From Sisters to Grandfathers

A componential analysis of the kinship system of English, Fanti and Russian

Lydia Bax

3657671

Supervisor: Y. Winter

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Introduction

After months of babbling, the first words a young child utters are often something like "mummy" and "daddy". Some children are an exception to this rule, like my sister, whose first word was "car". But she soon learned to address her parents too. These two words that denote the parents are the first of a whole system of kinship terms a child will learn to use. Every language has it's own system, some are quite equal to each other, some differ in many ways. They differ for instance in the sound of the words that denote "mother", or in the way they are used: in Dutch the word "moeder" (meaning "mother") is often used to designate the mother - "The woman over there is my mother" - but almost never used to address the mother directly. The word "mamma" (something like "mummy") is more common in that context.

I, on the other hand, am interested in precisely which people are designated by which words. How do languages differ from each other in their kinship system? The ultimate goal in this would be to study every language and compare all the different systems. That, however, is not possible in the scope of this paper (or perhaps in any scope). To get a rough insight I will outline the kinship terms of three different languages: English, Fanti and Russian. I chose English, a language I know well, to have a reference frame. The other two were selected from of a brief overview of kinship terms in languages by Nikolayeva.[1] I was looking for one language that uses less terms than English, and one that uses more terms, hoping I would find kinship systems that differ a lot from each other.

To compare the systems, I will make a componential analysis of the kinship terms. A componential analysis "defines all of some set of words in terms of the same semantic dimensions or components. The meaning of each word in the set appears as a unique bundle of values on the common dimensions."[2] In other words: in a componential analysis kinship terms are defined on the basis of other semantics terms or properties they have in common. A mother, for instance, will be defined as a *female* relative in the *direct* line belonging to the *ascending* generation.

After analyzing English, Fanti and Russian, it is possible to make a comparison between the languages. A.K. Kroeber provided us with a method to compare the systems. He points out different principles of relationship a language can use to discriminate kinsmen and how languages can be classified according to these principles. I will dive into this theory later. At the end of the paper, I will show the differences between the languages, primarily on the basis of Kroeber's theory, and show how big the scope of different kinship systems (at least) is.

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1 Nikolayeva (2014) p. 201
2 Brown (1965) in Buchler and Selby (1968) p. 181

Chapter one – The American-English Kinship System

Ward H. Goodenough published an analysis of Yankee kinship terminology in 1965[3], although three years earlier his colleague Wallace already published a thorough analysis too.[4] The reason for Goodenough to make the analysis all over again was not the analysis of the terms themselves, but the way Wallace grouped the terms. This grouping is not one of the main points of the componential analysis that is required for this paper. However, as it's the method Goodenough uses for his analysis, I will introduce you to the discussion between these two man to make it more clear. The way Goodenough did his work makes it very easy to extract the principles of relationship the English-speaking people use, which I will show you later on.

In 1962, Wallace published his article in which he divided the English kinship terms in three groups, based on the degree of collaterality. When people are collateral related, it means they have a common ancestor, but descend from it by a different line. My cousin and I have the same ancestors – our grandmother and -father – but the route through the family tree to our grandparents is different. Wallace defined three groups: a lineal set, a first-degree collateral set and a second or further-degree collateral set.[5] Lineal is different from collateral in the sense that when you're lineal related, the other person is your direct ancestor. You could say that the lineal set is the zero-degree collateral set. This set exists of *father, mother, grandfather, grandmother* and earlier *ancestors*. The first-degree collateral set contains *aunt, uncle, nephew, niece, brother* and *sister*. The third, second-degree set contains the term *cousin*.

According to Goodenough, "it doesn't feel right […] separating the terms *brother* and *sister* from *father, mother, son* and *daughter*, with which I felt they somehow belonged as a distinct subset of terms."[6] The terms *brother* and *sister* don't belong in the same group as *aunt* and *uncle*, but should be grouped together with the closer relatives *father, mother, son* and *daughter*. After explaining all the family relationships, Goodenough proposes a different grouping of kin terms. He divides all the relatives in five distinct groups.[7] The first encloses *father, mother, son, daughter, brother* and *sister*. The second group consists of *uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, grandfather, grandmother, grandson* and *granddaughter*. The third group contains, as in Wallace's grouping, the term *cousin*. Group four consists of *husband* and *wife* and the fifth and last group consists of the terms *ancestor, ancestress* and *descendant*. As you can see, Goodenough not only proposes a different distribution, but he also includes some extra terms like *husband* and *wife*. He also considers terms such as *stepbrother, foster*

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3   Goodenough (1965)
4   Wallace (1962)
5   Goodenough (1965) p. 260
6   idem
7   Goodenough (1965) p. 270

father and *mother-in-law*. These terms are put together in subgroups of the five earlier mentioned groups. In the scope of this paper, I will only elaborate on the in-laws, not on the foster family and step family.

In contrast to Wallace, Goodenough has three discriminant variables which divide the kin terms, instead of one. Wallace only divided the terms based on the degree of collaterality, Goodenough separates the terms based on the collateral distance, the degree of genealogical distance and presence of marital tie between ego and alter[8]. The order and degree in which these discriminant variables are applied, decide the groups. The first variable, collateral distance, isn't used by Goodenough to divide the terms in three groups, as Wallace does, but in two: less than two degrees of distance (group 1,2,5) and two or more degrees of distance (group 3). The second variable, degree of genealogical distance, subdivides groups 1,2 and 5: one unit of distance (group 1), two units of distance (group 2) or three or more units (group 5). The last variable, presence of marital tie between ego and alter, distinguishes group 4 from the rest, and, as we will see later on, splits up the other groups.

