

Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis

Studia Linguistica 15 (2020)

ISSN 2083-1765

Tom dedykowany Pani Profesor Elżbiecie Rudnickiej-Firze

DOI 10.24917/20831765.15.1

ARTYKUŁY NAUKOWE

Anna Bączkowska

ORCID 0000-0002-0147-2718

University of Gdansk

Shynar Gabdrakhmanova

Academy of Public Administration, Uralsk

Gulnara Akhmetova

West Kazakhstan State University, Uralsk

The Representation of the Capital of Kazakhstan in Central Asia Online News Coverage: a Corpus-Assisted Analysis

Central Asia is a region spanning five countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) which emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union. The biggest country of the Central Asia region is Kazakhstan, with a population of only ca. 16 million people inhabiting an area comparable to Europe. It is located on the border of Europe and Asia (with the border resting on the Ural River). It fosters the traditional Asian values and at the same time tries to keep close ties with Europe and aspires to follow European standards. The country is landlocked, with a vast steppe running across the country, which causes huge amplitudes of temperature, oscillating between minus forty in winter to plus forty in summer. In the middle of the Kazakh Steppe is the capital – Nur Sultan.

The establishment of Nur Sultan as the capital city followed the gaining of independence by Kazakhstan first from the Russian Empire and next from the Soviet regime in 1991, after the demise of the Soviet Union. In the wake of this, in 1998, it entailed moving the capital from Almaty (then known as Alma-Ata) to Nur Sultan, and building a new city on the foundations of a small town, previously called Tseliningrad (in the Soviet supremacy period), Aqmola (in the pre- and post-Soviet times), Astana (in the post-communist times) to finally change its name into Nur Sultan in February 2019. Interestingly enough, the previous name of Nur Sultan – Astana – means ‘capital’ in Kazakh. The president of Kazakhstan called Astana “the heart of Eurasia”, which reveals Kazakhstan’s ambition to become a part of the European economy and culture. As of 1998, the new capital city has seen rapid development and has become not only one of the newest capitals in the world but also one of the most impressive. The sudden, unremitting, grand-scale architectural changes in Nur Sultan (by some seen as controversial) and the economic growth fuelled by the rich natural resources

of Kazakhstan, as well as political and sports events hosted by the capital, increasingly draw the attention of many commentators in the media.

Research aim

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the capital of Kazakhstan was represented by the online news media published in Central Asia in the period when it was known as Astana, specifically in the years 2014–2018. The study will focus on online media content published by countries solely of Central Asia, i.e. Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, with the exclusion of Kazakhstan itself. It is expected that the theme of the capital of Kazakhstan, whether Astana is used as the topic of interest itself or just a metonymical reference to the whole country of Kazakhstan or country-wide events, has attracted considerable attention in the countries of CA due to their geographical closeness and, stemming from that, a natural interest in the political, social and cultural events occurring in the capital of the neighbouring and the biggest country of Central Asia.

The data will be analysed through the prism of how they were framed, both on the language level and social/communication plane (Fillmore 1982, Entman 1993). In simplest terms, frames are purposeful measures, or “interpretative devices” (Lehrer and Kittay 1992:4), employed to present a given topic to a target audience in a specific way. They reveal how a topic in question is relativized against other topics and background information, and what perspective is accommodated, i.e. which news items are made salient and which are de-emphasised.

Online news published in Central Asia have not, to the best of our knowledge, been collected in a form of a corpus and analysed so far. Likewise, the topic of Kazakhstan, and in particular its capital, has not received much attention in corpus-assisted press discourse or online news studies as yet (see Bączkowska and Khokhlacheva, 2019, for a study of the perception of *Astana* in selected titles of the British and American press). Kazakhstan as such has, of course, received attention of researchers, mainly representing social and political sciences, yet in linguistic research, (critical) discourse analytical studies, it has not been popular.

Methods and materials

Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies

The methodology used in the study is embedded in corpus-assisted tools of text analysis. Specifically, it follows the Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS; Baker 2006, Partington et al. 2013: 10–13). In most general terms, CADS tries to uncover some hidden information encoded by a text, such as ideology, unjust, discrimination, etc. Thus it differs from the more traditional Corpus-Assisted Studies (CAS) methodology, which focuses primarily on revealing lexico-grammatical aspects of a language. CADS focuses primarily on social

aspects encoded through language and uses longer stretches of utterances (at discourse level) to examine them, whilst CAS tends to privilege a more linguistic analysis (at word or phrase level). As Partington et al. (2013: 11) define it “The aim of the CADS approach is the uncovering, in the discourse type under study, of what we might call non-obvious meaning, that is, meaning which might not be readily available to naked-eye perusal.”

