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ON THE COGNITIVE FRAME OF FREEDOM

Agnieszka Uberman 

Institute of English Studies, University of Rzeszów, Poland

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Abstract: Freedom is considered one of the basic human rights. It is a complex concept encompassing many types. Freedom is also among the most rudimentary values observed by human societies and a crucial cultural keyword. An attempt will be made in the discussion to sketch out the cognitive frame of FREEDOM and to show selected fundamental elements, exemplified by media coverages and news reports. The linguistic analysis of some of its most salient elements is provided on the basis of Oxford English dictionary.

Keywords: value, cultural keyword, cognitive frame, freedom, the frame of FREEDOM.

1. Introduction

In turbulent times that we are currently living, the basic human safety tends to be under need of threat in various places across the world. Armed conflicts and unstable political situation in different countries make freedom not only an inescapable need and a sought-after value, but a necessity the protection of which is the responsibility of diverse communities, societies and nations. Regrettably, it is not only in war-ravaged areas that diverse human freedoms are denied or violated. These features of the phenomenon make it an interesting topic worthy of research.

Freedom is a complex concept that defies brief description. It is a multifaceted notion which can be addressed from a number of perspectives, such as philosophical, theological and social, to mention but a few. Section 2 of the present discussion (Defining freedom: methods and materials) focuses on the definitions of the concept from different perspectives. The symbolic representations of freedom



are introduced (Pinker 1997; Biedermann 1996) and briefly addressed, followed by the general definitions of freedom presented on the basis of the Oxford English dictionary (OED, *s.a.*). A philosophical perspective of freedom is outlined by Feinberg (2005), Waldron (2008) and Bochenek (2017). The linguistic perspective is grounded in observations by Wierzbicka (1997), who presents an explication of the concept by referring to its culture-specific and language-specific characteristics. She proposes a definition in terms of semantic metalanguage, thus avoiding the bias that individual languages and cultures might and do bring into their understanding of the notion.

Freedom is also a significant value discussed extensively in the expert literature (Abramowicz 1993; Antosiak 2003; Bartmiński 2003; 2008; 2009; 2014; 2015; Koczur-Lejk & Rodziewicz 2021; Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2015; Pinker 1994; Puzynina 1992; Wierzbicka 1992; 1997; 1999). This important aspect is the primary focus of Section 3 titled Freedom as value. Additionally, the American perspective on values is briefly presented (Borstelmann 2020; Caldwell 2007; Gries 2016; Gooding 2018; Obama 2020; Plummer 2003; Sharpes 2019; Uberman 2022). It is also important to note that freedom is considered a cultural keyword (Bartmiński 2015; Levisen & Waters 2017; Wierzbicka 1992; 1997; 1999; 2006; 2007; 2014).

In Section 4 (A cognitive frame of FREEDOM: outline and discussion) the frame of FREEDOM is analysed. The cognitive model is presented from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics and outlined on the basis of specialist literature (Figar 2020; Fillmore 1975; Foolen 2012; Hoang 2022; Ioannou 2019; Lakoff & Johnson 1999; Petruck 2013; Sullivan 2013; Uberman 2018). The frame is understood as "a cognitive structure that organizes human experience and can be activated by various linguistic signals" (Ushchyna 2020: 462).

The research study is conducted on the basis of two online lexicographic sources, the Oxford English dictionary, *s.a.* and the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *s.a.* Additional sources are composed of selected online BBC News reports and a Polish news report together with a YouTube interview, all of which concentrate on the many faces of the issue of freedom. The analysis of the sources enables the creation of a rudimentary cognitive frame of FREEDOM, as the presentation of a complete structure is well beyond the scope of such a limited research study. The most crucial frame elements are instantiated, and they are exemplified by world news items for clarification and illustration. It must be stressed that only the aspects of freedom relating to social life will be addressed; the science-related senses of freedom will be excluded from considerations. Concluding remarks is the final section which briefly summarises the analysis of the research study material and its findings.