With this solution, Goodenough has resolved the problem he had with Wallace's theory: *brother* and *sister* are now in the same group as *mother, father, son* and *daughter*. He just took less different degrees of collaterality and added some degrees of genealogical distance. To divide the groups further and differentiate every kin term, Goodenough added more discriminant variables. First group 1 is split up by the lineality of relationship. Is the ego lineal or collateral related to the other person? Recall that Wallace did this too, but earlier in the dividing system. The group now falls apart in *brother, sister* and *father, mother, son, daughter*. The latter is again divided by generation seniority: is the alter in a senior or a junior generation? The three subgroups can all be split up in singletons by discriminating the sex. This disjunction will be the last in every subdivision.

The second group is divided by the same discriminant variables as group 1. An overview of this division is given in table 1.

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8   Goodenough (1965) p. 273, 278

	Lineality	Generation seniority	Sex
Grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece	*Grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter*	*Grandfather, grandmother*	*Grandfather*
			Grandmother
		Grandson, granddaughter	*Grandson*
			Granddaughter
	Uncle, aunt, nephew, niece	*Uncle, aunt*	*Uncle*
			Aunt
		Nephew, niece	*Nephew*
			Niece

Table 1: Division of the second kinship group by Goodenough

This chart can of course be extended with (great-)great-grandfathers and -daughters et cetera, by adding more units of genealogical distance.

The third group doesn't need much elaboration, consisting of just one member: *cousin*. It is the only term that doesn't specify the sex. A cousin can be a male or female. Group four brings us to a new topic. Until now we only treated consanguineal relatives, but by marrying someone, you gain a whole new family: your affinal relationships. First, there's *husbands* and *wifes*, distinguished by their sex. Goodenough doesn't amplify much on the in-laws, but only shows a table from which you can extract the variables that discriminate the terms.

Your *in-laws* (*father, mother, son, daughter, brother* and *sister*) have the same characteristics as group 1, with the extra presence of a marital tie. They are the blood relatives of your spouse. I already discussed group 2 above, but these terms have a second meaning. They are not only consanguineal relatives, but also affinal relatives, discriminated by the "involvement of a senior party to relationship in marital tie"[9] These relationships are not achieved by marriage of the ego, but by marriage of a relative of the ego. An *aunt* can be your mother's or father's sister, but also your mother's or father's brother's wife.

The last group, containing *ancestor, ancestress* and *descendant* is not elaborated on much, I think because they're only collective terms. These terms are different from other terms - like sister, which you could see as a collective term for all collateral related females in the same generation - because they cover several of the terms already discussed. For instance, *ancestor* includes *grandmother* and *grandfather*, and *descendant* includes *granddaughter* and *grandson*. This in contrast to a word like *uncle*, for which in English are no words to divide the term. These collectives are defined in the beginning of the paper, but not placed in context with the other terms. An *ancestor* is "any male

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9   Goodenough (1965) p. 278

more than two generations removed at the senior end of the procreative chain of which ego is at the junior end"[10]. This means the discriminant variables are the genealogical distance (I already established this earlier) which has to be more than two generations, the seniority (the ego has to be the younger person) and the sex. An *ancestress* is the female version of an *ancestor*. By turning around the seniority (the ego is the older relative) you get the definition of *descendant*. This kinship term doesn't have a sex specification. It can either be a male or female.

Soon after Goodenough's paper was published, David M. Schneider came with some comments in his article "American Kin Terms and Terms for Kinsmen: A Critique of Goodenough's Componential Analysis of Yankee Kinship Terminology"[11]. In this paper, Schneider doesn't have a lot of comments on the mapping Goodenough made, which I described above. He is actually rather positive about it: "Goodenough's paper is [...] the best place to see just what componential analysis can do"[12] and "[his] work, done wholly independently, is so very close to my own findings"[13]. Schneider has some other problems with the analysis instead. Schneider himself tends to look more at the cultural-symbolic side of things than Goodenough, who shifts to functional formulations. He introduces some problems, like which people actually are considered as kinsmen. If you go back in time far enough, everyone is eventually a relative.[14] Schneider also questions how affinal relatives are divided as to closeness.

Eventually, he informs us about his real troubles with Goodenough's analysis: it is aimed at the semantic domain which is defined by the control question (what kinship relationship is this and this person to you?). This doesn't make it an analysis of kinship terms, as the title says, nor an analysis of terms for kinsmen, but "an analysis of the way in which kin types are classed by kinship terms"[15]. Therefore, componential analysis doesn't define a semantic domain, but only a analytic domain. "It is a way of setting up a standardized frame into which any particular culture might be more or less initially fitted for comparative purposes."[16] To analyze the semantic domain, you also have to consider the domain in it's cultural context. As said before, Goodenough is leaning toward the functional side of the analysis, while Schneider values the cultural side. The first is more interested in which terms designate which relationships, the latter in which people are closer tho the ego and are the core of a family.

