

Eureka Journal of Language, Culture & Social Change (EJLCSC)

ISSN 2760-4926 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 3, March 2026



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GUSTATORY AND OLFACTORY LEXEMES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: SYMMETRY, EVALUATIVE SEMANTICS, AND METAPHORICAL EXTENSION

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Abstract

This article compares gustatory and olfactory lexemes in English and Uzbek within a symmetry-asymmetry framework. The study is based on explanatory dictionaries and contextual material used in the dissertation corpus. Componential, semantic-field, cognitive, contrastive, pragmatic, and statistical methods are applied. In both languages, neutral units such as taste/ta'm and smell/hid or is form the central zones of the corresponding perceptual fields. Symmetry is strongest where the units denote direct sensory recognition or a conventional positive or negative evaluation. Asymmetry increases when taste and smell vocabulary develops figurative meanings connected with aesthetic judgment, personal preference, emotional attitude, social criticism, danger, purity, or moral evaluation. Quantitative analysis identifies 190 English and 107 Uzbek gustatory units, as well as 122 English and 81 Uzbek olfactory units. The results demonstrate a common embodied basis together with differences in lexical density, part-of-speech distribution, evaluative differentiation, and the degree of metaphorical extension.

Keywords: Gustatory lexemes, olfactory lexemes, symmetry, asymmetry, evaluative semantics, English and Uzbek.

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Introduction

Taste and smell belong to the chemically mediated senses, yet their linguistic representation extends far beyond the physiological act of recognizing a substance. In English and Uzbek, gustatory and olfactory words regularly describe emotional states, aesthetic preferences, interpersonal attitudes, moral qualities, and the evaluation of social situations. This semantic mobility makes the two fields especially productive for contrastive research. Their central meanings are grounded in shared human experience, while their figurative and evaluative developments reveal language-specific patterns of categorization.

The present article examines how English and Uzbek organize the lexical fields of taste and smell and how symmetric relations change into asymmetric ones. Symmetry refers to correspondence in the invariant sensory meaning and in the principal communicative function of two units. Asymmetry appears when one language differentiates a meaning more precisely, distributes it among different parts of speech, attaches an additional evaluative component, or uses a sensory word in a culturally conventional metaphor that lacks a direct lexical counterpart in the other language.

The aim is to identify the central and peripheral zones of the two fields, describe the main evaluative and metaphorical extensions, and interpret the quantitative distribution recorded in the dissertation. The comparison is not limited to dictionary translation pairs. It considers semantic components, word-class behavior, contextual meaning, pragmatic function, and the relation between direct perception and abstract judgment.

Theoretical and Methodological Basis

The analysis is grounded in the cognitive view that lexical meaning profiles selected aspects of embodied experience. Sensory vocabulary provides a clear example of this principle because direct bodily perception functions as a source domain for the conceptualization of abstract phenomena (Lakoff & Johnson,

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2004; Sweetser, 1990). A pleasant taste or smell may represent approval, attraction, harmony, or moral purity, whereas bitterness, sourness, stench, and decay may represent disappointment, hostility, danger, corruption, or social disorder.

A semantic-field approach is used to distinguish central, dominant, and peripheral units. The central zone contains neutral identifiers of the sensory domain. The dominant zone includes frequent evaluative units that specify quality, intensity, or manner. The periphery contains expressive, metaphorical, metonymic, stylistically marked, or context-dependent meanings. The farther a unit moves from the direct physiological act, the more likely its correspondence will be partial rather than complete.

The empirical base includes English explanatory dictionaries such as Hornby's Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Webster's Third New International Dictionary, the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, and Longman dictionaries. Uzbek meanings were examined through the five-volume O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati and other lexicographic materials cited in the dissertation. The units were classified by sensory domain, part of speech, evaluative polarity, semantic extension, and degree of symmetry. Statistical results were then interpreted together with qualitative evidence.

Gustatory Lexemes: Core Meanings and Evaluative Structure

The invariant core of the gustatory field is represented by English taste and Uzbek ta'm or maza. These units denote the ability to perceive flavor, the quality perceived by the tongue, and the result of tasting. Both languages also use the central term to express preference, aesthetic judgment, and a person's level of refinement. Thus, the movement from physical taste to cultural or intellectual taste is structurally comparable, even though the lexical combinations and stylistic frequency are not identical.

