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SEMANTIC AND COGNITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSOCIATIVE REACTIONS TO THE CONCEPT OF "FRIENDSHIP" IN THE UZBEK AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This article presents a contrastive analysis of the semantic and cognitive features of associative responses related to the concept of "friendship" in Uzbek and Russian. It examines semantic groups of associations, their conceptual content, evaluative features, and connections with cultural factors. Uzbek and Russian lexical examples associated with trust, loyalty, affection, support, sincerity, and devotion are used to illustrate the semantic field of friendship. The article also considers how knowledge about friendship is organized in the minds of language speakers, how semantic relations connect associative responses, and how cultural representations may be reflected in language. The comparison aims to distinguish universal values associated with friendship from potential language- and culture-specific patterns.

Keywords: concept of friendship, associative response, semantic features, cognitive features, contrastive analysis, conceptual field, linguistic culture.

Introduction

In modern linguistics, significant attention is being paid to studying linguistic units not merely within the scope of their lexical meaning, but in relation to human cognition, memory, emotional experience, and cultural perspectives. In this

approach, associative reactions serve as essential research material, as the units that emerge in response to a specific word can reveal the knowledge, evaluations, and experiences linked to that concept within the human mind [1; 2]. The concept of "friendship" (do'stlik) is a key ethical and social notion representing interpersonal relationships. It encompasses elements such as trust, loyalty, sincerity, mutual aid, affection, and closeness. Although the terms "do'stlik" (in Uzbek) and "дружба" (in Russian) share a common semantic foundation, comparing the associative reactions linked to them allows for an exploration of how this concept is perceived across different linguistic and cultural environments.

Analysis and results

An associative reaction refers to a response - whether a word, a phrase, or another meaningful unit - that arises in a respondent's mind under the influence of a stimulus word. For instance, the stimulus "do'stlik" (friendship) might elicit responses such as "ishonch" (trust), "yordam" (help), or "sadoqat" (loyalty). Similarly, the Russian stimulus "дружба" (friendship) would theoretically correspond to reactions such as "доверие" (trust), "поддержка" (support), or "верность" (loyalty). These examples are provided in the article for illustrative purposes and do not represent the results of a specific experiment.

A concept possesses a broader meaning than the lexical definition of a specific word. In addition to a formal notion, it may encompass emotional evaluations, cultural perceptions, typical situations, and social experience. Consequently, the concept of "friendship" does not merely denote a relationship between two individuals; it is also linked to one's ideas about what a friend should be like, the

circumstances under which friendship manifests, and the specific behaviors through which it is affirmed [1; 4].

In the analysis of associative reactions, factors such as semantic proximity, evaluative quality, the degree of connection to the concept, and the probability of occurrence are taken into account. Here, the frequency of a reaction serves as a significant indicator. If a large number of respondents provide the same or semantically similar responses to a given stimulus, such reactions may occupy a relatively stable position within the collective consciousness. However, conclusions regarding frequency must be drawn solely on the basis of empirical evidence or reliable data from an associative dictionary [5]. Semantic characteristics of associative reactions related to the concept of “friendship”. The semantic characteristics of these associative reactions are revealed by grouping them according to their content. Reactions associated with the concept of “friendship” can be theoretically categorized into ethical-spiritual, emotional, relational, practical-behavioral, and socio-cultural groups.

The ethical-moral category may include concepts such as “trust”, “loyalty”, “honesty”, and “truthfulness” (corresponding to the Russian terms “доверие”, “верность”, “честность”, and “преданность”). These responses link friendship to ethical standards, encompassing qualities such as trusting a friend, keeping promises, maintaining the relationship, and being sincere. The emotional category may encompass concepts like “affection”, “joy”, “sincerity”, and “closeness” (along with the Russian terms “радость”, “теплота”, and “искренность”). Such responses demonstrate that friendship is connected to an individual’s emotional world; it is perceived not merely as an ethical obligation, but also as a source of positive experiences, mutual understanding, and spiritual closeness.

The relational category may include terms such as “confidant”, “dear friend”, “companion”, “close friend”, “comrade”, and “interaction” (including the Russian terms “близкий друг”, “товарищ”, and “общение”). These terms point to the individuals between whom friendship exists and the specific nature of the relationship that manifests. While the term “sirdosh” (confidant) emphasizes a friend’s role as a trusted interlocutor, “qadrdon” (cherished/long-time friend) conveys a sense of deep, enduring closeness and mutual appreciation. The category of practical action includes terms such as “yordam” (help), “qo‘llab-quvvatlash” (support), and “ko‘mak” (assistance) - corresponding to the Russian concepts of “помощь”, “поддержка”, and “взаимопомощь”. These terms represent the manifestation of friendship through concrete actions. In this context, friendship is not merely a feeling or a perspective; rather, it is defined by responding to another person’s needs, providing aid during difficult situations, and working together to solve problems.

“Trust” (ishonch) relates to the expectation of security, openness, and sincerity within a friendship. “Loyalty” (sadoqat) evokes the idea of maintaining a friendship over time and remaining committed to the relationship even during difficult situations. “Assistance” (yordam) represents the action-oriented aspect of friendship, while “affection” (mehr) reflects its emotional content. These elements are interconnected and can form a multi-component cognitive model of friendship. In the Uzbek language, the terms “oqibat” and “mehr-oqibat” are also significant for understanding the cultural interpretation of this concept. These words encompass the valuing of a relationship, the act of showing attention, and the preservation of bonds between people. Their connection to the concept of friendship can be analyzed within the cultural and social context of the Uzbek language. Nevertheless, one cannot draw definitive conclusions without empirical

data regarding the frequency with which these terms appear in associative responses.

From a cognitive perspective, friendship can be described as a model consisting of components such as “trust”, “emotional closeness”, “mutual obligation”, and “practical assistance”. In this framework, specific associative responses activate particular facets of the concept. For instance, “confidant” (sirdosh) emphasizes interpersonal closeness, “loyalty” (sadoqat) denotes moral steadfastness, and “help” (yordam) signifies a practical aspect of the relationship. Cognitive characteristics of associative reactions in the Russian language: terms such as “trust” (доверие), “fidelity” (верность), “support” (поддержка), “sincerity” (искренность), “devotion” (преданность), and “mutual aid” (взаимопомощь) can be included among the theoretical associative units linked to the concept of “friendship” (дружба) in Russian. These terms represent the moral, emotional, and practical dimensions of knowledge regarding friendship.

In the cognitive approach, the concept of “friendship” (дружба) can also be structured within the human mind through scenarios concerning relationships. For instance, a friend providing assistance during a difficult situation, keeping a secret, or maintaining a long-term relationship are envisioned as typical scenarios associated with friendship. While such scenarios may be linked to the cultural experience of a specific linguistic community, the extent of their prevalence must be determined through dedicated research [3; 4].

Conclusion

From a cognitive perspective, associative reactions can reveal how knowledge about friendship is organized in the human mind, as well as the emotional evaluations and behavioral patterns linked to this concept. In both languages, the

significance of trust, loyalty, and mutual support highlights the universal human content of the concept of friendship. At the same time, the cultural and contextual nuances of terms such as “mehr-oqibat” (affection/kindness) or “преданность” (devotion/loyalty) underscore the necessity of examining the concept individually within the framework of each language. Thus, the semantic and cognitive analysis of associative reactions serves as an effective theoretical tool for comparing the conceptual structure of “friendship” in the Uzbek and Russian languages. In the future, free association experiments, frequency analysis of respondents' answers, and the study of data from associative dictionaries will help to provide an empirical basis for these conclusions.

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