2. Defining freedom: methods and materials

Even though it is ubiquitous, freedom is an abstract concept that can be interpreted and epitomized in a number of ways. The concept of freedom is symbolically rendered by a number of images. A concrete image that is universally understood as representing freedom is the Statue of Liberty (Pinker 1997: 297). Searching online sources for data has revealed recurrent images, such as an eagle – a bird considered 'king' among the feathered beasts, a dove, a raven – owing to its connotation with freedom and independence. Other images signifying freedom are broken chains, open palms, wings, torches, stars or olive branches (Symbols of freedom, *s.a.*). Biedermann (1996: 60) also notes that cats are considered a symbol of freedom. They signify liberty owing to the difficulty in catching or confining them. Freedom can be also figuratively ascribed to deer, which as "creatures of the wild [...] roam through nature, seeking distant regions and shunning fixed abodes" (*ibid.*, 93).

2.1 Freedom: Definitions

Freedom is generally defined as "the state of being able to act without hindrance or restraint; liberty of action" (Freedom (a), *s.a.*). In its more specific understanding, it is also referred to as "exemption or release from slavery or imprisonment", "exemption or release from the obligations of a contractual agreement; spec. release from a marriage, divorce". In the current situation of many nations across the globe involved in some kind of (not only armed) conflict, there is a strong prevalence of search for freedom understood as "the state or fact of not being subject to despotic or autocratic control, or to a foreign power; civil liberty; independence". In figurative terms, freedom is considered to be "liberation from the bondage or dominating influence of sin, spiritual servitude, worldly ties, etc." (Freedom (b), *s.a.*).

From a philosophical perspective freedom is considered to be the self-determination of personal, mindful activity (Freedom (c), *s.a.*). It is rendered in various walks of life as, for instance a socio-political freedom, freedom of choice and practising religion, freedom in searching for truth and arranging academic research, freedom in moral conduct, freedom of artistic activity, etc. All of the abovementioned types assume some form of understanding of human freedom.

As further clarified by Feinberg (2005: 294):

"There are at least two basic ideas in the conceptual complex we call 'freedom'; namely, rightful self-government (autonomy), and the overall ability to do, choose or achieve things, which can be called 'optionality' and defined as the possession of open options. To be autonomous is to be free in the sense of 'self-governing' and 'independent', in a manner analogous to that in which sovereign nation states are free. Optionality is when a person has an open option in respect to some possible action, x, when nothing in the objective circumstances prevents them from doing x should they choose to do so, and nothing requires them to do x should they choose not to. One has freedom of action when one can do what one wills, but in order to have the full benefit of optionality, it must be supplemented by freedom of choice (free will), which

consists in being able to will what one wants to will, free of internal psychological impediments. Autonomy and optionality can vary independently of one another. A great deal of one can coexist with very little of the other".

Waldron (2008: 279) claims that "Humans are potentially free agents and the realisation of their freedom is a matter of the greatest moral importance". However, in connection with the language of rights, the author notes that people do not have "a right to perform just any action they choose. Maybe we have a right to perform at least those actions that do not interfere with the liberty of others" (ibid.). As pointed out by Bochenek (2017: 35-36), from the personalism perspective an individual as a dynamic reality is constituted by will whose basis of realisation is self-determination – i.e. possessing oneself. Freedom is the primary measure of one's dignity and greatness, the fundament of other features, the privilege without which a given individual's actions are devoid of any axiological connotation.

While discussing the concept of 'freedom' Wierzbicka (1997) states that it is a culture-specific and a language-specific concept. She notes that 'freedom' is mostly discussed by researchers in philosophy and not so much attention is devoted to the linguistic analysis of the notion. Moreover, she believes that a cross-linguistic analysis would unveil similarities as well as existing diversities between the 'freedom' lexicon in different culture and language communities, despite the fact that the concept might be commonly considered to be universal. She goes on to state that "An awareness is also lacking of the fact that words encode certain conceptualizations rather than any objective "pictures" of reality, or that the same situation or state of affairs can be differently construed [...] for the purposes of linguistic encoding" (ibid., 126). Therefore, a culture-independent explanation employing semantic metalanguage is likely to provide an unbiased image. The modern English concept of 'freedom' is covered in the following explication (ibid., 130):

"freedom

- (a) someone (X) can think something like this:*
- (b) if I want to do something I can do it*
- (c) no one else can say to me: "you can't do it because I don't want this"*
- (d) if I don't want to do something I don't have to do it*
- (e) no one else can say to me: "you have to do it because I want this"*
- (f) this is good for X*
- (g) it is bad if someone cannot think this"*

As further noted, the explication above justifies the possibility in English to talk about "freedom OF / TO" as well as "freedom FROM" (ibid., 131). An important observation is made by Wierzbicka (ibid., 132), referring to the latter, in the following words:

