

Re: Lack of vocabulary in English?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-03/0322.html>

ranjit_mathews_at_yahoo.com

Date: 03/02/05

Date: 1 Mar 2005 19:08:39 -0800

Neeraj Mathur wrote:

- > *"Stewart Gordon" <smjg_1998@yahoo.com> wrote ...*
- > > *I had a friend who came from Sri Lanka. She sometimes jokingly referred*
- > > *to her brother as "my fourth cousin" (her parents are third cousins). And*
- > > *I found out that Tamil has separate words for "maternal grandmother",*
- > > *"maternal grandfather", "paternal grandmother" and "paternal grandfather" – presumably a number of other languages are the same.*
- But I
- > > *don't remember what was said (if anything) about the existence or not of*
- > > *terms encompassing two or four of the above.*
- >
- > *All Indian languages make this distinction – there are very few terms that*
- > *apply equally to both parents' sides of the family. In Hindi at least there*
- > *are no terms that include two or four of your grandparents (except for*
- > *dvandva compounds).*

In Malayalam, the default word for grandmother seems to follow lineage. In a patrilineal caste, <valiyamma> means father's mother and in a matrilineal caste, it means mother's mother.

- > > *And people must have some job translating stuff to Maori, where they have*
- > > *different words for siblings depending on your gender and the direction of*
- > > *age difference.*
- > >
- > > <http://groups.google.co.uk/groups?selm=3DED1D66.A30@ihug.co.nz>
- > >
- > > *But at least this distinction must help people remember the age order of*
- > > *twins.*

sci.lang: Re: Lack of vocabulary in English?

I think twins would be considered of equal age where I'm from, but none of my hundreds of 1st, 2nd & 3rd cousins are twins and I haven't heard of any in my parents' and grandparents' generation either.

- > *In Hindi as well, you have different terms depending on the age of your*
- > *sibling relative to yourself. Or to be more specific, there are general*
- > *words for 'brother' and 'sister' and words that specifically mean 'older*
- > *brother' and 'older sister', which carry an element of respect.*

In Malayalam:

<penngaLa> = a man's sister

<anngaLa> = a woman's brother

<anujan> = a man's younger brother

<anujatti> a woman's younger sister

<jESTan> = a man's elder brother

<jESTatti> = a woman's elder sister

They can also refer to first cousins living in the same household; a prefix of <sondam> makes it unambiguously one's own sibling.

They're also used for relatives by marriage; eg., <jESTatti> can also be a man's elder brother's wife (a term of respect even if she's younger than oneself)

Then, there are the seldom used terms:

<sahOdaran> = brother

<sahOdari> = sister

<sahOdarar> = siblings (no singular form)