

Conceptual Metaphor in English Slang Phytonyms

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The present paper provides a cognitive account of conceptual metaphor in English slang phytonyms. The research focus falls on denominations of vegetables, fruits, and nuts serving as the basis for conceptual metaphorization. As concrete inanimate objects accompanying humankind since the dawn of civilization and forming the basis of its diet, these three categories of plants are visually, tactilely, olfactorily, gustatorily, and, to a lesser extent, aurally perceptible, which contributes to their advanced and long-held position in human experientiality. The simple and complex specific-level metaphors formulated are categorized according to their degree of conventionality and function. The cognitive results obtained not only showcase the verbalization and conceptualization potential of the phytonyms under study but also substantiate the anthropocentrism, physicalism, somatocentrism, and hedonism of English slang users.

Keywords: *phytonym, conceptual metaphor, English slang, phytonymic slang metaphor.*

1 Introduction

The notion of concept has been one of the cornerstones of cognitive linguistics since the new paradigm emerged in the 1970s as an opposition to the omnipresent formalization of the then-dominating structural paradigm. The latter was deeply rooted in approaching language as a self-contained hierarchy of signs which interacted with and influenced one another as well as the whole system per se. Apparently, the structuralist attempt to “mathematize” and “patternize” linguistics had a multitude of obvious benefits, such as ultimately providing it with a solid scientific foundation (remotely comparable to that of exact sciences) and contributing to its establishment as a separate discipline. This, in turn, expanded the scope of linguistics from retrospective linguohistorical and linguotypological research to the study of language tools, patterns, and regularities both in synchrony and diachrony.

However, what the structural paradigm lacked and, in actual fact, viewed as virtually unresearchable was an insight into how language, mind, and embodied experience interact, or, in other words, how human cognition manifests itself in language form, meaning, and function as well as shapes them. It was these aspects that came to the forefront of academic endeavour in the then-budding field of conceptual studies.

With the advent of cognitive linguistics, meaning became the primary focus of scholars' attention as it both determined form and reflected function. The units, patterns, mechanisms, and principles of semantic change were revisited, reinterpreted, and retheorized within the framework of the novel paradigm. Furthermore, the notions of metaphor and metonymy, which had formerly been construed by structuralists as somewhat peripheral or even marginal, were reinvestigated in the light of human cognition and experientiality. The mere understanding of metaphor and metonymy as semantic shifts based on similarity and contiguity respectively was not rejected altogether but rather readdressed from a different angle. This, in turn, resulted in the elaboration of a number of theories, including the now-proverbial Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) introduced by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980). In accordance with CMT, METAPHOR is seen as a conceptual projection based on a set of conventional mappings which establish correspondences between two separate conceptual domains, the source domain and

the target domain. Therefore, the source domain structures the target domain, which allows us to think of one notion in terms of another (Evans 2007: 136).

The aim of this paper is to provide a cognitive account of conceptual metaphor in English slang phytonyms. The research focus is the denominations of vegetables, fruits, and nuts which have undergone semantic change in English slang, thus resulting in the coinage of novel senses. D. Borys rightfully claims that “slang reflects human consciousness [...] “in the raw” , at its most unadorned and unrestricted” (2023: 5). As opposed to language standard, which represents a carefully “pruned”, “shaped”, and “sculpted” grapholect, slang, in spite of constituting a rather “gnarled”, “misshapen”, and “untrimmed” sociolect, mirrors an accurate projection of its users’ cognition just as it is, free from any intervention, enforcement, or manipulation by external forces.

2 Theoretical framework

In accordance with the structural pattern proposed by N. Panasenکو (2000), modern phytonyms fall into two broad categories: the nuclear category (comprised of literary phytonyms in national languages) and the peripheral category (incorporating scientific phytonyms in Latin, on the one hand, and common / folk phytonyms in the national language, on the other). In turn, common / folk phytonyms are further subdivided into sociolectal phytonyms and regiolectal phytonyms (ibid., 12). Slang denominations of vegetables, fruits, and nuts, which come into the prime focus of the present research, form a distinct yet fairly understudied class within sociolectal phytonyms.

English slang as a sociolinguistic phenomenon has undergone a dramatic evolution. Initially, in the mid-18th century, the term designated secret language largely employed by fringe social groups whose members were predominantly involved in illegal activity. Subsequently, in the late 18th century, *slang* also assumed the sense of ‘informal professional language’. Finally, the early 19th century saw an obvious attempt to reconcile the two existing interhyponymic senses, the term being ultimately generalized so as to refer to any highly colloquial language (Ayto & Simpson 2010). These three phases in the development of slang may be presented as a chronohierarchy: 1) CRYPTOLECT → 2) (CRYPTOLECT +) PROFESSIOLECT → 3) (CRYPTOLECT + PROFESSIOLECT +) LECT (Borys & Garmash 2019: 53-54).

It is from the 19th century on that heated debate rages over which of the three senses best reflects the nature of the phenomenon. Yet, relying on diachronic semantics in an endeavour to standardize and disambiguate the term leads us nowhere, since any one of the three understandings of slang is historically retrievable, hence viable. Consequently, in this article, a synchronic approach is applied, the focus shifting towards the broadest and latest sense of the term. Since English slang can be analyzed in terms of its normativity, stylistics, and register, it will be taken to mean, following the definition proposed by D. Borys, a substandard, familiar / colloquial, and informal lect (Borys 2017: 6).

As far as plant names are concerned, English phytonyms have been investigated from a number of different perspectives, including textual (Tull 2009; Robinette 2014; Corley 2015; Rotasperti 2021); structural semantic (Sommer 1988; Kowalczyk 2019); cognitive semantic (Mosko 2009); cognitive contrastive (Callebaut 1990; Mihatsch 2016); onomastic (Yagumova et al. 2016); phraseological (Yakunina 2018); gender (Sagal 2022); integrative (Panasenکو 2021). Yet, the bulk of the research available on the issue tends to focus on floral or, to a lesser extent, arboreal literary lexis and phraseology. This tendency is apparently due to the fact that,

according to the British and American worldviews, flowers and trees are generally seen as the most prototypical entities in the plant hierarchy. Consequently, to date, linguists have not treated English slang plant names in detail. The scanty coverage of the latter issue in academic literature results from several factors, including (but not restricted to):

- 1) the long-standing marginalization of slang studies;
- 2) the perduring prevalence of prescriptivism over descriptivism in linguistics;
- 3) the social fabric reorganization in recent decades, which manifests itself in worldview anthropocentrization, lifestyle juvenalization, social dehierarchization, communication informalization, and language familiarization;
- 4) the vast underestimation of the impact of slang on the formation of national languages;
- 5) the presumably insignificant role of flora in slang users' lives (the only exception being psychoactive plants for people suffering from substance use disorder), whence the limited derivational potential of phytonymic root morphemes in primary and secondary nomination (excluding, accordingly, drug addicts' slang).