"This "negative" semantics of freedom¹ corresponds, then, to the ideal of "non-imposition," which is one of the major cultural themes in the Anglo world. It is not the ability to do whatever one wants that is a key Anglo ideal, because the

supreme goal of individual rights is linked in this culture with a general recognition of other people's individual rights. It is "non-imposition" which is the key idea: "Maybe I can't do some things that I'd like to do, but at least no one else is going to prevent me from doing what I want and what I have the right to do." It is crucial to this conception that what applies to me applies also to everyone else: freedom² is not just a privilege that some people may enjoy ('it is good for this person') but a universal right ('it is bad if someone can't think this'). The emergence of the concept of 'freedom' in the English language reflects the rise of this modern ideal".

Selected different types of freedom will be the focus of discussion in the sections to follow in order to sketch out the core of the cognitive frame in which they are included.

2.2 Methods and materials

Freedom is a concept that can be interpreted from a number of perspectives, as proven by the definitions that have thus far been provided. It is not only a condition in human life but also a significant value for most individuals. This is reflected in the way freedom is perceived in language-specific and culture-specific contexts. The main emphasis of the discussion is the cognitive model, i.e. the frame of FREEDOM with its diverse elements formed by freedom types and associated notions, such as the people and certain activities involved. The construct to be outlined is so complex that only its most salient elements will be addressed. It is an extremely multifaceted knowledge structure and the main types of freedom will be referenced in the present research study.

The corpus subjected to analysis and presented as the cognitive frame of FREEDOM has been gathered from two online dictionaries, the Oxford English dictionary, *s.a.* (henceforth OED, *s.a.*) and the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *s.a.* (referred to as MW, *s.a.*). Individual entries pertaining to types of freedom and freedom-related concepts are quoted after the above sources. Moreover, online BBC News reports are referenced as well. The selection that is referred to are the articles reporting on issues affecting diverse types of freedom (i.e. freedom of education, reproductive freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of expression). One online article comes from a Polish online news platform and, together with a YouTube link to the interview on which the article is based, they address the freedom of expression of a Chinese-born poet in exile. The focus of attention are the freedom types in the Western world, however, instances from other regions are also quoted to identify limitations on particular types of freedom placed on citizens in different parts of the globe.

3. Freedom as value

It has to be stressed that freedom is one of the human values that are most dearly held by communities, ethnic groups, societies as well as whole nations (Abramowicz 1993; Antosiak 2003; Bartmiński 2003; 2008; 2009; 2014; 2015; Koczur-Lejk & Rodziewicz 2021; Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2015; Pinker 1994; Puzynina 1992; Wierzbicka 1992; 1997; 1999). Preserving and maintaining freedom are

undoubtedly activities that are influenced by affectivism, as freedom is the concept and condition requiring utmost attention and deserving priority. As rightly stressed by Bartmiński (2009: 12) "freedom and sovereignty, peace and well-being, democracy and solidarity" are the entrusted values for many European nations, Poland included. Among the most significant values for Polish people 'freedom' – [Pol. *wolność*] ranked sixth, after 'family', 'work', 'love', 'faith' and 'friendship' (Bartmiński 2014: 19). In a conducted research study (Lappo 2006) 'freedom' was associated mainly with the following features:

- a) independence, the lack of external limitations;
- b) freedom of speech;
- c) ability to decide about oneself;
- d) the freedom of choice;
- e) self-limitation for common good;
- f) a guarantee of a democratic state;
- g) it is a human feature / an individual's inner feeling;
- h) it gives the feeling of happiness / safety / lightness;
- i) freedom of religion, denomination;
- j) ability to act in unrestricted manner;
- k) ability to travel / move about;
- l) acting according to one's conscience;
- m) national sovereignty;
- n) it is related to the responsibility for one's choices;
- o) it requires self-control;
- p) no obligation to work;
- q) it is the rule of law.