The way I see it, there's not a right or wrong way to analyze a kinship system. It depends on

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10 Goodenough, 1965, p. 269
11 Schneider, 1965
12 Schneider, 1965, p. 289
13 Schneider, 1965, p. 295
14 Schneider, 1965, p. 290
15 Schneider, 1965, p. 304
16 Schneider, 1965, p. 305

what your aims are. It is possible to analyze a system without delving into the underlying culture. But this culture can help understand why the system is the way it is. In the course of this paper, I will focus more on the functional, or Goodenough's, side of kinterm analysis. As Schneider says: Goodenough sets up a frame into which he can fit different systems for comparative purposes. This is exactly what the aim is of this paper: to compare different languages with each other. How are kinship relations expressed in Russian and Fanti, and what are the differences with American-English? Of course I won't totally ignore the cultural side, because some linguistic differences will arise from the cultural contexts of the languages. But before I will discuss the kinterms of Russian and Fanti, I will talk about a paper by A.K. Kroeber, who provides us with a method to point out how the languages at some point differ from each other.

Almost a hundred-and-fifty years ago, the scientific study of kinship terms began.[17] L.H. Morgan published an article in 1870 in which he proposed a distinction between two kinds of kinship terms: classificatory and descriptive.[18] The first are the terms which include a relatively large number of kinsmen. The second are the ones that include a relatively small amount of kinsmen. This idea grew and was developed through the years until there was a distinction between classificatory and descriptive systems of relationships.[19] In line with the division in kinship terms, the first system embraces the languages that group distinct relationships together and call them by the same name. The second would denote the differences between relatives by adding affixes to primary terms. Kroeber pulls no punches: this view is fallacious. Every language groups together relationships. English doesn't distinguish an older or younger brother, and the word *cousin* denotes both men and women. "The total number of different relationships which can be distinguished is very large, and reaches at least many hundred. No language possesses different terms for all of these or even for any considerable proportion of them."[20] There are eight common principles of relationship or, what Goodenough would call it, discriminant variables.

The first is the difference between persons of the same and of separate generations. This one is reflected in English. You can think of the difference between *father/grandfather*. The second principle is the difference between lineal and collateral relationship, which is also reflected in English: it separates a *brother* from a *father*. The third principle is not operative in English: the difference of age within one generation. For instance, we don't make a difference between an older brother or sister and a younger one. The sex of the relative, which is the fourth principle, is present in almost every English kinship term, except for *cousin*. The sex of the speaker is never reflected in

17 Buchler and Selby (1968) p. 1
18 Morgan (1870)
19 Kroeber (1909) p. 77
20 idem

English, as the sex of the person through whom the relationship exists. We can't describe, with just one term, if we are talking about our grandmother on father's or mother's side. The seventh principle is the distinction of blood relatives from connections by marriage. This one is represented in English (*father/father-in-law*), but not always expressed. The condition of life of the person through whom relationship exists is the last principle. In some languages you can denote whether your nephew is an orphan or not. In English this variable is not represented.[21]

English only denotes four of the eight categories that Kroeber states. Goodenough presented us with six categories. This seems contradictory, but is easy to explain. Goodenough split some of Kroeber's principles. The difference in generations was split in generation seniority (senior, same, junior) and the degree of genealogical distance (zero, one or more). Also the differences between lineal and collateral relationship were split up in degree of collateral distance and presence of lineality. This brings the total of categories back to four.

The total of different terms is, according to Kroeber 21. Goodenough distinguishes 23 terms (step-family and foster family not counted). I think this is because Kroeber doesn't count *husband* and *wife*, but I can't be entirely sure because he doesn't enumerate his terms. The several Indian languages he compares English to, express at least six of these categories, making a total of 24-35 terms. This is a remarkable difference. If you can distinguish 21 different terms while using only four of the categories, you could, by adding for instance principle five (the sex of the speaker), distinguish twice as much terms. But the Indian language representing the most principles, doesn't even reach the number of 42. "In short, as far as the expression of possible categories is concerned, English is less complete than any of the Indian languages; but as regards the giving of expression to the categories which it recognizes, English is more complete."[22]

The solution of Kroeber's problem lies in the above mentioned 'completeness'. The former called 'classifying' systems express less categories, but express them completely. The 'descriptive' systems express more categories but less complete. This is not a binary division, but rather a scale you can put languages on. After obtaining these principles and division of language systems, the other languages will be analyzed and compared.

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21 Kroeber (1909) p. 78-9
22 Kroeber (1909) p. 80

Chapter two – The Fanti Kinship System

Fanti is one of the languages spoken in Ghana. To be more precise: it is a language spoken in the central part of the south of Ghana, by approximately a million people.[23] David Kronenfeld, professor of anthropology at the University of California did extensive research on the use of kinship terms by Fanti speaking people. He wrote several articles about their kinship system and the cultural background underlying this system. There is a close connection between their inheritance and their kinship system, on which I will expand later.

The speakers of Fanti have a kinship system very different from that of English speaking people. In fact, they haven't got one system, they have three. These systems include the same terms, but have different rules. They are partially used to address different relatives. The first system is called the 'unskewed' system.[24] This system is a bit like the English system, with terms for relatives like father, mother and child. The second system is the 'skewed' system. This is a variation on the first system and is considered the formal and correct system.[25] Some relationships are, as the name tells us, skewed. "One's mother's brother's child is equated with one's own child, moving him down a generation. Father's sister's child is reciprocally equated with father or mother, rising a generation. Relatives derivative from these connections move up or down accordingly (...)."[26] For us, this would mean we call some of our cousins our child and some of our other cousins father or mother. The reason of this shift will be explained later on. The third and last system is not a system assigning kinship terms to kin, but to non-kinsmen. The Fanti use their kinship terms also to address other villagers. The terms for the closest family members are used to address non-kinsmen of approximately the same age as these members.[27] For instance, a man around forty years would greet his seventy-year-old neighbor with something like 'hello mother', while the other aged neighbor would say 'hello sister' to the same person.