The type of corpus-assisted approach to language regardless, it is important to note that the corpus era in linguistic methodology replaced subjective and predominantly qualitative analyses by more objectified and predominantly quantitative observations of naturally occurring data, which allow one to quickly recognise certain regularities in the way language is used and thus to unearth generalisable tendencies across a large number of texts. A frequently explored way to analyse any large collection of texts in corpus linguistics is the identification of word frequencies. The two essential frequency-based techniques, also employed in the present paper, involve the analysis of collocations and keywords (Baker and McEnery 2015: 2). Whilst collocations show the network of associations triggered by words repetitiously used in the neighbourhood of the search word, and thus may unmask some ideological viewpoints, keywords are indicative of the predominant topics touched upon in a collection of texts by pinpointing words which are used more often in a given text than in a reference corpus (Baker and McEnery 2015: 2). In line with CADS, the findings of such linguistic analyses should be interpreted by positioning them in a wider social (and/or political and cultural) context. Therefore, in what follows, the statistical outcomes of our study will be accounted for by making reference to social, political and cultural aspects of the Central Asia region.

Framing

The query word *Astana* is searched for in the newspaper discourse under investigation and next grouped according to the emerging frames. A frame is a well-known term in linguistics as well as in media studies. In linguistics, it has been used in Frame Semantics (Fillmore 1982), Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995) and Cognitive Linguistics (Langacker 2008), yet it can be traced back to the work by Bateson (1954), and was later developed by Minsky (1975) in artificial intelligence, and Goffman (1974) in sociology (see Bączkowska 2020 for more details). In media studies and mass communication, it was pursued *inter alia* by Entman (1991, 2003), Igartua et al. (2005), van Hout and Macgilchrist (2010), Cheng et al. (2014), and Alcántara-Plá and Ruiz-Sánchez (2017), where it is known as the Framing Theory (FT). FT is often juxtaposed with another well-known approach to news reporting, namely Agenda Setting Theory (AST; McCombs and Shaw 1972).

In the Agenda Setting Theory, the public may be manipulated by the order in which news items are presented: news items to be shown as most important are mentioned first. In line with the Framing Theory, on the other hand, the order in which news items are presented is not as essential as the set of associations imposed on the viewer, which is achieved by evoking

carefully selected conceptual connotations linked with a news item in question. As Entman puts it himself, framing “involves *selection* and *salience*” (Entman 1993: 52), i.e. “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution” (Entman 2003: 5). A typical methodology predicated on the FT analyses language by recognizing a definition of an issue, its cause or future consequences and its evaluation (Entman 1993: 52). A frame thus imposes a particular perspective on the audience and the news item guides the viewers’ perception of the presented reality, i.e. it suggests its interpretation by prompting how to think about the presented news item and how to evaluate it.

The concept of a frame is widely used in linguistics, where it is seen as an experience-based schematisation that allows one to see concepts in relation to other concepts, to see an element against a more general structure (known as a “schema”, “script”, or “cognitive model”, depending on the author) in which it fits, and that contains information about the expected sequence of events, roles and purposes (Fillmore 1982: 111–112). Frames thus contain conceptually interconnected elements and they structure knowledge (Bednarek 2005). When singled out from the structure, a constitutive element has no explanatory meaning as it can only be understood in the context of the more general structure from which it derives. The more general structure functions as a mediator among all elements in the structure, provides all the constituents within a network with some background information and allows the establishment of semantic relations among them, and thus it functions as a common denominator. Therefore, Kazakhstan may be defined through the prism of its political history as a *post-Soviet republic*, in the modern geo-political context of a state in Central Asia, in a more global sense as a part of Eurasia continent, or may be thematically profiled as an *oil-rich country*, and Astana may be referred to as *the Dubai of the north*. Obviously, all these names evoke different associations in the audience as they flow from varying frames.

Corpus data

For the present study, the corpus of the press published in Central Asia (CA corpus) has been created by gleaning relevant data from the JSI corpus¹ (Trampus and Novak 2012). JSI Timestamped corpus is a large newsfeed web-crawled corpus (RSS based), currently exceeding 40 billion tokens, created in the Josef Stefan Institute. Data are amended daily and added to the commercial corpus once a month, so the corpus size grows exponentially and reflects current (starting from 2014) news published online worldwide. The study presented in the remainder of this paper spans the time from 2014 up to 2018. The data coming only from three countries of the CA corpus will be examined, so the following virtual corpora were created: corpus CAK (Central Asia, Kyrgystan), corpus CAT (Tajikistan) and corpus CAU (Uzbekistan). No texts containing the word *Astana* have been found in the Turkmenistan subcorpus. This does not mean that in Turkmenistan the topic of Astana has not received

¹ The analysis is based on data available through the Sketch Engine (the.sketchengine.co.uk).

any attention; rather, the JSI corpus does not contain a sufficiently high number of relevant online news data published in English or, alternatively, news data are not published online in great amounts in Turkmenistan. This state of affairs, however, may also result from the Turkmen long-standing self-imposed policy of isolationism. The structure of the CA corpus is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of the CA corpus

