

Describing Deliciousness: A Cross-Linguistic Analysis of European Pear Reviews in Japanese and English

Nobuyo Fukaya

Faculty of Agro-Food Science, Niigata Agro-Food University, Niigata, Japan

Email: nobuyo-fukaya@nafu.ac.jp

Manuscript received November 28, 2025; accepted February 9, 2026; published April 28, 2026

Abstract—This study investigates cross-cultural differences in the linguistic expression of pear deliciousness, focusing on reviews written by Japanese and American consumers. While general evaluative terms such as “delicious” are common, more precise descriptions often refer to specific sensory attributes, including appearance, smell, flavor, and texture. Online reviews of European pears from Japan (Rakuten) and the United States (Walmart) were analyzed to identify differences in sensory vocabulary. Japanese reviewers emphasized softness (46% of texture-related comments) and smell, whereas American reviewers highlighted juiciness (48% of texture-related comments) and firmness. To explore the underlying reasons for these differences, a supplementary analysis of Japanese pears (*nashi*) reviews was conducted. Japanese pears differ from European pears not only in flavor but also in shape, being round rather than oblong. Japanese reviewers frequently described Japanese pears as juicy and refreshing, suggesting that their perception of European pears as “soft” may reflect a cultural benchmark based on the crisp, juicy texture of domestic pears. These findings indicate that cultural background shapes the sensory vocabulary used in food reviews, highlighting the importance of culturally informed approaches to understanding consumer perception and language use in the context of food evaluation.

Keywords—consumer reviews, pear, texture, juicy, sensory evaluation

I. INTRODUCTION

When describing the deliciousness of food, people often rely on general expressions such as *delicious* or *good*. However, deliciousness can be conveyed more precisely by referring to specific sensory attributes, such as flavor, texture, and smell. For example, adjectives like *sweet*, *crunchy*, *soft*, and *fresh* are frequently used to communicate more detailed impressions [1].

However, communicating the deliciousness of food is more challenging than conveying the excellence of music or art [2]. While music and art can be experienced simultaneously by multiple people in the same space, the sensation of deliciousness is internal and subjective, occurring inside the mouth during the act of chewing and mixing food with saliva. This makes it difficult to directly share the same experience with others. For this reason, various studies have explored ways to share the taste of food. For example, an app called TasteReel allows users to visualize and share flavors such as sweetness during a meal [3]. Other research has examined how sharing food contributes positively to social and emotional well-being [4, 5].

From a linguistic perspective, several studies have investigated how deliciousness is expressed. For example, Ohashi (2010) [6] visualized the degree of perceived deliciousness using 220 Japanese expressions.

Ariyasriwatana and Quiroga (2016) [7] compiled a wide range of expressions describing deliciousness from restaurant reviews. Additionally, several studies have focused on Japanese onomatopoeia related to taste and texture. For instance, Ohashi (2016) [8] showed diachronic changes concerning Japanese onomatopoeic expressions, while Matsuo (2014) [9] examined the manga *Oishinbo* to analyze the rich descriptive language used to convey sensory experiences of deliciousness. Despite these contributions, little research has investigated the typical expressions used to describe specific types of food or conducted cross-linguistic comparisons of such expressions.

This study focuses on pears, because Niigata Prefecture, where my university is located, is known not only for Japanese pears (*nashi*) but also as a major producer of Le Lectier, a variety of European pear. According to *Kudamono Navi*, Niigata ranks seventh nationwide in combined shipment volume of Japanese and European pears, shipping approximately 11,470 tons annually—including approximately 2110 tons of European pears, which places it second in the country for European pear shipments [10].

As a first step, this research concentrates on European pears, comparing consumer reviews written by Japanese and American consumers. It addresses the following research questions:

Research Question 1: When comparing consumer reviews written by Japanese and American reviewers, what are the linguistic differences in their descriptions of European pears?

Research Question 2: What factors might account for the differences identified in RQ1?

To address these questions, Section II reviews relevant literature, including Muto (2016, 2020), who conducted a comprehensive analysis of texture expressions [1, 11] and Fukaya (2024) [12], who compared Japanese and English reviews of Japanese rice. Section II presents the methods and results of the current analysis of pear reviews. Section IV discusses the linguistic patterns found in the reviews in light of the research questions. Finally, Section V concludes the paper and offers suggestions for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Muto

1) Muto (2016)

Muto (2016) [11] investigates how native English speakers express the concept of deliciousness and compares these expressions with those used in Japanese. The study analyzes the linguistic and cultural factors that influence the description of taste and food enjoyment in both languages. Specifically, Muto examines expressions related to a variety

of common foods and dishes, including fruits, sweets, and traditional meals, to capture a broad spectrum of sensory experiences.