Before looking more closely at the kinship terms, it's important to understand the inheritance system of the Fanti. This will give some background to understanding some of kinship terms and differences with the English system. A difference in family culture is that the Fanti have matrilineal clans. This means that their descent is traced through maternal ancestors. This matrilineage controls not only their inheritance, but also their political leaders and the owners of land and property.[28] According to this system, "an inheritance goes to the senior of the deceased matrilineal descendants

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23 Kronenfeld (1980) p. 587
24 Kronenfeld (1973) p. 1578
25 Kronenfeld (1980) p. 604 and Kronenfeld (1973) p. 1579
26 Kronenfeld (1973) p. 1579
27 Kronenfeld (1973) p. 1581
28 Kronenfeld (1991) p. 19

of his or her own sex, where seniority is determined by relative age of mothers, and where a matrilineal descendant is a junior person who is a descendant in the maternal line of the mother (…).”[29] So, if you're a man, and you die, your belongings first go to your younger brothers, then to the eldest son of your eldest sister, followed by the eldest son of your next eldest sister et cetera. These are no strict rules, but guidelines, and can be overruled by the elders that gather when someone of their clan dies.[30]

Let's examine the first, unskewed system somewhat closer. The term *egya* means 'father', but includes not only the male parent, but also other family members.[31] For example, the male parent's brother, the male parent's sister's husband, the female parent's sister's husband; several people we would call *uncle*. Also your father's male cousins are called *egya*. These are all males that are able to fulfill a father role. But the consanguineal brothers and male cousins of the mother are not called *egya*, but *wofa*, which means something like 'maternal uncle'. Here we see the matrilineage in the kinship terms. The males that are related to us via our mother have a different designation. The term for 'mother' is *na* and includes all the female versions of *egya* and *wofa*. There is no distinction between 'mother' and 'maternal aunt'.

Ba is the term for a lot of relatives in the generation of your child, but not all. There's also the term *awofasi*. This one only includes male's consanguineal relatives in a lower generation, related through a sister or mother. The rest is denotated by *ba*. We perceive again the distinction in matrilineage. Striking is that it's always the relation between a male and a matrilineal relative that is distinguished, never a female. This would make more sense if only males could inherit, but that's not the case. Females inherit from females and males from males, only to be deviated from when the elders decide to. This distinction in matrilineage, but slightly different from the previous two, is also present in the sibling relation. The usual term for 'sibling' is *nua* (there are no separate terms for brother and sister) and includes all the relatives in the same generation as the speaker, except the female relatives of a male, which are called *akyereba*. This is an additional term. A man's sister can be called *akyeraba*, but also *nua*.

The Fanti don't make a difference in grandchildren and grandparents. They have one term for all grandrelatives: *nana*. Also the siblings of a grandrelative and the grandrelatives of your siblings are called *nana*. This is only operative in one way in English, the downward way. The siblings of your grandchildren are (of course) also your grandchildren. But the siblings of your grandparents are normally not called *grandfather* or *grandmother*.

The term for husband, *kun*, and wife, *yer*, include the person you are married with and your

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29 Kronenfeld (1980) p. 588
30 idem
31 All the kinship terms are explained in table 2-4 in Kronenfeld (1980) p. 590-4

sibling's spouse. Your spouse's parents, parent's siblings and child's spouses are indicated with *sew* or *asew*. A male's brother-in-law, either his sisters husband or wife's brother is an *akonta* or *akontangye*. There's no term for a male's sister in law. The opposite applies to females. A sister-in-law is a *ekuma* or *kuma*, but a brother-in-law is absent. The last expressed relationships are a male's wife's sister's husband*, mangow* or *mangowdow*. The female version of this relationship is a *ekora* or *kora*, a term also used for a female's husband's second wife.

I have now covered all the kinship terms with their unskewed denotations. This system is the most commonly used, compared with the skewed system, that is seen as the correct one.[32] The skewed system is a shifted version of the unskewed one. As told before, mother's brother's child is designated as own child and father's sister's child is classed as father or mother. The relatives that are derivative from these move with them. This means for instance that the children of your father's sister's child are called *nua*, sibling. And mother's brother's child's child is a grandrelative, a *nana*. This shift shows the inheritance rules of the clans. "B, the sister's son, inherits from A, his mothers brother; among other things, formal kinship obligations are inherited; and thus B may become "father" to C, his mother's brother's child."[33] The Fanti do not only inherited property or money, but also the formal kinship obligations. It's not an unlogical thing to call the father figure in your life *father*. But the use of both systems in common day language does cause a very large scope for every kinship term.

The third system increases this scope even more, but not with kinsmen. The kinship terms are not only used for relatives, but also to address the other villagers. We can be very short and simple about this one: "a much older or younger person may be a "grandrelative" (*nana*); a generation older person will be "mother" (*na*) or "father" (*egya*), never "uncle" (*wofa*); and a generation younger person will be "child" (*ba*), not "nibling" (*awofasi*). A person of about the same age will be "sibling" (*nua*)."[34] As you can see, they only use the most basic terms, not the terms for for instance "maternal uncle" (*wofa*) and "male's sister" (*akyereba*).

