

Semantics of Eating in Afrikaans, Northern Sotho and Georgian: Cross-linguistic Variation in Metaphor

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Abstract

The study of conceptual metaphor is of particular importance in the theory of cognitive semantics (Geeraerts 2010: 203-222). Building on the theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is viewed not merely as a linguistic feature but as a conceptual and culturally grounded phenomenon. Following the work of Taljard and Bosman (2014) on Afrikaans and Northern Sotho, this research investigates metaphors related to the semantics of eating in Georgian and compares the findings cross-linguistically. The study is corpus-based and draws on data from the Georgian National Corpus, the English-Georgian Parallel Corpus, and Araneum Georgianum. Keywords associated with eating (e.g., “eat,” “swallow,” “digest”) were used to identify metaphorical expressions, which were then categorised into agent-oriented, patient-oriented, and mixed groups. The analysis shows that Georgian shares 12 of the metaphorical categories previously identified in Afrikaans and Northern Sotho. Additionally, Georgian demonstrates four unique metaphorical extensions only depicted in the Georgian context. The findings support the idea that conceptual metaphors are largely universal, grounded in shared human experience, while still allowing for language-specific variations. This study highlights both cross-linguistic convergence and cultural nuance in metaphorical systems.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor; cognitive semantics; cross-linguistic comparison; semantics of eating; corpus linguistics

1 Introduction

Conceptual metaphor theory views metaphor as a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which abstract concepts are structured in terms of embodied human experience. One of the most productive source domains in metaphorical mapping can be the universal activity of eating, which involves hunger, consumption, satisfaction, and digestion. Previous research, particularly by Taljard and Bosman (2014) and Newman (2009), has shown that eating-related metaphors are widespread across languages and often extend into domains such as emotional satisfaction, deception, possession, and interpersonal relations. Follow-

ing Taljard and Bosman's research, "The Semantics of Eating in Afrikaans and Northern Sotho: Cross-Linguistic Variation in Metaphor", it is interesting to see how the Georgian language correlates with the depicted metaphorical mappings. While Afrikaans and Northern Sotho have been previously studied in this regard, Georgian provides a contrasting linguistic perspective that allows broader cross-linguistic comparison. The aim of this research is to identify shared and language-specific metaphorical mappings and to examine whether these patterns are primarily motivated by universal embodied experience or influenced by cultural factors. By analysing naturally occurring linguistic data, the study highlights similarities and differences in how eating is used metaphorically across the three languages.

2 Literature Review

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the conceptual system of humans is metaphorical in character. It contains a metaphorical system which emerges from embodied experiences, ontological concepts and structured activities. Lakoff and Johnson classify metaphorical concepts into three categories: orientation metaphors, ontological and structural metaphors.

Geeraerts (2010) considers conceptual metaphor within the broader scope of cognitive semantics. As noted by Geeraerts, cognitive semantics is defined by these core ideas: the contextual, pragmatic flexibility of meaning, the idea that meaning is a cognitive phenomenon which exceeds the boundaries of the word, and lastly, meaning involves perspectivization. In this regard, metaphor is considered a deep-seated cognitive mechanism which influences our ideas, thoughts and language.

Conceptual metaphor theory within the framework of cognitive semantics constituted the theoretical foundation of Taljard and Bosman's (2014) study of eating metaphors in Afrikaans and Northern Sotho. The study highlights two main ideas: embodied experience and cultural models. As noted by Taljard and Bosman (2014), human experiences with the physical world shape our understanding of abstract ideas. In addition, culture plays a key role in creating distinct metaphorical mappings of embodied experiences. The primary aim of the study was to investigate whether conceptual metaphors related to eating were shared by Afrikaans and Northern Sotho and to examine the extent to which they were influenced by cultural factors.

Taljard and Bosman provide a brief overview of the languages under research. Afrikaans is an Indo-European language of the West Germanic branch spoken in South Africa. Northern Sotho is a Bantu language belonging to the Sotho group of South Eastern Bantu languages. As there are distinct cultural and linguistic differences, Taljard and Bosman (2014) claim that comparing these two languages creates an opportunity to research whether the metaphors of eating are universal or culture-specific.