In the study, students at the University of Hawaii were asked to freely describe expressions related to both deliciousness and unpleasantness for 204 different food items. The results revealed that frequently used expressions were “sweet”, “crunchy”, “soft”, “salty”, and “tasty”. Although the research covered a wide range of foods, it did not analyze the characteristics of expressions specific to individual foods.

Muto also discussed how cultural attitudes toward food and eating influenced these linguistic patterns. This comparative analysis contributed to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic variation in the expression of taste and provided valuable insight into how language reflected cultural values related to food.

2) Muto (2020)

A notable study by Muto (2020) [11] compared expressions of deliciousness across several Asian languages. The study investigated Thai, Korean, and Chinese, covering a total of 204 food items. Participants were asked to select 68 foods from the 204 items and freely describe their taste experiences for each selected food. Results showed that in all three languages, synesthetic metaphors from texture to taste were the most frequently used expressions, followed by expressions related to sweetness. This suggests a common tendency across these languages to describe taste experiences through multi-sensory language, particularly emphasizing texture.

3) Unexplored Aspects of Food Expression

While Muto’s studies are highly valuable in that they cover a large number of food items and provide cross-linguistic comparisons, their primary focus is on common patterns across languages. As a result, she does not offer a detailed analysis of specific expressions used for individual foods. In other words, although these studies reveal general tendencies in describing taste experiences, the nuances of how particular foods are linguistically characterized within a single language remain unexplored. This gap highlights the need for further research that examines food-specific expressions in greater detail.

B. Fukaya (2024)

Table 1. Consumer reviews of *Koshihikari* rice

	Amazon JP	Amazon USA
Appearance	15	6
Smell	7	3
Flavor	14	15
Texture	14	26
Total	50	50

Fukaya [12] investigated how Japanese and American consumers describe the taste of Japanese rice through the analysis of online reviews. Specifically, Fukaya collected 50 of the most recent reviews, each from Amazon Japan and Amazon USA, and categorized expressions of deliciousness into four sensory dimensions: appearance, smell, flavor, and texture. The findings, summarized in Table 1, revealed a notable difference between the 2 groups: while Japanese reviewers tended to use expressions related to appearance, flavor, and texture in roughly equal proportions, American

reviewers used texture-related expressions in about half of the cases.

Fukaya also conducted a similar analysis of Thai rice, following the same methodology. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Consumer reviews of *Jasmine* rice

	Amazon JP	Amazon USA
Appearance	2	1
Smell	29	13
Flavor	4	22
Texture	15	14
Total	50	50

Unlike Japanese rice, Thai rice elicited different descriptive tendencies: approximately 30% of the expressions written by Japanese reviewers referred to smell, whereas flavor was most frequently used by American reviewers. This suggests that people tend to focus on specific sensory attributes when describing certain foods, and that these tendencies are not universal, but may vary across cultures and regions, especially when the food originates from abroad. Since Fukaya’s study was limited to rice, it remains unclear whether similar patterns would emerge for other food items.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Data Sources

To analyze consumer perceptions of European pears, I collected online reviews from 2 major e-commerce platforms: Rakuten (Japan) and Walmart (USA). Each platform hosts multiple product pages for fresh pears. I selected products with a high number of reviews and high ratings. The selected products and their average ratings are listed in 1):

- 1) Japan (Rakuten): Nagano European Pears–4.6/5
- USA (Walmart): Fresh Pears Bartlett Bulk–3.2/5

All reviews were collected from publicly available product pages between May and July 2025.

B. Method

Reviews were filtered based on high ratings (≥ 4.0 in Japan, ≥ 3.0 in the USA), and the most recent reviews were prioritized to focus specifically on expressions of deliciousness.

From the collected reviews, expressions describing the sensory experience of pears were manually extracted. Each expression was then categorized into 4 sensory dimensions—appearance, smell, flavor, and texture—following the semantic criteria established by the National Agriculture and Food Research Organization (2023) [13]. In total, 50 reviews in Japanese and 50 reviews in English were collected and analyzed.

For data analysis, the frequency of expressions within each sensory category was compared across languages and fruit types using chi-square tests to determine statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$). The effect size for significant differences was reported using Cramér’s V, and the results were visualized using bar graphs and percentages to illustrate cross-cultural tendencies in sensory expression.

C. Data Analysis

The collected expressions were categorized into the 4 sensory dimensions. Table 3 shows the distribution of

sensory-related expressions in Japanese and English.

Table 3. Distribution of sensory-related expressions

	Japanese	Americans
Appearance	10	11
Smell	6	0
Flavor	21	18
Texture	13	21
total	50	50

As the table shows, flavor was frequently mentioned in both languages, with Japanese reviews showing a slightly higher number (21 vs. 18). Japanese users often focused on sweetness, using expressions such as 2):

- 2) a. とっても甘い (*tottemo amai*)
 very sweet
 b. さっぱりとした甘さ (*sappari to shita amasa*)
 refreshing sweetness

Similarly, of the 18 flavor-related expressions in the English reviews, 14 explicitly referred to the pears as sweet.

Texture was more emphasized in the English data (21 vs. 13). Common English expressions are shown in 3):

- 3) a. Very juicy.
 b. These pears were plump and succulent!

Japanese reviews also mentioned texture, as in (4):

- 4) a. とろけるよう (*torokeru you*)
 It's like melting
 b. やわらかい (*yawarakai*)
 It's soft

Appearance was mentioned with similar frequency in both languages. Examples are given in 5) for Japanese and 6) for English.

- 5) a. 大きく綺麗 (*Okiku kirei*)
 It's big and beautiful.
 b. 見た目も綺麗だ (*Mitame mo kirei da*)
 It looks beautiful too.
 6) a. These pears were plump.
 b. Great freshness

Smell, however, was mentioned only in the Japanese reviews (six instances), with expressions shown in 7):

- 7) a. 芳醇な香り (*Hojun na kaori*)
Rich fragrance
 b. いい匂い (*Ii nioi*)
Good smell

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To address RQ1, this study focuses on 2 sensory categories—smell and texture—where the linguistic differences between Japanese and American reviewers were most pronounced.

A. Research Question 1

Research Question 1: When comparing consumer reviews written by Japanese and American reviewers, what are the linguistic differences in their descriptions of European pears?

The most striking difference was observed in the smell category. Japanese reviewers frequently used smell-related expressions (6 instances), as in 7). By contrast, none of the English reviews referred to smell.

In terms of texture, Japanese and American reviewers emphasized different qualities. Among the Japanese reviews, 6 out of 13 texture-related comments (46%) described pears as soft or melting in the mouth, as in 8).

- 8) a. 柔らかくて美味しかったです. (*Yawarakakute oishikatta desu.*)
 It was soft and delicious.
 b. とろけるような舌触り. (*Torokeru you na shitazawari.*)
 It had a melt-in-the-mouth texture.

Meanwhile, in the English reviews, 10 out of 21 texture-related comments (47%) used descriptors such as juicy or succulent, as in 9).

- 9) a. Very juicy.
 b. These pears were plump and succulent!

Interestingly, several American reviewers expressed a preference for firmness, using words such as crunchy or firm, as in (10).

- 10) a. Tasty, crunchy.
 b. The pears were fresh and firm to touch.

B. Research Question 2

Reviews from Japanese and American consumers revealed differences in how they perceive the texture of pears. A key question that arises is: Why do Japanese people tend to perceive European pears as soft? To explore this, I conducted a supplementary analysis of reviews of Japanese pears (*nashi*). Japanese pears differ from European pears not only in flavor but also in appearance: they are typically round, while European pears have a gourd-like shape with a narrower top and broader bottom.

Research Question 2: What factors might account for the differences identified in RQ1?

To address RQ2, this study investigates why Japanese consumers tend to perceive European pears as soft and melting. Japanese pears (*nashi*) are less familiar outside Japan; as shown in Fig. 1, they have a round shape, which contrasts with the elongated form of European pears.



Fig. 1 Japanese pear.

A supplementary analysis was conducted on reviews of Japanese pears, following the same methodology applied to European pears. Fifty reviews of Japanese pears were collected from Rakuten in August 2025. Expressions of deliciousness were categorized into four sensory domains (appearance, smell, flavor, and texture), in line with Fukaya [12]. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of sensory-related expressions concerning Japanese pears by Japanese consumers

	Japanese pears	European pears
Appearance	14	10
Smell	0	6
Flavor	17	21
Texture	19	13
Total	50	50

Chi-square tests confirmed these patterns, as summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of the main descriptors and their proportions within each group

Fruit	Reviewer	Main Descriptor	Proportion
Japanese pear	Japanese	Refreshing / Juicy	16/19 ≈ 84%
European pear	Japanese	Soft	6/13 ≈ 46%
European pear	Americans	Juicy	10/21 ≈ 48%

For Japanese consumers, the proportion of “juicy/refreshing” descriptors was significantly higher for Japanese pears than for European pears ($\chi^2(1) = 18.66, p < 0.001$). Conversely, for European pears, “juicy” descriptors were significantly more frequent among American reviewers than among Japanese reviewers ($\chi^2(1) = 6.63, p = 0.010$).

