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TEXT-IMAGE INTERRELATIONSHIPS IN BRITISH ENGLISH VERSUS AMERICAN ENGLISH NOMINALS

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Abstract

This paper investigates dialectal variation in English from a cognitive linguistic perspective, focusing on how different dialects (American English and British English) conceptualise and convey meaning through alternative terms and phrases. Abandoning objectivist semantics, the study adopts a conceptualist view, emphasising the human ability to construe situations in multiple ways and focus on salient features. It explores dialectal variation in nominal structures using examples from a corpus of usage guidebooks. The analysis applies the base/profile theory to demonstrate how different dialects highlight distinct aspects of concepts, revealing subtle differences between seemingly synonymous words. Profiling plays a central role in this process, as it involves emphasising specific characteristics of an object, either physical or non-physical, depending on what is most salient in a given context. Key profiling aspects such as purpose, user, container, content, and origin influence how dialects construe and represent meaning. For instance, the purpose behind an object, the identity of its user, or the container holding it can shape how it is linguistically framed. Similarly, focusing on the content or the origin of a concept brings out differences in mental construal, which can vary significantly between dialects. By analysing these cognitive patterns, the study reveals that what are traditionally considered synonymous terms across dialects are actually functionally equivalent expressions with distinct conceptual delineations. The findings challenge the notion of strict lexical similarity and call for a redefinition of dialectal synonymy as functional equivalence, shaped by cognitive and cultural factors. Ultimately, the study sheds light on how profiling directs attention to different facets of a concept, influencing perception, communication, and understanding between speakers of different English dialects.

Keywords: Dialect; Cognitive Linguistics; Construal; Base/ Profile Theory.

1 Introduction

The concept of image is a multifaceted one, but it primarily designates a visual representation of something, whether it be a photograph, painting, drawing, or any

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other visual depiction. Several possibilities concerning the nature, origin, purpose of an image spring to mind, as these factors can vary greatly depending on context, medium, and intention. Among these possibilities are included tangible or visible representations of an object produced on a photographic material or an electronic display (such as a television or a computer screen), as well as the apprehensions of a mental picture or impression of an entity, or mental representations. According to Langacker (1987: 117), the image embodied by a linguistic expression – the conventionally established way in which it structures a situation – constitutes a crucial facet of its meaning. This sense of image will be embraced in what follows.

The present paper connects the concept of image to the lexis of two regional varieties of English that are most prominent nowadays, namely British English and American English. It focuses on "the ability of speakers to construe the same basic situation in many different ways, i.e. to structure it by means of alternate images" (Langacker 1987: 117). It seeks to provide insights into how exactly "the contrasting images imposed on a scene amount to qualitatively different mental experiences" (Langacker 1987: 117) across two regional varieties and, therefore, two cultures.

British English and American English, as surveyed and elaborated on in numerous studies (e.g. Bauer 2002, Svartvik and Leech 2006, Rohdenburg and Schlüter 2009, Baker 2017) are two major varieties of the English language, each with its own distinct vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, and grammatical conventions. Despite these differences, speakers of British and American English can generally understand each other without much difficulty, although certain regional accents or slang terms may pose challenges. Additionally, due to globalisation and the influence of media, there is increasing overlap and convergence between the two variants in certain contexts.

The differences between British English and American English can be attributed to historical, cultural, and linguistic factors. For ease of reference, the two varieties will be henceforth abbreviated as BrE and AmE.

AmE and BrE differ in various aspects, including pronunciation, spelling, grammar and vocabulary. Each of these areas will be briefly mentioned and exemplified below, with a view to laying the foundation for the exploration of language as a locus of cultural conceptualisations.

First of all, from the viewpoint of differences in pronunciation, General American (GA) and Received Pronunciation (RP) are two major accent groups in AmE and BrE, respectively, with notable differences in vowel sounds, consonant sounds, stress and intonation, and the pronunciation of specific words. Specific words are pronounced differently, such as *herb*, which is /ɝːb/ in GA and /hɜːb/ in RP, and *schedule*, which is /ˈskɛdʒuːl/ in GA and /ˈʃɛdjuːl/ in RP.

