Original Paper

THE METAPHORICAL USE OF '*SWEET*' IN GUJARATI AND MARATHI – Cognitive and Comparative Account

Devashree Trivedi
Department of Linguistics, Gujarat University
dtrivedi.msub@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

I propose to analyze in this paper the metaphorical usage of the taste-term for *sweet* in Gujarati and Marathi. Belonging to the Indo-Aryan language family, both Gujarati and Marathi share a certain extent of linguistic similarity. However, remarkable distinction occurs in the sense derivation of similar concepts in the two languages. Therefore, I seek to identify the diversity in linguistic construction of the same reality by users of both the languages. Furthermore, I attempt to present various senses conveyed by the terms for *sweet* in each respective language and its comparative analysis between given languages.

Scientifically, a term for gustatory sense in any language corresponds to identification of a certain element in food. It is a lexical entity used to express the physical experience of stimulation of a specific receptor on account of its contact with a specific substance. However, in everyday language use, this physical sensation is applied to other domains of experience and thus, metaphorically extended. The embodied experience of taste becomes the source domain for comparison with other embodied experiences. The present analysis attempts to identify this perceptual interpretation and metaphorical employment of the taste-terms for *sweet*; as well as examine the varied senses derived by each. Moreover, it investigates the polysemic behavior of these taste-terms using the cognitive model of prototypicality.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first introduces some basic tools of Cognitive Linguistics employed in the paper and discusses the physiological process of gustatory perception. The second deals with analysis of metaphorical use of the taste-terms in both languages and identifies the similarities and distinctions between the usages. It illustrates the relation and reasoning between a particular gustatory experience as the source domain and its target domain. The third offers the conclusion.

KEY WORDS: polysemy, prototype, embodiment, conceptual metaphor, gustatory perception, sense.

AREA: Cognitive Linguistics

1. Introduction

Taste is a physiological phenomenon common across mammals in general. The gustatory experience of taste is on account of the functioning of *taste buds* (chemical receptors in the taste cells) in the mouth. There are 13 probable chemical receptors in the taste cells of humans identified by psychophysiologic and neurophysiologic studies. The sense of taste allows the mammal to identify and therefore, accept, or reject the pleasant ingested substances from the unfavourable ones. The sense of smell also contributes greatly to the perception of taste of various foods. Hence, together, these senses participate in the different behavioural and emotional functions of the

nervous system. (Hall 2011: 645).

There are lexical items in every language designated to each embodied experience of humans. Each distinct psychophysiological experience of various senses is expressed by its respective lexical item in any given language. Thus, the sum total of the lexicon, to represent each sensory experience, available in a given language, determines the total sensory experiences acknowledged through the vocabulary of that language. Backhouse (1994: 13) explains that the vocabulary associated with proximate senses (of gustation, olfaction and touch) is comparatively poorer than that associated with distal senses (of vision and hearing). Scientifically, there are five general categories into which the primary sensations of taste have been divided: sweet, bitter, sour, salty, and *umami*. Of which, *Sweet* taste is caused by various chemicals such as glycols, aldehydes, ketones, etc. (Hall 2011: 645-646). Linguistically, one may observe that each language incorporates various terms for taste, depending upon the types of foods consumed by a speech community, and the kinds of gustatory sensations that dominate their culinary preparations. Thus, the expressions for *taste derivation* do not rely only on the physical experience but also on the individual and cultural perception of that physical experience – thereby, making 'taste' a *perceptual* field along with being an *embodied* experience. Thus, an experience that is mainly physiological in nature, finds its meaning representation as a collective outcome of the embodied experience and its derived perception. As Kasschau (1985: 186) puts it, 'A sensation occurs any time a stimulus activates one of your receptors. Perception occurs when you apply your experience to interpret sensations'.