The research method of Taljard and Bosman is based on a corpus-based approach. The researchers implemented a "source-domain vocabulary approach", which means searching for lexical items that belong to a specific semantic field, in this case eating, and then analysing the contexts where the word appears. In addition to the main verb for "eating", they investigated semantically related verbs such as "swallow", "chew", "devour", "digest", "gulp

down” and others. The corpora used in the study were the *University of Pretoria Afrikaans Corpus* (UPAC), containing 15,452,173 tokens and the *University of Pretoria Sepedi Corpus* (UPSC), containing 7,424,335 tokens. It should be noted that neither corpus was annotated. WordSmith tools were used to generate concordances, and then the researchers manually analysed lines to find metaphorical meanings.

The researchers identified two main categories: internalisation (agent-oriented) and destruction (patient-oriented), which indicates that these metaphors are universal. Under the agent-oriented category, there were metaphors like “Intellectual satisfaction is eating” (in Afrikaans “she devours one book after another” and in Northern Sotho “to gulp down the moisture of learning”). Under the patient-oriented category, there was “Diminishing is eating”, which appeared in both languages: “the 18% tax is continuously eating into our hard-earned pension”, and in Northern Sotho the reference was to an expensive program which “eats a lot of money”. Interestingly, some metaphors were found to be characteristic of only one particular language. For example, in Northern Sotho, the following categories were found: “Emotional satisfaction is eating”, “Sex is eating”, “Accumulating possessions is eating” and “Killing is eating”. As for Afrikaans, they discovered: “Understanding is eating”, “Humiliation is eating”, “Defeating is eating” and “Endearing is eating”. It is worth mentioning that conceptual metaphors were not influenced by culture or customs.

3 Methodology

In order to identify conceptual metaphors related to the semantics of eating in the Georgian language and to compare them with corresponding metaphorical models analysed in Afrikaans and Northern Sotho, we employed a corpus-based methodology, following the approach used by Taljard and Bosman (2014). Corpus-based methodology is a research approach that investigates language on the basis of attested linguistic data found in natural texts, rather than relying on the researcher’s intuition or artificially constructed examples.

When the object of study is a specific lexical domain, such as, in our case, words, units, or fixed expressions denoting the semantics of eating, the process is relatively straightforward, as it allows for the direct retrieval of relevant units. This approach makes it possible to identify both literal instances of eating and conceptual metaphors associated with eating semantics.

To collect the empirical data, we used the *Georgian National Corpus*¹, the *English-Georgian Parallel Corpus*², and the Georgian web corpus *Araneum Georgianum*³, created by Vladimír Benko at the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Given the aims of the study, the search for metaphorical examples related to eating semantics did not focus on frequency; instead, only those examples were selected in which eating

1 <http://gnc.gov.ge/gnc/page>

2 <https://enkacorporus.iliauni.edu.ge/>

3 <http://unesco.uniba.sk/aranea/>

was used metaphorically and did not refer to actual food consumption. More specifically, all keywords were selected based on the semantic field of “eating” and included synonyms, hypernyms, and other related units. These included verbs such as: *ჭამა* / *to eat*, (*ch’ama*), *ყლაპვა* *to swallow* (*q’lap’va*), *კვება* *to feed* (*k’veba*), *ძღმობა* *to be satiated* (*dzghoma*), *დაგემოვნება* *to taste* (*dagemovneba*), *ხრამუნია* *to crunch* (*khramuni*), *გამოხვრა* *to gnaw* (*gamokhvra*), *შთანთქმა* *to engulf* (*shtantkma*), *ღეჭვა* *to chew* (*ghech’va*), *მონელება* *to digest* (*moneleba*), *ძიძგნა* *to rip* (*dzidzgna*), *სკდობა* *to burst* (*sk’doma*) and *სანსვლა* *to wolf down* (*sansvla*).

The extracted lexical units were classified into three groups of metaphors: subject-oriented, object-oriented, and mixed metaphors. Subject-oriented metaphors refer to cases where the focus is on the internal or external state of the agent performing the act of eating (e.g., “to swallow the bait”). Object-oriented metaphors focus on what happens to the object itself (e.g., “to devour with one’s eyes”). The mixed group includes metaphors in which both the subject and the object are affected (e.g., “you have to chew it for them so they understand what you are saying”).