Secondly, spelling differences between BrE and AmE are prominent in various aspects of the language. For instance, words ending in *-our* in BrE, such as *colour, honour*, and *neighbour*, are spelt *color, honor* and *neighbor* in AmE. Verbs ending in -ise in BrE, such as *realise* and *organise*, end in -ize in AmE, becoming *realize* and *organize*.

Furthermore, grammar differences between BrE and AmE encompass various aspects of the language. One notable difference is the use of the present perfect tense. In BrE, it is common to use the present perfect for actions that have a relevance to the present, such as *I have just eaten*, whereas in AmE, the simple past tense is often used instead, as in *I just ate*. Prepositions also vary, with BE favoring *at the weekend* and *different from*, while AmE prefers *on the weekend* and *different than*.

Vocabulary differences between BrE and AmE are no rare occurrence in everyday terms. In BrE, the word *lift* is used for what AmE calls an *elevator*, and *flat* (BrE) designates an *apartment* (AmE). A *lorry* in BrE is a *truck* in AmE, while *sweets* (BrE) are known as *candy* (AmE).

All in all, the dimensions in which the two language varieties employ different lexis are numerous, encompassing various activities and fields, such as economy and trade, education and health, domestic life, transport and communication, public services and entertainment, etc.

The present paper argues that, beyond all the major factors that have contributed to the emergence and differentiation of these two regional varieties, BrE and AmE, lie significant overlapping as well as sometimes diverging conceptualisations of events, entities, experiences, which have shaped language patterns in particular ways. The examples to be discussed herein are subsumed to the claim that several potential lexical choices stem from alternative conceptualisations or mental images connected to linguistic signs. Images are shown to be essential tools in how we make sense of the outer and inner worlds, serving as a means of representation, communication, expression, and cognition.

The present paper seeks to address the text-mental image relationship in the case of a series of dialectal nominal phrase pairs and, by applying the profile/ base theory, provide arguments that differences in terminology may amount to conceptual differences. Thus, the text-image relationships identified in a corpus containing contrastive BrE and AmE pairs and elaborated on in this paper are indebted to the cognitive linguistic enterprise and to its main tenet, namely that language, as a cognitive phenomenon, is intimately connected to human thought processes and conceptual structures.

2 Literature Review

Ever since the launch of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in the 1930s, there has been increasing interest in providing solid empirical evidence of how language configures thought. Boroditsky (2011: 64) claimed that research "has been uncovering how language shapes even the most fundamental dimensions of human experience: space, time, causality and relationships to others".

The interaction between spatial language and cognition is acknowledged by Talmy (2000), who examines how languages, including dialects of English, encode spatial relationships and motion events, providing insights into cognitive differences

between BrE and AmE. Subsequently, Coventry and Garrod (2004) explore how spatial prepositions (e.g., *in, on, over*) are used and understood differently in BrE and AmE, and Tyler and Evans (2003) analyse the polysemy of prepositions and how their meanings can vary in BrE and AmE.

In *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation*, Kövecses (2005) examines how cultural factors influence metaphorical expressions in different English-speaking cultures, including British and American English. This work continues Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) ground-breaking discussion of the role of conceptual metaphors in everyday language, which had highlighted cross-cultural variations, including between British and American English.

Wilson and Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2021) survey conceptualisations of *pride* and related cluster members in order to explore how pride and related emotions are conceptualised in BrE and AmE. The findings confirm that American culture is more expressive and British culture more reserved in terms of pride.

Grammatical constructions and their variation receive attention from scholars such as Goldberg (1995) and Hilpert (2014); the latter discusses how construction grammar can be applied to study syntactic and semantic differences between BrE and AmE.

Corpus-based cognitive linguistics is the lens through which Stefanowitsch and Gries (2007) use corpus data to analyse variations in language use, including distinctions between BrE and AmE. Wolf and Polzenhagen (2009) are also among the pioneers who establish cognitive linguistics as a research paradigm within the field of world Englishes. The authors review the key principles of both fields and propose that the theoretical and methodological tools developed in cognitive linguistics, especially its new sub-discipline cognitive sociolinguistics, can address the limitations of traditional approaches to cultural variation in language. They use a case study on the linguistic expression of the cultural model of community in African English to illustrate how cultural models can be investigated in other English varieties. The study combines corpus-linguistic methods with conceptual metaphor analysis and blending theory to uncover a complex network of conceptualisations significant to African English speakers.

