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COGNITIVE-SEMANTIC REPRESENTATION OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC GASTRONOMIC TERMS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article investigates how culture-specific gastronomic terms in Uzbek and English encode conceptual knowledge beyond their dictionary meanings. Unlike historical accounts of culinary vocabulary, the present study focuses on the interaction of cognitive frames, semantic features and discourse contexts. A qualitative comparative analysis of selected terms, including palov, sumalak, qazi, patir, pudding, scone, roast and pie, identifies recurring relations between the names of dishes, their ingredients, preparation procedures, sensory profiles and cultural functions. The proposed interpretation distinguishes a term’s primary nominative frame from the secondary frames it evokes in recipes, menus and cultural descriptions. The findings suggest that formal lexical equivalence does not guarantee conceptual equivalence and that explanatory translation is often necessary for culture-bound food names.

Keywords: gastronomic terminology; frame semantics; cognitive semantics; Uzbek; English; cultural specificity; polyframe interpretation; translation.

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается когнитивно-семантическая репрезентация национально-специфических гастрономических терминов в узбекском и английском языках. В отличие от исторического описания кулинарной лексики, основное внимание уделяется взаимодействию фреймов, семантических признаков и дискурсивных контекстов. На материале терминов palov, sumalak, qazi, patir, pudding, scone, roast и pie анализируются связи между названием блюда, ингредиентами, способом приготовления, сенсорными характеристиками и культурными функциями. Показано, что лексическая эквивалентность не всегда означает концептуальную эквивалентность, поэтому при переводе культурно маркированных наименований нередко требуется пояснение.

Ключевые слова: гастрономическая терминология; фреймовая семантика; когнитивная семантика; узбекский язык; английский язык; национально-культурная специфика; перевод.

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomic terminology is a productive area for examining the relationship between language, knowledge and culture. A dish name may designate a recognizable food product, yet

understanding that name in a specific community often requires knowledge of ingredients, techniques, eating occasions and shared expectations. Such information is not always explicit in a dictionary definition. Consequently, comparison of gastronomic terms across languages must address both their lexical meanings and the conceptual structures they activate.

The present investigation differs from a diachronic account of gastronomic vocabulary: it does not reconstruct borrowing routes or chronological stages of lexical development. Instead, it asks how selected terms are organized within conceptual frames and how those frames change with communicative purpose. The principal research questions are: which semantic features are central to the interpretation of Uzbek and English food names; how do object, process, sensory and social knowledge interact; and what implications do these interactions have for translation.

Frame semantics, associated with Fillmore, treats word meaning as dependent on structured background knowledge. Minsky’s account of knowledge representation and Cabré’s communicative approach to terminology provide complementary grounds for considering specialized units in relation to conceptual systems and professional communication. In gastronomy, a name may be simultaneously a designation of an object and a cue to a preparation event, an instrument or a cultural practice [1–3].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material consists of a purposively selected illustrative set of eight gastronomic terms: Uzbek palov, sumalak, qazi and patir, and English pudding, scone, roast and pie. These examples were selected because they permit comparison of food objects, preparation techniques and culture-related associations. This is a qualitative conceptual analysis, not a corpus-frequency study; therefore, no statistical generalizations are claimed.

The analysis combines descriptive, componential, contrastive and frame-based procedures. First, each lexical unit is assigned a dominant nominative category. Second, its typical ingredient, preparation, sensory and communicative associations are identified. Third, the same unit is considered in three hypothetical discourse settings: a recipe, a restaurant menu and a cultural explanation. Finally, possible English renderings of Uzbek terms are evaluated for the degree to which they preserve the relevant conceptual information. The resulting interpretations are analytical proposals rather than experimentally validated measures of speakers’ knowledge.

For consistency, five working frames are distinguished: the Object Frame (products, ingredients, dishes and beverages); Processual Frame (preparation and cooking); Perceptual Frame (taste, aroma, colour and texture); Instrumental Frame (utensils and equipment); and Social-Communicative Frame (participants, occasions, etiquette and cultural practices). These frames are not mutually exclusive categories. Rather, they are complementary perspectives on the same gastronomic event.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

1. The difference between lexical nomination and conceptual content. A food name typically has an object-oriented function: it tells a speaker which item is being discussed. Nevertheless, the knowledge necessary for accurate interpretation may be distributed across

other frames. For instance, palov primarily designates a prepared dish, but in a recipe it activates knowledge of rice, carrots, meat or alternative ingredients, cooking sequences and a large cooking vessel. In a cultural description, the same name can evoke collective hospitality and ceremonial meals. The primary lexical category remains relatively stable, while the salience of associated knowledge changes.