Therefore, the same embodied experience can be 'construed' by different speakers in distinct manners. The 'different ways of encoding a situation constitute different conceptualizations' (Lee 2004: 2). Moreover, when a particular experience is perceived in terms of another domain of experience, it accounts for the metaphorical extension of the said experience. 'Metaphors are large-scale structures that influence our thinking about whole areas of human experience' (Lee 2004: 7). Hence, the use of metaphorical expressions is not restricted to poetic language but is a common practice in everyday language use. Thus, 'Metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience (target) in terms of another (source)' (Lakoff and Johnson1980). When any lexical item is metaphorically employed to derive sense beyond the literal meaning, it reflects the polysemic behaviour of that linguistic form. Polysemy, as stated by Taylor (2003:103), is the association of two or more related senses with a single linguistic form. He further adds that 'a polysemous item associates a phonological form with a number of more or less discrete though related meanings, which cluster in a family resemblance category.' (Taylor 2003:124). Some of the early works on polysemy by Lakoff (1987: 417) reveal that 'The senses of a word are related to one another more or less closely by various means, one of which is conceptual metaphor.' These multiple senses conveyed by a linguistic form can be organized using the cognitive model of *prototypicality*. The prototype model marks the central or typical members of a category, the exemplars, as the 'prototypical' members and the other related members of the category as less typical or 'peripheral' (Rosch 1973b, 1975, Rosch and Mervis 1975, Rosch et al. 1976). The central or 'prototypical' member of any sense category refers to the example that best explains the linguistic form, according to the language user. The senses derived through the less typical usage of the linguistic form are the less similar or 'peripheral' members of the category. Organizing senses using *cognitive categorization* and *prototype model* can be found in Wittgenstein's (1953) notion of 'family resemblances, centrality and gradience', Austin's (1961) concept of a 'primary nuclear sense' through the analysis of the adjective *healthy*, as well as the different senses of the word *lie* analyzed

through the prototype view by Coleman and Kay (1981).

The present analysis aims to identify the various senses derived by the literal and metaphorical use of the terms for *sweet* available in Gujarati and Marathi languages, respectively. Both, Gujarati and Marathi, belong to the Indo-Aryan language family, part of the greater Indo-European language family. The Gujarati script is a variant of Devanâgarî script, differentiated by the loss of the characteristic horizontal line running above the letters and by a small number of modifications in the remaining characters. The Marathi script is written in the *Balbodh* version of the Devanâgarî script (Masica 1993). This paper focuses on the Gujarati and Marathi speakers in the city of Vadodara (Gujarat). Vadodara was the princely Baroda state under the ruler of the Marathi-speaking Gaekwad family, thereby comprising of considerable number of Marathi speakers, along with the native Gujarati speakers. It has, hence, witnessed contact between both the languages for a long period of time (Digital Library of India). This paper proposes to delineate the similarities and differences in expressing and perceiving the same physical reality by both groups of speakers, and the resultant senses derived through the distinct uses. The outcome aims to add to the semantic information of the lexical items being examined, thereby contributing to the lexicographical works in both the languages as well as to the language teaching methods for native and non-native speakers.

To examine the data, the analysis employs the cognitive tools of *Conceptual Metaphor*, *Perspective*, *Prototypicality,* and *Polysemy* as discussed above. The second section of the paper examines the data from both languages, comparatively and cognitively. The third and final section provides the conclusive remarks.

2. Analysis of Taste-terms

The current paper focuses on the taste-terms for *sweet* – extensively used as metaphor in both the languages. The occurrences of these terms for expressing various experiences are discussed as below:

The use of the taste-term *sweet* as a metaphor applies the source domain of *pleasant or palatable physical experience* to a more abstract target domain.