The study by Taljard and Bosman on Northern Sotho and Afrikaans identified some of the following conceptual metaphors:

- “Emotional satisfaction is eating” – emotional fulfilment is conceptualised as the pleasure derived from physical eating;
- “Intellectual satisfaction is eating” – intellectual achievement or the acquisition of knowledge is perceived as satisfying mental hunger, i.e., “consuming” knowledge;
- “Understanding is eating” – understanding something is conceptualised as grasping or “digesting” it;
- “Intellectual activity is eating” – intellectual activity is described as a feeding process, where thinking, analysis, or learning resembles “mental eating”;
- “Sex is eating” – sexual activity is conceptualised through the metaphor of eating;
- “Disappearance / Absence is eating” – sudden disappearance, loss, or absence of something, just like food disappears while eating;
- “Torment (Physical and psychological) is eating” – pain, both physical and psychological, is conceptualised as an internal force that “eats” a person from within;
- “Defeating is eating” – defeating an opponent is perceived as swallowing or devouring them;
- “Conceding is eating” – agent is forced to yield or admit defeat by swallowing their words;
- “Endearment is eating” – expressions of affection are sometimes metaphorized through eating (e.g., “you’re so cute I could eat you”);
- “Humiliation is eating” – humiliation is conceptualised as the act of consuming something unpleasant (e.g., “to swallow one’s shame”).

At the next stage of the research, the Georgian data collected within our study were systematically compared with the findings from Afrikaans and Northern Sotho. The comparison revealed that, out of the sixteen metaphorical classes identified by Taljard and Bosman, twelve were also attested in Georgian. In addition, the Georgian language exhibited types of metaphors that were not found in Afrikaans or Northern Sotho.

4 Data Analysis

Obtained Georgian conceptual metaphors were analyzed according to Taljard and Bosman's metaphor mapping (2014). Georgian examples were examined to see if they correlated with Afrikaans and Northern Sotho. Additionally, they were grouped according to agent-oriented, patient-oriented and mixed cases.

Table 1 below summarises the domain mappings found in Afrikaans, Northern Sotho, and Georgian.

Domain Mapping	Afrikaans	Northern Sotho	Georgian
<i>Internalisation (Agent-Oriented)</i>			
"Emotional Satisfaction Is Eating"	—	✓	✓
"Intellectual Satisfaction Is Eating"	✓	✓	✓
"Understanding Is Eating"	✓	—	✓
"Intellectual Activity Is Eating"	✓	✓	✓
"Sex Is Eating"	—	✓	✓
"Uncritical Acceptance of Ideas Is Eating"	✓	✓	—
"Humiliation Is Eating"	✓	—	✓
<i>Destruction And/Or Elimination (Patient-Oriented)</i>			
"Accumulating Possessions Is Eating"	—	✓	—
"Diminishing Is Eating"	✓	✓	✓
"Killing Is Eating"	—	✓	—
"Disappearance/Absence Is Eating"	✓	✓	✓
"Torment (Physical And Psychological) Is Eating"	✓	✓	✓
<i>Mixed Cases</i>			
"Defeating Is Eating"	✓	—	✓
"Conceding Is Eating"	✓	✓	✓
"Endearment Is Eating"	✓	—	✓
"Charming/Submission Is Eating"	✓	—	—

Table 1: Domain Mappings in Afrikaans, Northern Sotho and Georgian.

4.1 Internalisation: Agent-Oriented Expressions

“Emotional Satisfaction is Eating”

According to Taljard and Bosman (2014), the process of eating entails partaking of food that usually brings pleasure and contentment to the agent. Therefore, metaphorically, the internalisation aspect of eating involves emotional well-being and feelings of joy.

In Northern Sotho, the link between eating and emotional joy is especially strong, as the verb “*ja*” (eat) also has a lexicalised sense of “enjoy.”

(1) O *jele* bjang mafelelong a beke/Keresemose? “How did you *enjoy* the weekend/Christmas?” (Lit. “How did you *eat* during the weekend/Christmas?”)

This metaphorical sense is not as prominent or easily found in Georgian as in Northern Sotho, but examples of emotional satisfaction were still identified:

(2) ამ სახლს სიყვარულით კვებავენ მესხეთელები (am sakhls siq’varulit k’vebaven meskhetelebi). “This house is *nourished* with love by Meskhethians.”

Additionally, the physical process of “eating” is also associated with religious nourishment that leads to similar pleasurable sensations. Such spiritual experience is vivid in Jewish and Christian rituals surrounding Passover and Lent, respectively. With regard to partaking of the Christian Holy Communion, the lexical item *ja* “eat,” in Northern Sotho is used to express the notion of “partake of, participate in” (Taljard and Bosman 2014: 233). This metaphorical domain is evident in Northern Sotho:

(3) Re tlo *ja* Selalelo se Sekgethwa ka Sontaga. “We will *partake* of Holy Communion on Sunday.” (Lit. “We will *eat* Holy Communion on Sunday.”)