As mentioned above, previous studies on the interaction of language and thought have explored various aspects such as differences in conceptual metaphors, spatial/ time-related language, lexical semantics, and grammatical constructions. The representation of nominals in alternate dialects, to be tackled in this paper, is therefore a niche which has not been examined yet from a cognitive linguistics perspective. In this context, the present analysis addresses the research question: "How does the profile/base theory, with attention to salience and cognitive construal, account for semantic distinctions in synonymous nominal constructions between British and American English?".

As such, this inquiry can aim to be ultimately subsumed to cultural linguistics, as discussed in Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2021), a pioneering interdisciplinary sub-branch of linguistics that explores the relationship between

language and cultural conceptualisations, building upon the overarching premise that language is firmly grounded in cultural cognition.

3 Theoretical Framework

The foundation of the cross-dialectal inquiry in this paper rests upon two key pillars: sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics. These pillars underpin and support the interpretation of language data, drawing upon their core principles and specialised concepts. In this section, we delve into how these pillars inform and fortify the present investigation.

On the one hand, sociolinguistics, as a field, investigates the relationship between language and society. Within the context of regional dialects and language varieties, sociolinguistics explores how language use is shaped by social factors such as region, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and education.

Language variety encompasses a broader range of linguistic forms, including regional dialects, sociolects (varieties associated with social groups), and ethnolects (varieties associated with ethnic or cultural groups). Varieties of English, such as BrE and AmE, are examples of distinct language varieties shaped by historical, cultural, and social factors.

Regional dialects refer to variations of a language that are associated with specific geographical areas. These dialects can differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, reflecting the diverse linguistic heritage of different regions. This paper, just like other sociolinguistic studies, assumes that regional dialects develop, evolve, and interact with other varieties of the language.

BrE and AmE are two major varieties of the English language, each with its own unique linguistic features, vocabulary, and pronunciation. These differences stem from historical developments and cultural influences. For example, BrE is influenced by the linguistic legacy of the British Empire, while AmE has been shaped by diverse immigrant populations and cultural exchanges.

The present sociolinguistic study examines some of the differences between BrE and AmE, as mirrored in the lexis and grammatical patterns unique to each variety. The dialectal dichotomies under investigation are studied using the lens of cognitive linguistics and its key assumptions.

On the other hand, cognitive linguistics is a branch of linguistics that investigates the relationship between language and cognition, or how language shapes and reflects thought processes. Unlike traditional structural linguistics, which often focused on syntax and grammar, cognitive linguistics considers language from the perspective of the human mind and its cognitive processes. It is a framework that has been termed “an enterprise” rather than a full-bodied theory, due to its puzzle-like and heterogeneous acceptance of theoretical claims, as manifested in prototype theory, conceptual metaphor and conceptual metonymy or cognitive grammar.

However, the diversity of approaches within cognitive linguistics is rooted in several common principles.

As a whole, cognitive linguistics provides a framework for understanding how language reflects and is shaped by human cognition, incorporating insights from psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, and philosophy, to study the intricate relationship between language, thought, and culture. It emphasises the idea that language is grounded in bodily experiences and perceptions, therefore suggesting that our understanding of abstract concepts is rooted in our sensory and motor experiences.

This paper is similar to other studies in sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics, aiming to analyse and understand the intricate interplay between language variation and social factors. Specifically, it investigates how regional dialects and language variety become manifest in British and American English, but, unlike previous studies, it draws on insights from cognitive linguistics to elucidate patterns and phenomena within a series of binary nominal sets.

4 Research Methodology

According to the cognitive linguistics tenets, meaning is encyclopaedic, not compositional, i.e. it is deeply rooted in our broader knowledge and experiences, not just in the syntactic combination of its parts. This concept shifts focus from traditional approaches that view meaning as a sum of its components to a more holistic understanding where context and background knowledge play a crucial role.

