related to this social phenomenon. It is worthy to state that Most Muslim and Arab societies permit polygamy (called sometimes plural marriage) under certain conditions, with no more than four wives. The permission of polygamy is explicitly revealed in the Holy Quran as indicated in the following Quranic verse.

#### Example 16: The permission of polygamy in Islam

"...وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً" (النساء: 3)

(If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one ...). [Surat An-Nisā' (The Women, 4:3), (Ali, Trans., 1937, pp. 178)].

This Quranic verse affirms that Muslims are allowed to marry up to four women simultaneously. However, this explicit Divine approval on marrying more than one wife is conditioned by equal, just, and ethical treatment to these wives by the husband. In case the husband cannot achieve such conditions, he should be confined to one wife only. As for Arab countries, polygamy has become a matter of debate because some Arab countries have legalised it conditionally; whereas others have banned it (Doi, 2002).

Pragmalinguistically, because polygamy is a controversial institution in different Muslim and Arab societies, Arabs utilise some different terms and names that refer to the second wife and her children. These names are deliberately used to achieve some social functions such as maximising the negative meaning of polygamy or mitigating the impact of polygamy among Arab societies to make it socially acceptable. These terms include the following:

- a. ضرة *durra* (co-wife): this term is derived from the verb *ضرّ* *dara* (to harm) which means that the wives of the same husband will be called *ضرائر* *dara'r* (co-wives) to each other, i.e., each wife is harmful to each other. This term carries a negative connotative meaning.
- b. العلة *Al'ala* (literally, illness or co-wife): this term means that the other wife will be regarded as a kind of sickness or may feel sick from the other co-wife. This term carries a negative connotation.
- c. شريكة *shareeka* (literally, partner or co-wife): these wives share the same husband as the partners in the same company.
- d. الجارة *Aljaarah* (literally, neighbour or co-wife), it is a euphemistic term of *ضرة* *durra* or *العلة* *Al'ala* which also has a negative connotation. Thus, this term indicates that one or more wives are like a neighbour to one another.
- e. مثناة *Mithfat* (literally, tripartite stone or co-wife): this term refers to the third wife married after the first two wives. This term is used metaphorically to refer to a pot that is put above three stones to stabilize it. Thus, the third stone is the third wife or what is called *مثناة* *Mithfat*. (Cowan, 1976; Husam al-Deen, 2000)

One can infer from these terms that some of them, such as *ضرة* *durra* (the harmful co-wife) and *العلة* *Al'ala* (the causing illness co-wife) are used to maximise the negative connotation and impact of polygamy. This is because these two terms literally denote that the second wife is regarded as a harmful person and causing illness to the first wife. Thus, these terms that have negative connotations are utilised to maximise threat to the face of the second wife. In contrast to the first two terms, the other remaining terms are meant to have a positive impact and connotative meaning to polygamy. These terms are used to mitigate the impact of polygamy for the second wife. Therefore, these terms carry euphemistic meanings to polygamy as to refer to the second wife as a *partner or helper* to the first wife in the term *شريكة* *shareeka*, as a *neighbour* in the term *الجارة* *Aljaarah*, and as a *stabilizer* to the structure of family in the term *مثناة* *Mithfat*.

In the above polygamous context, Arabs call the brothers who are born from different wives but from the same father as *ابناء العلات* *abna' al'allat* (sons of

the same father); whereas the brothers who are born from the same father and mother are called بنو الاعيان *banu al'ayan* (literally same source of water, or sons of the same father and mother). As for the brothers who are born from the same woman but from different husbands, they are called as ابناء الاخياف *abna' al'akhyaf* (literally, sons of mixing men or sons of the same mother and different husbands) (Sa'idi & Musa, 1929).

#### 4. Conclusion

By adopting the ethnosemantic or CDA approach, the researchers have highlighted the main terminologies of affinal kinship domain in the Arab culture as well as the structure and the context of these terminologies. This study explored the linguistic structures and meanings of this social domain to overcome some cross-cultural misunderstanding in the Arab culture to non-Arab and non-Muslim readers.