Georgian also has similar religious metaphors with the verb *kveba* (eat, nourish), which can be motivated by the fact that Georgia’s religion is Orthodox Christianity.

(4) ფიზიკურ საკვებზე მეტად სულიერი საკვები გვესაჭიროება (pizik’ur sak’vebze met’ad sulieri sak’vebi gvesach’iroeba). “The *nourishment* of the soul is more necessary than physical *nourishment*.”

“Sex is Eating”

Sexual intercourse relates to the same emotional domain, especially emotional satisfaction. As Newman (2009) notes, it is a pleasurable experience. As the agent seeks to satisfy hunger and attain contentment, sexual desire (conceptualised as hunger) similarly requires satisfaction.

Interestingly, this link is very prominent in Northern Sotho, where *ja* (eat) has been lexicalised to mean “having sex.” Therefore, there are many metaphorical expressions, such as “a man who does not eat at home” (he is unfaithful) or “eat chips” (to engage in sexual activity).

While Afrikaans does not exhibit this metaphorical domain, Georgian shows a vivid link between eating and sex:

(5) უმზერს ლამაზ ქალბატონს და თვალებით ჭამს (umzers lamaz kalbat'ons da tvale-bit *ch'ams*). "He is looking at a beautiful woman and *wants to have sex* with her." (Lit. "He is watching a beautiful woman and *eating* her with his eyes.")

(6) ქალის ჩახრამუნება (kalis *chakhramuneba*). "To have sex with a woman." (Lit. "To *eat/crunch/munch* a woman.")

"Understanding is Eating"

This metaphor is used, and must be interpreted as "to understand", not "derive intellectual satisfaction". It clearly expresses the aspect of internalising food (figuratively, ideas) and digesting the ideas (understanding them) (Taljard & Bosman 2014).

In Afrikaans, the verb *verteer* ("to digest") is interpreted as "to understand." Examples from the corpus include expressions such as "to digest a message" and "to digest luxury and eccentricity." On the other hand, in Georgian, the verb ჭეჭვა *ghech'va* (to *chew*) is used to express a similar meaning.

(7) უნდა დაუღეჭო, რომ გაიგოს რას ეუბნები (unda *daughecho* rom gaigos ras eubnebi).

"You have to *chew* it for them so they can understand what you're saying".

"Humiliation is Eating"

This mapping is grounded in experiential reality, namely the fact that not everything consumed results in a pleasant experience, and that individuals may even be compelled to consume something that is distinctly unpleasant. The Afrikaans lexical item that introduces this mapping is *sluk* ("to swallow"), which evokes the conceptual image of bitter medicine or another similarly unpalatable, typically liquid substance, being ingested against one's will.

In Georgian metaphorical cognition, the verb ჭამა *ch'ama* (to *eat*) and ყლაპვა *q'lap'va* (to *swallow*) are employed to convey this conceptual meaning.

(8) ქართულმა ფეხბურთმა სირცხვილი ჭამა (kartulma pekhburtma sirtskhvili *ch'ama*). "Georgian football *suffered a shame*". (Lit. "Georgian football *ate* their shame.")

(9) სირცხვილი გადაყლაპა, რისხვა კი უღუღდა (sirtskhvili *gadaq'lap'a*, riskhva k'i udugh-da). "He endured the humiliation, but anger was boiling inside him." (Lit. "He *swallowed* the humiliation, but anger was boiling inside him.")

"Intellectual Satisfaction is Eating"

This mapping is grounded in experiential reality, namely the universal human need for intellectual stimulation and the gratifying experience that follows the consumption and processing of knowledge. Through reading, listening, or observing, information is taken in and mentally processed, leading to the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity. In the context of agent-oriented extensions (internalisation), the eater (reader/listener/observer) actively consumes knowledge as if it were food (Taljard & Bosman, 2014: 233).

The Afrikaans lexical item that introduces this mapping is *verslind* ("to devour"), which evokes the conceptual image of someone eagerly and hungrily consuming books one after another. In Northern Sotho's metaphorical cognition, the verb *phaka* ("to gulp down") is

employed to convey this conceptual meaning. In Georgian, the verb *ყლაპვა q'lap'va* ("to devour" or "to swallow") is used.

Afrikaans

(10) Sy *verslind* die een boek na die ander ("She devours one book after another.")