As far as phytonymic metaphors are concerned, in the past quarter of a century a number of researchers (Sommer 1988; Kleparski 1997; Krzeszowski 1997; Kövecses 2010; Grząsko 2015; Grząsko 2017) have investigated plant names within conceptual metaphors.

Theoretically, phytonyms have been found to serve primarily as the source domain, as in the conceptual metaphors (A) GOD IS A PLANT, A HUMAN BEING IS A PLANT, AN ANIMAL IS A PLANT, and A THING IS A PLANT, delimited by T. P. Krzeszowski (1997: 161), the phenomenon per se being referred to as PLANTOSEMY (Kleparski 1997; Grząsko 2015; Grząsko 2017; Kowalczyk 2019), BOTANOMORPHISM (Sommer 1998), or VEGETALIZATION (Krzeszowski 1997: 162). The focus on understanding humans and things in terms of plants is equally found in Z. Kövecses (2010), who stresses the conventionality of the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS (*ibid.*, 123) as well as provides a detailed theoretical and practical analysis of the conceptual metaphor COMPLEX ABSTRACT SYSTEMS (by which the cognitologist means social organizations, scientific disciplines, people, economic and political systems, human relationships, sets of ideas, etc. (*ibid.*, 126)) ARE PLANTS with a comprehensive outline of its submetaphors (for more details, see Kövecses (*ibid.*, 126–129)).

Empirically, English language evidence of plantosemy (A HUMAN BEING IS A PLANT) is found in R. Sommer's investigation of vegetable and fruit metaphors (1988); A. Grząsko's case studies of English terms of endearment (2015; 2017); G. A. Kleparski's diachronic research into denominations of females (1997).

Phytonyms functioning as the target domain are far less common, as substantiated by the conceptual metaphors A PLANT IS A THING, A PLANT IS AN ANIMAL, A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING, and A PLANT IS (A) GOD, formulated and classified by T. P. Krzeszowski as reification, animalization, humanization, and deification respectively (1997: 161).

That being said, the only specialist publication in the area of substandard, familiar / colloquial and informal plant names is a study of sensory metaphors in English slang phytonyms (Borys 2023). Yet, the research in question examines exclusively what is known in cognitive studies as resemblance-based metaphor, with correlation-based metaphor falling out of the scope of the study. Thus, it is on the latter type of metaphor analyzed in terms of its conventionality and function that the present article focuses.

3 Database and methodology

The choice of vegetables, fruits, and nuts as the three categories of common plant names to be addressed in the present article is by no means accidental. Evolutionarily, the emergence of the plant kingdom by far antedated the appearance of mammals, let alone modern humans, that is why flora has been “part of humanity’s environment since the dawn of history” (Sommer 1988: 667). Over the course of time, plants have developed multiple agricultural and industrial uses, but their foremost function consists, as it did “at the dawn of history” , in being consumed as food. In this respect, plants, often alongside animal flesh and fungi, are the main sources of essential nutrients required for the normal functioning of the human body. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the first plants a human being comes into physical contact with are vegetables, fruits, and, to a lesser extent, nuts. Indeed, the delimitation of the three categories serves the purpose of gastronomic convenience rather than botanical accuracy. Furthermore, the three groups have fairly diffuse culturally and territorially determined boundaries. Yet, cognitively, it is upon the foundation of these archetypal notions that collective consciousness complements existing conceptual metaphors with previously unattested verbalizations or synthesizes altogether novel conceptualizations, in both cases exploiting common denominations of vegetables, fruits, and nuts instead of addressing the academically recognized plant taxonomy.

The research data in this investigation (overall 262 items) is drawn from “*The concise new Partridge dictionary of slang and unconventional English*” (Dalzell & Victor 2008), the most thorough printed dictionary of substandard, familiar / colloquial, and informal English. The final sample features 48 slang senses being relevant to the correlation-based metaphor identification procedure. However, due to practical constraints, this paper addresses English slang as a whole (as opposed to its Arabic, French, Hungarian, Indonesian, Japanese, Polish, etc. counterparts or near-counterparts) and thus does not provide a discrete analysis of its ethnic, regional, social, subcultural, developmental, or individual dimensions reflecting its users’ background, ancestry, affinities, age, or idiolect. On the one hand, the lexicographic information provided in “*The concise new Partridge dictionary of slang and unconventional English*” does not allow for a clear-cut differentiation between British and American slang items. Although each entry is organized in accordance with the same general pattern, “HEADWORD → PART OF SPEECH → DEFINITION → REGIONAL INDICATOR → REGISTRY DATE”, THE REGIONAL INDICATOR does not reflect the HEADWORD’s current sociolinguistic status but rather determines the geography of its original usage. For instance, such taboo words as *bitch* (ibid., 58), *fuck* (ibid., 273), or *shit* (ibid., 574) employed extensively in the USA as well as in other English-speaking countries alike are labelled British English (REGIONAL INDICATOR UK). On the other hand, the potential strategy of complementing or replacing “*The concise new Partridge dictionary of slang and unconventional English*” with existing specialist British or American slang dictionaries proves to be of dubious efficiency, since they do not list many of the items contained in the former. Furthermore, the aim of the present research does not consist in specifying the sociolinguistic status of substandard, familiar / colloquial, and informal words and phrases but boils down to providing a cognitive account of conceptual metaphor in English slang.

A conceptual metaphor is phytonymic if its source domain, target domain, or both feature a phytonym. The focus of this research, however, is restricted to those conceptual metaphors whose source domain contains a plant name. It is the source domain that is of crucial importance in nomination, since existing words and phrases can be figuratively used to

designate previously un verbalized (e.g. *orange* designating any orange soft drink) or un conceptualized (e.g. *meat and potatoes man* denoting a retrosexual whose traditional masculinity is channelized into his dietary habits too) notions, whereas the reverse is impossible. Therefore, metaphors containing a phytonym only in the target domain, such as *beef and shrapnel* ‘in the Vietnam War, a meal of beef and potatoes’ (ibid., 44), where the fragmented shot of an anti-personnel weapon is juxtaposed with lumps in poorly mashed potatoes, fall out of the scope of this research, since the deducible metaphor VEGETABLES ARE WEAPONS is primarily chrematonymic (the very projection serving to reflect and complement the military worldview of US soldiers participating in the Vietnam War) rather than phytonymic.

One more remark concerns the level of generality, which allows for discriminating between generic-level and specific-level conceptual metaphors. The former are characterized by extremely skeletal structures relying on concepts such as actions, events, generic and specific (Kövecses 2010: 45). Presenting the highest level of abstraction, these metaphors are fairly limited in number and, consequently, thoroughly listed and well-studied. Conversely, the latter abound in specific detail (ibid., 45), serving as an empirical base for the abstraction of generic-level instances. It is these specific-level metaphors that rely on virtually innumerable verbalizations (thus forming metaphor systems) as well as provide novel conceptualizations. Since vegetables, fruits, and nuts constitute a rather restricted group of concrete and inanimate objects, the cognitive analysis of their common names used in slang is likely to contribute primarily to our understanding of specific-level metaphors. Furthermore, according to the level of complexity, specific-level metaphors fall into simple (indivisible; none to minimum abstraction involved in the verbalization of the source and target domains) and complex (divisible; the abstraction involved in the verbalization of the source and target domains commonly exploits hypernymization, i.e. integration of subordinate concepts into superordinate ones). Both simple and complex metaphors are extensively addressed throughout the paper.

