

THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC UNITS  
DENOTING FOOD IN ENGLISH AND ARMENIAN

The present paper deals with the study of language units (lexical and phraseological) denoting food in English and Armenian, the connection of language and culture, and its reflection in the word stock of both languages.

The problem of language and culture studies is connected with the functioning of language as a means of accumulating and preserving experience. In a number of works that have appeared recently culture is taken in the sense in which it is used by cultural anthropologists, according to whom culture is something that everybody has. The term is used to refer to some characteristics shared by a community especially those which might distinguish it from other communities. According to Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics "Culture is the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviour, social habits etc. of the members of the particular society".<sup>1</sup>

W. Goodenough defines culture as "socially acquired knowledge". "A society's culture of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members".<sup>2</sup> W. Goodenough defines culture as "socially acquired knowledge". "A society's culture of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members".<sup>3</sup> According to L. Grant "Our culture also teaches us how to interpret the world. As each culture has a unique way of interpreting different situations, we find great diversity in cultural behavior throughout the world".<sup>4</sup> The cultural differences are the source of serious problems for understanding a language, these problems can result even in cultural shocks, strong feelings of discomfort, fear and insecurity which a person may have when entering another culture.

In Russian linguistics language and culture studies can be traced back to L. V. Sherba and A. A. Potebnia "When studying the language of this or

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<sup>1</sup> Richards J., Platt J., Weber H. Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (LDAL) L., Longman, 1995, p. 70

<sup>2</sup> Goodenough W., Culture and Language, M., 1957, p. 74

<sup>3</sup> Goodenough W., Culture and Language, M., 1957, p. 74

<sup>4</sup> Grant L. & L. Bauer, Criteria for Re-defining Idioms: Applied Linguistics, 2004, p. 38-61

that nation we are at the same time studying its historically established system of concepts through which the nation views the objective reality".<sup>5</sup> A. A. Potebnia pointed out the conceptual incomparability of words in different languages: "So, the word of one language is not identical and cannot be identical to the word of another language, even if both words refer to the same object of reality."<sup>6</sup> Thus, language and culture are interrelated. One cannot study language without taking into consideration the cultural aspects of the people who use the language natively. The culture of a certain nation is accumulated and reflected in the corresponding language, also in phrases which carry one of the main cultural and ethnic characteristics of the nation. There even exists such a term as culture-loaded words. Food is closely connected to culture, and the beliefs, practices, and trends in a culture affect its eating practices. Food options and local specialties arise out of a society's nature, geography, and history. And the linguistic manifestations of these options in different cultures are different, too.

We distinguish two groups of language units with names of food bearing cultural component: lexical and phraseological. In the semantic layer of these groups there is some extralinguistic content, which definitely reflects the reality and the culture of the people speaking that language. Within these groups of language units are: 1) those units which have some correspondence in another language, and 2) those not having any correspondence in another language. Words which have no word equivalent in other languages, the so-called "realia", in translation studies are defined as words (or word groups) denoting objects expressing national and historical peculiarities characteristic of life of one nation and alien to another. Realia sometimes can play a prominent part in literary text being emotionally and stylistically charged. They often acquire additional shades of meaning. It is nearly impossible to understand this or that word, phrase, sentence, correctly without knowing the associations of this or that realia. Linguists single out denotational and connotational realia. According to G. D. Tomakhin, denotational realia are full of background information, connotational realia are those which carry a lot of additional information, and shades of meaning"<sup>7</sup>. Tomakhin singles out large groups subdivided into smaller ones: ethnographic realia (food,

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<sup>5</sup> Щерба Л. В. Языковая система и речевая деятельность. М. 1974, стр. 374

