STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC COMPONENTS OF THE THEMATIC FIELD OF 'TELEVISION' IN ENGLISH LINGUOCULTURE

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Abstract

This study explores the structural and semantic composition of the thematic field of "television" within English linguoculture. Employing semantic field theory, conceptual metaphor analysis, and cultural linguistics, the research identifies core and peripheral lexical units associated with television, analyzes their paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, and uncovers cultural meanings embedded in key terms. By examining both denotative and connotative values of these lexical items, the study provides insight into how television-related language reflects media practices and social norms in Anglophone societies. The findings draw upon theoretical frameworks by Trier, Ufimtseva, Lakoff and Johnson, Crystal, and Sternin.

Keywords: thematic field, semantic field, television, English linguoculture, media language, paradigmatic relations, conceptual metaphor, cultural linguistics

Introduction

Language and culture are inextricably linked through the conceptual and communicative roles they serve in human societies. One way to examine this interrelation is through the study of thematic and semantic fields. The concept of the thematic field is a significant theoretical construct in semantics, lexical field theory, and cognitive linguistics. It refers to a group of lexical units that are united by a shared theme or conceptual domain, such as education, war, television, or medicine. Thematic fields organize vocabulary based on situational or referential topics, providing insight into the cultural, functional, and semantic organization of a language. The origins of thematic field theory are rooted in the broader framework of lexical field theory, initially developed by German linguists like Jost Trier (1931) and Leo Weisgerber. Trier proposed that the vocabulary of a language is structured in systems or fields, where meaning is relational and words within a field are interdependent.

In the 20th century, Stephen Ullmann (1962) contributed significantly to the theory of semantic fields and emphasized the importance of thematic and associative groupings of words. Ullmann distinguished between logical groupings (e.g., hypernyms and hyponyms) and thematic groupings based on real-world concepts. Later developments saw the integration of field theory with cognitive linguistics and frame semantics (Fillmore, 1976), where thematic fields are seen not just as lexical clusters but as mental models or frames that structure human experience. In the 21st century, the theory of the thematic field has matured into a flexible, interdisciplinary concept that integrates linguistic structure, cognitive modeling, and social context. Leading scholars emphasize its relevance in lexicography, discourse analysis, translation, education, and digital communication. Through tools like FrameNet, corpora, and cognitive models, thematic field theory now serves as a powerful framework for understanding how language maps human knowledge and cultural experience.

In the 21st century, **Tony Berber Sardinha** and others have applied **corpus-driven methods** to analyze thematic fields across genres and registers. Using keyness analysis, clustering, and topic modeling, scholars identify how thematic fields are constructed and used differently in news, academic writing, political discourse, etc.

Modern linguistic research characterizes thematic fields with the following features:

Discourse-based: Thematic fields emerge from actual language use, not just dictionary definitions.

Culturally shaped: Vocabulary reflects national, professional, or ideological worldviews.

Cognitively grounded: Words in a thematic field evoke schemas, scripts, and mental models.

Corpus-verifiable: They are identified and analyzed through frequency, collocation, and semantic prosody using large corpora.

Thematic fields group lexical items around a shared topic or domain, such as "television," while semantic fields explore deeper lexical interconnections based on meaning. In English linguoculture, television serves not only as a technological tool for mass communication but also as a conceptual space that embodies social values, media ideologies, and communicative trends. This paper investigates the thematic field of "television" in English through structural, semantic, and cultural lenses.

Methodology

This qualitative research integrates three primary methodologies:

a) **"Semantic field theory"** – building on the frameworks by Trier (1931), Porzig, and Ipsen, the study categorizes lexical items based on shared meaning domains and their hierarchical structures.

b) **"Conceptual metaphor theory"** – following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphorical mappings such as "television as a window" or "media as a battlefield" are analyzed.

c) **"Cultural linguistics"** – using Sternin (1996) and Crystal (2003), the study interprets how television-related language reflects sociocultural practices in English-speaking contexts.

Lexical data were collected from media discourse (BBC, CNN), television program transcripts, and English dictionaries (Oxford English Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary) to identify frequently used terms and phrases in television contexts.

Results

The thematic field of "television" consists of a semantic core and a peripheral layer (Zinder, 1977).

Core Units:

television, TV, channel, program(me), news, anchor, viewer

Peripheral Units:

sitcom, reality show, talk show, streaming, binge-watch, prime time, remote control, satellite, on-demand

These elements are structured by:

Paradigmatic relations (substitution):

Example: series – show – documentary – sitcom

Syntagmatic relations (co-occurrence):

Example: watch a program, host a talk show, air live news, stream a series

Moreover, lexical items within the television field carry both denotative and connotative meanings:

Lexeme	Denotative meaning	Connotative meaning
News	factual information broadcast	urgency, trustworthiness, seriousness
Reality show	entertainment based on real life	sensational, voyeuristic, low culture
Prime time	peak viewing period	commercial profitability, family time, drama
Binge-watch	watching multiple episodes	addiction, indulgence, passive entertainment
Anchor	news presenter	authority, reliability, charisma

These connotative meanings are culturally embedded, often shaped by viewer habits, national broadcasting traditions, and genre popularity.

At this stage, analyzing the conceptual metaphor is both relevant and necessary. A conceptual metaphor is the understanding of one idea or conceptual domain (**target domain**) in terms of another (**source domain**). It is a mental mapping between domains. Based on Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the following metaphors are prevalent in television discourse:

TELEVISION AS A WINDOW - e.g., "a window into the world"

MEDIA AS A STAGE - e.g., "politicians took the TV stage"

INFORMATION AS A FLOW - e.g., "streaming services", "content flows daily"

These metaphors reveal how television is conceptualized not only as a medium but also as a cultural force shaping perception, authority, and emotion.

Discussion

The thematic field of "television" reflects broader social patterns in Anglophone culture. For instance, the rise of streaming and "on-demand" services has introduced lexical innovations such as cord-cutting, platform, algorithmic recommendations, and content curation. These terms show how digitalization reshapes television language.

Moreover, the concept of binge-watching, while neutral in denotation, connotes excessive consumption, paralleling concerns in public discourse about attention spans and digital addiction (Osgood et al., 1957).

Pragmatic differences in media-related language also illustrate cultural attitudes. English media frequently employs hedged or polite directives ("please stand by" vs. "wait"), which reflects norms of indirectness and viewer-centered communication (Crystal, 2003).

The distinctions between semantic fields (based on meaning relations) and thematic fields (based on topical organization) are crucial in linguocultural analysis.

A word like broadcast may belong to multiple semantic fields:

Media transmission   Technology   Sound/image   Public communication

This dynamic overlap demonstrates the fluidity of semantic networks in language use.

Conclusion

The thematic field of television in English linguoculture represents a multidimensional structure encompassing lexical, semantic, and cultural components. While core terms denote essential elements of the television experience, peripheral items and metaphoric expressions reflect changing media habits and cultural perceptions. The study underscores the value of integrating semantic field theory with cultural linguistics to better understand how media discourse shapes and mirrors societal norms. Further research may extend this framework to multilingual comparisons or genre-specific television terminology.

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