It is equally noteworthy that identifying a generic- or specific-level projection as a PHYTONYMIC SLANG METAPHOR does not automatically imply its exclusiveness to slang. Therefore, the usage of the label “phytonymic slang metaphor” throughout the article is descriptive rather than limitative. In actual fact, the majority of conceptual metaphors found in standard English prove to also be prolific in slang since all native speakers of English share a considerable portion of phenomenological knowledge and experientiality. Ontologically, slang is secondary to the language standard and, as such, the former constantly taps into the conceptual fabric of the latter. A good example of conceptual metaphors productive in slang but deriving from standard English is HAPPY IS LIGHT / BRIGHT or HAPPINESS IS BEING OFF THE GROUND, both provided by Z. Kövecses (2005: 97). Alongside extensively exploiting the projections that originate from the language standard, slang gradually develops its own conceptual metaphors, such as ANGER IS PHYSICAL TENSION IN AN OBJECT (ibid., 96). However, the scarcity of extensive specialist research on slang metaphor and the resulting unavailability of a comprehensive list of metaphors productive in slang leaves the task of differentiating between SLANG METAPHORS BY USAGE (i.e. deriving from language standard or other lects) and SLANG METAPHORS BY ORIGIN (i.e. deriving from slang per se) largely to subsequent studies.

The methodological approach taken in this study is based on the integrative hierarchical methodology for phytonym analysis developed by N. Panasenکو (Panasenکو 2021), featuring elements borrowed from the methodology for conceptual metaphor detection and formulation in corpora designed by M. Coll-Florit and S. Climent (Coll-Florit & Climent 2019).

The integrative hierarchical methodology for phytonym analysis rests on the premise that structural-semantic and onomasiological analyses can furnish the basis for subsequent cognitive interpretation (Panasenko 2021: 585). Therefore, a three-stage methodological hierarchy is applied, involving structural-semantic, onomasiological, and cognitive analyses (ibid., 587–596), employed consecutively, in an ascending order of mental abstraction.

The methodology for conceptual metaphor detection and formulation in corpora, although applicable primarily to discourse, relies on the procedure containing four principles, initially tested on the annotation method:

1) working hypothesis formulation and verification at the metaphorical expressions detection stage;

2) partial use of standard methods for metaphorical focus identification;

3) employment of external expert knowledge in the form of more extensive use of dictionaries and additional utilization of metaphor compendia;

4) implementation of strategies for conceptual metaphor formulation, including domain formulation at two levels of generalization (Coll-Florit & Climent 2019: 52).

Therefore, the methodology adopted in this research includes five stages:

1) the identification of a preliminary sample of secondary denominations of vegetables, fruits, and nuts from “*The concise new Partridge dictionary of slang and unconventional English*” (262 items);

2) the finalization of the sample size and content by determining those instances of semantic change that imply experiential correlations / co-occurrences (through the juxtaposition of the secondary, non-phytonymic, slang senses with their primary, phytonymic, literary senses) (48 items);

3) the formulation of simple phytonymic conceptual metaphors;

4) the integration and abstraction of the previously identified simple phytonymic conceptual metaphors into complex phytonymic conceptual metaphors;

5) the cognitive interpretation of the accumulated simple and complex phytonymic conceptual metaphors in the light of English slang users’ cognition and experientiality as well as the role attributed to vegetables, fruits, and nuts as archetypes capable of nurturing novel verbalizations and conceptualizations.

4 Results and discussion

Throughout its evolution, the cognitive paradigm has seen the elaboration of several typologies of conceptual metaphors, the commonest underlying criteria including the degree of conventionality and the function. According to their degree of conventionality, the phytonymic slang metaphors under study are divided into conventional and unconventional. With regard to the cognitive function performed, they are classified into ontological, orientational, and structural phytonymic slang metaphors.

4.1 *Conventional vs unconventional phytonymic slang metaphor*

CONVENTIONALITY is generally regarded as one of the principal characteristics of those metaphors that humans employ in their day-to-day communication. Conventional metaphors are equally known as dead (Goatly 2005: 4), or “frozen” (Kroeger 2019: 100). Conventionality serves as a major contributor to language economy and analogy in semantic

change, since one and the same conceptual metaphor may be linguistically embodied, i.e. verbalized, in a variety of ways. The cognitive process of conceptualization (Eysenck & Keane 2000: 306–307) is based on redundancy, which constitutes a prerequisite for secondary nomination and semantic shifting (Borys 2018: 1). If every single metaphor use instance followed a fresh and untried pattern, human memory would be incapable of processing so enormous a number of neuron links or storing so massive an amount of information. This, in turn, would require unnecessary expenditure of mental effort on constant memorization and recollection in order to decrypt the hidden sense, which, in the long run, would significantly impede figurative thinking and hence creativity.

At present, two approaches to categorizing metaphor in terms of its regularity can be singled out, which we propose to name the non-gradable approach and the gradable approach. The non-gradable approach to categorizing metaphor in terms of its regularity (Kroeger 2019) indicates that metaphors tend to form two extremities: conventional metaphor, i.e. regular one, on the one hand, and unconventional, i.e. irregular one, on the other. This approach reflects a perspective on figurativeness as a relatively static phenomenon, devoid of any (statically) intermediate or (dynamically) transitional forms. Conversely, the gradable approach to categorizing metaphor in terms of its regularity (Croft & Cruse 2004; Goatly 2005; Hanks 2006) implies that metaphors are to be viewed as a scale. Gradability of metaphor is the key point in P. Hanks's research on how the degree of metaphoricity can become measurable, drawing upon the number of the shared semantic properties (Hanks 2006: 31). In a similar vein, A. Goatly ironically mentions “a scale of metaphors stretching from the Dead and Buried at one extreme, through the Sleeping and merely Tired, to the novel and original” (2005: 36). W. Croft and D. A. Cruse go further, identifying the three stages in the life history of metaphor: 1) coinage (with the metaphor decryptability being limited to the recipient's innate metaphorical interpretive strategy); 2) spread across a speech community through sufficient repetition (with the metaphor being fixed in the mental lexicon and its meaning becoming more determinate); 3) semantic drift (with its metaphorical origins being weakened or obscured) (2004: 204-205). This approach equally reflects the dynamic nature of semantic change.