Now all the systems are explained and (hopefully) understood, it's time to explore which of Kroeber's principles are applicable to the Fanti kinship terminology. The first principle is very present in the Fanti terminology: the difference between persons of the same and of separate generation. I think it's safe to declare that this is the principle which makes the most differences in Fanti. They don't have a lot of terms: fifteen to be precise, distributed over five generations. That's an average of three per generation, which is not much. The second principle is also operative: the difference between lineal and collateral relationship, bur only because of the matrilineage. The Fanti have a separate term for among other things the mother's brother (*wofa*).

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32 Kronenfeld (1973) p. 1579
33 Kronenfeld (1973) p. 1581
34 Kronenfeld (1980) p. 604

The Fanti don't make a difference in age within one generation. Younger and older brothers are both called *nua*. The forth and fifth principle, on the other hand, the sex of the relative and the sex and the speaker, are seen in the difference between *egya* and *na* ("father" and "mother") and the difference between *nua* and *akyereba*. A woman calls her sister *nua* and a man calls his sister *akyereba*. The sex of the person through whom the relationship exists is also expressed in Fanti. A *wofa* is always an uncle-like matrilineal person, never a patrilineal one. The last principle is the distinction of blood relatives from connections by marriage. In the description of the kinship terms above it was very clear that some in-laws have their own term, like *ekuma*, a female's brother's sister. The last of Kroeber's principles, the condition of life of the person through whom relationship exists, is not expressed.

Six of the eight principles are operative in Fanti. But, as mentioned before, the Fanti only have fifteen different kinship terms. This is even less than the twenty-one in English, that only expresses four of the eight principles. Thus, Fanti is, according to Kroeber's classification, a language that expresses a large number of categories, but does not express them very complete. In this case even very incomplete.

Chapter three – The Russian Kinship System

The form of Russian now spoken in Russia has evolved from Proto-Indo-European (2400 B.C.) to Proto-Slavic or Old Russian (1100 A.D.). The contemporary language is spoken since approximately 1850.[35] The history of this language and all the kinship terms are described extensively by Paul Friedrich in his articles "An Evolutionary Sketch of Russian Kinship" and "Semantic Structure and Social Structure: An Instance from Russian". Contemporary Russian covers a lot of terms, but it used to cover some twenty-five more.[36] The number of lost terms is already higher than the total of terms in English, and the remaining number exceeds fifty (although some terms are questionable, as I will show later on). This large amount is probably due to the formerly extended households, that included a husband and wife, with their married sons and their wifes and children, their unmarried sons and daughters, sometimes attached widows and orphans, and a *babushka* (a nanny, although this is not really a kinsmen of the other household members).[37] These *sjábri's*, members of the household, all had separate terms to be addressed.

Let's start with the consanguineal terms. They have separate terms for ancestors until the fourth degree, starting with *otets*[38] for father and *mat'* for mother. The Russians don't make a distinction between ancestors on the father's and on the mother's side, which results in the following terms: *ded* (parent's father) and *baba* (parent's mother), *praded* and *prababa* (parent's parent's father and mother) and *praskchur* and *praskchurka* (the father and mother of *praded* and *prababa*). The descendants of the ego are expressed to the third generation, which makes a total (including ego) of eight generations! The first principle of relationship Kroeber defined is obviously operative in Russian: the difference between persons of the same and of separate relations. A son is called *syn* and a daughter *doch'*. Their children are designated as *vnuk* (man) and *vnuchka* (woman). The third generation, the great-grandson and -daughter, are expressed by, respectively, *pravnuk* and *pravnuchka*.

In the horizontal, collateral way the Russian kinship system expresses a lot of branches too. The closest members of the ego, the brother and sister, are designated by *brat* and *sestra*. Their children are called *plemjannik* (nephew) and *plemjannitsa* (niece). Your parent's brother is a *djadja*, the female variant is *tjotja*. Until now the system seems a lot like the English system. Almost all the terms are directly translatable into Russian, except for the great-great-grandfather, for whom the Russians have the term *praskchur* and the English only have the term *father* with some prefixes.

This brings me to the problem of the questionable Russian kinship terms I briefly introduced

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35 Friedrich (1962) p. 3, 19
36 Friedrich (1962) p. 14
37 Friedrich (1964) p. 137
38 All the consanguineal kinship terms are represented in a table in Friedrich (1962) p. 15

above. Friedrich did record a few terms in his overview table, of which I'm not sure they should be there. The person the English would name a *cousin*, is named *dvojurodnyj brat*, "second-line brother", and the parent's parent's sibling's child's son, your second cousin, is called a *trojurodnyj brat*, a "third-line brother". The female versions of these relatives are *dvojurodnyj sestra* and *trojurodnyj sestra*. Similar to these terms are *dvojurodnyj ded* (grandparent's brother), *dvojurodnyj baba* (grandparent's sister), *dvojurodnyj tjotja* (parent's female cousin) and *dvojurodnyj djadja* (parent's male cousin). Your sibling's child's children can be designated by two different descriptions: *vnuchatyj plemjannik*, which means something like "grand-nephew" or *dvojurodnyj vnuk*, which means "second-line grandson". For the female terms, just replace the words for nephew and grandson with the ones for niece and granddaughter: *plemjannitsa* and *vnuchka*.