Northern Sotho

(11) Go *phaka* monola wa thuto ("To gulp down the moisture of learning.")

Georgian

(12) წიგნებს *ყლაპავს* (tsignebs *ylapavs*). "Devours books."

4.2 Patient-Oriented Expressions

"Disappearance/Absence is Eating"

The domain of disappearance and absence is evoked by how food is visible at the beginning but becomes invisible as it is chewed and swallowed. Here, the focus does not fall on killing or death; rather, this metaphor underscores the visual aspect of something quickly disappearing, often for unknown reasons.

This domain is present in all three languages. Additionally, the examples show that the causes of disappearance are also somewhat similar across these languages. Interestingly, this metaphorical domain is particularly prominent in Georgian, where many similar figurative usages can be found.

Afrikaans

(13) Dooie swart sonne wat lig *insluk*. "Dead black suns that swallow light."

Northern Sotho

(14) Leswiswi la ba *metša* bjang? "How did the darkness then swallow them?"

Georgian

(15) ცამ *ჩაყლაპა* (tsam *chaq'lap'a*). "The sky has swallowed it."

(16) მიწამ *ჩაყლაპა* (mits'am *chaq'lap'a*). "The ground has swallowed it."

"Torment (Physical or Psychological) is Eating"

A distinction is made between physical and psychological torment. Torture sometimes leads to the complete destruction of the object, indicating an overlap between this and other mappings distinguished in this section.

In Northern Sotho, examples include "eating someone with a fist," resulting in physical harm. The verb to eat is used to convey the destructive, corrosive effect of physical force on the patient.

In Afrikaans, examples found in the corpus for physical torment are caused by agents such as fists, acid, cancerous growths, the sun, or drought that eat the patients. These agents gradually consume, wear down, or destroy the affected entity, whether a person or an object (Taljard & Bosman, 2014: 238).

In Georgian, corpus data confirm the use of the verb to eat in cases referring to both physical and psychological torment.

(17) საშინელი დაავადება, რომელმაც შიგნიდან გამოხრა (sashineli daavadeba, romelmats shignidan *gamokhra*). Lit. "A terrible disease that ate him/her from the inside."

(18) ტკივილმა გამოუხრა გული (tkivilma *gamoukhra* guli). Lit. "The pain ate his/her heart."

These metaphors express the slow, destructive process by which an external or internal agent consumes the patient, causing gradual erosion, suffering, or annihilation.

4.3 Mixed Cases

"Endearment is Eating"

An interesting case is identified in the domain of endearment. While the process of eating typically entails the destruction of the patient, in this domain, both the agent and the patient experience emotional satisfaction. Taljard and Bosman (2014) regard this as a somewhat unusual metaphor found in Afrikaans, noting that its motivation is difficult to determine. It is seen as a part of the broader category of emotional satisfaction.

(19) Soos Adam wat aan Eva sê, à la Hennie Aucamp: "Ek kan jou *opeet* van liefde." "Like Adam telling Eve, à la Hennie Aucamp: 'I can *eat you up* out of love.'"

It is noteworthy that a similar example is also found in Georgian colloquial usage of the verb "swallow," where the agent, driven by affection, metaphorically "eats" or "devours" the patient.

(20) ისეთი სასაცილო და საყვარელია, ჩაყლაპავ! (iseti sasatsilo da saq'varelia, *chavq'lap'av!*). "She is so funny and lovely that I will *swallow her / eat her up*."

"Conceding is Eating"

Across all three languages, the conceptualisation of concession is confirmed through the metaphor "Conceding is Eating". This metaphor illustrates situations in which an individual is compelled to "swallow" their own words, that is, to retract or take back what has been said. In this sense, both Afrikaans and Northern Sotho employ the same lexical item denoting "swallowing": in Afrikaans, *sluk/insluk* ("to swallow"), and in Northern Sotho, *metše* ("to swallow"). In Georgian, a comparable metaphorical expression is also attested, namely, *ჩაყლაპვა chaq'lap'va* ("to swallow"), which similarly conveys the idea of forced concession and emotional restraint.

(21) დამცირებას ყლაპავს (damtsirebas *q'lap'avs*). "Swallowing humiliation."

(22) გინებას ყლაპავს (ginebas *q'lap'avs*). "(He/She) swallows cursing."