2. Culture-specific semantic configurations. Sumalak provides a particularly clear case of social and processual knowledge converging. It denotes a food associated with germinated wheat and lengthy preparation, while its cultural interpretation commonly includes Navruz celebrations and communal participation. A short English gloss such as “sweet wheat dish” conveys a portion of the object frame but does not adequately represent its ritual and participatory dimensions. Qazi likewise cannot be reduced to the broad expression “sausage” without losing relevant information about its traditional meat-based composition and preparation.

The English items reveal a comparable dependence on frames, although the relevant associations differ. Scone usually activates knowledge of a baked product, a characteristic dough and certain serving practices. Pie foregrounds a pastry structure and filling, but its precise interpretation varies by subtype and culinary setting. Pudding is especially context-sensitive because it may refer to different kinds of dishes across varieties of English and meal traditions. These cases caution against treating an apparent dictionary equivalent as a full conceptual match.

3. Frame interaction in discourse. Recipes typically prioritize the Processual Frame through verbs such as mix, knead, simmer, bake and serve. Restaurant menus often foreground the Object and Perceptual Frames by combining a dish name with descriptors such as traditional, homemade, tender or crispy. Cultural explanations, in contrast, give greater prominence to the Social-Communicative Frame. The term roast can denote a cooking process, a cooked item or a meal-centered occasion depending on context. Such shifts illustrate polyframe activation without requiring a claim that every associated feature is part of the term’s narrow lexical definition.

4. Contrastive interpretation and translation. The translation of a culture-bound dish name involves choosing which conceptual features matter to the target reader. Retaining palov with a brief explanation, for example “palov, an Uzbek rice dish commonly prepared with carrots and meat,” preserves cultural identity while introducing essential object knowledge. For sumalak, a contextual explanation can mention its association with Navruz when that association is central to the communicative purpose. Translating qazi simply as “sausage” may be acceptable in a very general inventory, but a gastronomic or ethnographic text benefits from a more precise description.

The same principle works in the reverse direction. An Uzbek translation of pudding may require specification of the subtype rather than an unqualified generic equivalent. Likewise, pie and scone may need transliteration, descriptive translation or an established local equivalent according to audience and genre. Thus, the translator’s task is not merely to replace

one word with another, but to reconstruct the most relevant frame for the communicative situation.

5. A comparative synthesis. The selected Uzbek and English units share an abstract conceptual architecture: each can be understood in relation to food objects, preparation, perception, instruments and social activity. Their culturally specific contents, however, differ. The shared architecture enables comparison, while different typical ingredients, cooking techniques, meal occasions and cultural associations limit direct equivalence. The comparison therefore supports a distinction between structural similarity at the frame level and variation in the content of individual slots.

The findings also suggest a practical analytical sequence for bilingual gastronomic lexicography: identify the dominant designation; record the most relevant processual and sensory features; determine whether social or ceremonial associations are central; and select a translation strategy appropriate to the intended discourse. This sequence can reduce the risk of flattening culturally marked terms into excessively broad categories.

CONCLUSION

The cognitive-semantic analysis demonstrates that gastronomic terms in Uzbek and English function as entry points to organized knowledge rather than as isolated labels. The distinction between a primary nominative frame and contextually activated secondary frames helps explain why a single dish name can convey different kinds of information in a recipe, menu or cultural account. The selected examples also indicate that frame structures are broadly comparable across the two languages, whereas their lexical realizations and cultural associations are not necessarily equivalent.

For translation, the principal implication is that preserving a dish name or providing a literal substitute may be insufficient when cultural or procedural knowledge is central to the text. Frame-sensitive description offers a more flexible solution. Further research should test these qualitative interpretations against larger bilingual corpora, authentic menus, recipes and speaker judgments before making broader claims about the distribution of frame features.

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