However, whilst conventionality can be defined as multiple verbalizations of one conceptual metaphor, neither of the two approaches establishes any clear-cut criteria of unconventionality. Firstly, the identification of unconventionality with novelty leads us nowhere since the latter constitutes a rather subjective characteristic. Perception of novelty invariably correlates with the person's educational background, general knowledge, and previous experience. If the speaker has never directly or indirectly come into contact with a specific conceptual metaphor, he / she is likely to label it as new. For instance, a scholar conducting research on cognitive linguistics may be misled by the seeming novelty of a number of conceptual metaphors used in slang if they are not verbalized outside the community of its speakers. Secondly, there is a direct dependence of unconventionality on the academic coverage of conceptual metaphors. Yet, as of now, no exhaustive list of all conceptual metaphors has been compiled to be referenced as a comprehensive source. Therefore, if a metaphor is not mentioned in the academic literature familiar to the researcher, he / she is likely to label it as unconventional. Thirdly, once a novel conceptual metaphor is introduced, it may start circulating and acquiring new verbalizations, which would eventually lead to the loss of its unconventionality. In P. Hank's words, “frequency breeds literalness” . Therefore, unconventionality can equally be construed as a chronological variable.

Considering all the above, CONVENTIONALITY will be defined in this paper as a characteristic assigned to a conceptual metaphor if the number of its attested verbalizations exceeds 1 (≥ 1).

As throughout its history slang has been majorly limited to social groups involved in criminal or immoral activities, it comes as no surprise that the conventional conceptual metaphors reflecting sexual taboos, with both male and female bodies being objectified and sexualized, prove to be very productive in modern English. The culturally established stigmatization, avoidance, and / or ban of certain concepts produce the reverse effect in slang, where limitations, let alone taboos, are ignored or rejected altogether. The conceptual metaphors referred to this category revolve around primary and secondary sexual characteristics, as substantiated by the following projections:

1) FEMALE BREASTS ARE FRUITS, as in *apples* ‘the female breasts’ (Dalzell & Victor 2008: 14); *grapefruits* ‘large female breasts’ (ibid., 303); *melons* ‘large female breasts’ (ibid., 426); *watermelons* ‘female breasts of generous dimensions’ (ibid., 689);

2) FEMALE NIPPLES ARE FRUITS, as in *cherry* ‘the female nipple’ (ibid., 131); *strawberry* ‘the female nipple’ (ibid., 625);

3) VAGINAS ARE FRUITS, as in *apple* ‘the vagina’ (ibid., 14); *peach* ‘the vagina’ (ibid., 486);

4) PENISES ARE VEGETABLES, as in *bean* ‘the penis’ (ibid., 40); *gherkin* ‘the penis, especially a small penis’ (ibid., 287); *jackin’ the beanstalk* ‘(of a male) masturbating’ (ibid., 360); *to jerk the gherkin* ‘(of a male) to masturbate’ (ibid., 365); *traveller’s marrow* ‘an erection brought on while travelling, especially while sleeping’ (ibid., 664);

5) PENISES ARE NUTS, as in *hung like a cashew* ‘(of a male) blessed with a small penis’ (ibid., 348); *peanut* ‘the penis’ (ibid., 486);

6) TESTES ARE FRUITS, as in *apricots* ‘the testicles’ (ibid., 14); *the berries* ‘the testicles’ (ibid., 49); *grapes* ‘the testicles’ (ibid., 303); *plum* ‘the testicle’ (ibid., 503); *to ring the berries* ‘in ice hockey, to hit the goalie with a hard shot between the legs’ (ibid., 540);

7) TESTES ARE NUTS, as in *chestnuts* ‘the testicles’ (ibid., 132); *to freeze one’s nuts* ‘to be extremely cold’ (ibid., 269); *to have one’s nuts in the wringer* ‘to be trapped in a very weak position’ (ibid., 466); *to laugh one’s nuts off* ‘to laugh uproariously’ (ibid., 394); *love conkers* ‘the testicles’ (ibid., 409); *love / lover’s nuts* ‘testicles that ache because of sexual stimulation that has not led to ejaculation’ (ibid., 410); *nut-chokers* ‘men’s underpants’ (ibid., 466); *nut nectar* ‘semen’ (ibid., 466); *nut sack* ‘the scrotum’ (ibid., 466); *nuts* ‘the testicles’ (ibid., 466); *to pop one’s nuts* ‘to ejaculate’ (ibid., 509).

The outlined simple conceptual metaphors allow for drawing a few important conclusions.

Firstly, the special focus on reproductive organs points to the sexualization of the human body in English slang, unveiling the implicit yet fundamental conceptual metaphor HUMAN BODIES ARE SEX OBJECTS.

Secondly, referring to primary and secondary sexual characteristics in terms of vegetables, fruits, and nuts reveals certain physical features that are shared by the source domain and the target domain and constitute the ground (or, in P. Hanks’s terminology, the salient cognitive features (2006: 20)) for metaphorization: firmness, flaccidity, roundedness, oblong shape, sweetness, etc. These characteristics evince, in turn, the implicit conceptual metaphors BIGGER IS GOOD (as in the sequence *apples* → *grapefruits* → *melons* → *watermelons*), SMALLER IS BAD (as in the sequence *marrow* → *banana* → *gherkin* → [*hung like a*] *cashew* → *peanut*), FIRM IS GOOD (as in the projections involving the firm fruits and nuts

denoting female breasts), and SWEET IS GOOD (as in the projections involving the sweet fruits designating female genitalia), the focus being on visual, somatosensory, and gustatory perception. Therefore, it can be deduced that, from an average English slang speaker's perspective, a prototypical female is seen as a sex object endowed with large and firm breasts and palatable genitalia; a prototypical male is viewed as a sex object endowed with large and firm genitalia.

Thirdly, the association of culturally and pragmatically tabooed body parts with edible plants exposes yet another implicit complex conceptual metaphor: HUMAN BODIES ARE FOOD. Obviously, this formulation should not be understood literally as it does not intend to evoke cannibalism or dismemberment. Instead, certain physical operations can be performed on the body and / or its parts that are similar to those performed on food, including smelling or tasting it, licking or swallowing it, sucking or biting on it, playing with it, etc. This, in turn, provides access to the underlying metaphor SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IS A MEAL. The two latter projections, HUMAN BODIES ARE FOOD and SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IS A MEAL, prove to be crucial for understanding the archetypal role of slang as the ultimate “destigmatizer” and “detabooser” of the culturally condemned concepts in question. Sexual activity is equalled to ingestion of food, and although both constitute manifestations of instinctive behaviour, it is the latter and the latter only that is indispensable for individual survival. Therefore, English slang users resort to such conceptual metaphors in a subconscious attempt to destigmatize sexual activity, practices, and their participants, i.e. themselves.

UNCONVENTIONALITY will be defined in this paper as a characteristic assigned to a conceptual metaphor if the number of its attested verbalizations equals 1 (=1). Cognitivists also refer to unconventional metaphors as original (Goatly 2005: 4), novel (Croft & Cruse 2004: 204–211; Kroeger 2019: 100), “creative” (Kroeger 2019: 100), or dynamic (Hanks 2006: 17). While the distinctive feature of figurativeness and hence metaphoricity is the anomalousness of its literal interpretation, what sets unconventional metaphors apart from conventional ones is either the emergence of a previously unattested source domain and / or target domain in their projection, or the originality of their verbalization. In both cases, it is solely through conceptual blending that the unconventionality involved becomes retrievable and researchable (Croft & Cruse 2004: 207).

