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The Associative Field Of The Concept “Friendship" In The Uzbek And Russian Languages: A Comparative Description Of Core And Peripheral Units

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Abstract.
This article examines the associative field of the concept of “friendship” in Uzbek and Russian from a contrastive and linguocognitive perspective. It focuses on the core and peripheral units of the associative field, their semantic features, and their cultural significance. Associations related to loyalty, trust, support, sincerity, devotion, and mutual assistance are considered. The study identifies shared and culture-specific features of the concept of friendship in Uzbek and Russian linguistic worldviews. It also explores how friendship reflects interpersonal relationships, moral values, and social solidarity.
Keywords: Concept Of Friendship, Associative Field, Core, Periphery, Contrastive Analysis, Linguocognitive Approach, Cultural Specificity.

Introduction. Language is an essential tool for expressing human knowledge, experience, and values regarding existence. The way a specific concept is articulated within a language - and the words or mental images associated with it - provides insight into a people’s worldview and cultural experience. In this regard, the study of concepts from both linguistic and cognitive perspectives constitutes a significant branch of modern linguistics. A concept encompasses a complex of knowledge, emotional experience, evaluative judgments, and cultural representations formed within the human mind [1]. The concept of “friendship” (do‘stlik) signifies relationships characterized by closeness, mutual trust, loyalty, sincerity, and support. Although this concept holds a prominent place in the cultural experience of various peoples, its specific content - manifested through distinct associations, imagery, and values - can vary from one language to another. While the terms “do‘stlik” (in Uzbek) and “дружба” (in Russian) are closely aligned in their core meaning, a comparative analysis of the cultural representations associated with them allows for the identification of both universal and culture-specific characteristics of the concept.

Literature review. The purpose of this article is to describe the associative field of the concept of “friendship” in the Uzbek and Russian languages, to identify its core and peripheral units, and to conduct a comparative analysis of the relationships between them. The analysis draws upon theoretical perspectives concerning the concept, the associative field, and the linguacultural approach [2; 3]. The associative field and its core-periphery structure: an associative field is a complex of semantic units, mental representations, emotional attitudes, and cultural images that are activated in the human mind under the influence of a specific word or concept. Within human memory, a word connects with other words and experiences, giving rise to an extensive associative network. Consequently, studying the associative field helps to determine not only the lexical meanings of linguistic units but also the connections they form within the mind [2].

Research methodology. The core of an associative field consists of units that are most directly and stably linked to the content of a concept. The periphery, by contrast, encompasses units that are indirectly related to the concept - those that emerge under the influence of specific situations, personal experiences, social environments, or cultural perceptions. The boundary between the core and the periphery is not absolute; certain units may be activated to varying degrees among individuals of different ages, social groups, or cultural backgrounds. For the concept of “friendship”, core units might include trust, loyalty, sincerity, mutual assistance, and closeness - elements that directly express the essence of friendship. The peripheral layer, meanwhile, may contain situations and imagery such as childhood, school, neighborly relations, meetings, conversations, memories, gifts, or shared activities. However, such a classification is based on theoretical

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linguistic description; the precise status of any unit - whether it belongs to the core or the periphery - must be verified through empirical associative data and the responses of participants.

Analysis and results. In the Uzbek language, the concept of "friendship" (do'stlik) is intrinsically linked to notions such as sincere interpersonal relationships, mutual trust, loyalty, "mehr-oqibat" (affection and enduring care), and providing support during difficult times. Lexical units such as "do'st" (friend), "qadrdon" (cherished friend), "hamroh" (companion), "sirdosh" (confidant), and "birodar" (brother/close friend) serve to express various facets of friendship. Some of these terms emphasize closeness, while others highlight trust, the ability to keep secrets, or companionship throughout life's journey. In describing the theoretical associative field of this concept in Uzbek, terms such as "ishonch" (trust), "sadoqat" (loyalty), "mehr" (affection), "yordam" (help/support), "samimiyat" (sincerity), and "oqibat" (enduring care/loyalty in relationships) can be categorized as part of its core layer. While "ishonch" signifies the strength of the bond between friends, "sadoqat" denotes remaining faithful to a friend, to one's promises, and to the relationship itself. "Mehr" and "samimiyat" deepen emotional closeness, whereas "yordam" manifests the practical dimension of friendship. Within the Uzbek cultural environment, friendship is often envisioned alongside concepts related to family, the "mahalla" (neighborhood/community), neighborly relations, and collective bonds. Consequently, terms such as "hamjihatlik" (solidarity), "oqibat" (enduring care), "hurmat" (respect), "mehmondo'stlik" (hospitality), and "birlik" (unity) play a significant role in illuminating the broader cultural context of this concept. The fact that such units are located in the peripheral layer does not mean their connection to friendship is weak; rather, they are linked to the concept primarily through social situations and cultural experience.

Words such as "sirdosh" (a confidant) and "qadrdon" (a dear, long-time friend) hold special significance in expressing the personal and emotional dimensions of friendship. While "sirdosh" refers to a close person with whom one can share one's innermost thoughts and feelings, "qadrdon" evokes a sense of long-standing acquaintance, deep closeness, and mutual appreciation. Thus, the concept of "do'stlik" (friendship) in the Uzbek language encompasses not only interpersonal trust but also affection, care, and social intimacy.