Fillmore (1975), in his frame semantics theory, drew attention to the wider body of knowledge which is activated in the process of understanding any concept. Furthering this key observation, Langacker (1990: 35) emphasised this perspective by stating that "meanings are always characterised relative to cognitive domains, i.e. knowledge structures or conceptual complexes of some kind". This assertion stems from the claim that our understanding of language is inseparable from our cognitive domains, i.e. vast networks of knowledge that include our perceptions, cultural context, personal experiences, and other conceptual frameworks.

For instance, let us consider the word *apple*. In a compositional view, its meaning might be derived from features like 'a type of fruit', 'round', 'red, yellow or green', etc. However, from an encyclopaedic perspective, *apple* brings to mind a wealth of associated knowledge and experiences: its taste, its role in the story of Adam and Eve, its symbolism in various cultures, its connection to health, and even modern associations like Apple Inc., the tech company. This encyclopaedic nature of meaning highlights that understanding language involves accessing a rich tapestry of related concepts and experiences stored in our cognitive domains. Thus, language comprehension is a dynamic and context-sensitive process, reflecting the intricate interplay between linguistic expressions and our extensive background knowledge.

According to Langacker (1990: 99), "[s]emantic structure is conceptualisation tailored to the specifications of linguistic convention. Semantic

analysis therefore requires the explicit characterisation of conceptual structure". This means that the way we understand and use meanings in language is shaped by our mental processes and conforms to established linguistic norms. To analyse meaning effectively, we must clearly describe these underlying conceptual structures.

A useful tool for such analysis is the profile/ base theory (Langacker 1987, 1990, 2013; Cruse 2004; Evans and Green 2006; Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007; Evans 2019). This theory helps explicate the semantic structure by differentiating between the profile and the base of a concept. The profile is the specific aspect of a concept that is highlighted or brought into focus by a word or expression. It is what the word specifically refers to in each context. The base is the broader conceptual background or context that supports and gives meaning to the profile. It includes all the relevant knowledge and associations that are necessary to fully understand the profile. For instance, let us consider the word *hypotenuse* in geometry. The profile is the hypotenuse itself – the longest side of a right-angled triangle. However, to understand what a hypotenuse is, one needs the base, which includes the entire conceptual structure of a right-angled triangle, the Pythagorean theorem, and basic geometric principles. Further examples are provided in Cruse (2004: 138).

Tackling the sensitive issue of grammatical categories, cognitive grammar is also concerned with the identification of basic classes, defining a noun as "a symbolic structure whose semantic pole designates a thing" (Langacker 1987: 183). In traditional grammar, a compound noun with an endocentric structure comprises a head and a dependent (a modifier). In cognitive grammar, however, the head of the construction has been called profile determinant (Langacker 1987: 235).

By distinguishing between profile and base and discussing the linguistic layer implications, the analysis of the selected nominal pairs is meant to seek evidence related to how meanings are constructed and understood. It emphasises that meaning is not isolated but is instead embedded in a network of related concepts. This approach helps to reveal the richness and complexity of semantic structures, showing how specific aspects of our knowledge are highlighted and contextualised within larger cognitive domains. What is more, the profile/ base framework also illustrates that different linguistic expressions can profile and make salient different aspects of the same base. This offshoot makes the theory compatible with the analysis of text-image interrelationships. Following Langacker (1987: 110), image is understood herein as "our ability to construe a conceived situation in alternate ways […] for purposes of thought or expression".

The cognitive linguistics framework will be applied to a selection of binary sets collected from usage guidebooks that instruct readers as to the differences and similarities between BrE and AmE (Davidson 2004; Davies 2005; Dervaes & Hunter 2012). They are meant to serve as a practical guide for travellers, expatriates, students, and professionals who need to navigate the differences for effective communication. Tips for writing, speaking, and understanding both variants are offered in listed or explanatory form. The audience comprises non-native speakers who need to adapt to different English-speaking environments, teachers, linguists, and language learners who are studying the distinctions and evolution of English

language variants, or writers, editors, translators, and journalists who need to ensure their work adheres to the appropriate variant of English for their audience. Apart from clarification of expected British versus American English counterparts in multiple areas such as spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, these guidebooks hint at the encyclopaedic aspect of meaning by addressing usage in connection with the practical and cultural context.