2.1 GUJARATI

Gujarati language incorporates three terms for *sweet* – *galvu* [gəʈiũ], *mitthu* [miːʈʰũ], and *madhur* [məd̪ʱʊr]. These are adjectives and may occur in subjective or predicative position to modify the noun. They agree with the noun in gender and number. The adjectives change to *galpan* [gəʈpən] and *mitthaash* [miːʈʰaʃ] in their respective noun forms. Deshpande (1984: 288) defines [gəʈiũ] as 'sweet' and [miːʈʰũ] as 'sweet, tasty; (of water) fresh; (of sound) melodious' (Deshpande 1984: 704). The term *madhur* [məd̪ʱʊr] specifically refers to the sweetness derived from honey 'madh' [məd̪ʱ]. The following uses have been observed for this taste-term:

(1a) gəʈi   kʰand̪
      sweet sugar

(1b) miːʈʰũ   məd̪ʱ
      sweet   honey

(1a) and (1b) show the prototypical use of the respective terms. It is observable that [gəɭiũ] is necessarily used with foods that are sugary or have saccharine content, whereas [mi:ʈʰũ] is used with substances that taste of honey or nectar. Probing into the further available usages of the two lexical items, it has been observed that [gəɭiũ] does not occur with nouns beyond saccharine foods and is only used in its literal sense. [mi:ʈʰũ] is metaphorically extended beyond its literal sense, as can be observed in the following examples:

(2)   mi:ʈʰo   əʋaɟ
        sweet   voice
        'melodious/ pleasant/ soothing voice'

        əʋaɟ   -mã   mi:ʈʰaʃ
        voice   in   sweetness
        'sweetness/ appeal in voice'

The use of [mi:ʈʰo] in (2) for 'voice' suggests the use of the gustatory term for expressing an auditory experience. The noun 'voice' stands for both the basic nature of someone's voice and quality of voice while singing. Thus, the sense derived by the term refers to 'melodious', 'pleasing' or 'pleasant', 'soothing' as well as 'appealing'.

(3)   mi:ʈʰi   nəɟər
        sweet   sight
        'loving/ affectionate glance'

        nəɟər   -mã   mi:ʈʰaʃ
        sight   in   sweetness
        'affection in the eyes/ glance'/ 'to look at someone lovingly'

Here, the gustatory sense is transferred to the sense of sight and the consequent emotional experience thereby. When used to refer to 'glance' or 'the way someone looks at a person,' the adjective and noun forms of 'sweet' convey the senses 'loving' and 'affectionate'.

(4)   mi:ʈʰi   ʋat̪
        sweet   talk
        'pleasing/ agreeable/ gratifying words'

        ʋat̪   -mã   mi:ʈʰaʃ
        talk   in   sweetness
        'pleasantness/ agreeability in the words'

The use of [mi:ʈʰi] with the noun *talk* provides it the sense of 'pleasing', 'agreeable' and 'gratifying'. It differs from the English usage of the phrase 'sweet talk', in the way that here, 'talk' refers more to the words used or the content of the talk. It may also indicate the 'way in which someone expresses their thought/ selection of words'.

(5)   mi:ʈʰo   sʋəbʰaʋ
        sweet   nature
        'sweet-natured/ affable nature'

swəbʰaʋ   -mã   miːʈʰaʃ
nature   in   sweetness
'affability in nature/ personality'

The use of [miːʈʰo] with 'human nature or personality' is extending the gustatory experience to an emotional and social experience. Here, the sense conveyed is 'affable' or 'socially acceptable' nature of a person.

(6)(i)   miːʈʰa səbəndʰo
         sweet   relations
         'clandestine relations'

   (ii) səbəndʰo   -mã   miːʈʰaʃ
         relations   in   sweetness
         'happiness in relations'

The usage of [miːʈʰũ] as adjective and noun respectively in example (6) stands unique in its meaning derivation. When used in the form of adjective as [miːʈʰa] in (i) before the noun 'relations', it turns to a rather sarcastic remark depicting a person's 'clandestine relations' with someone. Whereas the same term for taste when used as a noun in (ii), it refers to the 'happiness' shared by individuals in their relation.

