

Gastronomic Metaphors in the Linguistic Worldview: An Embodied and Cross-Cultural Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of gastronomic metaphors in shaping the linguistic worldview through cognitive and cultural perspectives. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Cultural Linguistics, the paper analyzes how food-related expressions structure abstract meaning. Using qualitative semantic analysis of English and Central Asian data, the study demonstrates that gastronomic metaphors are grounded in embodied experience while encoding culturally specific conceptualizations. The findings reveal that such metaphors function as cognitive models and cultural markers, contributing to the linguistic representation of reality. The study offers new insights into the interaction between embodiment and culture in metaphor formation.

Keywords: Gastronomic metaphor, linguistic worldview, conceptual metaphor theory, embodiment, cultural linguistics, semantic analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a fundamental role in shaping how individuals conceptualize reality. The notion of the linguistic worldview suggests that speakers interpret the world through language-specific conceptual systems. Within this framework, metaphor is a central cognitive mechanism.

According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), abstract thinking is structured through metaphorical mappings grounded in bodily experience. Gastronomic metaphors, derived from food and taste, are particularly significant due to their universality and experiential basis. Despite extensive research on metaphor, the role of gastronomic metaphors in shaping the linguistic worldview – especially in Central Asian contexts – remains insufficiently explored. This study aims to address this gap by analyzing their cognitive and cultural functions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of metaphor has undergone a significant shift from a purely rhetorical perspective to a cognitive and conceptual one. A major contribution to this transformation is the work of Lakoff & Johnson (1980), who argue that metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a fundamental mechanism of human thought. According to their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), abstract concepts are structured through systematic mappings from concrete domains rooted in bodily experience. This theoretical framework has become central to contemporary cognitive linguistics and provides the foundation for analyzing gastronomic metaphors.

Subsequent research has expanded on this approach by emphasizing the role of embodiment in meaning construction. As Gibbs (2006) suggests, human cognition is grounded in physical and sensory experience, which explains why domains such as taste and food are highly productive sources of metaphorical meaning. Similarly, Barsalou (2008) argues that conceptual representations are “grounded” in perceptual systems, reinforcing the idea that sensory experiences like taste directly influence abstract reasoning. In this context, gastronomic metaphors such as sweet success or bitter disappointment illustrate how sensory perception is mapped onto emotional and evaluative domains.

While early studies focused primarily on universal cognitive mechanisms, later research has highlighted the importance of cultural variation in metaphor usage. Farzad Sharifian (2017) introduces the framework of Cultural Linguistics, which

emphasizes that language reflects shared cultural conceptualizations, including values, beliefs, and norms. From this perspective, gastronomic metaphors are not only cognitively motivated but also culturally embedded. For example, the symbolic meaning of food items such as bread, salt, or tea varies across cultures, shaping the interpretation of metaphorical expressions.

Further contributions by Kövecses (2010) demonstrate that although many metaphors have universal foundations, their linguistic realization often differs across cultural contexts. He argues that cultural models influence both the selection of source domains and the interpretation of metaphorical meanings. This is particularly relevant for gastronomic metaphors, where food-related concepts are closely tied to local traditions and social practices. In Central Asian cultures, for instance, bread is associated with sacredness and hospitality, whereas in English-speaking contexts it often represents economic survival or basic livelihood.

In addition, Wierzbicka (1997) highlights the role of language-specific semantic systems in shaping cultural meaning, suggesting that key cultural concepts are encoded in lexical and metaphorical structures. This perspective supports the view that gastronomic metaphors function as carriers of cultural knowledge, reflecting how communities conceptualize social relations, morality, and emotional experience.

Overall, previous research demonstrates that metaphor operates at the intersection of cognition and culture. However, the specific role of gastronomic metaphors in shaping the linguistic worldview remains underexplored, particularly in the context of Central Asian languages. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing how food-related metaphors contribute to both universal and culture-specific patterns of conceptualization.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative semantic and conceptual analysis. The data consist of selected metaphorical expressions from:

- English language usage
- Uzbek and Karakalpak linguistic contexts

The selection criteria include frequency, semantic transparency, and cultural relevance. The analysis follows three stages:

- Identification of gastronomic metaphors
- Mapping source and target domains
- Interpretation of cognitive and cultural meanings

This approach aligns with established methods in cognitive linguistics (Kövecses 2010).

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. *Embodied conceptual patterns*

The analysis reveals consistent metaphorical mappings across languages:

- sweet → positive emotion (sweet memory)
- bitter → negative experience (bitter truth)

These patterns confirm that metaphor is grounded in embodied sensory experience (Gibbs 2006).

4.2. *Cultural conceptualization*

Significant cultural differences are observed:

- Uzbek/Karakalpak: “non sindirish” → respect, ritual, sacred value
- English: “earn one’s bread” → economic survival

These examples demonstrate that while the sensory basis is universal, metaphorical meaning is culturally shaped (Sharifian 2017).

4.3. *Literary evidence*

Gastronomic metaphors are also prominent in literary discourse. For example:

- “His words were bitter as wormwood” → emotional suffering
- “She spoke with honeyed sweetness” → positive evaluation

Such expressions illustrate how sensory imagery enhances emotional and aesthetic meaning.

4.4. *Functional analysis*

Gastronomic metaphors perform three key functions:

- Cognitive → structuring abstract thought
- Cultural → encoding social values
- Communicative → enhancing expressiveness

This multi-functionality explains their persistence across languages.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that gastronomic metaphors operate at the intersection of embodiment and culture. While grounded in universal sensory experience, they are shaped by culturally specific conceptualizations.

This dual nature has important implications for:

- intercultural communication
- translation studies
- linguistic anthropology

The study thus contributes to a deeper understanding of how language encodes both shared and culture-specific knowledge.

6. CONCLUSION

Gastronomic metaphors play a crucial role in the linguistic worldview by linking sensory experience with abstract cognition. They reflect both universal human embodiment and cultural specificity, demonstrating the complex interaction between language, thought, and culture.

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