In line with the aim of investigating nominal constructions in cognitive terms, the present paper applies the profile/ base theory to a sampling of BrE and AmE nominals. The examples below belong to the corpus extracted from the usage guides mentioned above and are illustrative of different patterns that underlie the profile/ base interactions and the corresponding interdialectal or cross-dialectal meanings, selected on the basis of salience (what features are made prominent) and cognitive construal (how concepts are framed and interpreted).

5 Results and Interpretation

In cognitive grammar terms, a noun profiles a thing, even though things are not limited to objects or physical entities. The present section explores the nature of noun pairings from a cognitive perspective. Pairs of synonyms are semantically distinct in that they encompass substantially different images, even though they could be used interchangeably and effectively in describing a situation. The results encompass analyses of both simple and compound noun structures, reflecting how the nouns integrate alternate profiles onto bases.

From the perspective of profile/ base theory, *pants* and *trousers* in BrE and AmE highlight different aspects of clothing based on regional usage. In BrE, *trousers* profile the outer garment for the lower body, while *pants* profile undergarments. In American English, *pants* profile the outer garment for the lower body, with *trousers* used less frequently and often in more formal contexts. These differences reflect cultural and regional preferences in terminology and can lead to potential misunderstandings when the terms are used across these varieties of English. Therefore, the reader is advised to replace the AmE terms *vest, suspenders* and *pants* with *waistcoat, suspenders* and *trousers* in the UK (Davies 2005: 103). The terms *pants* and *trousers* are dialectal synonyms in that they realise the same profile against the same base (garment), but within BrE *pants* and *trousers* are not synonymous since their profiles are projected against different bases (undergarment and garment, respectively).

In the field of food and drinks, the pairs *cider/ apple cider* and *sweet corn/ corn* are worth discussing. According to Davies (2005: 222), *cider* in BrE and AmE highlights different aspects of the beverage based on regional usage. In BrE, *cider* unambiguously profiles the alcoholic beverage made from fermented apples. In AmE, *cider* can refer to both non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks, requiring context or additional qualifiers to clarify its meaning. *Apple cider* specifically profiles the non-alcoholic version, whereas *hard cider* profiles the alcoholic version. As for the

other pair, when a British person uses the term *corn*, they might be referring to any cereal grain, typically wheat or oats, leading to potential confusion for Americans, who associate *corn* specifically with maize. In BrE, *sweet corn* specifically points out the sweet, edible variety of maize, while *corn* is a more generic term that can refer to various cereal grains (Davies 2005: 222). Both pairs exhibit a variation in conceptualisation due to the scale of the base. The base is more inclusive in AmE (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks for *cider*) and less inclusive in the case of *corn* (maize, not any other cereal). Hence, the profiles are divergent. The regional linguistic preferences are manifestations of diverse construal and potential misunderstandings when the terms are used across these varieties of English.

Applying the profile/ base theory to equivalent compound nouns in BrE and AmE can further elucidate the different cognitive frameworks underlying the terms, namely the factors that may affect the combinations base/profile and their interpretations within and across dialects.

Directory inquiries (BrE) and *directory assistance or directory information* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 14) both utilise the base concept of a telephone directory but highlight different substructures: the British term emphasises the agent-initiated act of making *inquiries*, while the American terms focus on the significance of the process (*assistance*) or the outcome (*information*). Similarly, a *fold-up bed* in BrE results from an egressive profile, focusing on the bed's final compact state, whereas the American *rollaway bed* highlights the inchoative profile, emphasising the initial action of rolling the bed away (Davies 2005: 9).

The pairs *communicating* door (BrE)/ *connecting door* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 9), and *removal van* (BrE)/ *moving van* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 62) exhibit a variance at the level of specificity of the profile. While *communicate* covers a broad array of informational exchanges, *connect* is more specific to forming deeper, more personal relationships; furthermore, *move* is a more generic term referring to any change in position or state, while *remove* is more specific, referring to the act of taking something away from its current place.