“Defeating Is Eating”

The metaphor of eating as a representation of defeat is attested in both Afrikaans and Georgian. In Afrikaans, the verb *eet* (“to eat”) is employed, as illustrated in the expression “Ons glo ons kan die Reds *eet*” (“We believe we can *eat/defeat* the Reds”), which conveys complete domination over an opponent and confidence in victory. A comparable metaphor in Georgian is expressed through the construction *ჭაბა ach’ama* (“to feed”), which likewise denotes the subject’s victory over an opponent. This metaphor, however, is not attested in Northern Sotho.

(23) მარცხი *ჭაბა* (martskhi *ach’ama*). “He *fed* him defeat.”

(24) ცივი წყალი გადაასხა და მარცხი *ჭაბა* (tsivi ts’q’ali gadaaskha da martskhi *ach’ama*). “He poured cold water on him and *fed* him defeat.”

4.4 Georgian metaphorical extensions

Georgian Metaphor Domain Mapping
“Deceiving is Eating”
“Neutralising Negative is Eating”
“Infusing with Thoughts/Feelings is Eating”
“Depletion/Exhausting Resources/Ceasing is Eating”
“Squandering is Eating”

Table 2: Exclusive Domain Mapping in Georgian.

“Deceiving is Eating”

The Georgian agent-oriented domain of “Deceiving is Eating” is related to the concept of “Uncritical Acceptance of Ideas is Eating”. This idea is motivated by the action of “swallowing” or “nourishing,” in which the agent is not active and either passively swallows false information without chewing or digesting it, or is being fed. Just as food quickly disappears in one’s mouth while eating, false information is also quickly received by the agent.

(1) სატყუარა გადაყლაპა / ანკესი გადაყლაპა (sat’q’uara *gadaq’lap’a* / ank’esi *gadaq’lap’a*). “He/she *believed* it.” (Lit. “He/she *swallowed* the bait / hook”).

(2) დაპირებებით გვკვებავს (dap’irebebit *gvk’vebavs.*). “He/she is *lying* to us by making promises.” (Lit. “He/she is *feeding* us with promises”).

(3) ილუზიებით კვებავს (iluziebit *k’vebavs*). “He/she is *deceiving* him/her.” (Lit. “He/she is *feeding* him/her with illusions”).

“Neutralising Negative is Eating”

This patient-oriented mapping is motivated by the idea of food being destroyed and digested. This metaphor is connected to the domain of “Diminishing or Destroying is Eating.” In Georgian, the focus is on neutralising and eliminating negative experiences such as defeat or stress, which can be conceptualised as digesting something unpleasant that one has eaten. This metaphor is typically expressed by the verb “digest.”

(4) მარცხი მოიწელა (martskhi moinela). “He/she got over a loss.” (Lit. “He/she digested the loss”).

(5) სტრესი მოიწელა (st’resi moinela). “He/she got over stress.” (Lit. “He/she digested stress”).

(6) საქართველოს აღარ ძალუძს ამდენი სამოქალაქო დაპირისპირების და რევოლუციის მოწელება (sakartvelos aghar dzaludzds amdeni samokalako dap’irisp’irebis da revolutsiis moneleba.) “Georgia can no longer neutralize so many civil conflicts and revolutions.” (Lit. “Georgia can no longer digest so many civil conflicts and revolutions”).

“Infusing with Thoughts/Feelings is Eating”

This specific domain does not have similarities with the conceptual metaphors Taljard and Bosman identified. In this case, the agent is being fed or infused with thoughts or feelings which are often negative. This metaphorical mapping can be explained by the imagery of a person (usually in a passive state) being fed by another, more dominant agent, with something that must be accepted, swallowed, and digested. Therefore, the following examples typically involve the verb “feed/nourish” and negative thoughts or feelings as “food”.

(7) გაღიზიანება განცდებს კვებავს (gaghizianeba gantsdebs k’vebavs). “Irritation affects feelings.” (Lit. “Irritation nourishes feelings”).

(8) სიძულვილით კვებავს (sidzulvilit k’vebavs). “He/she is making them feel hatred.” (Lit. “He/she nourishes him/her with hatred”).

“Depletion/Exhausting Resources/Ceasing is Eating”

Following the domains of destroying/diminishing and killing, in Georgian, metaphors of eating also refer to the exhaustion of one’s resources and the eventual end of existence. This domain is motivated by the imagery of eating, where the agent starts with a full plate of food and ends up with an empty plate. Rather than immediate disappearance, the examples suggest a gradual process. Notably, the entity that ceases to exist is the agent itself, which has consumed its own resources.