Country	Number of tokens
Kyrgyzstan	3,386,258
Uzbekistan	1,330,276
Tajikistan	1,349,598
Turkmenistan	28,707

With the exclusion of the data from Turkmenistan, the final structure of the CA corpus is illustrated by Fig. 1. The total number of tokens of the whole Central Asia corpus adds up to 6,094,839 tokens, of which the CAK corpus takes 56%, the CAT corpus occupies about 22.2%, and the CAU corpus equals 21.8%. The Turkmenistan corpus constitutes only 0.5% of the whole CA corpus, and because of this disproportion the Turkmenistan corpus will be ignored in the present study.

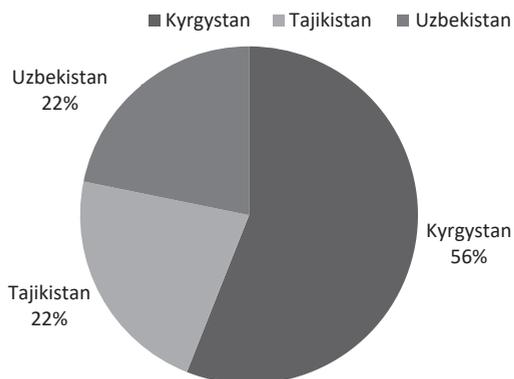


Figure 1. The structure of the Central Asia corpus

The material in the CA corpus contains the news published only in the English language and it relies on the following online news sources: Kyrgyz National News Agency website, Information Agency website (CAK), Uzbekistan News Agency “Khovar” website, UzReport Information Agency website (CAU), National Information Agency of Tajikistan website, Avesta Information Agency website (CAT), and Asia Plus Media Group (CAT). The JSI Timestamped corpus also contains texts published by the Central Asia News Service (CANS), launched by Eurasia Foundation in 2007, supported by the government of the USA and by the Netherlands, co-operating with the local media partner AKIpress (the first

independent news agency in Kyrgyzstan, established in 2000), and claiming to publish politically neutral information. According to Wikipedia, CANS was launched by Akipress, yet it is financially dependent on foreign sources as it openly admits on its website.

The study presented in this paper will be restricted to the examination of some statistical information, such as frequency, collocations, sentiment analysis, and keyness, as well as to the most typical topics touched upon in the corpora regarding Astana and the framing strategies of the news. The analysis of collocations will be based on logDice statistical values, and the examples will be retrieved from the corpus with the use of Corpus Query Language, a regex-based language aligned with taggers and parsers available at the Sketch Engine corpus management system. All the above-mentioned methods of text analysis will allow us to reveal some perspectives on Astana adopted in the online newspapers published by the countries of the Central Asia region.

Research results

Frequencies

The number of occurrences in each corpus and their number after standardization for 100,000 (S) words is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of occurrences of the lemma *Astana* in the CA corpus

Occurrences of <i>Astana</i> in CA corpus		Contexts	S
Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	843	25
	CANS	152	
	Tajikistan	107	7.9
	Uzbekistan	59	4.4

Of all the Central Asian countries the highest interest in Astana is seen in papers published in Kyrgyzstan (84%), next in Tajikistan (10.6%), and finally in Uzbekistan (5.8%).

Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis, which is a computer-based estimation resulting from a mathematical algorithm, reveals information regarding polarity of the news, and it demonstrates that most contexts represent positive or neutral emotions towards the events and descriptions revolving around the capital of Kazakhstan (Table 3). In the JSI Timestamped corpus, sentiment analysis is available solely for the CAU and the CAT.

Table 3. Sentiment analysis for the CA corpus

SA	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unclassified
CAU Uzbekistan	29	5	22	3
CAT Tajikistan	41	11	41	10

Collocations

The collocations of *Astana* (measured by logDice, with the minimum co-occurrence of 5, at least 5 instances in the corpus for the CAK corpus, and at least 3 for the CAU corpus and the CAT corpus, with slope -5 to 5), unveil the following main patterns:

Table 4. Top collocation patterns and collocation cooccurrence measured by logDice in the CA corpora

CAK	logDice	CAU	logDice	CAT	logDice
Forum	9.5	Arlans	11.5	summit	10.2
Exhibition	9.3	Almaty	10.3	EXPO	9.8
communications	9.2	Kazakhstan	10.1	leaders	9.7
city	9	summit	9.2	3rd	9.4
flights	8.7	forum	8.4	Club	9.3
EXPO	8.7	SCO	7.7	Host	9.2
held	8.6	against	7.6	Summit	8.9
economic	8.6	parties	7.5	SCO	8.5
Airline	8.3	Council	7.3	flight	8.4
OSCE	8.1	business	6.3	launch	8.1
opera	8	held	5.7	session	8
Smart	8			talks	7.7
Airport	8			next	7.6
starts	8				
session	7.9				
expected	7.6				
Summit	7.5				
average	7.5				
Charter	7.5				
Eurasian	7.3				