<sup>6</sup> Потебня А. А. Из записок по русской грамматике. М., 1958, стр. 94

<sup>7</sup> Томахин Г. Д., Реалии-американизмы. М., Высшая школа, 1988, стр. 41

beverage, housing conditions, transport, pastime, tradition, customs, holidays, speech habits, etc.), realia concerning education, religion and culture (in its narrow sense): theatre and cinema, mass media, art and music. In the language and culture studies "realia" are understood in a much broader sense. "Realia" means both the object (a cultural phenomenon) and the word denoting it (a language phenomenon). We find a great number of realia and words denoting them in the sphere of social and political life, clothes, food, etc. Food in England or America differs from Armenian food. Though, the youth in Armenia also eats bacon and eggs, hamburgers, etc., and though they are popular all over the world, the names of some dishes should be interpreted and explained. Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding - made from flour, eggs and milk, it is the sort of batter baked in the oven and usually moistened with gravy, and is called England's traditional Sunday lunch.

Toad in the Hole - made from sausages covered in batter and roasted.

Ploughman's Lunch - a piece of cheese, a bit of pickle and pickled onion and a chunk of bread.

Shepherd's Pie - made with minced lamb and vegetables topped with mashed potato and grated cheese.

Hotpot - a stew, cooked slowly in the oven, made of meat and vegetables.

"Bangers and Mash" - bangers are sausages in England (the reason sausages were nicknamed bangers is that during wartime rationing they were so filled with water they often explode when they were fried).

"Blood Pudding" - a black sausage made from pig's blood and fat.

"Pie and Mash with parsley liquor" - the original pies were made with eels because at the time eels were a cheaper product than beef.

"Cumberland sausage" - famous pork sausage usually presented coiled up like a long rope.

Full English breakfast - a bowl of cereals and a slice of toast are typical to it.

It is difficult to give the exact number of food realia in English as many of them have already become international, nevertheless, in most cases they play an important role in the description of people of Great Britain and the USA, and convey some definite information. The Armenian food realia are of no less interest. Their meaning can involve both honour and humour and are used both in literary Armenian and in its dialects.

"Խորոված" - usually made of the joints of pork, lamb or beef on a specially made fire. Usually it doesn't come without the very traditional Armenian bread called "lavash".

"Բլուֆթա" - made of minced beef which is served with butter.

"Խաշլամա" - made of boiled lamb with onions and tomatoes.

"Դոլմա" - a traditional Armenian dish also made of mince beef, stuffed vine leaves, usually served with some kind of home-made yogurt, known as "matsun".

"Հարիսա" - made of good mixed mass of lamb and boiled oats.

"Լավաշ" - a soft thin Armenian flatbread made from flour, water and salt.

"Մածուն" - made of milk. Something like yogurt

"Սպաս" - made of matsun, dzavar and the kind of greens.

"Խաշ" - a traditional Armenian dish which is eaten early in the morning, with garlic and lavash.

"Թան" - A drink which comes out of the milk while making butter.

"Խաշիլ" - Made of fine-ground wheat, with milk or water.

"Մատաղ" - the boiled meat of a cock, a sheep [a ram] or a pigeon which is sacrificed to the God.

The connection between the history and culture of nations is fully and mostly reflected in the field of phraseological units. Idioms, sayings, proverbs, aphorisms express special national layers and have peculiar language images used by native speakers.

When analyzing the phraseological units denoting food we classify these units according to their equivalence degree in two languages taking into consideration 3 main criteria: semantic, structural-grammatical and componental, the most important of which is the first one including significative-denotative, functional-stylistic and emotional meanings.

According to these criteria we distinguish between the following types of equivalence of phraseological units: phraseological equivalents, phraseological analogues, non-equivalent phraseological units.

