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THE ASSOCIATIVE-CONCEPTUAL FIELD OF THE CONCEPT "TOURISM": A FRAME-BASED COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF UZBEK AND ENGLISH LEXICAL REACTIONS

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Abstract: This article examines the associative-conceptual field of the concept TOURISM as it is verbalized in the linguistic consciousness of Uzbek and English native speakers. Building on frame semantics and associative-field theory, the study analyzes free-association responses elicited by the stimulus word tourism/turizm and organizes them into eight cognitive layers corresponding to the functional slots of the underlying frame: spatial, locomotive, organizational-practical, motivational, cultural-identity, emotional-experiential, material-economic, and legal-regulatory. The quantitative distribution of lexical reactions across these layers reveals that, while the overall frame architecture of TOURISM is cross-culturally shared, its content is filled in culturally specific ways: Uzbek respondents foreground toponyms and rituals bound to national heritage (Bukhara, Samarkand, Navro'z, ziyorat), whereas English respondents foreground exploratory and experiential motifs (London, the Alps, exploration, adventure).

The findings support the view that concepts are not isolated lexical meanings but dynamic, culturally mediated cognitive structures, and they contribute empirical evidence to the growing body of cross-linguistic associative research within cognitive and cultural linguistics.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics; concept; frame semantics; associative-conceptual field; free association test; tourism; cross-cultural comparison; Uzbek and English linguistic consciousness.

Introduction

Contemporary cognitive linguistics treats linguistic meaning not as a self-contained property of words but as a manifestation of the conceptual knowledge, experience, and worldview of the language user. Within this paradigm, a concept is understood as a multidimensional mental structure that integrates perceptual, cultural, and experiential information about a fragment of reality, and language is regarded as one of the principal means through which this structure becomes accessible to the researcher. The concept of TOURISM is a particularly productive object for such analysis, since travel-related activity intersects with spatial cognition, social practice, economic behaviour, cultural memory, and emotion simultaneously. A theoretically robust way of modelling this kind of multi-component concept is offered by frame semantics. Charles Fillmore proposed that word meanings cannot be understood independently of the background frames of knowledge and experience that motivate their existence; a frame is a structured schema of a recurrent situation consisting of participants, roles, and relations, later formalized in artificial-intelligence-oriented terms by Minsky as a data structure with fixed slots to be filled by variable values. Fillmore's earlier case grammar had already argued that predicates impose a fixed set of semantic roles, or cases, on their arguments; this

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line of reasoning was extended by Eugene Charniak's case-slot identity approach, which examined how lexical items are matched to the slots of a frame on the basis of case compatibility. Applied to the concept TOURISM, this theoretical apparatus predicts that the concept is not reducible to the notions of "travel" or "recreation" alone, but instead comprises an interrelated set of slots: destination, movement, transport, accommodation and services, purpose, cultural object, financial cost, safety, and emotional evaluation.

Within Uzbek cognitive linguistics, the concept TOURISM has begun to receive attention as tourism itself has grown into an economically and culturally significant domain of national life, yet systematic frame-based, cross-linguistic associative research on this concept remains limited. The present study addresses this gap by applying the slot-and-frame pattern methodology to associative data collected from Uzbek and English native speakers, with the aim of (a) establishing the internal frame structure of the concept TOURISM, (b) quantifying the distribution of associative reactions across the resulting cognitive layers, and (c) identifying points of cross-cultural convergence and divergence in how the concept is verbalized.

Methodology

Data were collected by means of a free (unrestricted) association test, the standard elicitation procedure in associative-field research, administered to two groups of native speakers: speakers of Uzbek and speakers of English. Respondents were presented with the stimulus word turizm / tourism and were asked to record the first word or short phrase that came to mind, with no restriction on grammatical class or number of associations, following the classical free-association protocol used in associative-lexicographic research. All elicited reactions were transcribed, lemmatized, and classified according to their semantic orientation and functional role within the presumed frame of TOURISM. Classification was carried out using the slot-and-frame pattern approach, under which each reaction is assigned to the frame slot whose situational function it instantiates rather than treated as an isolated lexical unit. The classification criterion was the functional position of the lexical unit within the tourism frame: whether it named a place, an action, a service, a motive, a cultural referent, an emotion, an economic entity, or a regulatory/legal notion. This procedure produced eight non-overlapping cognitive layers, described in Section

Results

Analysis of the associative responses confirmed that the concept TOURISM is organized as a frame consisting of eight functionally distinct cognitive layers (slots), summarized in Table 1.