In the CAK corpus, the collocations may be grouped into the following two themes: (1) cultural/economic events (*Forum, exhibition, Communications, EXPO, held, session, Opera, Economic, expected, Eurasian Economic Union*); (2) city development and residents' well-being (*city, flights, airline, OSCE, Smart, airport, start, expected, average, charter*). OSCE is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the world's largest security organization. Smart city program promotes the introduction of technology to city services in order to improve infrastructure and urban attractiveness. It is a part of Digital Kazakhstan program. Eurasian Economic Union was founded in 2014 by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus (later joined by Kyrgyzstan and Armenia) to integrate their markets by securing free movement of goods, capital, people and services, and to have common policy on varying microeconomic spheres. The CAK corpus emphasizes Astana's prosperity and stresses the fact that Astana develops

technologically and thus enhances the residents' well-being (with salaries as high as 160.000 Tenge, which is roughly 500 dollars, and with charter flights to European tourist destinations and to Turkey). It also underlines the fact that it often hosts cultural, political and economic international events. The country of Kazakhstan is shown as a member of world security organizations, thus the anti-isolationism, pro-European policy and strong links with the world's most powerful states are highlighted. It is surprising that the collocation with SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) is not in the top twenty collocations (unlike in the corpora of CAU and CAT). The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is a body founded in 2001 in Shanghai by China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (current members also include India and Pakistan). Its aim is to create an alliance in order to provide mutual security for the participating states and to bolster their economic and political cooperation, as well as to offer support in the spheres of education, healthcare, technology, tourism, environmental protection, media, and sports. In the CAK corpus, the collocations are suggestive of *Astana* being a busy and booming city of young people, the average age oscillates around 30 (*residents, city, 30*), with a growing population (*increased*), and whose GDP will soon reach 30,000\$; it is modern and technologically advanced, where many new investments have just started (*airport, Smart program, OSCE, started*), and where international conferences and exhibitions are organised (*held, host*). The city is visited by air and it increases the number of flights (*flights, airport, charter, increased*). The emerging themes boil down to *Astana* being a modern and busy city, easily accessible due to air transport, and which attracts young people and investors. The citizens' well-being is the predominant theme as well as the city development. The lion's share of the news, however, concerns meetings of political importance.

In the CAU corpus, the collocations indicate two predominant themes: sports (*Arlans, against*) and political/business meetings (*summit, forum, SCO, parties, Council, business, held*). The strongest collocations refer to sports. Uzbekistan tends to focus on sporting events (*boxing*) instead of cultural ones yet the Uzbek-Kazakh *business* relations (*forum*) are also emphasized. Kazakhstan is shown as a country where SCO states meet; thus it is framed through the Asian perspective, making reference to the "narrow format" of SCO meetings (CAU, 9 June 2017). The use of "narrow format meetings" is suggestive of a rather closed, local (Central Asian) perspective adopted by the Uzbek media.

In the CAT corpus, Tajik news emphasize the alliances among the countries of Central Asia (CA leader's *summit*), evoking the so-called *Astana Club* (3rd meeting of *Astana Club*), i.e. a government-backed forum discussing issues connected with Eurasia. *Astana* is also seen as a place for other important political and economic meetings (*talks, session, next, host, EXPO, SCO*). Air transport is only mentioned in connection with direct flights between *Astana* and *Dushanbe*, the capital of Tajikistan. Overall, the CAT corpus frames *Astana* as a hub for political and economic talks leading to integrate the Central Asian region and Asian countries (the SCO states).

Taken together, the news published by the Uzbek and the Tajik online media frame Astana (and Kazakhstan) from a more local perspective of Central Asia affairs as well as East Asia (SCO frame in particular), while the Kyrgyz news place Astana (Kazakhstan) in a wider perspective, as a part of Eurasia, stressing connections with Europe. The Kyrgyz news, moreover, focus both on international political and business issues as well as technological and urban developments, and present Astana as a city easy to reach (due to air connections), despite the geographical distance, and as a hub of cultural life. These aspects are essentially not touched upon in the news issued in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The observations informed by the analysis of collocations allow some tentative frames to emerge revolving around the topics of: (1) Astana presented as a modern and technologically advanced city, (2) Astana envisaged as a hub for Euroasian meetings and contacts, and (3) Astana viewed largely as a part of Asia (Central Asia in particular). These tentative frames will be further elaborated and attested in the next section.

Topics

This section presents most common topics which revolve around the word *Astana* retrieved from keyness and the verb/adjective/noun constructions. The contexts describe both events connected with the capital of Kazakhstan and the very city of Astana.