(9) წყობილებამ თავისი დრო მოჭამა (ts’q’obilebam tavis dro moch’ama). “The regime ceased to exist.” (Lit. “The regime has eaten up its time”).

(10) მოჭამა თავისი პოლიტიკური რესურსი (moch’ama tavis p’olit’ik’uri resursi). “He/she ran out of political resources.” (Lit. “He/she ate up his/her political resources”).

“Squandering is Eating”

In relation to possession or money, in Northern Sotho, the mapping of “Accumulating Possession is Eating” refers to gaining possession, while in the case of Afrikaans, the domain “Destroying/Diminishing is Eating” reflects the element of spending money. In Georgian, a prominent domain of “Squandering is Eating” relates to squandering money, savings, or grants. Just as the domain of disappearance is motivated by the image of food being quickly swallowed and becoming invisible, the same motivation applies to squandering. In these examples, money is metaphorically “swallowed” and wasted without justification.

(11) თავდაცვის სამინისტრო ფულის ყლაპვას შეუდგა (tavdatsvis saminist’ro pulis q’lap’vas sheudga). “The Ministry of Defence is *embezzling/squandering* money.” (Lit. “The Ministry of Defence started *swallowing* money”).

(12) გრანტი-ყლაპია (grant’i-q’lap’ia). “Someone who *squanders* funds.” (Lit. “Grant/fund *swallow*”).

5 Conclusion

It is clear from the analysis that metaphors of eating are shared across languages, and three distinct languages, Afrikaans, Northern Sotho, and Georgian, exhibit similar figurative associations connected to eating.

Out of Taljard and Bosman’s 16 domain mappings (2014), Georgian corresponds to 12 of them. Georgian does not seem to include “Uncritical Acceptance of Ideas is Eating,” “Accumulating Possessions is Eating,” “Killing is Eating,” and “Charming/Submission is Eating.” However, the reasons for these correspondences cannot be specifically related to cultural norms or aspects of Georgian society. The reason for that is that the Georgian language has five additional metaphorical mappings closely related to the ones above. For example, “Uncritical Acceptance of Ideas is Eating” is similar to the Georgian domain “Deceiving is Eating,” which is more narrowly defined and emphasises the accidental acceptance of lies without fully processing the information. “Accumulating Possessions is Eating” mainly concerns money, and the Georgian domain of “Squandering is Eating” also includes metaphors connected to money and possessions. “Depletion/Exhausting Resources/Ceasing is Eating” is partly connected to the domain of killing and destroying; therefore, no clear cultural differences can be identified here either. As for “Charming/Submission is Eating,” Georgian does not seem to have similar expressions. However, several examples in Georgian (especially in the Georgian domain of “Infusing with Thoughts/Feelings is Eating”) show how the act of eating is used to infuse others with certain thoughts or feelings. While this usage does not necessarily imply submission, a similar interpretation can also apply.

Our study supports the view that eating is not strongly linked to specific cultural customs or beliefs. Conceptual metaphors appear to be motivated by the experience of eating itself and arise from the process of consumption, involving hunger, chewing, swallowing, and digestion. The focus is on both the agent (eater) and the patient (food). As the process of eating is generally shared across the globe and human physiology plays an important role, it is not surprising that distinct languages such as Afrikaans, Northern Sotho, and Georgian

have similar metaphors. As Deignan and Potter (2004) and Newman (2009) state, some metaphors are, in fact, universal.

Therefore, our research underscores that, in terms of conceptual metaphors related to eating, notable similarities and only a few differences were observed among these three languages. It is evident that cultural factors do not play a primary role in establishing figurative expressions of eating, and they are mainly influenced by shared human psychological and embodied experience.

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Appendix

List of Georgian verbs relating to the eating process that have been used for data collection.

- ჭამა — ch’ama (eat)
- ყლაპვა — q’lapva (swallow)
- ხრამუნი — khramuni (munch, crunch)
- კვება — kveba (feed)
- გამოხრა — gamokhra (gnaw, chew)
- სანსვლა — sansvla (wolf down)
- ღეჭვა — ghechva (chew)
- ძიძგნა — dzidzgna (rip)
- მონელება — moneleba (digest)
- დაგემოვნება — dagemovneba (taste)
- ძღომა — dzghoma (be satiated)
- შთანთქმა — shtantkma (engulf)
- სკდომა — sk’doma (burst)