The pair *single bed* (BrE) and *twin bed* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 9) will be understood through distinct conceptual domains as bases. The term *single* typically relates to marital or romantic relationships, while *twin* pertains to family connections, specifically siblings born from the same pregnancy. Each profile term has a specific context that identifies a key individual: for *single bed*, it is the spouse or partner, and for *twin bed*, it is the twin sibling. Thus, the pair manages to connect to the same referent via alternative conceptualisations. In the same way, the term *double* in *double bed* (BrE) indeed suggests multiplication, implying that the bed is designed to accommodate two people. The modifier *double* focuses on the idea of doubling or pairing, indicating a bed size suitable for two individuals. In contrast, *full-size* emphasises enlargement or completeness. The profile in *full-size bed* (AmE) suggests a bed that is larger or more spacious compared to other sizes. It conveys the idea of fullness or completeness in terms of size. Thus, both terms, *double bed* and *full-size bed*, are grounded in the idea of extension, but they emphasise different aspects of size and capacity.

The term *ground floor* in BrE (Davidson 2004: 39) profiles the level of a building directly at ground level, with the base being the physical structure of the building in relation to the ground, making the ground itself the primary landmark. In contrast, *first floor* in AmE profiles the first level above the ground floor, with the base being the sequential order of floors in a building, making the sequence of levels the primary landmark. This difference in cognitive framing highlights how BrE emphasises the physical relationship to the ground, while AmE focuses on the internal sequence of floors, thus explaining why the same physical level is referred to differently in the two varieties of English.

Profiling involves emphasising certain aspects or characteristics of an object, either physical or non-physical, depending on what is most salient or relevant in a given context. For instance, *jacket potatoes* (BrE) and *baked potatoes* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 24) focus either on the potatoes' physical attributes or the cooking process. Similarly, *spring onion* (BrE) highlights the time of year when the onion is grown, shifting attention away from its colour, as seen in the alternative term *green onion* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 35). In the case of *double cream* (BrE) and *heavy cream* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 36), the former profiles the extensive procedure of fat extraction, emphasising the fat content, whereas the latter simply describes the cream's richness. The terms *golden syrup* (BrE) and *pancake syrup* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 36) illustrate how the intended purpose (*pancake syrup*) takes precedence over physical characteristics (*golden syrup*) in one dialect. Lastly, *unmade road* (BrE) and *dirt road* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 63) demonstrate a focus on the unrealized state of development (*unmade road*) versus the physical state (*dirt road*). These examples show how profiling is successful in directing our attention to different facets of an object or concept, shaping our understanding and interpretation based on what is considered most relevant.

Purpose is another element that acts as one of the profiled elements in a few functionally equivalent doublets. Applying the profile-base theory, the pair *number plate* (BrE) and *license plate* (AmE) (Davidson 2004: 58) reveals nuanced distinctions in conceptual focus within the domain of vehicle identification. *Number plate* emphasises the profile of numerical identification, suggesting a plate primarily designated for displaying a unique numerical sequence for identification purposes. Conversely, *license plate* shifts the focus to the base of legal authorisation or permission, suggesting a plate granted by authorities for legal recognition and registration of a vehicle. Both terms are grounded in the broader concept of vehicle identification, but highlight different aspects: the former centres on numerical identification, while the latter emphasises legal authorisation and compliance with regulations. Similarly, the pair *wing mirror* (BrE) and *side-view mirror* (AmE) (Dervaes, & Hunter 2012: 63) reflects subtle differences in the conceptualisation of vehicular mirrors. *Wing mirror* highlights the profile of the mirror's position on the vehicle's wing or fender, emphasising its location and function for visibility. However, *side-view mirror* suggests a mirror designed specifically for lateral observation and situational awareness. Both terms relate to providing visibility from

the side of the vehicle, but emphasise different aspects: the former highlights the mirror's physical location, while the latter emphasises its observational function.