Keyness

Before embarking on an in-depth analysis, let us look at the general score for the coverage of the topics regarding Kazakhstan (measured by *log-likelihood* statistics). Keyness for the four states from CA present in the online news is shown in Table 5. In the news coverage in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan enjoys the highest keyness value, whereas for Tajikistan online newspapers, Kazakhstan is in second place. From this it transpires that the topic of Kazakhstan in online news media has high salience for the other countries of CA, in particular for Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Table 5. Keyness in three subcorpora

CAT	<i>log-likelihood</i>	CAU	<i>log-likelihood</i>	CAK	<i>log-likelihood</i>
Uzbekistan	715.8	Kazakhstan	237.5	Kazakhstan	1604.1
Kazakhstan	533.5	Turkmenistan	120.3	Tajikistan	803.2
Kyrgyzstan	509.8	Kyrgyzstan	84.2	Uzbekistan	752.3
Turkmenistan	286.8	Tajikistan	78.9	Turkmenistan	344.3

Constructions “Astana” + verbs/adjectives/nouns

The retrieval of the query word *Astana* co-occurring with verbs (slope -3, +3), adjectives (slope -2, +2) and nouns (-3, +3) uncovers the following frames and topics:

- A. Astana is seen as a place which advances economically, technologically, scientifically, architecturally and educationally.

- B. Astana is seen as a city participating in important international political debates.
- C. Astana is framed from Eurasian/European perspective.
- D. Astana (Kazakhstan) is seen as a key player in CA.

The Corpus Query Language was used to tease out these constructions from the corpora automatically. These frames will now be analysed separately in the remainder of this section.

A. Astana is seen as a place which advances economically, technologically, scientifically, architecturally and educationally

The CAK corpus reveals the following news: the news FM radio is to be installed, educational and industrial programs are being implemented, such as the Smart Astana Project; 38 hotels are to be built by 2017 (before EXPO international exhibition, i.e. within 3 years), the construction of a new military camp will soon be launched, new theatre and opera are often visited with interest growing daily, powerful solar panels are to be released, volume of electricity consumption drops down, small and medium businesses increase, population in Astana increases, GDP increases, railway station and junction in Astana will be built, new plants will be launched (for the production of diesel engines), a smart *besik* (Kazakh traditional cradle) was invented by physicists from Astana, one of the most difficult mathematical problems was solved by scientists from Astana.

Europe is perceived as a place of high quality products and services. The innovations being introduced in Astana are compared to, and thus framed from the perspective of the European quality. In the fragment below, the struggle to reach the European standards seen as the model quality (of fire hydrants) is also seen in the verb *procured* (Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “to obtain something that is difficult to get”), which is suggestive of obtaining the fire hydrants successfully yet not without any problems.

It was reported that in 2013, a car fleet of specialized vehicles was renewed, water networks were reconstructed, fire hydrants of European quality were procured, water-supply networks were reconstructed, as well as rundown water-supply networks were replaced [CAK 2014].

What is also noticeable in all the contexts teased out from the CAK corpus is that the modifier *new* tends to be associated with Astana (2.66 per million words). Thus, there is a new opera, new theatre, new housing district, centre, economy, airport, etc., as the concordances below show (Figure 3). Implicitly, the new is juxtaposed with the old, i.e. the flourishing Astana of today (the post-Soviet era) is compared to the backward Aqmola/Tseliningrad settlement of the past (the Soviet era). Interestingly, the modifier *new* does not appear in the other subcorpora. The Kyrgyz news media used the framing strategy of contrast. The hidden information one may read between the lines is that Astana undergoes a robust development and that it is a modern city (compared to the previous Soviet era), which is located in a rich country that can afford multiple, expensive and impressive investments (e.g. a housing complex with a ski slope,

international airport, a new Opera building, etc.), enhancing the standard of living comparable to other developed (European) countries.

Z] - Construction of a **new** military camp near **Astana** will be completed by the end of the year, schoolchildren CA-NEWS (KZ) - The **new** theater **Astana** Opera was visited by about 10,000 schoolchildren. Mayor also added that the **new** task for **Astana** is to increase the part of service sector in its development. There will be a **new** center of **Astana** of a brand new quality. This will attract more attention on the role of women in **new** economy in **Astana** Bishkek, May 22 / Kabar / . MP, chairwoman of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, discussed the role of women in the **new** economy in **Astana** (Kazakhstan). The two-day forum will discuss the role of women in the **new** economy in **Astana** (Kazakhstan). Malaysian firms finalising talks on \$1bn **new** **Astana** International Airport project CA-NEWS (KZ) - The construction of the proposed \$1 billion **new** **Astana** International Airport, the Malaysia's national project, is set to include a **new** housing complex planned in **Astana**, Kazakhstan's capital, is set to include a 1