As rightfully claimed by Z. Kövecses (2010: 36), metaphors of this kind are infrequent. However, while the Lakoffians heavily focus on conventional projections, giving scant attention to unconventional ones, investigating freshly coined examples is crucial for getting “to the heart of metaphor” (Croft & Cruse 2004: 204), since every single conventional metaphor was once novel and unconventional.

The English slang denominations of edible plants revealing such unconventional metaphors are not numerous, e.g.:

1) HAIRSTYLES ARE FRUITS, as in *Croydon pineapple* ‘a female hairstyle, popular among an underclass of urban youth, in which all hair is tightly scraped into a spiky top knot’ (Dalzell & Victor 2008: 175);

2) HAIRSTYLES ARE VEGETABLES, as in *calabash cut* ‘a haircut in which the hair is cut on a line equidistant from the top of the head’ (ibid., 113);

3) HUMAN SECRETIONS ARE VEGETABLES, as in *free green peppers* ‘a sneeze by a food preparer’ (ibid., 268);

4) LOCALITIES ARE FRUITS, as in *Big Apple* ‘New York’ (ibid., 51).

4.2 *Ontological vs orientational vs structural phytonymic slang metaphor*

4.2.1 *Ontological phytonymic slang metaphor*

ONTOLOGICAL CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS are based on understanding abstract concepts as physical entities (Koivisto-Alanko & Tissari 2006: 196). According to Z. Kövecses, the source domain in this type of metaphors is most commonly represented by physical objects, substances, or containers, whereas the target domain typically includes nonphysical or abstract entities, events, activities, undelineated physical objects, physical and nonphysical surfaces, and states (Kövecses 2010: 39).

THE TARGET DOMAINS REFERRING TO ABSTRACT ENTITIES are found to belong to one of the three categories identified in the present research: EVALUATION, QUANTITY, and EXPERIENCE.

As a bipolar category, EVALUATION is embodied in the following conceptual metaphors:

1) POSITIVE EVALUATION IS SWEET FRUITS, as in *berries* ‘anything considered to be the finest, the most excellent, the best’ (Dalzell & Victor 2008: 49); *cherry fine* ‘excellent’ (ibid., 132); *guava* ‘very good, superlative’ (ibid., 310); *peach* ‘an excellent person or thing’ (ibid., 486); *peachy* ‘good, pleasing, attractive’ (ibid., 486); *plum* ‘an exceptional person or thing’ (ibid., 503);

2) POSITIVE EVALUATION IS NUTS, as in *nut* ‘in horse racing, a horse picked by a racing newspaper to win a race’ (ibid., 466); *nut flush* ‘in poker, a hand with all cards of the same suit and an ace as the high card’ (ibid., 466); *nut graf* ‘in journalism, the key paragraph in an article’ (ibid., 466); *nut player* ‘in poker, a player who only plays a hand that is excellent as dealt’ (ibid., 466); *nuts* ‘in poker, the best possible winning hand at a given moment’; ‘the advantage in a bet’ (ibid., 466); *sweet as a nut* ‘satisfying and easy, especially of a crime’ (ibid., 634);

3) NEGATIVE EVALUATION IS BASIC VEGETABLES, as in *cabbage* ‘poor-quality’ (ibid., 112); *small potatoes* ‘something of little consequence’ (ibid., 595);

4) NEGATIVE EVALUATION IS BITTER FRUITS, as in *chokecherry farmer* ‘an unsuccessful farmer’ (ibid., 138);

5) NEGATIVE EVALUATION IS SOUR FRUITS, as in *lemon* ‘in used-car sales, a mechanically unsound vehicle, or one with a dubious history’; ‘anything that is undesirable’; ‘a heavily diluted narcotic’; ‘in pool, a person who loses intentionally’ (ibid., 397).

Firstly, sweetness is construed as a prototypically positive characteristic (correlating with beauty, exceptionality, feasibility, preeminence, satisfaction, success, or victoriousness), whereas bitterness and sourness tend to be viewed as negative properties (congruous with disrepair, dissatisfaction, failure, inferiority, mediocrity, swindle, triviality, or unfeasibility). It follows from the above that, from an average English slang user’s perspective, sweet fruits are ideasthetically connected with pleasant emotions and life satisfaction. Biochemically, sweetness is based on the human gustatory perception of sugars that constitute soluble carbohydrates such as monosaccharides and disaccharides. Fruits are rich in the monosaccharide known as fructose that constitutes an abundant source of accessible energy. If consumed in large quantities, fructose is likely to activate the reward system in humans, which gradually leads to the development of a sugar addiction. Thus, the correlation between sweetness and positivity stems from the hedonistic philosophy of English slang users, on the one hand, and the addictivity of the sugars that they consume, on the other.

Secondly, the commonness and availability of such basic vegetables as cabbage and potato is treated as a negative characteristic. The motivation behind the latter trend may consist in the long-lasting surfeit of specific edible plants in the speakers' diets as well as in the lack of variety or the blandness of the dishes containing them.

A second category, QUANTITY, manifests itself as dimensionality (1, 2) or proportion (3) in the conceptual metaphors below:

- 1) MINUTE QUANTITY IS SMALL VEGETABLES, as in *bean* 'anything at all; very little' (ibid., 40);
- 2) MINUTE QUANTITY IS NUTS, as in *peanuts* 'a very small sum of money' (ibid., 486);
- 3) EXCESSIVENESS IS BIG VEGETABLES, as in *to yam* 'to talk too much'; 'to eat as if famished' (ibid., 711).

The dimensionality found in the first two instances correlates insignificant amounts with the modest (as regarded humanwise) spatial size of the vegetables and nuts. The proportion in the third metaphor is seen as a relative magnitude scalarized within the continuum "deficiency (x is not enough, or $x < 1$) – sufficiency (x is enough, or $x = 1$) – excessiveness (x is more than enough, or $x > 1$)". While sufficiency is viewed as the norm, both deficiency and excessiveness are considered to be deviations from the norm. In both of the slang senses, excessiveness is associated with yam as a comparatively voluminous irregular-shaped (whence its taxonomic label *stem tuber*) vegetable. Thus, the physical entity characterized by a more-than-average size coupled with an irregular shape provides access to the abstract entity denoting superfluity, evicting the additional implicit metaphor QUANTITY IS SIZE.

Thirdly, EXPERIENCE, which constitutes one of the fundamental tenets of phenomenology and is, irrespective of its nature, structure, and contents, characterized by relationalism, is found in two conceptual metaphors, KNOWLEDGE IS BASIC VEGETABLES and KNOWLEDGE IS BASIC FRUITS, as in *to know one's onions / apples* 'to have knowledge that comes from experience' (ibid., 387). What accounts for linking practical knowledge with onions and apples is that, traditionally, both plants have been extensively grown in the UK and the USA alike, becoming the staple ingredients of British as well as American cuisines. The overall affordability and culinary omnipresence of the plants throughout British and American histories make them an ideal example of a collective perceptive (visual, somatosensory, gustatory, and olfactory) experience universal for all Britons and Americans, which gives rise to the metaphors in question.