In the next pairs, the user serves as a profile, highlighting the intended purpose or end-user of the product, design or amenity. On the one hand, the intended purpose of the van for camping or recreational travel is emphasised in *camper van* (BrE) (Davies 2005: 64). On the other hand, highlighting the process of converting a standard van into a customised vehicle with added features and amenities, such as sleeping accommodations, seating arrangements, and storage compartments, results in the coinage of *conversion van* (AmE). The pair *turtle-neck* (BrE)*/ crew neck* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 175) hinges on the base collar style. The design of the neckline, with a higher, folded collar that covers more of the neck emerges as the profile of a *turtle-neck*, while a *crew neck*, featuring a rounded, collarless design typically associated with casual or everyday clothing, is the term that profiles the typical user substructure. The term *zebra crossing* (BrE) (Dervaes & Hunter 2012: 64) specifically profiles the visual appearance of the crossing. The focus is on the distinctive broad white stripes that resemble a zebra's coat, which are designed to be highly visible to both pedestrians and drivers. This profile highlights the method of ensuring pedestrian safety through visual cues. The term *pedestrian crossing* (AmE) is, however, more generic and profiles the user and purpose of the crossing rather than its specific design. It encompasses all types of crossings designated for pedestrian use, not only the zebra crossing.

Pairs in which the container becomes the profile of one of the functional equivalents have also been noticed. For example, *salt cellar* (BrE) and *salt shaker* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 25) rely on different construal. The compound *salt cellar* likely derives from the combination of *salt*, referring to the seasoning, and *cellar*, referring to a storage place or container. *Cellar* originally referred to an underground storage area, typically used for storing food or wine. Over time, the term came to be used more broadly for any storage container or compartment, but it still reflects traditional dining practices. The combination of these two words likely arose from the practice of storing salt in containers placed on dining tables, particularly in wealthy households where salt was presented in a decorative and often ornate manner. Over time, the term *salt cellar* became standardized to refer to these containers specifically designed for holding and dispensing salt at the dining table. In *salt shaker*, the profile could be dispensing mechanism or modern convenience. The focus shifts to the mechanism used for dispensing salt, typically a container with small holes and a perforated lid for controlled sprinkling, a construal underlying contemporary preferences for easy and controlled salt distribution.

Alternatively, content is profiled in a number of noun phrases, such as *Christmas pudding* (BrE)*/ plum pudding* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 36), *deposit account* (BrE)*/ savings account* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 21). *Christmas pudding* places emphasis on the holiday tradition and festivity, suggesting a pudding traditionally consumed during the Christmas season. The profile is grounded in cultural practices and celebrations surrounding Christmas, emphasising the time of year and associated rituals. Nevertheless, *plum pudding* diverts focus to the ingredients and historical

origins of the dessert. The profile highlights the use of dried fruits, particularly plums, in the pudding, suggesting a specific recipe or culinary tradition. Similarly, *deposit account* emphasises the action of placing money into an account for safekeeping or investment purposes. The profile determinant *deposit* suggests a broad category of financial accounts that accept deposits. Alternatively, the wording *savings account* reorients speakers to the purpose and intended use of the account. The profile highlights the account holder's intention to save money over time, suggesting a specific type of deposit account designed for this purpose.

Origin is an attention-grabbing device that is profiled in cuisine terminology. For example, the series *caster sugar* (BrE)*/ castor sugar* (BrE)*/ icing sugar* (BrE)*/ superfine (sugar)* (AmE) */ baker's sugar* (AmE) */ confectioners' sugar* (AmE)*/ powdered sugar* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 35) associates to the base concept sweetener several profiles that showcase the operation (*to cast/ to ice*) or a typical user (*confectioner/ baker*) or physical form, especially granularity (*superfine/ powdered*). Origin and content feature predominantly, in turn, in the pair *Swiss roll* (BrE) */ jelly roll* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 36). The profile for *Swiss roll* is the cultural origin association, whereas for *jelly roll* it is the type of filling. In both cases, the base is a rolled sponge cake filled with something sweet.