In Russian, the concept of "дружба" (friendship) is semantically linked to terms such as "друг" (friend), "доверие" (trust), "верность" (loyalty/faithfulness), "поддержка" (support), "искренность" (sincerity), "преданность" (devotion), and "взаимопомощь" (mutual aid). These terms represent the emotional, ethical, and practical aspects of friendship. "Доверие" signifies openness and trust between friends, "верность" denotes loyalty to the relationship, and "поддержка" refers to providing assistance when needed. Theoretically, one can include "доверие", "верность", "поддержка", "искренность", and "взаимопомощь" within the core layer of the Russian concept of "дружба". These elements directly reveal the essence of friendship. Units such as "interaction", "meeting", "shared interests", "school", "student life", and "memories" can be interpreted as peripheral associations representing the situations and experiences in which friendship is formed. The Russian phrase "настоящий друг" (true friend) allows for the evaluation of friendship based on ethical criteria. In this context, a true friend is expected to be reliable, loyal, and prepared to provide assistance during difficult situations. The proverb "Друг познаётся в беде" (a friend is known in times of trouble) further underscores that friendship is tested and defined by loyalty and support. This proverb illustrates that friendship is not merely a collection of positive emotions, but rather an ethical relationship manifested through an individual's actions. Within the peripheral layer of the concept of "дружба" (friendship) in the Russian language, one may find notions related to shared activities, common interests, conversation, shared memories, and a long-standing acquaintance. These elements reflect the conditions under which a friendship arises and the ways in which it manifests in daily life. At the same time, determining which of these elements is most prominent in the minds of Russian speakers requires consulting associative dictionaries or data derived from specialized empirical studies [4; 5].

A comparative description of core units in the Uzbek and Russian languages. A comparison of the theoretical associative fields in both languages reveals significant commonality in the fundamental content of the concepts "do'stlik" (friendship) and "дружба" (friendship). In both languages, trust, loyalty, sincerity, and mutual assistance are considered key concepts that characterize friendship. These units demonstrate that friendship is linked to universal human values.

In the Uzbek language, the terms "mehr-oqibat" (affectionate concern/bonds of care) and "sirdosh" (confidant) vividly express aspects of friendship related to emotional closeness, care, and the keeping of secrets. In Russian, the terms "доверие" (trust), "верность" (faithfulness), and "преданность" (devotion) clearly articulate the

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concepts of trust and commitment within a relationship. However, it would be incorrect to interpret such differences as absolute national distinctions. The concepts of “affection/care” (mehr), “trust” (ishonch/доверие), “faithfulness” (верность), and “support” (поддержка) exist in both cultural environments; the differences may manifest primarily in how they are used in speech, their level of activity within a cultural context, and their associative strength.

Core units constitute the primary semantic content of a concept, while peripheral units reveal its connections to lived experience and cultural context. For instance, the terms “yordam” and “поддержка” (support) are semantically close, representing the practical dimension of friendship. Similarly, terms like “qadrdon” and “близкий друг” (close friend) denote a sense of closeness and a long-standing relationship. Such correspondences help identify conceptual similarities between the two languages; however, their exact equivalence can only be assessed through contextual and corpus-based analysis. The influence of cultural experience and social environment is more pronounced within the peripheral layer. In Uzbek, concepts such as “mahalla” (neighborhood/community), “oqibat” (mutual care/bonds of kinship or friendship), and “mehmondo‘stlik” (hospitality) link friendship to collective social relations. In Russian, terms like “совместные интересы” (shared interests), “общение” (interaction/communication), and “воспоминания” (memories) may highlight aspects of friendship rooted in shared activities and personal experience. These examples serve as theoretical hypotheses for comparative analysis; empirical evidence is required to confirm them as distinct national-cultural differences.

In the theoretical model of the concept of “friendship” in both the Uzbek and Russian languages, the core layer includes elements common to both - such as trust, loyalty, sincerity, and support - which constitute the fundamental essence of friendship. Concepts such as closeness, affection, respect, the ability to keep secrets, and mutual understanding may be situated in the layer adjacent to the core. The peripheral layer encompasses life situations, social environments, and cultural imagery associated with friendship. In the Uzbek language, this layer might include concepts such as the “mahalla” (neighborhood community), neighborly relations, hospitality, “oqibat” (a sense of enduring, caring connection), and solidarity. In the Russian language, elements such as meetings, conversations, shared interests, or memories from school or university years may be theoretically significant. This categorization is not a rigid or definitive conclusion, but rather a conceptual model to be examined through further empirical research.

The relationship between the core and the periphery is dynamic. For one individual, terms like “confidant” (sirdosh) or “dear, long-time friend” (qadrdon) might be elements situated close to the core, while for another, “support” or “trust” may emerge as the primary association. Similarly, the associative composition of the concept of “friendship” (дружба) may vary depending on a respondent’s age, experience, social environment, and language-related background. Therefore, when defining the core and periphery of a concept, it is advisable to supplement theoretical semantic analysis with empirical associative data. In both the Uzbek and Russian languages, the associative field of the concept of “friendship” reflects shared values such as trust, loyalty, sincerity, closeness, and mutual support among individuals. In both languages, these elements serve as an important theoretical basis for describing the core content of the concept. Meanwhile, the peripheral layer of friendship encompasses elements related to everyday interactions, shared experiences, social environment, and national-cultural perceptions.

Conclusion. A comparative analysis shows that terms such as “mehr-oqibat”, “sirdosh”, and “qadrdon” in Uzbek, as well as «доверие», «верность», «преданность» and «поддержка» in Russian, illuminate various semantic facets of friendship. At the same time, many of these terms are semantically close to one another, confirming the universal human foundation of this concept. When identifying national-cultural differences, it is more important to consider the frequency of usage, associative strength, and cultural context of these terms rather than merely their existence. Thus, examining the core and peripheral components of the concept of “friendship” helps to reveal both the common and the unique aspects of the worldviews reflected in the Uzbek and Russian languages. In future research, conducting free association experiments with native speakers of both languages - calculating the frequency of responses and categorizing the resulting terms into core and peripheral elements—could strengthen the empirical basis for these theoretical conclusions.

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