

# **TASTE PERCEPTION: COMPARATIVE SEMANTICS (ON THE MATERIALS OF THE ENGLISH, RUSSIAN AND BELARUSIAN LANGUAGES)**

Korneyeva M.V., Kunevich A.A.

State educational establishment “Baranovichy secondary school №7”

**A linguistic picture of the world** is an integral part of a coherent picture of the world that is not chaotic, but a strictly organized system, which allows looking at the world from different perspectives. Each language forms a certain image of the world presented by the semantic characteristics of the language of its carriers [1, c.11].

A comparative study of lexical groups in several languages is a regular subject of scientific interest. Emphasis is usually made on nouns and verbs. Unlike a number of works on similar problems our research is done on adjectives and, thus, it is topical. We’ve chosen a semantic group of “taste” adjectives in order to make a comparative analysis of their language realization in three languages, to reveal systematic relations within these groups.

**Taste perception** is the sensation that is felt when taste buds in the tongue and throat convey information about the chemical composition of a soluble stimulus [2, c.15].

In psychology **taste** is a sensory function of the central nervous system. Classical taste sensations *include sweet, salty, sour, and bitter* tastes.

Analyzing the semantic field of taste perception in various dictionaries we have come to the conclusion that the meaning of all taste characteristics in the English, Russian and Belarusian languages are divided into two groups: direct meaning and figurative meaning .

According to the figurative meaning of taste adjectives we split them into the following groups:

1) “*Taste*” — “*Smell*”

- 2) “*Taste*” — “*Sound*”
- 3) “*Taste*” — “*Characteristics*”
- 4) “*Taste*” — “*Feeling*”

Dictionary entries show some preferences of each nation in tastes of national meals and drinks. The English like salty popcorn and sweet cherries, while Russians and Belarusians prefer “*салёныя грыбы*” і “*салодкія яблыкі*” [3]. They drink “bitter coffee” in Britain and in Russia and Belarus they take «*горькую пилюлю*» and “*горкі палын*” as medicine [4]. As for the adjective ‘sour’, the English do not associate it with food, while Russians and Belarusians are crazy about “*кислая капуста*” [5].

We have studied 288 taste adjectives in all.

In our research work we’ve combined taste adjectives into blocks according to their meaning.

“*Sweet*” («*Сладкий*», “*Салодкі*”);

“*Sour*” («*Кислый*», “*Кіслы*”);

“*Bitter*” («*Горький*», “*Горкі*”);

“*Pungent*” («*Острый*», “*Востры*”);

“*Salty*” («*Солёный*», “*Салёны*”);

“*Delicious*” («*Вкусный*», “*Смачны*”);

“*Unpalatable*” («*Невкусный*», “*Нясмачны*”);

“*Tasteless*” («*Безвкусный*», “*Нясмачны*”).

As for “*Unpalatable*” and “*Tasteless*”, these adjectives make one group “*Нясмачны*” in the Belarusian language. As a result, we have 7 groups of taste adjectives in the Belarusian language and 8 groups in Russian and English.

In the English and Belarusian languages the block “*Tasty*”/ “*Смачны*” is the most numerous. In the Russian language such are the blocks «*Кислый*» and «*Сладкий*».

The least numerous in the English and Belarusian languages is the block “*Bitter*” / “*Горкі*”. In Russian – «*Безвкусный*».

It should be mentioned that each block is enriched thanks to different means of word-formation: *acid – acidic – acidulous – acidulated* [3]; *сладкий – сладковатый – слащавый – сладостный* [4]; *духмяны – духавіты – душысты* [5].

The list of synonyms in the English language is wider than in the Russian and Belarusian languages.

We can express sweet taste in the Russian language using the adjectives «сахарный», «сахаристый», in the Belarusian language – “цукровы”, in English – “sugary”, “sugared”, “saccharine”. The Russian adjective «лакомый» corresponds to Belarusian “смачны” and in English it is “lickerish”, “tidbit”, “dainty”, “liquorish”.

The group “Pungent” is essentially different in all three languages. In the Russian language this taste can be «жгучий», «пряный», «резкий», «терпкий», in Belarusian – “някучы”, “рэзкі”, “востры”. The English can express this taste as “chili”, “hot”, “zesty”, “zestful”, “spicy”, “tangy”, “peppery”, “seasoned”, “gingery” [3].

Speaking about basic flavors (sweet, sour, salty, pungent and bitter) in three languages we can observe the following results. In the English language the perceptive characteristic of “pungent” is more active (30%); in the Russian language – the perception of “sweet” (35%); in the Belarusian language taste perceptions of sweet and sour have equal positions (33%).

We scrutinized explanatory dictionaries, dictionaries of synonyms, antonyms and closely related words, joined the adjectives into groups according to the semantic meaning, revealed the peculiarities of the adjectives of taste perception in the languages, found out dominant characteristics of similar adjectives in each language and compared the materials. This is the way we carried out comparative analysis of the taste perception in the English, Russian and Belarusian languages.

The research proves the following:

First, the same external influences on human perception are equally perceived by the brain of different people at the physiological level, but they are formed and reflected differently in the languages.

Secondly, taste adjectives are observed both in direct and figurative meaning. They reflect specific cultural features of each nation. But figurative expressions with the adjectives of taste perception can't be observed as characteristics of perception.

Thirdly, explanatory dictionaries show similarities in the meaning of Russian and Belarusian adjectives, but differences in their meaning with the English language. As for the list of synonymous groups and its quantitative analysis, the English and Belarusian languages are similar while the Russian language stays apart.

Finally, in English the semantic realization of pungent taste is more actual than that of sweet, sour and bitter; in Russian the semantic realization of sweet taste is dominant, in the Belarusian language the semantic realization of sweet and sour are at the same level. The perception of salty isn't reflected widely in the lexicon of the languages we study.

The scientific originality of the research lies in the authors with author's comparative analysis of taste adjectives in three languages, revealing the ways of their verbalization and identifying systematic relations within the groups in the languages.

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