Figure 3. Concordances with *Astana + new* as premodifier

Another example retrieved from the CAT corpus demonstrates that Kazakhstan puts some effort to become the locomotive for local integration, and sees Astana as the place of Central Asian leaders summits:

Some local experts consider that Kazakhstan is seeking to reprise its role as a locomotive for regional integration by calling for a landmark summit of Central Asian leaders. Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbayev reportedly reiterated calls for the integration of Central Asian countries as a way to jointly ensure the security and prosperity of the region on November 13 last year, while answering questions at the 3rd session of the Astana Club, a Kazakhstani government-backed international forum aimed at discussing Eurasian issues. [CAK 2018]

New, modern buses are to be obtained for Astana that run on natural gas; importantly, they are to arrive from Europe (France), and they are to run on Kazakh gas. Astana is also presented as a *modern* and *dynamic* city, and the country of Kazakhstan is shown as gas-rich by the Uzbek online media:

French company IVEKO BUS and the Astana LRT JSC have signed an agreement on delivery of 350 IVEKO buses on natural gas to Astana. [CAK 2014]

International specialized exhibition "EXPO" – 2017" is being held at a high level in the modern and dynamic Astana, which celebrates the Day of the capital on July 6. [CAU 2017]

Kazakhstan is shown as a major political and economic power of the Central Asia region aiming at strengthening the integration of all CA states for joint security and prosperity. The so-called Astana Club is defined as an organisation "discussing Eurasian issues", which frames the CA region as a part of the world belonging both to Asia and Europe. This is suggestive of CA having strong connections with Europe, being a part of the continent spanning both Asia and Europe, which is seen as one, unified whole. Thus framed, the CA region's, and Kazakhstan's in particular, aspirations and ambitions of being a part of Europe and reaching the standards of Europe are stressed, although they are not expressed straightforwardly. In particular, in the Kyrgyz news coverage, Kazakhstan is defined through the prism of not only Central Asia but also Europe, despite the geographical distance separating Kazakhstan from Europe and a general lack of recognisability of Kazakhstan as being part of Europe by European commentators and societies.

B. Astana is seen as a city participating in important international political debates

The Kyrgyz corpus mentions the following important political events: Astana discusses trade and economic ties with Kyrgyzstan, the third session of Kazakh-Iran discussion on trade and economic cooperation held in Astana, and a meeting on reducing energy consumption.

The CAU corpus reports on the bilateral Uzbek-Kazakh cooperation meeting (Joint Intergovernmental Commission), which is suggestive of tight links and strong contacts between the governments of the two countries. The meetings are called *fruitful*, and the countries are hoping to *increase volumes* of mutual trade and to *further* cooperation. Both *increase volumes* and *further* (as a verb) imply that a great deal of cooperation is already behind the mutual, successful relationships of the two countries. Uzbekistan presents itself as an economically close and a long-term business partner.

According to the results of the fifteenth session of the Commission, held on 10-11 March 2016 in Astana, the sides agreed to contribute practical implementation of the achieved agreements in order to increase the volumes of mutual trade and further development of cooperation in transport and communication sphere. Another noteworthy fact within the fruitful partnership in the economic sphere are operating joint and foreign enterprises. [CAU 2016]

The Uzbek-Kazakh meeting is shown in CAU as a significant event for Uzbekistan, where a number of joint measures will be launched through a *hefty package of agreements* expected to be signed. Kazakhstan is seen as a crucial economic and business partner and as a strong and powerful state in CA.

The sides are expected to sign a hefty package of bilateral agreements on many levels and a number of commercial contracts aimed at taking Uzbek-Kazakh cooperation to a new level. [CAU 2017]

The way talks with Kazakhstan are presented in the news indirectly manifests its high value for Uzbekistan. The news report mentions that the talks were organised behind closed doors and as a very official ceremony, with anthems being played and with honour guards.

Uzbek and Kazakh Presidents hold talks in Astana Akorda Residence Shavkat Mirziyoyev in an official ceremony, involving an honour guard and Uzbek and Kazakh anthems. In a closed meeting, the sides discussed furthering Uzbek-Kazakh cooperation, maintaining peace and security. [CAU 2017]

The Uzbek news also mention some cultural events: a *large-scale* international conference devoted to a poet from Afghanistan Ali-Sher Navoi, and that a “renowned Uzbek artists hold exhibitions in the art galleries and museum of Astana, Almaty and other cities” in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan, including Astana, is thus seen as an important country for the promotion of Uzbek artists.

The CAT corpus provides information about, inter alia, the Astana Club meeting, a meeting in Astana of Foreign Ministers from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan,

and the Tajik-Kazakh trade-economic cooperation meeting. Tajikistan offers less rich material on Astana in the online newspapers than the other countries of the Central Asia region under investigation.