(7)   mədʰʊr   əʋaɟ
         sweet   voice
         'melodious/ harmonic voice (of instruments or singers)'

When the sweetness of honey or nectar is perceived as the source domain for the auditory experience of 'voice', it derives the sense of 'melodious' or 'harmonic'. Generally, the use of [mədʰʊr] is only to refer to the quality of 'voice' in relation to 'music'. When [mədʰʊr] is used to qualify the noun [əʋaɟ], it can be for the 'voice' of the singer as well as the instrument. *Madhur* seems to find usage only in this metaphorical occurrence for Gujarati speakers.

Thus, Gujarati speakers use the gustatory experience *sweet* in the sense of *nectar* rather than *sugary sweet* as the source domain to metaphorically extend the sense to other domains of experience.

2.2   MARATHI

Like Gujarati, Marathi language also makes use of two terms for the *sweet* taste: the adjectives *god* [god] (as in the sweetness of sugar or jaggery) and *madhur* [mədʰʊr] (as in the sweetness of honey). Dalvi & Prabhudesai (2013: 1197) explain *sweet* as [god] when taste is like that of sugar and [mədʰʊr] when referring to milk/ water/ fruit. The distinction lies in the usage of these terms in Marathi compared to their usage in Gujarati. Unlike Gujarati, Marathi speakers make metaphorical use of both the terms in their specific, distinctive perspectives. The modifying noun depicts which source domain has been perceived for the metaphorical extension.

(7a)   god   sakʰər
         sweet sugar

75

(7b)   məd̤ʱʊɾ   məd̤ʱ
        sweet   honey/ nectar

Sugar and *honey* are the foods that act as best exemplars for [god] and [məd̤ʱʊɾ] respectively, for Marathi speakers as well. The metaphorical use of either terms, therefore, depict the nature of sweetness as suggested by these food items.

(8a)   god   aʋadz̄
        sweet voice
        'pleasant/ innocent voice (generally, like that a child)'

(8b)   god   gəɭa
        sweet throat
        'sweet voice' (Chaus 2006: 212)

The use of [god] to depict *sweet* when used with 'voice' usually provides the sense of 'pure or innocent pleasantness' as found in the voice of a child. For most speakers, it necessarily refers to the pleasing texture of the voice with which ones speaks. When the adjective is used with 'throat' as the modifying noun, it metonymically refers to the 'voice/sound' produced by the 'throat'. With 'throat', the adjective 'sweet' necessarily refers to 'melodious' – in terms of speech or music. Here, it is the sweetness of sugar that is perceived as the source domain of comparison.

(9)   məd̤ʱʊɾ   aʋadz̄
        sweet   voice
        'melodious/ harmonic voice (of instruments or singers)'

Similar to the taste-perception of Gujaratis of the term *madhur*, Marathi speakers also identify this term with the quality of 'voice'. When the sweetness of honey or nectar is perceived as the source domain for the auditory experience of 'voice', it derives the sense of 'melodious' or 'harmonic'. Generally, the use of [məd̤ʱʊɾ] is only to refer to the quality of 'voice' in relation to 'music'. When [məd̤ʱʊɾ] is used to qualify the noun [aʋadz̄], it can be for the 'voice' of the singer as well as the instrument.

(10)   god   tʃehɾa
        sweet face
        'pleasing/ appealing face'

When it comes to comparing the sensory experience of looking at a face, the source domain perceived is the sweetness of sugar by Marathi speakers. The sense of [god] conveyed here is that of the face being 'appealing' or 'pleasing' to look at.

(11)   god   sʋəbʱaʋ
        sweet nature
        'sweet-natured/ affable nature'

The perception of '(human) nature' being 'sweet' remains the same as that perceived by Gujarati speakers – giving the sense of 'affability' to the taste-term.