Freedom is one of the most crucial aspects of American culture (Borstelmann 2020; Caldwell 2007; Gries 2016; Gooding 2018; Obama 2020; Plummer 2003; Sharpes 2019; Uberman 2022). Sharpes states that "the essence of American values [is] **human freedom** and the indispensable condemnation of those who violate it" (2019: 98). It is featured extensively in various walks of life. For Americans, freedom is a deeply-rooted notion significant in terms of both the authorities, individuals, and the media. The freedom of all forms of expression, including the freedom of speech, are universally declared and executed in the daily lives of citizens in the USA. "This very aspect of American life is of fundamental significance, and it can be easily identified as the American cultural script and also as a notion featuring in the national anthem" (Uberman 2022: 145). The national coat of arms of the

United States is referred to as the **Bird of Freedom**, "the bald eagle considered as an emblem of the United States of America" (Bird of freedom, *s.a.*).

Freedom is also considered one of the cultural keywords in numerous languages and cultures (see among others Bartmiński 2015; Levisen & Waters 2017; Wierzbicka 1992; 1997; 1999; 2006; 2007, 2014). Wierzbicka (1997: 15-16) interprets keywords to be "words which are particularly important and revealing in a given culture", but states that their number is not set and no objective discovery process can be named to recognize them. As noted by experts in the field, cultural keywords may vary from language to language in subtle details, as it is those details and individual elements of the linguistic worldview that make culture and language communities unique (Bartmiński 2009; Underhill 2012).

4. A cognitive frame of FREEDOM: Outline and discussion

It is a long-held claim and a rudimentary supposition in Cognitive Linguistics that language and cognition are interrelated. Foolen (2012: 349) states that the manner in which "human cognition works has an influence on the structure of human language, and language influences human cognition".

As pointed out by Dukes et al. (2021), it is not only facts that enable individuals to make sense of the world in which they live: in line with the claims of the affective sciences, it is emotions, feelings and motivations that are of grand relevance for human cognitive processes. They (*ibid.*, 816) note that

"the affective sciences have already led to a better understanding of how we acquire knowledge of the objects, concepts, and people around us, as well as how we determine the value of those things. Importantly, emotions do not just shape how we interpret the world, but also shape which aspects of the world need our attention and which can safely be ignored: emotions are not just about what is, but also about what matters".

Petruck highlights the fact that a concept of a semantic frame was introduced by Fillmore in 1975 "as an alternative to 'checklist' theories of meaning", thus, "instead of representing the meaning of a linguistic form in terms of a checklist of conditions that must be satisfied for the form to be appropriately or truthfully used, word meaning is characterized in terms of experience-based schematizations of the speaker's world – *frames*" (2013: 1). A semantic frame is the basis for understanding concepts. The combination of background data enables the language user to comprehend and apply a linguistic concept. "Patterns of language reflect cognitive models and frames, which form the cognitive spaces with layers and lots of mental elements, namely, language

perceiver capabilities of mapping, analysing, synthesizing, building image schema, partitioning concept, etc." (Hoang 2022: 845).

As noted by Sullivan (2013: 17), "To date, semantic frames have appeared mostly in analyses of non-metaphoric language. Conceptual metaphor theorists have suggested that frame structure is preserved in metaphoric mappings, but this is rarely formalized". A semantic frame is described as "a script-like conceptual structure that describes a particular type of situation, object, or event and the participants and props involved in it" (ibid., 18).

A frame is a cognitive construct, a composite data structure, originally discussed by Fillmore (1975), who proposed to substitute the "traditional notion of a static, rigid, structuralist construct of a semantic field" with "a more flexible construct of a frame" (Figar 2020: 160). Frames "are complex knowledge structures, which encompass not only culturally-conditioned information, but also descriptions of activities and tools employed in the related processes, their linguistic exponents and elements that are interrelated and mutually-conditioned" (Uberman 2018: 428). Cognitive frames, as noted by Ioannou, are "the conceptual categories evoked by the presence of elements that belong to the frame, independently of the discursive, pragmatic or other context" (2019: 14). Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 116) stress the fact that semantic frames offer an inclusive conceptual framework "defining the semantic relationships between entire "fields" of related concepts and the words that express them", adding that the conceptual frames present in human cognition "*contribute semantically*³ to the meanings of words and sentences". Fillmore and Atkins (1992: 75) state that "individual word senses, relationships among the senses of polysemous words, and relationships between (senses of) semantically related words are linked with the cognitive structures (or "frames"), knowledge of which is presupposed for the concepts encoded by the words".

Frames function in human cognitive processes as complex networks of interrelated elements. They contain names of objects, ideas, actions, sequences of events (scripts) and upon evoking one such element, access to the entire structure is enabled, and information is made available for retrieval. In the following, we will address the core elements of the cognitive construct under consideration, i.e. the frame of FREEDOM.