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The dissertation organizes the principal taste qualities around five recurrent categories: sweet/shirin, savory or tasty/lazzatli or mazali, bitter/achchiq, sour/nordon, and salty/sho‘r. At the direct sensory level, these pairs show a high degree of symmetry. They designate recognizable qualities of food and substances and can participate in parallel attributive and predicative constructions. However, each category develops a network of secondary meanings. Sweet and shirin can characterize a voice, a person, affection, pleasantness, or harmony. Bitter and achchiq may describe emotional pain, harsh speech, irony, anger, or an unpleasant life experience. Sour and nordon may move toward mood, severity, or social dissatisfaction.

The evaluative system is therefore not a simple opposition between pleasant and unpleasant flavor. It includes intensity, desirability, emotional response, social attitude, and stylistic coloring. English has extensive adjective clusters such as sweet, savory, bitter, sour, salty, appetizing, delectable, pungent, and tangy. Uzbek develops comparable meanings through shirin, mazali, lazzatli, achchiq, nordon, sho‘r, o‘tkir, yoqimli, and related derivatives. Symmetry is preserved when the dominant component is a stable sensory quality. Asymmetry appears when one unit simultaneously encodes sensory quality and a more specialized emotional or pragmatic feature.

Metaphorical Extension of Taste

Gustatory vocabulary is particularly active in the conceptualization of preference and judgment. The expression of good or bad taste may refer to clothing, artistic choice, behavior, or intellectual cultivation. In this extension, sensory discrimination is mapped onto evaluative discrimination. The mapping is available in both languages, but the conventional combinations differ. A direct translation can preserve the general evaluation while losing the stylistic register or degree of personal involvement.

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Another extension connects taste with emotional experience. Sweetness is associated with affection, comfort, harmony, and positive memory; bitterness with grief, resentment, or severe truth; sourness with displeasure or an unfriendly disposition; and sharpness with intensity or verbal force. These meanings are not arbitrary. They develop from bodily reactions to flavor, yet their lexical realization depends on habitual cultural associations. Consequently, two words may share the same literal meaning but differ in the range, frequency, or acceptability of their figurative uses.

The dissertation data also show that the gustatory field is distributed across nouns, adjectives, verbs, numerals, and adverbs. Adjectives are especially prominent because taste is commonly conceptualized as a quality of an object. Nouns name substances, sensations, or evaluative categories; verbs represent tasting and the acquisition of sensory information; adverbs characterize manner and intensity. Differences in this distribution contribute to asymmetry because English may prefer an adjective or derived adverb where Uzbek uses a noun phrase, a verb, or an analytic construction.

Olfactory Lexemes: Core, Intensity, and Evaluation

The English olfactory field is centered on smell, while the Uzbek field is organized around *hid* and *is*. These units denote an odor as an object of perception, the act or ability of recognizing an odor, and the property of a substance that affects the olfactory organ. English smell is highly polysemous and can function as a noun or verb, whereas Uzbek distributes related meanings among *hid*, *is*, *hidlamoq*, *hidlanmoq*, and other derivatives. This difference illustrates a recurrent typological asymmetry: English often uses conversion, while Uzbek relies more visibly on derivational morphology.

The dominant olfactory zone includes words for pleasant and unpleasant odor, intensity, duration, source, and artificial fragrance. English units include scent, odor, aroma, fragrance, perfume, bouquet, stink, stench, whiff, and reek. Uzbek

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uses hid, is, bo'y, dud, xushbo'y, qo'lansa, atir, tutatqi, hidli, hidsiz, hidlamoq, and related forms. The general opposition between pleasant and unpleasant smell is symmetric, but the internal boundaries are different. A word such as bouquet may encode a refined, complex fragrance associated with wine or perfume, whereas its Uzbek equivalent often requires a descriptive phrase.

Intensity also produces graded relations. Strong unpleasant odor is represented in English by stink, stench, reek, and related items, while weak or momentary odor may be expressed by whiff, trace, or faint smell. Uzbek can represent these distinctions through lexical items and combinations involving o'tkir, kuchli, yengil, xira, yoqimli, or qo'lansa. Because the two languages package intensity and evaluation differently, apparent equivalents do not always occupy the same position in the field.

Metaphorical and Pragmatic Extensions of Smell

Olfactory vocabulary frequently signals the recognition of an indirect sign. English smell can refer to sensing trouble, deception, or danger without literal odor. Uzbek hid and is can similarly denote the trace, indication, or hidden presence of an event or intention. In such contexts, olfactory perception is mapped onto inference: the perceiver detects a sign and reconstructs an unseen cause. This shared cognitive model creates functional symmetry, although the preferred collocations and stylistic effects may differ.