In sum, the news from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan tend to focus on issues occurring in Central and South Asia (Afghanistan, Iran) or, even narrower, on bilateral cooperation meetings with Kazakhstan. Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, more often mentions meetings in Astana between the representatives of Kazakhstan, other CA states, as well as participants from East Asia or Europe. Uzbekistan mentions a conference about a poet from Afghanistan, which has gone practically unnoticed by other countries, even though it was apparently a *large-scale* event. Uzbekistan stresses the links of this region with the Muslim world and South Asia. The comments about joint cooperation between Astana (Kazakhstan) and Uzbekistan are most frequent and enthusiastic. Kazakhstan as such is viewed as a powerful state, a locomotive of the development of the whole Central Asia region.

C. Astana is framed from Eurasian/European perspective

Astana is also seen as a part of a reborn ancient trade route connecting the East with the West – the New Silk Road – with its hub in Astana, seen as the place where Asia meets Europe:

He also added that the project is consonant with President Nazarbaev's Kazakhstan – New Silk Road project, which seeks to promote the development of Kazakhstan as a trade, logistics and business hub in Central Asia, as well as with the intention to strengthen the Asian vector of Astana international cooperation. [CAK 2014]

By saying “strengthening the Asian vector of Astana international cooperation” there is an implicit assumption that other vectors are also in existence, and this is obviously the other part of the world that Astana tries to join, i.e. Europe. Intense efforts are thus made to mark Astana’s membership in both categories, Asia and Europe.

A European accent is also seen in another fragment of the CAK corpus, which notices that every fifth driver in Astana is a woman. Considering the fact that Kazakhstan is essentially a Muslim country, it shows the city as “women-friendly”, and thus modern in attitudes towards equality, giving women freedom, which is in line with the European model of society and contrary to more radically-oriented Muslim countries (such as e.g. Saudi Arabia or Kuwait).

Women are recognized the most disciplined drivers in Astana, according to Astana police. Each fifth driver in Astana is female, says administrative police department of Astana city. “The traffic patrol policemen report that there is only 1 women per 30 drivers committing different road violations”, said in the message. [CAK 2014]

D. Astana (Kazakhstan) is seen as a key player in CA

Uzbekistan finds the cooperation with Kazakhstan as very important, its revitalization “was noted with deep satisfaction”. Means of transport between

Astana and Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, are already in operation (trains, flights, possibly buses).

Revitalization of cooperation on the entire agenda of bilateral relations was noted with deep satisfaction. The volume of goods turnover is increasing, the trains between the city of Tashkent and the cities of Astana and Almaty have started to run, the number of flights between the capitals has increased, the issue of resuming the bus service is being worked out. A partnership has been established and is intensively developing at the level of the regions of our countries. [CAU 2017]

Tajikistan also openly admits that Kazakhstan is its crucial partner as reported by the chairman of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI).

According to CCI press centre, during the meeting it was noted that Tajikistan considers Kazakhstan as one of the key strategic trade-economic and investment partners. [CAT 2016]

Tajikistan sees SCO as a “family”, which accentuates that the Central Asia countries keep together and are close allies, with Astana being the leader of the meetings.

The SCO Secretary-General has expressed confidence that the reception of India and Pakistan as full members into the SCO will open new opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation that will be beneficial for all the “family” of the SCO. We will remind that India and Pakistan have received observer status at the SCO in the Astana summit on July 5, 2005. [CAT 2016]

Tajikistan emphasises the “we” perspective, wherein CA countries and Russia constitute the in-group in the contexts of the conflict in Syria. Importantly, Russia is included in the “us” frame, while Turkey is seen as “them”, i.e. belonging to the out-group.

Turkey cannot afford to stay an idle spectator to bloodshed in Syria. This is precisely why we pay special attention to ceasefire. We are one of the safeguards of truce under the decision made in Astana,” Erdogan said. He promised to go ahead with “joint work with Russia for the sake of achieving a peace political settlement in Syria.” [CAT 2017]

Discussion and conclusions

The online news published by newspapers in Central Asia, in essence, tend to avoid expressing negative comments about Astana and Kazakhstan. This applies in particular to the news published by Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. All online newspapers under scrutiny seem to support the Kazakh political, social and economic decisions. Implicitly, Kazakhstan is framed as a key player that aims at integrating the interests of Central Asia, triggers some development of the whole region and takes the role of the leader in Central Asia, representing it on international arena.

Compared to the online journal news published in the UK and the USA (Bączkowska and Khokhlacheva 2019), which centre primarily on the Astana

ultra-modern architecture and some political events held in the capital, online newspapers from the Central Asia area focus more on the links between Astana and Europe, and the crucial role Astana plays in Central Asia in both politics and the economy.

Ostensible interest in Astana can be noticed in the corpus of Kyrgyz online news, and least interest seems to be expressed by articles in the Tajik corpus. The Kyrgyz main news agency, as mentioned earlier, has close links with the USA and the Netherlands, which may be the reason why the Kyrgyz newspapers differ from the Uzbek and Tajik online media.