Phraseological equivalents (full and partial) are units which coincide both in meaning and in structure. The most frequent are partial equivalents which have some grammatical or syntactical differences in two languages due to the type of these languages: add oil on the fire- կրակին յուղ լցնել, daily bread- հանապազօրյա հաց, forbidden fruit is sweet - արգելված պտուղը քաղը է, hard nut- ամուր ընկույզ, sour grapes- խաղողը թթու է, swim

between two waters- երկու ջրի արանքում լինել, the apple of discord - կովախնձոր, to carry water in a sieve- մաղով ջուր կրել, to grease one's palm- ափը յուղոտել, etc. Phraseological analogues are those units which express similar meaning, but have differences either in their structure or differ in one component: an apple does not fall far from the tree- պտուղը ծառից հեռու չի ընկնում, ask for bread and be given a stone - հաց խնդրել փոխարենը քար ստանալ, cabbage head - դդումի գլուխ, every bean has its black - որտեղ տանձ՝ պոչը վրան, never cackle till your egg is laid - առուն թռի նոր ասա "հոպ", stew in one's own juice- ինքն իր յուղով տապակվել, take the bread out of somebody's mouth - մեկի հացը կտրել, the apple of one's eye - մեկի աչքի լույսը, etc.

Non-equivalent phraseological units are those not having an equivalent unit in the corresponding language. They can be expressed in the translated language either by another phraseological unit or by means of explanation: a piece of cake - մատներդ էլ հետը կուտես, a storm in a teacup-մի կաթիլ մեղր, all bread is not baked in one oven - բոլոր մարդիկ նույնը չեն, as I live by bread - ազնիվ խոսք, bad egg - մութ կերպար, bread and butter - գոյատևման միջոց, bread and butter miss - դպրոցական, break the egg in somebody's pocket - ինչ-որ մեկի ծրագրերը ձախողել, drop like a hot potato - շտապ թողնել, duck's egg - կրիկետում «0» հաշիվը, fry your eggs - զբաղվել 'ք ձեր գործերով, hard boiled egg - անսիրտ, in the egg - նախօրոք, nest egg - գումար՝ պահված սև օրվա համար, real jam - հաճույք, sugar baby - սիրեցյալ, the answer's a lemon - այս համարը չի անցնի (in English), and ադ ու հացը մոռանալ - ուրանալ, ադ ու հացով մարդ - հյուրընկալ մարդ, աղցան անել - մեկին սաստիկ ծեծել, ապուրը խառնել - մեկի ներքին գործերին միջամտել, բեղից ընկած բրինձ- ավելորդ, բերանին չիր չի թրջվի- չի լոթի, գարի ուտող- հիմար, երեսին ճաշ ուտել- շատ գեղեցիկ լինել, երեսից քացախ թափվել- մոայլվել, լոթի ուտող- անշնորհք, խնձոր գլորել- բանասարկություն անել, կաթ և կորեկ դառնալ - մտերմանալ, հալալ կաթ ուտել - օրինավոր ամուսնությունից ծնված լինել, մեկի հետևից կարմիր խնձոր ուղարկել-պատվավոր հրավեր ուղարկել, etc (in Armenian).

Most non-equivalent phraseological units are those which have realia in them: as nice as pie- անսպասելի բարի լինել, as easy as pie- շատ հեշտ, as American as apple pie- տիպիկ ամերիկյան, pie in the sky- սուտ խոստում, pudding face - դեմքի անիմաստ արտահայտություն, over-egg