Another form of ontological metaphor is PERSONIFICATION, in which case human qualities are attributed to nonhuman entities (Kövecses 2010: 39). Yet, since the present research does not deal with the conceptual metaphors containing the phytonym-based target domain, such projections as VEGETABLES ARE HUMANS, FRUITS ARE HUMANS, and NUTS ARE HUMANS fall beyond the scope of this article. Conversely, the opposite phenomenon, known as REIFICATION (Borčić et al. 2016: 84–85) or, more specifically, DEPERSONIFICATION (Charteris-Black 2005: 15), is characterized by "referring to something that is animate using a word or phrase that in other contexts refers to something that is inanimate" (ibid.). Depersonification proves to be rather common in the ontological conceptual metaphors identified, the most important ones being HUMANS ARE VEGETABLES, HUMANS ARE FRUITS, and HUMANS ARE NUTS.

To begin with, the metaphor HUMANS ARE VEGETABLES is identifiable in such slang items as *bean* 'a man, a fellow, especially as a form of address' (Dalzell & Victor 2008: 40); *pumpkin* 'used as a sentimental term of address' (ibid., 519); *tomato* 'an attractive woman, especially a young one' (ibid., 657). The three examples feature denominations of humans used

either as a form of address (*bean*) or as a term of endearment (*pumpkin* and *tomato*). Although the grounds for the projections appear to be fairly obscure, thinking of a person in terms of a vegetable may be explained by the perceptual discreteness of both, as a mentally isolated human individual is likened to a free-standing vegetable detached from its pod or vine. This sensory discreteness is reinforced even further by the rounded shape of the vegetables (an ellipsoid on a curved major axis for the bean, an oblate rotational ellipsoid for the pumpkin, and a rotational ellipsoid for the tomato), since ellipsoids are symmetrical, and symmetrical entities are more visually salient than asymmetrical ones. The additional attributes at play include:

1) colour (the scarlet colouring of tomatoes vs the red colour, which is generally associated with women in modern British and American cultures; red also serves as the “component” of red-bloodedness, i.e. positively evaluated typicality, which, from a slang user’s perspective on a woman, is reinterpreted as sexuality);

2) gloss (the gloss of tomatoes is likened to the beauty of a woman, following the conceptual metaphor HUMANS ARE CELESTIAL BODIES, and, more specifically, HUMANS ARE STARS);

3) taste (sweetness for pumpkins proves to be in consonance with other “taste-based” terms of endearment, such as *honey*, *sweetheart*, or *sweetie*; umami, or savoriness, for tomatoes, which is equally characteristic of meat as well as fish, correlates with the olfactory and gustatory perception of pheromones secreted by the female body and perceptible by smell and taste);

4) texture (the firm texture of beans is associated with the muscularity as well as toughness of males).

Furthermore, HUMANS ARE VEGETABLES as a complex metaphor manifests itself through the following simple metaphors:

1) MENTALLY AND / OR PHYSICALLY INCAPACITATED HUMANS ARE VEGETABLES, as in *baked potato* ‘a drug-user who watches television while intoxicated’ (ibid., 28); *to fertilize the vegetables* ‘to feed or medicate neurologically depressed hospital patients’ (ibid., 248); *potatoed* ‘sluggish; in a non-responsive state (possibly as a result of drug use)’ (ibid., 511); *potato patch* ‘a group of neurologically depressed patients’ (ibid., 511); *STL (similar to lettuce)* ‘said of a hospital patient who is in a persistent vegetative state’ (ibid., 622); *vegetable* ‘a person who is mentally and physically incapacitated’ (ibid., 680); *vegetable garden* ‘a group of neurologically depressed hospital patients’ (ibid., 680); *to water the vegetables* ‘to administer intravenous fluids to a hospital’s neurologically depressed patients’ (ibid., 688);

2) MENTALLY INACTIVE HUMANS ARE VEGETABLES, as in *cucumber* ‘in gambling, an ignorant victim of a cheat’ (ibid., 177);

3) PHYSICALLY INACTIVE HUMANS ARE VEGETABLES, as in *couch potato* ‘a person who habitually idles, watching television’ (ibid., 165).

The common feature that all the target domains above share is the abnormal behaviour of humans who act either as if they are or as if they were in an altered state of mind. The desubjectification of humans stems from their physical and / or mental disengagement (whether voluntary or involuntary) and results in them being objectified as plants. The contrast between vegetables and humans serving as the basis of the metaphorization thus boils down to the opposition “statics (vegetables are regarded as prototypically static entities, since, although they grow, i.e. are capable of self-propelled motion, its speed is too low to be visually perceived

by the unarmed human eye) vs dynamics (humans are viewed as a prototypically dynamic lifeform capable of self-propelled motion at a speed perceivable by the unarmed human eye)” . In other words, metaphorization often feeds off the clash between the prototype and the anti-prototype. The lack of certain characteristics attributable to the prototype provides sufficient grounds for its cognitive reinterpretation as the anti-prototype, which is frequently accompanied by hyperbolization, as is the case of referring to partially dynamic and evolutionarily more complex living beings as static and evolutionarily simpler ones.

A second conceptual metaphor, HUMANS ARE FRUITS, is represented by the predominantly taste-related evaluation metaphors, namely:

1) POSITIVE EVALUATION IS SWEET FRUITS, as in *cherry* ‘a pretty young woman, a girlfriend’ (ibid., 131); *peach* ‘a sexually attractive person, usually a woman’ (ibid., 486); *plum* ‘in marketing, a married man with above-average income who is keen to improve his pension’ (ibid., 503);

2) NEGATIVE EVALUATION IS SOUR FRUITS, as in *gooseberry* ‘a person whose presence interferes with the relationship, especially romance, of two other people’ (ibid., 300).

The only example that does not comply with these projections is *jaffa* ‘an infertile man’ (ibid., 361), which is based on the image metaphor involving the mental image of a seedless sweet orange being projected onto a sterile male, whose “seed” , i.e. semen, is incapable of accomplishing fertilization.

Consequently, sweetness proves to be gender-specific in slang: it is associated with sex appeal in women but with wealth in men, which reflects the popular gender role stereotypes steadily perpetuated in Western culture. Conversely, sourness is considered an impediment to a potential sexual contact, serving as the complete opposite of sweetness in both its proper and figurative (metaphoric) senses. Interestingly, sweetness may acquire a negative value when applied to a man, accentuating his infertility-induced demasculinization.