Freedom, as defined by OED, *s.a.*, is a composite concept with a number of meanings and possible interpretations. The most prototypical reading of the term is related to independence of various kinds. In the discussion to follow an attempt will be made at outlining the most characteristic elements of the frame of FREEDOM, as presenting a complete set of concepts is impossible owing to its

incredible diversity and complexity. The following discussion will identify the core elements of the cognitive model under consideration. Those uses related to different areas of science (physics, chemistry, etc.) shall not be considered, as only those pertaining to the general lives of individuals will be addressed. Diverse types of freedom are guaranteed for citizens in most countries, such as the freedom of speech, or the freedom of education, and a selection of them will be presented and characterised below.

At present many places on the globe are war zones. Universal individual freedoms are violated when nations or ethnic groups are at war (Uberman 2024). **Personal freedom** is in opposition to slavery. OED, *s.a.* lists two other items, i.e. servility and servitude. **Servility** is defined as "the state or fact of being a slave, serf, bonded labourer, etc.; servitude, bondage; lack of personal freedom" (Servility (a), *s.a.*) or the state of "lacking spirit or independence" (Servility (b), *s.a.*) while **servitude** designates "the condition of being a slave or a serf, or of being the property of another person; absence of personal freedom; (now *esp.*) a state of subjection entailing enforced rigorous or excessive labour" (Servitude, *s.a.*). **Slavery** is historical in meaning and stands for "the state or condition of having the (legal) status of being the property of another person, of having no personal freedom or rights, and of being used as forced labour or an unpaid servant; the fact of being enslaved; involuntary servitude" (Slavery, *s.a.*). A person who was kept in bondage was a **slave**, however, upon getting set free they were given **freedom papers** i.e. "documents proclaiming the holder to be a free person (as opposed to a slave)" (Freedom papers, *s.a.*).

Any person involved in protecting or attempting to secure or to restore freedom can be named a **freedom fighter**, i.e. "a person who fights for freedom or liberation; a person who takes part in a resistance movement against the established political system of a country; also in extended use" (Freedom fighter, *s.a.*). Thus, **freedom fighting** is "a. *adj.* That fights for freedom or liberation; b. *n.* the action of fighting for freedom or liberation; (armed) resistance against the established political system of a country" (Freedom fighting, *s.a.*) (cf. Uberman 2024).

Gasaway Hill (2018: 21) points out that the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* in Article 19 necessitates basic liberties of expression and holding own views and states as follows: "Everyone has the right to **freedom of opinion and expression**; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

Freedom of thought is the type of freedom referred to as **free will**, "freedom to think or reason without restriction or interference" (Freedom of thought, *s.a.*). **Freedom of will**, also **freedom of the will** is chiefly used in philosophy and theology, and it is regarded as "Free will; the ability to choose freely" (Freedom of will, *s.a.*).

Freedom of expression is understood as "(a) Frankness or openness in the expression of one's thoughts, feelings, etc.; (b) the right to express oneself without interference or censorship" (Freedom of expression, *s.a.*). **Freedom of the press** (Sharpes 2019) is included in the freedom of expression. OED, *s.a.* defines it as "freedom to print and publish anything without interference or censorship, esp. when regarded as a right" (Freedom of the press, *s.a.*).

Freedom of speech is defined as "Freedom to express one's opinions without censorship, legal penalty, or any other restraint, esp. when regarded as a right" (Freedom of speech, *s.a.*).

The imperative essence of **personal freedom** as well as **freedom of speech** or **freedom of expression and opinion** can lead some individuals to exile, as exemplified by the Chinese poet Yang Lian. He is considered a freedom of speech fighter and in 2024 he was awarded The Zbigniew Herbert International Literary Award for his lifelong artistic input in poetry. In an interview with a Polish journalist (Uberman-Kamińska 2024a; 2024b) he noted that fighting for the freedom of speech is his personal way of saving his poetry. He claims that the kind of control over the freedom of thought and speech in various aspects of human life is ever present. He calls himself the 'poet in exile' and points out that poetry does not exist without **the freedom of thought and expression**.

Limitations on the **freedom of expression** in some Islamic countries has gone as far as ordering young females not to sing or speak aloud publicly. In 2021 an oppressive action was taken by the director of education in Kabul banning girls aged 12 and above from singing in public (Afghanistan investigates ... 2021). In 2024 an even more tyrannical law was introduced. "The Taliban have banned teenage girls from education, banned women from travelling long distances without a male chaperone, and now ordered them to keep their voices down in public – effectively silencing half the population" (Drury 2024).

Individuals in numerous parts of the world, though sadly not everywhere, are entitled to **freedom of conscience** and **freedom of religion**. The former is "freedom to follow one's own beliefs in matters of religion and morality, esp. when regarded as a right" (Freedom of conscience, *s.a.*), while the

freedom of religion is defined as "freedom to practise the religion of one's choice, esp. when regarded as a right" (Freedom of religion, *s.a.*).

Freedom of association is granted as "freedom to socialize or form an association with whom one pleases, esp. when regarded as a right" (Freedom of association, *s.a.*) and many nations guarantee a constitutional **freedom of assembly** (Sharpes 2019: 97) / **right of assembly** "the principle of popular government often constitutionally guaranteed that it is the right of the people peaceably to assemble for any purpose not expressly prohibited by law" (Right of assembly, *s.a.*). This right is exercised by citizens when they are opposing some government actions or legislature.

Emotions, as noted by Dukes et al. (2021), are running high when considering various protests against limiting individual freedoms. **Freedom marches** – "a march in celebration of or in support of freedom" (Freedom march, *s.a.*), or **freedom walks** – "a walk or march organized as a form of political demonstration, esp. (now *historical*) as a protest against racial segregation" (Freedom Walk, *s.a.*) are organised by dissatisfied or irritated citizens to show their disapproval of certain government actions, including legislative activity.

Such is the case of for instance relatively recent exemplars of social rage expressed against violating reproductive rights. In many countries all over the world governments have created stringent laws against abortion – punishing both patients and doctors (e.g. Poland / USA), causing miscarriage (e.g. in India: Offences causing...2024), jailing women for suffering involuntary / incidental miscarriage or a stillbirth – as exemplified by cases reported from El Salvador (Perasso & Duarte 2022), and the like. Such government policies have resulted in massive protests in order to promote and secure **reproductive freedom**, which is strictly connected with the right of abortion, availability of family-planning programmes, in-vitro fertilisation, etc. In Poland, the Constitutional Court in October 2020 claimed the long-held abortion compromise, (allowing the termination of pregnancy when the health of a mother and/or foetus was in danger or when the foetus was lethally deformed or terminally ill), was unconstitutional. When those women's rights of reproductive freedom were violated by the government, the language employed to express the protesters' dissatisfaction with the decision was highly emotional and, in numerous instances, very strong.

The 2024 US presidential election candidate Kamala Harris chose Beyonce's song "Freedom" as her campaign anthem. In her programme she frequently resorted to the need of preventing the limitations of women's **reproductive freedom**, and made abortion rights a key point in her campaign (A quick guide...2024). She was a strong advocate of securing women's rights and promoting reproductive

freedom (cf. Coen-Sanchez et al. 2022; Deckman 2021; Deckman et al. 2023), however, there remain fears of the prospective reversal of laws that were introduced by the Biden administration.

The protests that took place in Poland and USA (during the recent 2024 presidential campaign) as a response to law makers' attempts to limit or curb reproductive freedoms were acts of civil disobedience⁴ and exemplars of exercising the human right to the **freedom to protest** (Gasaway Hill 2018: 18).

All of the above evoked examples, including those involving some form of protest, rely on the interplay between language and emotions. Foolen (2015: 243) notes that emotions are "conditional for language" and states further that "It is unavoidable that emotions also colour language, as language is part of our everyday life. And apparently, language can live with this colouring, the emotional "infection" does not undermine its conceptualizing role. The emotional colouring is most clearly observable in the emotive meaning of words" (ibid., 244).

Considering the frame of FREEDOM, **academic freedom** can also be distinguished within its variations. It is defined as "a. (also **academic freedom of thought**) the freedom of a teacher to state personal opinions openly without censorship, or without the fear of professional disadvantage; b. the freedom of students to choose their courses or influence the content of courses; c. the freedom of an academic institution to control its own affairs" (Academic freedom, *s.a.*). Even though this type of freedom, including **freedom of education**, is universal in the Western world, it is unfortunately not granted to women in Islamic countries (Drury 2024; Drury & Gharanai 2024; Moshiri & Preskey 2025; Sandhu & Hafeji 2024). Obviously, the freedom of education is nearly non-existent and this affects all citizens in those regions of the world where armed conflicts are in progress and wars are fought, as well as in the areas that are poverty-stricken.