(12)   səmbənd̪ɦat̪il   god̪ʋa
           relations –in   sweetness
           'happiness in relations'

Though this metaphorical usage of the taste-term remains the same as that explained for Gujarati in example (6 (ii)), it forms an interesting observation that Marathi speakers do not make use of the adjectival form of [god] before the noun [səmbənd̪ɦ] to form *[god̪ səmbənd̪ɦ].

Thus, Marathi speakers make use of either *sugary sweet* or *nectar-like* as the source domain for comparison depending upon the noun or word to which they choose to apply the sense.

3. Conclusion

The analysis leads us to infer that the diversity of perception is highly characteristic of humans, and this diversity may be influenced by their socio-cultural norms that aid in shaping their understanding of individual entities and establishing a relation between them. The attempt made here is to identify the distinctions of different linguistic forms employed by users of two different languages based on their perception of the same reality and their categorization of these forms into the 'more obvious' to the lesser ones.

The inferences derived from the analysis also reflect the lack of inclusion all available senses of these taste-terms in monolingual or bilingual dictionaries, thereby adding to the available lexicon of the languages. The term *sweet* in Gujarati is used beyond modifying substances of food, and can be observed to have derived the senses 'sweet', 'pleasant', 'melodious', 'soothing', 'appealing', 'loving', 'affectionate', 'agreeable', 'affable', 'happy' as well as 'clandestine'. Here, 'pleasant' is the sense closer to the core sense of the word and the other senses derived form the peripheral senses of the category.

Similarly, Marathi records the term deriving various senses beyond the prototypical 'sweet', namely, 'pleasant', 'innocent/ pure', 'melodious/ harmonic', 'appealing', 'affable' and 'happy'; whereby 'pleasant' occurs towards the core sense 'sweet' and others are peripheral senses.

Thus, one can find considerable similarities as well as distinctions in the number and type of senses derived for both languages through the metaphorical use of the above analysed taste terms. This is a working paper and more such instances of linguistic use of gustatory experiences are being examined in process. Furthermore, examination is also underway for identifying how people with either low threshold for taste or congenitally lacking taste sensation make use of these terms metaphorically in their language. The socio-cultural factors influencing their taste perception are also being probed into.

By delineating the senses derived by these unique perceptions, endeavours have been made to intensify the understanding of the native Gujarati and Marathi speakers for their own cognition and for speakers of other languages to identify the contrast of their mental schema.

References

Austin, John L. 1961. *Philosophical Papers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Backhouse, A. E. 1994. *The Lexical Field of Taste: A Semantic Study of Japanese Taste Terms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chaus, Abdus-Salaam. 2006. *Chaus Dictionary (Marathi-English Dictionary)*. Nagpur: SalaamChaus.

Coleman, Linda, and Paul Kay. 1981. Prototype semantics: The English word lie. *Language* 57:1, 26-44.

Masica, Colin P. 1993. *The Indo-Aryan Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dalvi, Dattatray Keshavrao., and, Prabhudesai, Late Shri Sudhakar R. 2013. *Navneet Advanced Dictionary: English-English-Marathi*. Dantali: Navneet Education Limited.

Deshpande, Pandurang Ganesh. 1984/2002. *Gujarati-English Dictionary*. Ahmedabad: University Granth Nirman Board.

Hall, John E. 2011. *Guyton and Hall Textbook of Medical Physiology*. Philadelphia: Saunders Elsevier.

Kasschau, Richard A. 1985. *Psychology: Exploring Behaviour*. Pearson Prentice Hall.

Lakoff, George. 1987. *Women, fire and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980/2003. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee, David. 2004. *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. Australia: Oxford University Press.

Rosch, Eleanor and Mervis, Carolyn B. 1975. Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories. *Cognitive Psychology* 7:573-605.

Taylor, John. 2003. *Linguistic categorization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical investigations*. New York: Macmillan.

Web References

Digital Library of India: The Gaikwads of Baroda
http://dli.serc.iisc.ernet.in/handle/2015/63301