Positive olfactory imagery is associated with freshness, cleanliness, refinement, attraction, and emotional comfort. Negative imagery is connected with decay, accusation, social disturbance, moral corruption, and danger. The dissertation records broad English semantic networks in which stink and related items can participate in meanings of complaint, scandal, or disorder. Uzbek likewise employs bad smell imagery to evaluate a person, action, environment, or social condition. These figurative uses strengthen pragmatic meaning because the sensory image produces an immediate evaluative reaction.

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Metaphorical and metonymic models also connect smell with atmosphere and character. A pleasant aroma can stand for a positive emotional environment, whereas smoke, dust, impurity, or a foul odor may indicate tension or deterioration. Such meanings are context-sensitive. The same lexical unit can remain symmetric in a literal culinary description and become asymmetric in a political, moral, or interpersonal evaluation because the target-language unit may not activate the same conventional association.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data confirm both broad correspondence and unequal lexical density. The English gustatory sample contains 190 units: 157 symmetric and 33 asymmetric. The Uzbek sample contains 107 units: 94 symmetric and 13 asymmetric. Gustatory symmetry therefore reaches 82 percent in English and 87 percent in Uzbek. In the olfactory field, English contains 122 units, of which 88 are symmetric and 34 asymmetric; Uzbek contains 81 units, of which 60 are symmetric and 21 asymmetric. The respective proportions of symmetry are 72 and 74 percent.

Part-of-speech distribution adds a second level of evidence. The English taste field contains 69 nouns, 82 adjectives, 16 verbs, 21 adverbs, and 2 numerals. Uzbek contains 41 nouns, 43 adjectives, 9 verbs, 11 adverbs, and 3 numerals. In the olfactory field, English contains 18 nouns, 82 adjectives, 16 verbs, 4 adverbs, and 2 numerals; Uzbek contains 9 nouns, 43 adjectives, 25 verbs, 2 adverbs, and 2 numerals. The relatively high number of Uzbek olfactory verbs reflects productive derivation and the verbal representation of emitting, acquiring, or detecting odor.

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Table 1. Quantitative distribution of gustatory and olfactory lexemes

Domain	Language	Total	Symmetric	Asymmetric
Taste	English	190	157 (82%)	33 (18%)
Taste	Uzbek	107	94 (87%)	13 (13%)
Smell	English	122	88 (72%)	34 (28%)
Smell	Uzbek	81	60 (74%)	21 (26%)

Discussion and Translation Implications

The higher proportion of symmetric gustatory units shows that basic flavor categories and their conventional evaluations are strongly comparable. Olfactory vocabulary displays slightly more asymmetry because smell is closely connected with source, intensity, diffusion, social evaluation, and inference. Nevertheless, in both domains the majority of units retain a recognizable common perceptual basis. The main typological differences concern how semantic features are packaged and how readily the literal sensation is extended into abstract evaluation.

For translation, a dictionary equivalent should be treated as a starting point rather than a complete solution. Sweet and shirin, bitter and achchiq, smell and hid may correspond in the central sensory meaning but diverge in emotional coloring, collocational range, stylistic register, or metaphorical productivity. An adequate translation may require an adjective plus noun, a verbal construction, an explanatory phrase, or a different sensory image that preserves the pragmatic effect. Componential analysis is particularly important for words denoting intensity or socially marked evaluation.

The findings also have lexicographic significance. Bilingual entries should distinguish direct perception, quality evaluation, intensity, source, figurative inference, emotional meaning, and stylistic restriction. Without this differentiation, a list of apparent synonyms can create the false impression of interchangeability. A field-based presentation would show which units occupy the core and which belong to specialized peripheral zones.

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Conclusion

English and Uzbek gustatory and olfactory lexemes form structured fields with a shared embodied foundation and language-specific semantic development. Taste/ta'm and smell/hid or is function as central identifiers, while evaluative adjectives, derived verbs, intensity markers, and figurative meanings create dominant and peripheral zones. Symmetry is strongest in direct perception and stable positive or negative evaluation. Asymmetry increases with lexical specialization, metaphorical extension, part-of-speech preference, and pragmatic convention.

The statistical evidence demonstrates that English has larger recorded lexical samples, whereas both languages retain a high proportion of symmetric units. The comparison therefore should not be reduced to numerical richness. Its principal value lies in showing how common sensory experience is reorganized through different lexical, grammatical, and cultural mechanisms. These results can support comparative semantics, translation, bilingual lexicography, and the teaching of perception vocabulary.

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