Referring to **worker freedom**, Sharpes states, "corporations function as mini-states regulating worker lives. They issue orders on how to behave, how to dress, when to work, how to work, they monitor worker communications and activities. Ironically, the free market is free only in its hierarchy, and is not as an advocate for worker freedom or liberty" (2019: 154). It is crucial to stress that among essential elements of the discussed frame is also **economic freedom**, as well as the universal **freedom of choice** (Sharpes 2019). However, it is rightly pointed out that "although individuals have the **freedom to choose**, they cannot choose to ignore laws established to protect the rights of others"

(Sharpes 2019: 66). Thus, seen from this very perspective it might be fair to say that freedoms should have certain limitations, so that they are not exercised improperly.

Nevertheless, the **freedom of personal choice** has been radically limited by the newly sworn American president Donald Trump, who signed an executive order stating that the US will not recognize transgender individuals. In another one he made a decision to discontinue diversity, equity and inclusion programmes within the federal government. He also revoked Biden's administration orders "preventing discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation" (Wendling & Epstein 2025) thus limiting American citizens' personal freedoms.

5. Concluding remarks

The cognitive frame of FREEDOM as outlined above has shown only the most crucial of its elements, as the great diversity and extensive scope of the phenomenon cannot be all addressed in a text of such a limited size. However, it has been shown that once a frame element is evoked, the entire structure is brought to the fore, as associations between elements are awoken and allow individuals to see the broader picture created by interrelated concepts. By mentioning the term 'freedom', various interlaced types and related issues pertaining to the core of the concept are triggered and become activated.

Even though freedom appears to be a universal concept, there are certain limitations placed on individuals in different communities. The seemingly basic personal freedoms of choice, of expression or of speech are regrettably treated differently in specific societies, or by different groups and individuals within the same community or society. The limitations on the freedom of education or the freedom of speech affect mainly females in Islamic countries, as exemplified by recent legislature from Afghanistan. The reproductive freedoms are still not commonly protected worldwide.

Yet, despite all these shortcomings, freedom is a cultural keyword, it is a significant value for millions of people all over the world. It is protected and fought for in most communities where there are no authoritarian leaders. It is also symbolically featured in emblems and referred to in national anthems of many nations, for instance USA.

The fact that so many types of freedom are enumerated addressing its various aspects is strong evidence of the salience of this concept in countless human societies. The most recurrently addressed types of freedom are personal freedom, the freedom of expression, the freedom of speech, the freedom of thought, and the freedom of education. Some very specific individual freedoms are freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, as well as reproductive freedom. The people striving to retain or

regain freedom are freedom fighters, in its mildest form exercising the freedom of assembly and the freedom to protest; in extreme cases fighting for independence with the use of weapons and getting involved in armed conflicts. All these diversities are reflected in language use and constitute a cognitive knowledge structure of the frame of FREEDOM. It is also important to stress that violating freedoms is opposed to by citizens, the language they adopt to express their dissatisfaction or rage is full of emotions, as it is hardly tolerable to accept the curbing of individual rights silently and emotionlessly.

Notes

1. The underline has been introduced to reflect the italics in the original text (Wierzbicka 1997: 132).
2. The underline has been introduced to reflect the italics in the original text (Wierzbicka 1997: 132).
3. The italics have been introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) in their original work.
4. Civil disobedience is "the refusal to comply publicly with a law as an act of nonviolent protest" (Gasaway Hill 2018: 18).

Abbreviations

MW – Merriam-Webster dictionary

OED – Oxford English dictionary

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Contact data

	<p><i>name:</i></p> <p><i>academic title / rank:</i></p> <p><i>department:</i></p> <p><i>institution:</i></p> <p><i>e-mail:</i></p> <p><i>fields of interest:</i></p>	<p>Agnieszka Uberman</p> <p>Dr hab. prof UR (Linguistics) Associate Professor Institute of English Studies University of Rzeszów Al. mjr W. Kopisto 2b, 35-315 Rzeszów, Poland auberman@ur.edu.pl Cognitive linguistics, metaphorical language use, colour studies, contrastive semantics, contrastive paremiology, foreign language teaching.</p>
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