

STYLISTIC AND SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS OF PERIPHRAISIS IN AGRICULTURAL LEXICON

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Abstract

This paper investigates the stylistic and semantic functions of periphrasis within the agricultural lexicon in English. Periphrasis, defined as the use of multi-word expressions to convey concepts, plays a crucial role in enhancing clarity, precision, and stylistic richness in specialized discourse. Through the analysis of English agricultural terminology, this study demonstrates how periphrastic constructions contribute to the comprehension and effective communication of complex agricultural concepts.

Keywords

periphrasis, agricultural lexicon, stylistic function, semantic function, English, terminology, noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective + noun phrases, precision, cognitive support, specialized vocabulary, technical communication.

Agricultural lexicon represents a highly specialized subset of vocabulary dedicated to the precise description of processes, tools, organisms, and phenomena associated with farming, crop production, and livestock management. This domain-specific vocabulary is crucial for effective communication among professionals in agronomy, horticulture, animal husbandry, and related fields. In English, agricultural terminology frequently employs periphrastic expressions to articulate complex ideas that may not have concise single-word equivalents. The strategic use of periphrasis not only conveys nuanced and detailed meaning but also introduces stylistic diversity, thereby enhancing clarity and effectiveness in both oral and written communication within academic, technical, and professional contexts.

Periphrasis refers to the linguistic phenomenon where a concept is expressed through multiple words instead of a single lexical item. In specialized lexicons, such as those in agriculture, periphrastic constructions facilitate specificity, differentiation, and the communication of subtle distinctions. This is particularly

important when describing processes, equipment, or biological entities that are not commonly known or lack standardized nomenclature. Historical linguists, including Jespersen (1922) and Blumfield (1933), emphasize that periphrasis serves dual functions: semantically, it ensures precise and unambiguous meaning, while stylistically, it enriches language by introducing expressive depth, variation, and rhetorical sophistication.

The adoption of periphrastic expressions in agricultural discourse addresses the inherent challenges of technical communication, where single-word terms often fail to capture the complexity of modern farming practices, biotechnological innovations, and integrated management systems. For example, instead of using a broad term like “fertilization,” a periphrastic expression such as “the controlled application of nutrient-rich organic and inorganic materials to enhance soil fertility” communicates specific methods, conditions, and intended outcomes, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding.

Moreover, periphrasis enhances linguistic creativity and flexibility, enabling agricultural scientists, educators, and practitioners to introduce novel concepts, describe emerging technologies, and document experimental procedures with accuracy. In academic publications, detailed periphrastic constructions allow authors to define terminology within context, guide readers through complex procedures, and avoid misinterpretation. This careful elaboration also supports the standardization of technical language, contributing to the clarity of research dissemination and knowledge transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Periphrastic structures are particularly valuable when describing complex biological processes, such as “the gradual decomposition of organic matter in anaerobic soil conditions to produce bioavailable nutrients” or “the integration of precision irrigation techniques with automated soil moisture monitoring for optimized crop yield.” In equipment and machinery lexicon, periphrasis allows for accurate description of multi-functional devices, for instance, “mechanical soil tilling apparatus equipped with adjustable depth control and automated seed dispersal system.” Furthermore, periphrasis aids in specifying organizational and procedural contexts in agricultural management. Terms like “a coordinated rotational grazing plan for sustainable pasture management” or “the systematic monitoring of crop health using remote sensing and aerial imaging technology” exemplify how multi-word expressions facilitate detailed communication about strategies and operational procedures. Additionally, periphrasis plays a significant role in the education and training of agricultural professionals. By providing explicit and descriptive multi-word terms, instructors can ensure that students

understand not only the object or process but also its function, methodology, and potential applications. This is especially crucial in the dissemination of modern agricultural innovations, including precision farming, agroecology practices, and integrated pest management strategies, where accurate understanding is critical for implementation.

In cross-linguistic contexts, such as comparing English and Uzbek agricultural terminology, periphrastic constructions serve similar purposes. Uzbek, like English, uses multi-word expressions to describe processes, machinery, and techniques, demonstrating that periphrasis is a universal strategy in technical lexicons. For example, the Uzbek periphrastic term “tuproq namligini va ozuqa moddasini oʻlchash qurilmasi” directly parallels the English expression “device for measuring soil moisture and nutrient content,” showing the transferability and functionality of periphrastic structures across languages.

Stylistic Functions of Periphrasis in Agricultural Lexicon
Stylistically, periphrasis enables:

- Emphasis: Highlighting the significance of processes or objects. Example: “the process of soil nutrient replenishment” instead of simply “fertilization”.

- Elaboration: Providing detailed descriptive information. Example: “a device for measuring soil moisture and nutrient levels” instead of just “soil meter”.

- Expressive Variation: Enhancing the rhetorical quality of scientific writing and reports. Example: “the management of pest populations through integrated biological methods” instead of “pest control”.

These stylistic functions allow agricultural professionals to communicate complex processes clearly and persuasively, ensuring that technical information is accessible to diverse audiences.

Semantically, periphrasis provides:

- Precision: Clarifying the meaning of technical terms. Example: “irrigation system designed for controlled water distribution” vs. “sprinkler”.

- Disambiguation: Differentiating between similar concepts. Example: “mechanical harvesting device for cereals” vs. “mechanical harvester”.

- Cognitive Aid: Supporting understanding of complex procedures. Example: “the process of crop rotation for soil health maintenance”.

By expanding single lexical items into multi-word expressions, periphrasis enriches the semantic field, allowing speakers to encode specific and contextually relevant information.

Periphrastic constructions in English agricultural lexicon can be categorized as:

- Noun phrases: “high-yield crop variety”, “mechanical soil tilling device”.

-Verb phrases: “to prepare the field for sowing”, “to monitor pest populations in the greenhouse”.

-Adjective + noun phrases: “controlled-environment agriculture”, “disease-resistant wheat strain”.

These constructions are particularly useful when introducing new technologies, methods, or crops where a single word does not exist in the language. Although this paper focuses on English, comparative studies indicate that Uzbek agricultural terminology employs similar periphrastic structures. In Uzbek, periphrasis allows detailed description of processes, objects, and roles within agriculture, demonstrating that periphrasis serves universal linguistic and cognitive functions across languages. Example: “tuproq namligini va ozuqa moddasini o‘lchash qurilmasi” parallels the English “device for measuring soil moisture and nutrient content”.

Periphrasis in the agricultural lexicon serves essential stylistic and semantic functions. Stylistically, it adds emphasis, elaboration, and expressive variety; semantically, it provides precision, disambiguation, and cognitive support. In specialized agricultural discourse, periphrastic constructions are indispensable tools for effective communication, knowledge transfer, and education. Understanding their formation and function is vital for professionals, translators, and lexicographers.

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