Are these descriptions classifiable as kinship terms? In my opinion, this depends on how frequently these terms are used. Are these people really part of the family? I myself do not really see a "third-line brother" as part of my family, more as an acquaintance. But this could be very different in Russia. I certainly wouldn't classify *second cousin* as a primary kinship term, just like Goodenough, who didn't record *great-grandfather* in his list. Friedrich tells us that "terms for collaterals beyond the second degree are used less frequently, especially at the ascending and descending generations".[39] He also tells us that the word for fourth degree, *chetvejurodnyj*, was used before, but less and less at the beginning of the last (that is, 19th) century. Friedrich didn't record these terms anymore, so the terms he did record must be considered "real" or primary kinship terms. However, it remains not totally clear if these kinsmen are considered family or acquaintance.

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39 Friedrich (1962) p. 18

		Praskchur PaPaPaFa	Praskchurka PaPaPaMo			
		Praded PaPaFa	Prababa PaPaMo			
	Dvo. ded PaPaBr	Ded PaFa	Baba PaMo	Dvo. baba PapaSi		
	Dvo. djadja PaPaSbSo	djadja PaBr	Otets Fa	Mat' Mo	Tjotja PaSi	Dvo. tjotja PaPaSbDa
Tro. brat PaPaSbChSo	Dvo. brat PaSbSo	Brat Br	Ego		Sestra Si	Dvo. sestra PaSbDa	Tro. sestra PaPaSbChDa
	Dvo. plem. PaSbChSo	plemjannik SbSo	Syn So	Doch' Da	plemjannitsa SbDa	Dvo. plem. PaSbChDa
	Dvo. vnuk SbChSo	Vnuk ChSo	Vnuchka ChDa	Dvo. vnuchka SbChDa		
		Pravnuk ChChSo	Pravnuchka ChChDa			

Table 2: The Russian consanguineal kinship system, Friedrich

This system of consanguineal relatives appears to be quite similar to the English system. The affinal names, however, are pretty different. Where the English almost only use the suffix *in-law*, the Russians have different words for almost every affinal relative.[40] The most close affinal you'll be related to, is your husband, *muzh*, or wife, *zhena*. Striking is the division between the husband's parents and the wife's parents. They don't make a distinction between a mother's and father's ancestors, but they do make a distinction between husband's and wife's ancestors: *svjokor* stands for "husband's father", *svekrov'* for "husband's mother", *test'* for "wife's father" and *tjoshcha* for "wife's mother".

Also the brothers and sisters have their own designation at both sides. A man calls the sister of his wife a *svojachenitsa*, the brother a *shurin*. Vice versa, a wife calls her husband's sister a *zolovka*, and his brother a *dever*, but she also calls her husband's sister's husband a *dever*. A daughter-in-law is a *snokha*, a son-in-law a *zjat*. However, the term for "daughter's husband" is the same as the term for "sister's husband" and it is also used for "husband's sister's husband", which was called a *dever* most of the time. As you can see, the denotations of the terms overlap quite often in the affinal side. To make it more clear, you find a table below that clarifies the terms.

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40 All the affinal relatives are summed up in a table in Friedrich (1962) p. 3-4 and Friedrich (1964) p. 144

	Dever	Zolovka	Shurin	Svojachenitsa	Snokha	Zjat	Nevestka	Svojak	Jatrov
HuBr	x								
HuSi		x							
WiBr			x						
WiSi				x					
SoWi					x		x		
DaHu						x			
BrWi							x		x
SiHu						x		x	
HuBrWi							x		x
HuSiHu	x					x		x	
WiBrWi									x
WiSiHu								x	

Table 3: The Russian in-laws

In the table it's clear that as the relatives are further away from the ego, the terms mingle more and more. Friedrich divides the terms above in five categories[41]: spouses, AC, CA, ACA and CAC. The first one speaks for itself and are the primary affines. AC consists of the blood relatives of one's affines and is one of the two subsets of the secondary affines. The second is the subset of the affines of one's blood relatives. The tertiary affines consists of two subsets too: the ACA, the affines of consanguines of a spouse and the CAC, the consanguines of affines one's blood relatives. We saw some sort of the same mapping in Schneider's article, when he divided the affinals in a scale of closeness. Friedrich doesn't mention anything about closeness.

I still haven't covered all the affinal kinship terms of the Russian language. There are a few more left to discuss. The parents of the child's spouse have their own names: *svat* in case of the father and *jatrov* in case of the mother. A parent's brother's wife is a *djadina* or a *tjotja*, like the consanguineal term for parent's sister. The male variant is a *djadja*, the same as a a parent's brother. That leaves us with the two last terms, which are collectives. *Svojstvennik* designates a male affine and a *svojstvennitsa* a female affine. Now the enumeration is finished. The Russians also distinguish six different terms for step-family, but in the scope of this paper I don't discuss this branch of the family-tree.

Which of Kroeber's principles of relationship underlie the relationships the Russian languages expresses? The difference in generation was obvious, as I pointed out before. There's a difference between the term for "father" and "father's brother", which means the second principle is operative. Difference in age within one generation is, as in English and Fanti, not expressed. However,

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41 Friedrich (1964) p. 145

this is one of the components that got lost through the ages. The Russians formerly used to make a difference between older and younger siblings.[42]

Differences in sex are certainly made in Russian. In case of the relative (father versus mother), and the person through whom the relationship exists (husband's brother differs from wife's brother). It doesn't matter if it's a man or a woman speaking. The distinction of blood relatives from connections by marriage is very clear: the number of affinal terms is almost as big as the number of consanguineal terms. Last, but not least, in Russian the condition of life of the person through whom relationship exists isn't present, but this is a questionable statement. In the beginning I briefly mentioned that households can include attached widows (*vdova*) and orphans (*sirota*). The person establishing the relative is, sadly, dead. However, I wonder if these terms are used to denote kinsmen. In English the words for widow and orphan are never used in answer to the question "what relationship is this person to you?" Friedrich doesn't elaborate on these words, he only mentions them as possibly being part of a household. Him not discussing these terms together with the other relatives made me decide not to include these terms in the kinship system.

