
CONFERENCE ARTICLE

**Associative Field and the Processes of Its Analysis (On the Example of the Stimulus Word
“Oila” [“Family”])**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines in detail the “associative field”, one of the key concepts of associative linguistics, together with the ways in which it is formed and the problems of its linguistic analysis, using the stimulus “oila” (“family”) as an example. In determining the associative field, the methods of the associative experiment and of practical analysis are used, and the influence of the participants’ individual and collective characteristics, gender and age factors, and socio-cultural processes on the formation of associative units is analyzed. The study shows the place of the associative field within the system of the semantic, grammatical, pragmatic, connotative and national-cultural features of a lexical unit. It also demonstrates the significance of the associative field for studying the relationship between language and thought and its role in the formation and expression of particular concepts in the human mind.

Keywords: Associative linguistics, associative field, associative experiment, associative unit, stimulus “oila” (“family”), linguistic association, language and thought, lexical unit, semantic feature, pragmatic feature, connotation, national-cultural feature, gender factor, age factor.

INTRODUCTION

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The concept of the associative field is considered one of the basic concepts of associative linguistics. The associative field reflects not only the lexical-grammatical connections within a language but also the connections existing in human imagination. Therefore, studying the manifestations of the associative field in language makes it possible to identify connections both within language and beyond it. To achieve such a result, it is necessary to rely on the principles of associative linguistics [1].

In associative linguistics, the associative field is formed mainly in two ways:

- 1) the method of the associative experiment conducted with native speakers;
- 2) the method of determining the associative field of a ready-made text.

Unlike the semantic field, the associative field is a set of language units that are associatively linked with one another (that call one another to mind). The associative field is formed by the relations of units belonging either to the same level or to different levels of the language. Evidently, the members of an associative field are heterogeneous.

The associative field of a ready-made literary text contains only the individual associations and figurative expressions peculiar to the author. The associative field obtained on the basis of an associative experiment with native speakers, by contrast, has a collective character. In other words, these two methods of forming an associative field yield private and general associative fields respectively.

An associative experiment with native speakers can be conducted in two ways: orally and in writing. Because oral experiments take a great deal of time, linguists prefer the written method. In conducting associative experiments, serious attention is paid to the participants’ nationality, spoken

language, sex, age, education, occupation, place of residence and similar characteristics. The sources note that these factors have a considerable influence on the character of the associative units [1]. In associative experiments with linguistic aims, people aged 21–27 are most often involved. According to scholars, at this age native speakers have a broad vocabulary and fully formed intellectual abilities, and they are able to represent the linguistic consciousness and thinking both of present-day native speakers and of the coming generation.

Participants in associative experiments are most often selected from among native speakers with higher education or students. Sometimes people of various occupations are also chosen. In studying the gender features of lexical units, representatives of the same sex are involved in the associative experiments.

A. Mustajoki [2] raises the following question about the results of linguistic experiments: “If a linguist tries to obtain information about ‘the language system as a whole’, the situation is self-evident. Who has the right to demonstrate the opinion of ‘everyone’? Here the researcher directly encounters the notion of the ‘native speaker’ or the ‘native speaker of the literary language’.”

The results of an associative experiment are studied as follows.

The order of linguistic analysis:

1. The lexical-semantic feature of the lexical unit:

- a) the dictionary meaning of the lexical unit;
- b) the semantic components of the lexical unit;
- c) the figurative meanings of the lexical unit;
- d) the paradigmatic series of lexical units.

2. The lexical-grammatical feature of the lexical unit:

- a) the morphological forms of the lexical unit;

- b) the syntagmatic series of the lexical unit in speech.
- 3. The derivational feature of the lexical unit: derivatives formed from the lexical unit.
- 4. The acoustic feature of the lexical unit.
- 5. The stylistic feature of the lexical unit.
- 6. The pragmatic feature of the lexical unit:
 - a) its connotative feature;
 - b) its expression of an evaluative attitude;
 - c) its deictic feature.
- 7. The gender feature of the lexical unit.
- 8. The national-cultural feature of the lexical unit.
- 9. The social feature of the lexical unit.
- 10. The associative field of the lexical unit.
- 11. The frequency of use of lexical units.

In the analysis of an associative field, the question of its composition is of great importance. The main part of an associative field is made up of associates that are semantically connected with the stimulus word. In some cases, the stimulus word itself is also given as an associate. Associates may come in the same grammatical form as the stimulus word or, sometimes, in a different form. Associations belonging to different levels are also observed within the field.

In an associative field one sometimes also finds associative units belonging to colloquial speech, as well as pragmatic associates that are semantically unrelated to the lexical unit or that arise in connection with external factors such as the speech situation and the speaker's mental state [3].

The units of an associative field may be individual or collective in character. Each person perceives reality at the level of his or her own imagination, which leads to the formation of individual associates. The formation of individual associates is also influenced by native speakers' occupation, position in social life, sex, age and life experience. Individual associates provide information about a single person's knowledge of reality, views and mentality, formed on the basis of his or her life experience.

Collective associates arise from the uniform perception of reality by the majority. Such associates often express the most important notions connected with human life. The associates given to the stimulus word "oila" ("family") — xonadon (household), uy (home), tug'ilgan kunlar (birthdays), aka-uka (brothers), opa-singil (sisters), buva (grandfather), buvi (grandmother), kechki birgalikdagi ovqatlanish (shared evening meals), sho'xliklar (pranks) and yashirinish (hiding) — are collective associates that recall events of childhood, adolescence or student years, a period that leaves an unforgettable mark on every person's life. Such collective associative units are taken as the basis for the normative associative dictionary of a given language [1; 4]. It should be emphasized that associative units, whether individual or collective, are the product of native speakers' thinking.

The associative field plays an important role in studying the semantic features of a lexical unit serving as a stimulus word. It makes it possible to identify the stimulus word's dictionary meaning, certain connotative, stylistic, pragmatic and dialectal meanings not recorded in dictionaries, its features in speech use, and its figurative meanings. In this respect, the associative field can be assessed as a source that allows one to determine not only the associative structure of a lexical unit but also its various semantic features.

In short, the associative field, as a set of language units associatively linked with one another, is an important database. In linguistics, the units that are recalled in human memory in

response to a particular language unit, that is, a stimulus word, and that call one another to mind are recognized as associative units.

Conclusion

The associative field is a set of language units associatively linked with one another and reflects, along with the lexical-grammatical connections in language, the connections existing in human imagination. It is formed in two ways, through an associative experiment with native speakers and on the basis of a ready-made text: the first yields a collective field, the second an individual one. In the experiment, factors such as the participants' sex, age, education, occupation and place of residence must be taken into account. In the case of the stimulus "oila" ("family"), the collective associates (xonadon, uy, aka-uka, opa-singil, buva, buvi and others) express shared notions connected with childhood and family life. The associative field also makes it possible to identify connotative, stylistic and pragmatic meanings of a lexical unit that are not recorded in dictionaries, and is therefore an important source for studying the relationship between language and thought.

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