When presented as the capital of a state of CA, positive aspects of Astana are highlighted. The city is buzzing and blooming, dynamically developing, it is visited by many for cultural, business and political reasons. Astana is seen as a hub of Eurasia, a place where the East meets with the West, where Asia touches Europe. The capital of Kazakhstan is framed from a perspective larger than just the region of Central Asia, it is viewed as a part of Europe, or a part of a huge continent of Eurasia, thus its historical ties with the Asian world are interlocked with the future vision of catching up to Europe.

References

- Alcántara-Plá and Ruiz-Sánchez, 2017, The framing of Muslims on the Spanish Internet, *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 13.2, 261–283.
- Baker P., 2006, *Using corpora in discourse analysis*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Baker P. and McEnery T. (eds), 2015, *Corpora and Discourse Studies: Integrating Discourse and Corpora*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bateson G., 1954, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, New York: Ballantine Books.
- Bączkowska A., 2020, Framing the conceptualization of obesity in online Chinese and British Quality Newspapers: A corpus-assisted study, [in:] B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (ed.), *Cultural Conceptualizations in Language and Communication*, Cham: Springer, p. 129–154.
- Bączkowska A. and Khokhlacheva Y., 2019, “The world’s coldest, newest and most remote capital” – the perception of Astana by the British and American quality press: a corpus-assisted analysis, *Scripta Neophilologica Posnaniensia*, 19, 9–23.
- Bednarek M., 2005, Frames revisited – the coherence-inducing function of frames, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37(95), 685–705.
- Cheng L., Igartua J.J., Palacios E., Acosta T., & Palito S., 2014, Framing immigration news in Spanish regional press. *International Migration*, 52(6), 197–215.
- Entman R.M., 1991, Framing US coverage of international news: contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran Air incidents. *Journal of Communication*, 41(4), 6–27.
- Entman R.M., 1993, Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm, *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.
- Entman R.M., 2003, *Projections of Power: Framing news, public opinion, and U.S. foreign policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fillmore C., 1982, *Frame Semantics. Linguistics in the Morning Calm. Selected Papers from SICOL-1981*, Seoul: Hanshin Publishing Company.

- Goffman E., 1974, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York, NY et al.: Harper & Row.
- Goldberg A., 1995, *Constructions. A construction grammar approach to argument structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Igartua J.J., Cheng L., Muñiz C., 2005, Framing Latin America in the Spanish Press. A cooled down friendship between two fraternal lands, *The European Journal of Communication Research*, 30/3, 359–372.
- Langacker R., 2008, *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction*. Oxford: OUP.
- Lehrer A., Kittay E.F., 1992, *Frames, Fields, and Contrasts: New essays in semantic and lexical organization*, Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- McCombs M.E. & Shaw D.L., 1972, The agenda-setting function of mass media. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176–187.
- Minsky M., 1974, A framework for representing knowledge. *MIT-AI Laboratory Memo, 306*. Retrieved April 14, 2019 from <https://courses.media.mit.edu/2004spring/mas966/Minsky%201974%20Framework%20for%20knowledge.pdf>
- Partington A., Duguid A., Taylor Ch., 2013, *Patterns and meanings in Discourse. Theory and practice in corpus-assisted discourse studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Trampus M. and Novak, *Blaz: The Internals Of An Aggregated Web News Feed*, Proceedings of 15th Multiconference on Information Society 2012 (IS-2012).
- Van Hout T. and Macgilchrist F., 2010, Framing the news: an ethnographic view of business newswriting. *Text and Talk – An Interdisciplinary Journal of Language, Discourse and Communication Studies* 30/2, 169–191.

The Representation of the Capital of Kazakhstan in Central Asia Online News Coverage: a Corpus-Assisted Analysis

Abstract

Central Asia (CA) is a region spanning five countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) which emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union. Recently, the biggest CA country – Kazakhstan – spurs a growing interest in the media due to its rapid development and the emerging role as the key player in Central Asia economy, politics and culture. The aim of this paper is to analyse how the capital of Kazakhstan (and the country *per se*), is represented in online news coverage in a selection of newspapers published in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The theoretical and methodological framework of the investigation hinges on the assumptions of the Framing Theory used in media studies on the one hand, and follows a corpus-assisted discourse analysis widely used in linguistic inquiries on the other. The data come from a monitor JSJ corpus, from which virtual corpora illustrating the news published by the above-mentioned countries were teased out. The corpus-based tools used in the quantitative study involve: the analysis of collocations, keywords and frequencies, as well as sentiment analysis. The examination of framing illustrates a qualitative investigation. The results of the study demonstrate that Kazakhstan is represented in online CA news coverage in highly positive terms, as a powerful leader of the whole Central Asia region (in terms of economy, politics and culture).