This brings the total expressed principles to five, one less than the Fanti kinship system, one more than the English system. However, the total of kinship terms is a lot higher. The Russians distinguish a whopping fifty-two terms when the "second and third cousins and uncles" are counted. Otherwise they add up to a total of forty terms, still almost twice as much as the English total. In Kroeber's words, the Russian kinship system could be described as expressing quite a few principles, *and* expressing these quite regular. Where would Kroeber's predecessors classify this system? As descriptive or classificatory?

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42 Friedrich (1962) p. 18

Comparison and Conclusion

Now all languages, English, Fanti and Russian, are discussed, it's possible to compare them. I think it's fair to say that Fanti is the language that deviates most from the other two. English and Russian[43] are both quite symmetrical, while Fanti isn't. With symmetrical I mean that when there's a term for the brother of your father, there will also be a term for the sister of your father. So if English would have a word for a maternal uncle, you would expect they had a word for paternal uncle too. In Fanti this is not the case, it is an asymmetrical language. It's also necessary to grab some of the Fanti culture to understand the Fanti kinship system. The skewed system where some kinship terms shift to other relatives arises from the guidelines of inheritance. I don't mean to imply that English and Russian don't express their culture. It just seems to me that they have terms for the kinsmen that are closest to them, with whom they most often come into contact. I can not say this for sure, but English and Russian don't have terms that make me wonder where they come from, why they are present in the systems.

Another difference is the extensiveness of the systems. The Russians have by far the most extensive system, with around fifty kinship terms. The English come second-place, with twenty-one terms, followed by the Fanti, with fifteen terms. The Fanti group quite a lot of relatives in the denotation of their kinship terms. The Russian and English system are quite alike; the former is just a little more extensive in the number of expressed generations (horizontal and vertical). Beyond that, the two systems are a just a translation of each other, but only on the consanguineal side of the family. The affinal side is quite different: where English only inserts the "-in-law" affix, Russian and Fanti have separate words for the relatives bound to them by a marriage-tie somewhere in the family. The Fanti have seven separate terms denoting several relationships, while the Russians have around twenty of them, almost all denoting one relative. The terms only get more mixed up as the distance between ego and relative increases.

The last – and maybe most important – difference I will discuss in this paper is which of Kroeber's principles of relationship are operative in the three languages. I already pointed out the represented principles of each language, now it's time to compare them. Several are expressed by all three of them, some are never expressed. For instance, none of the languages give information about difference of age within a generation. But they all express differences between separate generations and differences between lineal and collateral relations, although speakers of Fanti distinguish very few. Sex of the relative is always expressed, apart from some collective terms like *descendant* in English, but these collectives are not counted as primary kinship terms. The sex of the speaker is only

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43 You can see the symmetrical Russian system very beautifully in table 2.

in some cases expressed in Fanti and the sex of the person through whom relationships exist is an operative principle in Russian and Fanti. Russians distinguish a man's and woman's affinals, while Fanti dinstinguish relatives that are connected to the ego through the mother. The condition of the person through whom relationships exist isn't expressed in any of the languages, although this one is a bit questionable in Russian. Last but not least, as discussed in the previous paragraph, all languages divided the affinal and consanguineal relatives.

It is possible to make a graphical reproduction of completeness of the languages. In the graph below you see the number of operative principles on the x-axis. On the y-axis are the number of kinship terms represented. However, this graph gives a distorted view of the completeness. English and Fanti lie quite close together, while English is far more complete than Fanti. It's more a representation of extensiveness than of completeness.
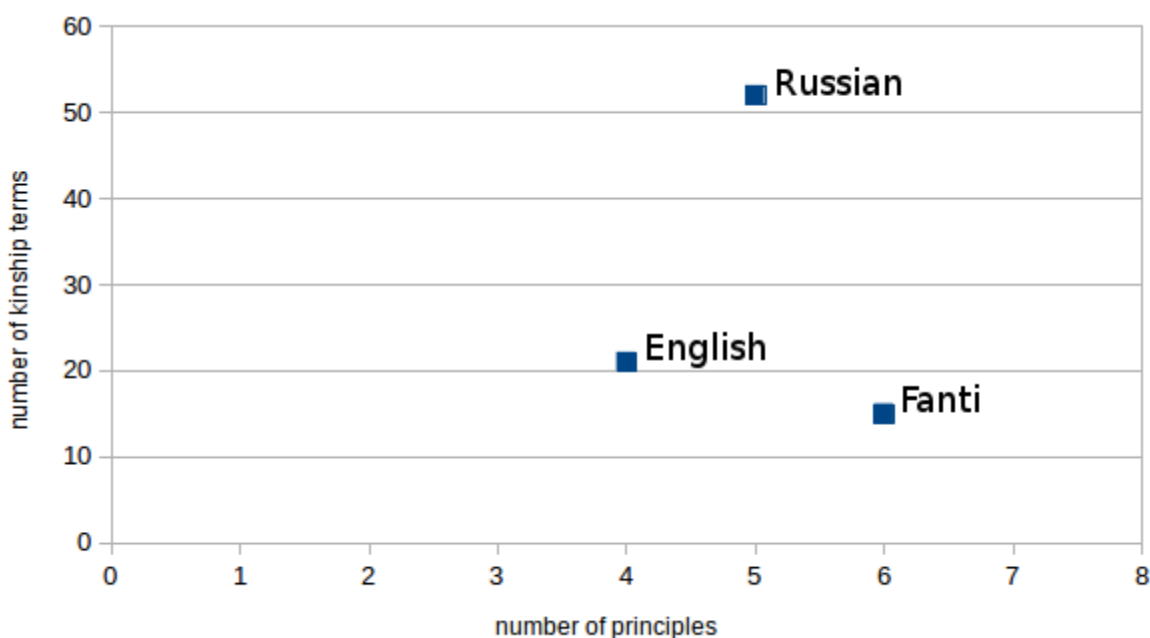