A third conceptual metaphor, HUMANS ARE NUTS, is based on the perceptual discreteness of a nut detached from its branch and projected onto a mentally isolated human individual, as reflected in the simplex *nut* ‘a person’ (ibid., 465–466) as well as the compounds *bloodnut* ‘a red-haired person’ (ibid., 626); *econut* ‘a zealous environmentalist’ (ibid., 231); *fucknut* ‘a contemptible person’ (ibid., 274). The metaphor per se proves to be neutral, as is the compound *bloodnut*, where a wide palette of red or reddish hair follicle pigmentation is associated with the blood colour. The negative connotations of the slang items *econut* and *fucknut* stem from their other root morphemes, i.e. *eco-* (initially neutral but capable of conveying negative evaluation when referring to the environmental awareness deemed excessive by the slang user) and *fuck-* (a taboo word used extensively alone and as part of a number of derogatory compounds). The only example providing richer ontological information is *coconut* ‘a clod, a dolt’ (ibid., 152), in which the narrow-mindedness or irrationality of a human is projected onto the hardness and roughness of a coconut shell.

Nevertheless, not every instance of depersonification is to be viewed as an ontological metaphor. For example, the slang items *greenpea* ‘a novice’ (ibid., 306) and *pepper* ‘an inexperienced, gullible victim of a gambling cheat’ (ibid., 489), on the one hand, in contrast to *green bean* ‘in South Africa, a township municipal police officer’ (ibid., 305) and *Green Onion* ‘a Montreal parking violation officer’ (ibid., 306), on the other, tap into completely different cognitive mechanisms. The former examples reflect the ontological conceptual metaphor INEXPERIENCED IS GREEN. Although the underlying correlation was initially image-

based, with green referring to the colouring of young plants and / or their parts and youth being traditionally viewed as a period of intellectual, professional, etc. immaturity, nowadays the original connection seems to have been largely lost. Conversely, the latter examples are based on the visual similarity of the colouring of police officers' uniform with that of certain vegetables, which results in the emergence of an image metaphor of colour (green). In a similar vein, the slang denominations *beanpole* (ibid., 40) and *string bean* (ibid., 626) both designating 'a tall, thin person' stem from the visual similarity of the verticality-to-horizontality ratio in the measurements of a human body and that of vegetables. All in all, the differentiation between image metaphor-based and ontological metaphor-based depersonifications boils down to the direct perceptibility (for the former) or imperceptibility (for the latter) of the ground, i.e. the common attribute shared by both the source and target domains.

4.2.2 *Orientalional phytonymic slang metaphor*

ORIENTATIONAL CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS revolve around basic human spatial orientations including the oppositions whole (+) vs not whole (-), center (+) vs periphery (-), link (+) vs no link (-), balance (+) vs imbalance (-), in (+) vs out (-), goal (+) vs no goal (-), and front (+) vs back (-). In each of the oppositions, the first image-schema is prototypically associated with positive evaluation whilst the second one implies negative interpretation (Kövecses 2010: 40).

The metaphors representing this group prove to be a rare occurrence in the phytonymic slang material analyzed. The denominations of vegetables, fruits, and nuts are not found in any of the source domains. However, a few examples provide slang verbalizations of other conceptual metaphors. A primary cognitive analysis allows for identifying the following simple projections:

1) REDUCING EMOTIONAL TENSION IS OUT, as in *to cabbage out* 'to relax' (Dalzell & Victor 2008: 112); *to veg out* 'to relax and do nothing' (ibid., 680); *vegged out* 'relaxed and inactive' (ibid., 680);

2) DANGER IS PERIPHERY, as in *banana skin* 'a potential if trivial danger that is easily avoided when not overlooked' (ibid., 31);

3) DISREPAIR IS PERIPHERY, as in *to orange-peel* '(used of freshly applied paint) to wrinkle or form small ridges' (ibid., 475);

4) EMOTIONAL REMOTENESS IS PERIPHERY, as in *fig-skin family* 'distant relatives whom you rarely see' (ibid., 249);

5) POOR QUALITY IS PERIPHERY, as in *limeskin* 'a worn-out felt hat' (ibid., 401).

However, a secondary cognitive analysis, which presupposes the reformulation of the listed simple metaphors as complex ones, evinces the following complex metaphors: BAD IS PERIPHERY (axiological compatibility with the opposition center (+) vs periphery (-)) and GOOD IS OUT (axiological incompatibility with the opposition in (+) vs out (-)). While the four conceptual metaphors sharing the source domain PERIPHERY involve clearly negative evaluation (hidden danger vs deterioration vs distant relations vs overused clothes respectively), this is clearly not the case of REDUCING EMOTIONAL TENSION IS OUT (→ GOOD IS OUT). Since the image-schema out implies egress from a container or, by metaphorical extension, from a state into which the object has previously ingressed, it is neither the motion accompanying the ingress / egress, nor the direction of the motion that actuate and determine evaluation but rather the collective positive / negative attitude to the container / state involved or the intendedness / unintendedness of the action performed. Accordingly, in the projection GOOD IS OUT, a feeling of mounting tension (ingress, or going INTO tedium) is

treated as negative since tedium, if continual, may cause health problems and even death. As a result, egression, or coming OUT of tedium, is considered essentially positive as liberation from tension and its potential consequences. One more factor at play here, although definitely a concomitant to the above, is the counterculturalism of slang as a protest to the dominant social norms and values. The Anglo-Saxon mainstream prototypically considers work to be the driving force behind both individual and collective physical, mental, cultural, cognitive, emotional, etc. progress, whereas rest is primarily viewed as a naturally conditioned prerequisite for continuous work performance, assuring individual physical, mental, cultural, cognitive, emotional, etc. durability for this purpose. Yet, from the perspective of prototypical representatives of the marginal “underworld” , work is largely seen as an obstacle to carefree life, where any pleasures are to be readily available at no physical or material cost whatsoever. This incompatibility points to an important conceptual metaphor clash: WORK IS GOOD in the mainstream culture vs WORK IS BAD in the underworld. Therefore, conceptual evaluation in the standard grapholect vs in substandard lects is not to be construed as a clear-cut and unchanging mechanism but rather as a socially and culturally ambivalent variable.

4.2.3 Structural phytonymic slang metaphor

STRUCTURAL CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS are characterized by the source domain providing a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target concept, which manifests itself in multiple correspondences (mappings) between the two domains (Kövecses 2010: 37).

The present research does not feature any instances of structural phytonymic slang metaphors, since the concepts of concrete and inanimate vegetables, fruits, and nuts in the source domain provide scanty grounds for forming a complex network of interrelated projections. However, phytonyms are occasionally found as elements in other structural projections, as is the case of the slang phrase *to turn into a pumpkin* ‘in transsexual usage, to dress in keeping with your genetic sex’ (Dalzell & Victor 2008: 670) within the LGBT-specific (MEN ARE WOMEN) as well as non-LGBT-specific (LIFE IS A FAIRY TALE) conceptual metaphors. Both metaphors tap into the rich symbolism and allegorality of the folk tale “*Cinderella*” , whose protagonist is adored by the LGBT community as the ultimate minion of fortune, owing to her meteoric rags-to-riches rise. Cinderella’s life story makes her an ideal role model for the majority of non-cisgender people: from the orphanhood, poverty, and stepmother’s abuse (associated with the parental rejection, glass ceiling, and heteronormativity-based social non-acceptance of LGBT identity respectively) to the eternal love, wealth coupled with status, and rupture with her old life (associated with finding one’s ideal partner, advancing one’s career, and freeing oneself from one’s fears and insecurities by finally accepting one’s LGBT identity respectively).