Gerunds, acting as nominal substitutes, may rely on alternative construal as well. From the perspective of profile/ base theory, *drink driving* (BrE) and *drunk driving* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 61) highlight different aspects of the same underlying situation. *Drink driving* profiles the combined actions of drinking and driving, while *drunk driving* profiles the state of intoxication and its impact on driving. *Drink driving* may suggest that drinking and driving are happening in close temporal proximity, possibly simultaneously. *Drunk driving* focuses on the result of the drinking (intoxication) and its impact on the driving behaviour, irrespective of when the drinking occurred. *Drink driving* can imply a more active role in the combination of drinking and driving, potentially highlighting the decision-making process involved in both actions. *Drunk driving* emphasises the state of intoxication, which might be construed as more passive, focusing on the outcome rather than the actions leading to it. In some regions, *drink driving* is the preferred term and may be used in legal contexts to specifically describe the offense of driving after consuming alcohol. *Drunk driving* is more commonly used in AmE and often carries a strong negative connotation, emphasising the irresponsibility and danger associated with the condition of being drunk while driving. These differences in construal can influence how the actions are perceived, judged, and addressed in legal, social, and cultural contexts.

The synonymic pair *double declutch* (BrE)*/ double clutch* (AmE) (Davies 2005: 65) is due to a complementary view on a driving technique used primarily in manual transmission vehicles to match the engine speed with the transmission speed during gear changes. The base is represented by the broader scenario of shifting gears in a manual transmission vehicle. From a technical perspective, *double declutch* puts more emphasis on the declutching action, highlighting the importance of disengaging the clutch twice; however, *double clutch* lays more emphasis on the

overall clutch operation, encompassing both the disengagement and engagement phases, thus presenting a broader view of the clutch mechanism. *Double declutch* is often used in BrE and regions where the focus is on the precise mechanical action of declutching. It may be preferred by those who want to emphasise the intermediate step of disengaging the clutch. *Double clutch* is more commonly used in AmE and tends to emphasise the entire process of using the clutch twice. It is often used by those who want to describe the complete clutching cycle in a more straightforward manner.

The nominal pairs investigated so far confirm that "[t]wo images of the same situation may differ as to which features of it are selected for explicit attention, the relative salience of these features, the level of abstractness or specificity at which it is treated, the perspective from which it is viewed, and so on", as already predicted by Langacker (1987: 110). What were traditionally synonyms across the two selected dialects are, in fact, "expressions that are often functionally equivalent but nonetheless different in meaning by virtue of the contrasting images they convey" (Langacker 1987: 111). It may be contended that the traditional view on such dialectal counterparts as synonyms, i.e. words and expressions with almost identical meaning, should be reworked into a claim that they are potentially functionally equivalent, although that is not always true, and that the meaning of each nominal phrase is conceptually differently delineated from that of its counterpart.

6 Conclusions

This study has explored the intersection of sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics through an investigation into dialectal variation within English nominal structures. By adopting a conceptualist semantics viewpoint, the research departed from traditional objectivist approaches, emphasising the human capacity to construe situations and project varied mental images. Grammar and lexicon were viewed as interconnected within symbolic structures, wherein conceptual and phonological components merge.

Through analysis of AmE and BrE doublets extracted from usage guidebooks, the study demonstrated how speakers of different dialects utilise alternative terms and phrases to convey nuanced meanings. These findings underscored the richness and complexity of dialectal variation, highlighting the concealed construal that shapes discourse and reflects embodied cognition.

Central to this exploration was the application of the base/ profile theory, which elucidated how seemingly synonymous nouns in different dialects actually highlight distinct aspects of underlying concepts. The variations are driven by what each dialect makes salient and how the shared base concepts are construed differently across regional and cultural contexts. This approach rethinks traditional notions of synonymy by emphasising the nuanced cognitive and semantic distinctions that exist between British and American English nominal constructions.

This cognitive linguistic approach offers a framework for understanding subtle semantic differences and functional equivalences across dialectal boundaries.

In conclusion, this research advances our understanding of language variation by integrating sociolinguistic insights with cognitive linguistic perspectives. By recognising the dynamic interplay between language structure, conceptualisation, and cultural context, it underscores the importance of studying language diversity not merely as a matter of lexical choice, but as a window into how speakers construct meaning and negotiate identities within linguistic communities. Future studies could further explore how these insights apply to other languages and linguistic phenomena, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of language variation and cognition.

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