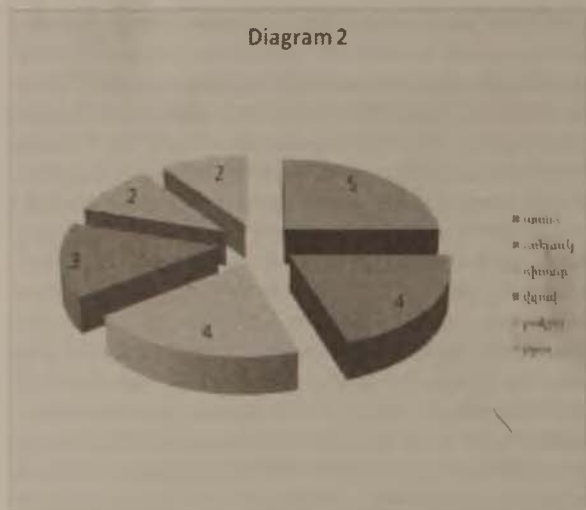
the pudding-անել ավելին, քան անհրաժեշտ է, praise is not pudding-գովասանքը փոր չի կշտացնի, go bananas- բարկանալ, խենթանալ, top banana- ղեկավար անձնավորություն, a plum job- հեշտ ու լավ վճարվող աշխատանք, bring home the bacon- վաստակը տուն բերել, to save one's bacon- գլուխը ազատել, etc. (in English) and, չիր ու չամիչ /մեղր ու կարագ -առատության խորհրդանիշ, յուղ ու բրինձ -ունեցվածք, խաշ-խորոված -տոնական ճաշկերույթ, աղ ու հաց -հյուրընկալություն, հալած յուղ -ճշմարտություն, գաթան հաց դուրս գալ- սպասելիքները չարդարանալ, արդար յուղի տեղ ընդունել- հավատալ, բերանին մածուն քսել- քծնել, շողոթորթել, մածնի մերան - խառնակիչ, բանսարկու, ջաղացքը մածուն աղալ- զուր աշխատել, ներքին արտի գարի-իրավագուրկ, մեկի սպասը եփել - վրեժ լուծել մեկից, ձավար-ձավար դուրս տալ- ցնդաբանել, խորթ մոր կորեկ - շատ դժվար գործ, կորեկ ծակող - շատ ազահ, հաճարին ածել- շատախոսել, մատաղ ուտող-ուրիշի հաշվին ապրող, թան դառնալ - սպիտակել, թանը անծամել կուլ տալ - առողջ, առույգ լինել, չարագ անել- ժամանակ անցկացնել, վերին արտի ցորեն- արտոկյալ, խաշը եփել - ծեծել, խաշիլ ուտող - թույլ և անպետք մարդ, փլավ բաժանել- հաճելի բան անել և այլն (in Armenian).

Summing up what we said above we can conclude that these words are used in the following frequency in English (Diagram 1) and in Armenian (Diagram 2).

Diagram 1



Diagram 2



Summing up what we have said above, we can state language and culture are inseparable. Many of the properties of language are also properties of culture in general, and meaning is best studied in relation to culture and thought. The culture of a certain nation is accumulated and reflected in the corresponding language, especially in the words and phrases which carry the main cultural and ethnic characteristics of the nation. Word meaning carries both linguistic and extralinguistic information and can serve as a source of background knowledge. Some cultural concepts are learned through language in general and lexical units in particular. Among 360 linguistic units denoting food we have depicted (250 in Armenian, and more than 110 in English). non-equivalent phraseological units prevail, as there are many linguistic units (lexical and phraseological) which bear cultural components and are culturally bound. And it is very difficult to find their equivalents in other languages.

The analysis revealed not only the differences but also the essential similarities between the Armenian and English phraseological units and other language units denoting food. These common features may have two reasons: the generic basis, and the typological basis, i.e. the ability of people to think, create and speak about certain phenomena in the same way.

It is evident that during the whole period of the development of the human culture, the imaginary logics has provided some common features of the mentality (though not absolute). This results in a "common language", which puts together the above mentioned numerous phraseological units and other language phenomena. For revealing the equivalence degree of the language phenomena, we should examine them on semantic, structural and stylistic levels.

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## Սենդանուն պարունակող լեզվական միավորների համեմատական վերլուծությունն անգլերենում և հայերենում

Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում և համեմատական վերլուծության են ենթարկվում սենդանուն պարունակող բառային և դարձվածային միավորներն անգլերենում և հայերենում: Վերլուծությունն իրականացնելիս կարևորվում է լեզու-մշակույթ համատեքստը, քանի որ սենդանուն պարունակող լեզվական միավորները համեմատվող լեզուներում կարող են անվանել ոչ միայն մշակութային իրականություններ, այլև ցուցաբերել համարժեքության տարբեր աստիճան կախված մշակութային առանձնահատկություններից: