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Cognitive Features of the Concept Food in Russian, English and Chinese Linguocultures

Yidan Xu

Department of Linguistics, Translation and Intercultural Communication, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, 1 Leninskiye Gory, Moscow 119991, Russia

Abstract--The article is devoted to the similarities and differences of the concepts YEDA / FOOD / SHI in Russian, English, and Chinese linguocultures. The purpose of the work is to present semantics structures of the concept FOOD in named languages and analyze them using the comparative method. The research was performed on the basis of explanatory and phraseological dictionaries of Russian, English and Chinese languages. The results prove that the general idea of the concept differs in the Russian, English, and Chinese linguocultures, which comes down to its subjects, functions, and forms. The transferred meanings of the verbalizers food and yeda remain close to their direct meanings, and the corresponding concepts possess only positive connotations, while the meanings of the verbalizer shi are more diverse, and the corresponding concept possesses ambivalent connotations. Besides, cognitive features related to the studied concepts are more pronounced in the Chinese linguoculture.

Keywords--Chinese language, cognitive linguistics, concept, English language, Russian language.

Introduction

Conceptual analysis is considered to be one of the leading research methods in modern cognitive linguistics, which takes a particular concept or conceptual sphere as the research object (Laenko & Popova, 2018; Kushkimbayeva et al., 2019). However, this term refers not to a single analyzing procedure, but to a set of procedures, which are dedicated to the general research purpose. The selection of concrete approaches depends on an understanding of the concept and its structure. For example, Demiankov (2000), stands up for the point that classical conceptual analysis requires the involvement of a large scale of contexts of lexemes in literature. Also, in the work of Kubryakova et al.(1991), it had been

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Corresponding author: Xu, Y.; Email: xuyidan@rambler.ru

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considered that the conceptual analysis interacts with semantic analysis. However, the purpose of semantic analysis is to understand the structure of lexemes, while conceptual analysis guarantees an understanding of the world. [Wierzbicka \(1997\)](#), studies concept by analyzing the so-called "keywords of the era". [Popova & Sternin \(2007\)](#) came up with a method, which involves analyzing the compatibility of essential concept nominees since it allows revealing the possibility of categorizing and conceptualizing a phenomenon ([Tendahl & Gibbs Jr, 2008](#); [Kertész et al., 2012](#)).

Regardless of the diversification in research approaches, the conceptual analysis contributes to the study of conceptual structure, which leads to a better understanding of the world in terms of concepts. Besides, this method conduces to the study of linguistic consciousness, since concepts are units of consciousness, which work as components of the standard conceptual model of the world ([Kubryakova et al., 1991](#)). Furthermore, another crucial part is in the selection of the sphere. There are four central values in cultural anthropology: lifestyle, ideology, religion, and artistic value, among which the sphere of lifestyle changes slower than the others and, to a great extent, works as the foundation of the rest ([Semenova & Meng, 2014](#)). Despite the background of globalization and large-scale immigration in the 21st century, national cuisine remains one of the most sustainable forms in the sphere of lifestyle ([Tseng, 2017](#)). With a view to this, the concept FOOD represented in different linguocultures and its verbalizers in corresponding languages should be treated as significant objects in modern cognitive linguistics, considering the different national characteristics and worldviews they reflect ([Prokhorova et al., 2014](#); [Yurina & Baldova, 2017](#); [Resnik, 2018](#)).

Methodology

The main research methods, which had been used are conceptual-semantic and comparative analyses, where the semantic features of the verbalizers and cognitive features of the concepts are analyzed from a comparative perspective to provide a better understanding of perceptual experiences and verbalization processes of the compared linguocultures ([Kazakov et al., 2021](#); [Kebaituli, 2021](#)). Lexical meanings of the concept verbalizers are considered, as well as widely used phraseological units, which represent these concepts in the corresponding linguocultures ([Schmidt-Schauß & Smolka, 1991](#); [Mont, 2002](#)).

At the stage of analyzing and comparing transferred meanings, the empirical material includes four explanatory dictionaries of the Russian language (Explanatory Dictionary of the Great Living Russian Language by Dal', Dictionary of the Russian Language by Ozhegov, Large Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language by Kuznetsov, Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language by Ushakov), three explanatory dictionaries of the English language (Cambridge Dictionary, Oxford Dictionary, Collins Online Dictionary) and two explanatory dictionaries of the Chinese language (Xinhua Chinese Dictionary, Modern Chinese Dictionary ([Kuznetsov, 2000](#))). At the stage of analyzing and comparing phraseological units, the empirical material comes from:

- Five phraseological dictionaries of the Russian language (Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Language by [Tikhonov et al. \(2007\)](#), Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Language by [Molotkov \(1986\)](#), Dictionary of Russian Phraseology by [Mokienko \(1999\)](#), Phraseological Dictionary of the Modern Russian Language by [Larionova \(2019\)](#), Dictionary of Russian Proverbs and Sayings ([Zhukov, 2000](#)).
- One English-Russian phraseological dictionary (The Big English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary ([Kunin, 1984](#)).
- One Russian-English phraseological dictionary (Modern Russian-English Phraseological Dictionary ([Kveselevich, 1998](#)).
- Two English phraseological dictionaries (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms [1998], The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms ([Siefiring, 2005](#)).
- One Chinese phraseological dictionary (Chengyu Dictionary) and search engines (Google, Yandex, Baidu).

Results and Discussion

In recent years, the concept FOOD and its verbalizers in different languages have been studied by a number of researchers:

- [Savel'eva \(2007\)](#), analyzed the lexical semantics and cognitive pragmatics of the concept FOOD in the Russian and English linguocultures.
- [Wang et al. \(2013\)](#), compared metaphors related to food in Chinese and English.
- [Semenova & Meng \(2014\)](#), studied the concept FOOD in the Russian language worldview by analyzing sayings and proverbs.
- [Marushkina \(2014\)](#), studied the concept FOOD in the Germany linguoculture.
- [Wang & Lin \(2014\)](#), compared food describing nouns in English and Chinese.
- [Abdykadyrova & Karabekova \(2016\)](#), compared the concept FOOD in the Russian and English linguocultures.

However, researchers from the Western world basically focus on the comparison among western linguocultures, while Eastern linguocultures and corresponding languages are rarely taken into consideration. Besides, researchers from the Eastern world commonly place emphasis only on the analysis of conceptual metaphors in specific languages ([Rinartha et al., 2018](#); [Aripov, 2021](#)). Thus, it can be assumed that research in the linguocultural approach, which at the same time combines western and eastern linguocultures, still has not been carried on until now. In this article, both direct and transferred meanings of the nouns *yeda* / food / shi are taken as the research objects, as well as culturally representative phraseological units, which contain these lexemes. On this background, it had been distinguished the common understanding of *food* and its cognitive features in Russian, English, and Chinese linguocultures. First of all, the direct meanings of the concept verbalizers *yeda* / food / shi are defined in the following ways:

- In the Dictionary of the Russian Language, which had been required by [Ozhegov \[n.d.\]](#), the direct meaning of the noun *yeda* is interpreted as "to,

chto edyat, chem pitayutsya / something to eat"; and in the Big Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language by Kuznetsov (n.d.) it is explained as "priyem pishchi, to, chto edyat; pishcha / eating, things that people eat; food".

- In the Cambridge Dictionary [n.d.] the word *food* is defined as "something that people and animals eat, or plants absorb, to keep them alive"; and in the Oxford Dictionary (Definitions, Meanings, Synonyms, and Grammar), it is treated as "any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink or that plants absorb in order to maintain life and growth".
- In the Xinhua Chinese Dictionary [n.d.], the noun *shi* is interpreted as "chi de dong xi / something to eat".

The statements above prove that native speakers of the Russian, English, and Chinese languages all define the concepts YEDA / FOOD / SHI as something related to the action of feeding (Paradis et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2006). However, in the English linguoculture this concept is defined more detailed: firstly, the purpose related to the usage of such substance is surviving or growing, which has not been mentioned in the Chinese and Russian linguocultures; secondly, the subject of certain activity can be people, animals or plants, while in the other two linguocultures nutrition for plants does not range into the category of *food*; thirdly, in the English linguoculture certain kinds of liquid are also accepted as *food*, while in the Chinese and Russian linguocultures *shi* and *yeda* usually refer to solid substance only. Besides, lexemes *yeda* / *food* / *shi* are provided with different transferred meanings in the Russian, English and Chinese languages:

- *shi*:
 - eating (*shi yu*);
 - dish (*shi pu*);
 - something eatable (*shi yan; shi tang*);
 - cereals, grains (*min yi shi wei tian*);
 - board, providing food (*shi su*);
 - the ritual of the feast (*xiang shi*);
 - life, living (*an shi*);
 - anything serving for consumption or use (*jing shen shi liang*);
 - eclipse (*ri shi; yue shi*);
 - sponging on someone (*shi ke*);
 - salary, official's payment (*jun zi mou dao er bu mou shi*).
- *food*:
 - dish (*American food*);
 - something warrants serious consideration (*mental food*).
 - *yeda*:
 - eating (*vo vremya edy; posle edy*);
 - dish (*amerikanskaya yeda*) (Ushakov, n.d.).

These fragments show that in all three linguocultures the verbalizers *yeda* / *food* / *shi* are used to refer to 'dish' or 'cuisine'. Second meaning is found only in Chinese language (Shevchuk et al., 2015; Shchitov et al., 2015). Besides, in the Russian linguoculture the feature of 'eating' is observed as well; in the English linguoculture — 'thought-provoking'; and in the Chinese linguoculture — 'eating',

'edibility', 'cereals', 'board', 'ritual of feast', 'life', 'serving for consumption', 'eclipse', 'sponging on' and 'salary'. In addition to the above mentioned, phraseological units related to the concepts YEDA / FOOD / SHI are also taken into account. The meanings of proverbs, sayings or phraseological units do not sprightly depend on the lexical meanings of single verbalizers. However, their interpretation as well reflects the characteristics of the associational patterns of different nations in the corresponding field:

- In the Russian linguoculture:
 - *zdorov na yedu, da khil na rabotu* (eat one's head off).
 - *sladkaya yeda ne prikhodit lezha* (work hard in order to gain something good).
 - *blyudi khleb pro yedu, a kopeiku pro bedu* (cherish everything in case of necessity) (Zhukov, 2000).
 - *beda — bedoi, a yeda — yedoi* (trouble is trouble, pleasure is pleasure).
- In the English linguoculture:
 - *food for thought* (anything that provides mental stimulus for thinking).
- In the Chinese linguoculture:
 - *shi bu er wei* (a frugal life).
 - *jiu shi di yu* (a painful lifestyle filled with social engagements).
 - *dao shi zhi bao* (obtain advantages by improper means).
 - *yin shi nan nv* (the nature of human beings).

The phraseological units above show that in three linguocultures the concepts YEDA / FOOD / SHI all possess positive connotations. Important to mention that only in the Chinese linguoculture SHI contains negative connotations and is associated with unpleasantness (such as 'painful lifestyle'). In the Russian proverbs, concept *food* correlates with work and importance to save food as money. In the Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (6 ed.) phraseological units with concept *food* not pointed out. Idiom *food for thought* contain cognitive mention and includes intellectual connotation (Zhou et al., 2008; Li et al., 2014).

Conclusion

In this article had been presented semantic structures of concepts YEDA / FOOD / SHI. Besides, the comparative analysis was held on three levels: main meaning, connotative meanings and phraseological structures. According to this, we describe the following conclusions:

- The general idea about food differs slightly in the Russian, English and Chinese linguocultures: only in the English linguoculture the subjects, functions and physical forms of *food* are clearly defined; besides, in the English linguoculture the range of *food* is comparatively more extensive than in the other two.
- The concepts YEDA / FOOD / SHI have more cognitive features in the Chinese linguoculture than in the Russian and English ones.
- The transferred meanings of the verbalizers *food* and *yeda* stay more closely to their direct meanings (for example, these lexemes are more commonly used to refer to 'dish' or 'eating'), while the meanings of the verbalizer *shi*

are more emanative (for example, it can also mean “salary” or “sponging on”).

- The concepts YEDA and FOOD possess only positive connotations in the Russian and English linguocultures, while SHI contains both positive and negative connotations in the Chinese linguoculture.

To draw it into a nutshell, these facts state that the concepts YEDA / FOOD / SHI are formed and received differently in the Russian, English, and Chinese linguocultures. The cognitive features related to these concepts accurately reflect their semantic structures, functional characteristics, and mental representations. In general, the results contribute to the identification of the cognitive patterns and cultural values of the compared linguocultures, realized by different verbal means (Zong & Zhen, 2021; Garnov et al., 2021).

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