It was found that the domain of affinal kinship relations is very important in the Arab and Islamic culture because it establishes a kind of relatedness or alliance between two families or tribes. Generally, the act of marriage is regarded as a sacred contract between a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation and supporting kinship relations in all civilised societies. Due to its important role within the Islamic and Arab societies, the lexical term الزواج *al-zawaaj* (marriage), which denotes an act of marriage in Arabic language, has been denoted by different synonymous terms that are slightly different from one Arab culture to another. In order to avoid cultural misunderstanding in the Arab societies, anthropologists, stakeholders and translators who are interested in the Arab cultures may find this study interesting as it explained many terms that refer to marriage relations. These terms include القران *al-Qiran* (marriage, but literally means conjugated or coupled with), النكاح *al-Nika'h'* (marriage), الأملاك *al-Emla'ak* (marriage, literally make him/her owner), البضع *al-Buḍa'* (means an act of marriage and a sexual relationship), الوطء *al-Waṭa'a* (means marriage, but literally sleep with or sexual relationship), and البناء *al-Bina'a* (to consummate the marriage,

literally house or building a home). Generally, the use of these terms depends on the setting and the context of an utterance.

With reference to the linguistic structures of affinal KT, it was found that Arabic affinal KT are of three types: monolexic, dilexic and trilexic. The most important ones of these kinds are the monolexic KT زوج *zawj* (husband) and زوجة *zawjah* (wife) because they are regarded as the basic terms from which other KT are derived. For social and euphemistic reasons, some of the Arabic KT may have some synonymous terms that can be used instead of the original KT. In order to present its main and authorised role within the family members, the monolexic KT زوج *zawj* (husband) is expressed by a large number of terms that are relevant to certain social contexts. Thus, it is expressed by the terms الرجل *al-rajul* (man), البعل *al-Ba'al* (husband), السيد *al-Said* (the master), القرين *al-Qarin* (husband or spouse), القيم *al-Qaim* (curator), العريس *al-'aris* (bridegroom), الحليل *al-Halil* (husband), and العشير *al-'ashir* (companion). Most of these terms are used instead of the term زوج *zawj* (husband) to show the central and the social connotative meanings of these terms.

For euphemistic purposes, Arabs tend to use some other terms instead of the KT زوجة *zawjah* (wife). This is because, in the Arab culture and in certain social contexts, it is impolite to use the first name of the wife or the KT زوجة *zawjah* (wife) when communicating with strangers. Therefore, they use different terms to denote the meaning of this term. These terms include المرأة *'imra'ah* (woman) الاهل *al-ahl* (wife or kinsfolk), الحنئة *al-Hanatu* (man's wife, literally compassion), العقيلة *al-'aqilah* (man's wife), الجارة *al-Jarah* (wife, literally the neighbouress), القعيدة *al-Qa'idah* (wife, literally woman companion), الرَبَضُ *al-Rabaḍu* (wife, literally a place where a person lie down to rest), الشاعة *al-Sha'a* (man's wife, literally the follower or supporter), العروس *al-'arus* (bride), الحليلة *al-Halilah* (wife), ام العيال *umm al-'iyal* (wife, literally the mother of children), القرينة *al-Qarinah* (wife or spouse), الطَّلَّةُ *al-ṭallah* (wife, literally dew or light rain), الفراش *al-Firaash* (wife, literally bed or cover), البيت *al-Bait* (wife, literally house or family), الإزار *al-Izaar* (wife, literally loincloth or cover), الخلة *al-ḥullah* (wife, literally dress or clothing), and اللباس *al-Libas* (wife and woman, literally dress). Most of these terms have some

connotative meanings or emotional associations that are only specified to the women or wives.

Functionally, most affinal KT's are mainly used as terms of reference; they are rarely used as terms of address in Arabic language. However, these terms may be substituted by other monolexic terms to be metaphorically used as terms of address. For example, the dilexic term أبو الزوجة أو الزوج (father-in-law or father of one's husband or wife) is addressed by using the descent KT عمي 'ammi (my uncle) that is derived from the reference KT العم al'amm (paternal uncle).

Although a few of studies have been carried out on aspects of affinal kinship terms in Arabic and the Arab culture, this social domain remained unexplored with regard to the linguistic analysis and the ethnosemantic aspects of this socio-cultural domain. Thus, from the present study, the socio-cultural nature of this social domain has become clearer as the researchers believe.

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