Figure 1: The absolute extensiveness of languages

The next graph represents this completeness somewhat better, although it's still not optimal. I calculated the relative completeness by dividing the number of expressed principles by the number of kinship terms. This way it gives a rough estimate of the completeness. A better, but far more time consuming way would be to calculate how many relationships you could express with each combination of principles. This would involve making decisions about how many generations are worth calculating, otherwise the number of relatives would be infinite. I don't want to make this kind of decisions in this paper. The number of expressed relationships divided by the total number of possible expressed relationships would give the real relative completeness.

The relative completeness I calculated gives a number between zero and one. The closer to

zero the number, the more complete the language. A language expressing all possible family relations according to Kroeber's principles, would give a data point in the right upper corner of the graph. The higher the data point (closer to zero), the more complete the language, The closer the data point is to the upper right corner, the more extensive the languages is. In contradiction to the previous graph, English is now closer to Russian and more distant from Fanti, which is a better representation of the real world. Russian would be the most complete in this case and Fanti the least, although calculating the real relative completeness could possibly show that English is more complete than Russian. The same ranking would count for the extensiveness.
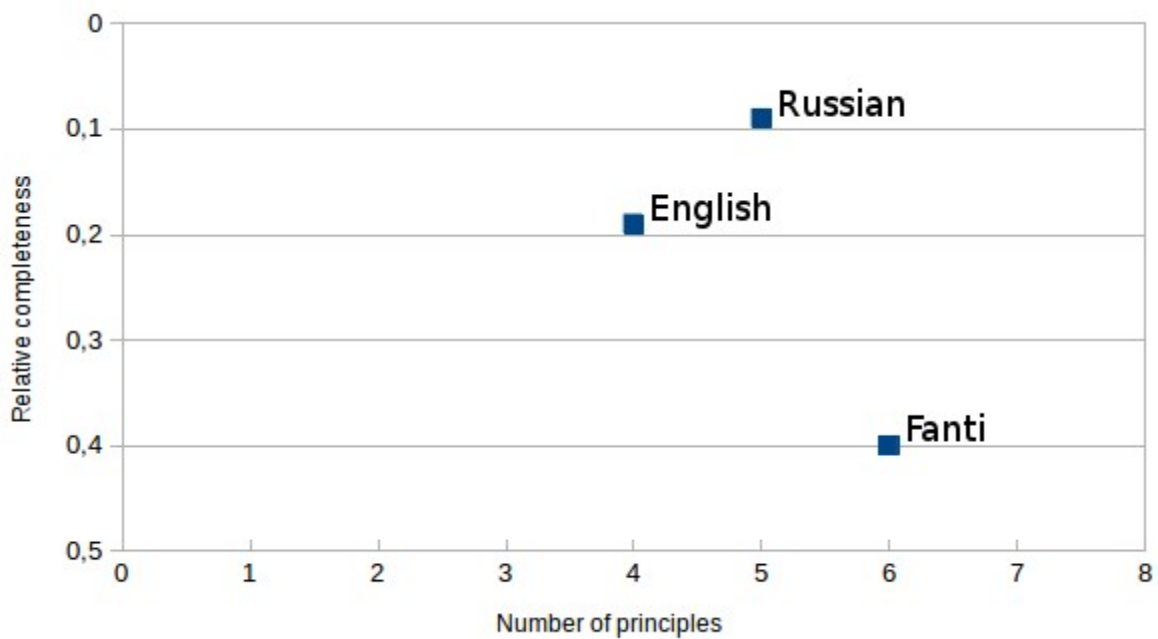

Figure 2: The relative completeness of languages

Now the kinship systems of the three languages are discussed, and a comparison is made, it's clear that there is a wide variety of kinship systems around the world. Only diving into three languages shows large differences: a diversity in number of terms, in principles of relationship, in the way culture is intertwined in the system, the relative completeness, the extensiveness of the affinal kin types, et cetera. And this paper only discusses the componential side of the systems. There is much more to explore. It would be very interesting to expand the paper with analyzes of more languages, to get a better view of the variety there exists. Could we group languages together with comparable systems? Also the way in which the kinship terms are used would give more useful information. Recall the example about the Dutch word "moeder" I mentioned in the introduction: which words are actually used as a form of address? This could help solving the problem of the questionable "second- and third-cousins" in Russian. In short: there is more to explore in the world of kinship.

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