No.	Cognitive Layer	Functional Criterion	Approx. Share
1	Spatial layer	Destination and geographical space	high
2	Locomotive layer	Travel, movement, and means of transport	high
3	Organizational-practical layer	Accommodation, services, tourist infrastructure	medium

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No.	Cognitive Layer	Functional Criterion	Approx. Share
4	Motivational layer	Purpose and motives of touristic activity	medium
5	Cultural-identity layer	Cultural-historical heritage and national identity	medium
6	Emotional-experiential layer	Emotional and personal experience	medium
7	Material-resource layer	Economic and consumer relations	low–medium
8	Legal-regulatory layer	Safety, control, and documentation	low

Note: exact percentage values correspond to the frequency distribution obtained from the associative experiment and are visualized in the original pie-chart figure (Figure 1) accompanying this study; the qualitative ranking above reflects the relative salience of each layer in the pooled data.

The two data sets diverge most clearly in the cultural-identity and spatial layers. Among Uzbek respondents, high-frequency reactions such as Buxoro (Bukhara), Samarqand (Samarkand), Navro'z (Novruz), urf-odat (custom/tradition), and ziyorat (pilgrimage/visit to a shrine) dominate, indicating that the Uzbek linguistic consciousness activates the TOURISM concept primarily through spiritually and historically loaded national referents. Among English respondents, by contrast, frequent reactions such as London, New York, Alps, exploration, and adventure indicate that the same concept is activated through internationally recognizable destinations and through an experiential-exploratory motive rather than a heritage-bound one.

The locomotive and organizational-practical layers (transport, hotel, guide, service, booking, and comparable items) were represented in both data sets with broadly comparable weight, suggesting that the operational core of the tourism frame — how a trip is physically carried out — constitutes a culturally stable, near-universal component of the concept. The legal-regulatory layer (visa, passport, security, insurance) was the least frequently activated layer in both languages, indicating that regulatory aspects of travel occupy a peripheral rather than a nuclear position in speakers' spontaneous conceptualization of tourism, despite their practical importance in real touristic activity.

Discussion

The results are compatible with the frame-semantic prediction that a single situational concept such as TOURISM is represented in the mind not as an unstructured bundle of associations but as a coherent frame whose slots are filled with culturally variable content while the frame architecture itself remains stable across languages. This is consistent with Fillmore's original claim that frames provide the shared cognitive scaffolding on which culturally specific lexical material is mapped, and it extends this claim empirically to a socially and economically salient concept that has not previously been examined through comparative Uzbek–English associative data.

The salience of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Navro'z in the Uzbek data can be interpreted, in line with Sharifian's (2011) cultural-linguistic model of cultural conceptualizations, as evidence that the TOURISM frame in Uzbek linguistic consciousness is substantially fused with the broader cultural conceptualization of national heritage and religious-

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historical memory. The corresponding prominence of exploration and adventure in the English data suggests a frame more oriented toward individual experience and discovery, a pattern that resonates with Western tourism-marketing discourse, which routinely foregrounds self-transformation and exploration as motivational appeals (see, e.g., cross-cultural tourism-discourse studies building on Wierzbicka's, notion of culturally specific semantic configurations). These findings should, however, be treated as indicative rather than definitive, since associative responses are also shaped by respondents' individual travel experience, age, and exposure to tourism media, factors that the present design does not fully control for.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the concept TOURISM, as verbalized through free-association responses in Uzbek and English, is organized around a shared eight-layer frame comprising spatial, locomotive, organizational-practical, motivational, cultural-identity, emotional-experiential, material-resource, and legal-regulatory components. While the overall frame structure is cross-culturally stable, its lexical content diverges systematically: Uzbek associative reactions are anchored in national heritage and religious-historical toponyms, whereas English reactions are anchored in international destinations and an exploratory motivational stance. These findings support a view of TOURISM not as a narrowly touristic or economic notion but as a culturally saturated cognitive structure that integrates spatial, social, emotional, and axiological knowledge. The slot-and-frame pattern methodology employed here offers a replicable procedure for future comparative studies of other socially significant concepts across typologically and culturally distinct languages.

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