The conceptual analysis of the phrase allows for identifying the following essential projections:

- 1) A TRANSSEXUAL MALE IS CINDERELLA;
- 2) LGBT PRIDE IS THE FAIRY GODMOTHER;
- 3) A MALE OUTFIT IS THE PUMPKIN;
- 4) A FEMALE OUTFIT IS THE CARRIAGE;
- 5) A MALE-TO-FEMALE OUTFIT CHANGE IS THE (INITIAL) PUMPKIN-TO-CARRIAGE TRANSFORMATION;
- 6) DRESSING IN KEEPING WITH ONE’S ACQUIRED GENDER IDENTITY IS THE MAGIC CAST;
- 7) A FEMALE-TO-MALE OUTFIT CHANGE IS THE (FINAL) CARRIAGE-TO-PUMPKIN TRANSFORMATION;

8) DRESSING IN KEEPING WITH ONE'S SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH IS THE MAGIC BROKEN.

Thus, although a transsexual male's sex assignment at birth does not align with his acquired gender identity, he accepts both, the former being imposed by the heteronormative society whilst the latter being freely chosen, which, in turn, gives access to the ontological evaluation metaphors ENFORCEMENT IS NEGATIVE and FREEDOM IS POSITIVE respectively. Driven by his aspiration for sexual self-affirmation, a transsexual male cross-dresses, i.e. puts on the clothes typically associated with females, which provides an escape from the sexual identity he is uncomfortable with. In this world of make-believe, he lives through his own fairy tale and disguises himself as a princess. This transformation implies a faint allusion to the concept of queen, construed literally and at the same time figuratively. Literally, a princess marrying a prince (in keeping with the plot) will become a queen one day. Figuratively, in English slang, the word *queen* commonly refers to an effeminate homosexual male. Emulating Cinderella, a transsexual male is dressed up as a female, which may improve his chances of finding his perfect same-sex match. However, his cross-dressing routine brings only temporary relief, since he retains his primary and secondary sex characteristics and is, therefore, ineligible for a relationship with the overwhelming majority of heterosexual males. Thus, his ultimate return to the regular, cisgender, dress code substantiates the transience of illusions clashing with the persistence of reality.

5 Conclusions

The aim of the current study was to examine a cognitive perspective on conceptual metaphor in English slang phytonyms. Since slang has long been on the periphery of social acceptance and scholarly interest, the issue of conceptual metaphor in English slang remains largely understudied. The present article covers one of such gaps, known as slang plantosemy / botanomorphism / vegetalization, which focuses on phytonym-based source domains.

The logic of the research process suggests that the conclusions drawn should be presented from two perspectives, COGNITIVE PHYTONYMIC and COGNITIVE SOCIOLECTAL.

From a COGNITIVE PHYTONYMIC PERSPECTIVE, the conceptual metaphors whose target domains feature common names of vegetables, fruits, and nuts prove to be a not infrequent occurrence in English slang. As concrete inanimate objects accompanying humanity since the dawn of civilization and forming the basis of its diet, the three categories of plants are visually, tactilely, olfactorily, gustatorily, and, to a lesser extent, aurally perceptible, which contributes to their advanced and long-held position in human experientiality. This phenomenological knowledge lays the foundations for the cognitive synthesis of more complex and abstract constructs both within and beyond the command of the commonly recognized sensory systems.

The “conventionality – unconventionality” metaphor continuum remains only partially conclusive in view of its quasi-total dependence on, at best, its coverage extent in academic literature or, at worst, the researcher's background knowledge, experiential basis, and subjective judgement. The phytonymic metaphors labelled as conventional in English slang foreground the sexualization and objectification of the human body. The more sexuality is forced out of public discourse and pragmatic ethics, the more it is entrenched in slang users' communication, which, in turn, leads to its incessant further verbalization and conceptualization.

As far as the criterion of the function performed is concerned, the ontological phytonymic metaphors outnumber the orientational and structural ones. The motivation behind

this trend is the proportionally significant frequency of depersonification instances among the vegetable, fruit, and nut names in English slang. However, not every example of depersonification is to be qualifiable as an ontological metaphor. Understanding humans in terms of plants may be equally based on the visual characteristics that they share, such as colour or shape. Therefore, the differentiation between the two boils down to the direct perceptibility (for image metaphors) or imperceptibility (for ontological metaphors) of the ground, i.e. the common attribute shared by both the source and target domains. Apart from depersonification, the ontological phytonymic metaphor can express evaluation, quantity, and experience.

The orientational phytonymic metaphors are scantily represented in English slang. Vegetables, fruits, and nuts are hardly relatable to basic human spatial orientations, whose number is extremely limited, the only exception being the opposition center (+) vs periphery (-).

The structural phytonymic metaphor is found to be unproductive in the present research. The concrete and inanimate nature of plants is largely inconducive to the formation of a complex network of interrelated projections within a structural metaphor. However, vegetable, fruit, and nut denominations can be incorporated in structural metaphors when acting as attributes of, for instance, mythologems, as is the case of the Cinderella mythologem analyzed in the paper.

From a COGNITIVE SOCIOLECTAL PERSPECTIVE, the findings of the present study indicate that English slang is the conceptual embodiment of the anthropocentrism, physicalism, somatocentrism, and hedonism of its users. The worldview of English slang users revolves predominantly around humans with their physiological and psychological needs, which is reflected in a plethora of denominations of people based on their general appearance, physical and mental health, character traits, and social roles. Biological determinism brings body image and sexual identity into general focus, instigating a public evaluation of the extent to which each individual fits the socially imposed standard. This, in turn, leads to the perpetuation of diverse cultural, gender, racial, and social stereotypes.

Special attention is drawn to cissexuality prioritizing the bipolar masculinity-vs-femininity opposition. Primary and secondary sexual characteristics come to the forefront of secondary nomination. The more physically prominent they are, the more socially significant their owner is deemed. Furthermore, human reproductive organs represent an important focal point inasmuch as they serve the purpose of deriving pleasure from satisfying one's "carnal hunger". In addition to that, sex is commonly associated with food, which serves the double purpose of not only destigmatizing and detabooing sexual intercourse but equally of disclaiming any moral responsibility for the socially partly acceptable or unacceptable practices one indulges in "under the pressure of one's basic biological needs". The gender bipolarity also leads to any gender identities that fail to fully or partially conform to the cissexual norm being condemned and stigmatized. Yet, in the end, they are still attributed either a masculine role or a feminine one.

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