These results suggest that Japanese reviewers evaluate European pears relative to a cultural benchmark set by their experience with domestic pears. From a cultural linguistics perspective [14], language use in food evaluation reflects culturally salient experiences and norms. From a sensory semantics perspective [15], these differences illustrate how perceptual experiences are selectively encoded in language. Thus, Japanese reviewers’ emphasis on softness and aroma can be seen as comparative lexicalization, describing unfamiliar foods in relation to familiar domestic varieties.

Another explanation for the differences between Japanese and English reviews can be found in a tendency observed in previous studies on food description. Fukaya [12], in her analysis of Japanese and English reviews of rice, noted that when consumers encounter a foreign or less familiar food, they often describe it by contrasting it with characteristics of a familiar domestic product. For example, Japanese reviewers of Thai jasmine rice frequently highlighted its fragrance, which stands in contrast to the relatively subtle smell of Japanese rice. Conversely, American reviewers of Japanese rice often emphasized its sticky texture, which differs from that of American long-grain varieties. Applying this perspective to the current study, Japanese consumers, who are accustomed to the crisp and juicy texture of Japanese pears, described European pears as soft or melting—not simply to evaluate them positively or negatively, but to highlight how they differ from the domestic benchmark. American consumers, on the other hand, already regard European pears as a familiar fruit, and thus their reviews emphasize internal qualities such as juiciness and firmness rather than comparative contrasts.

This suggests a more general principle: when a food is relatively unfamiliar within a cultural context, consumer reviews tend to highlight the ways in which it differs from familiar domestic foods. In contrast, when a food is already integrated into everyday consumption, reviewers focus more on intrinsic qualities without reference to contrastive features.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined how Japanese and American consumers describe the deliciousness of European pears in online reviews, focusing on the sensory dimensions of appearance, smell, flavor, and texture. The analysis revealed that Japanese reviewers emphasized softness and fragrance,

whereas American reviewers highlighted juiciness and firmness. A supplementary analysis of Japanese pear reviews suggested that Japanese consumers’ perception of European pears as “soft” may stem from comparisons with the crisp, juicy texture of domestic pears. Statistical testing confirmed significant differences in descriptor usage across cultural groups.

Overall, the results demonstrate that cultural background strongly influences the linguistic expression of food experiences. Future research should extend these findings to other foods and incorporate additional cultural contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how language reflects sensory perception across societies. Practically, these findings may inform international food marketing. For instance, exporters of European pears to Japan may benefit from emphasizing *fragrance* and *softness* in promotional materials, whereas marketing to American consumers may highlight *juiciness* and *firmness*.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author conceived and designed the study, conducted the research, analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript. The author has approved the final version of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Muto, “An observation on taste related expressions of native english speakers: With some reference to Japanese,” *Hiroshima Journal of International Studies*, vol. 22, pp. 105–115, 2016.
- [2] N. Sumi, *Visualizing Deliciousness*, Tokyo: Saiwai Publishers, 2019.
- [3] K. Yoshimura, and T. Nakajima. (2025). TasteReel: Proposal of a meal logging application that visualizes taste and temperature sensations with particle effects. *IPSJ Interaction*. pp. 511–515. [Online]. Available: https://www.interaction-ipsj.org/proceedings/2025/data/pdf/1P-73.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com (in Japanese)
- [4] R. I. M. Dunbar, “Breaking bread: The functions of social eating,” *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 198–211, 2017.
- [5] C. Wang, J. Huang, J. Liao, and X. Wan, “Food sharing with choice: Influence on social evaluation,” *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 1, pp. 1–8, 2020.
- [6] M. Ohashi, “Words that Express the Feeling of ‘Delicious’,” in *“Delicious” Sensation and Words: Generations of Food Texture Expressions*, Tokyo: BMFT Publishers, 2010, pp. 8–64. (in Japanese)
- [7] W. Ariyasriwatana, and L. M. Quiroga, “A thousand ways to say ‘Delicious!’—Categorizing expressions of deliciousness from restaurant reviews on the social network site Yelp,” *Appetite*, vol. 104, pp. 18–32, 2016.
- [8] M. Ohashi, “Sizzle Words Include ‘Mocchiri,’ ‘Fuwafuwa,’ and ‘Torori,’” in *Sizzle Words: How to Use ‘Delicious’*, Tokyo: BMFT Publishers, 2016. (in Japanese)
- [9] A. Matsuo, “Studies of Japanese expressions describing food,” Ph.D. dissertation, Kyoto Prefectural University, 2014. https://kpu.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/76/files/2014_G43_Matsuo.pdf (in Japanese)
- [10] European pear (Nashi) production statistics: Cultivation area, yield, and shipment volume. [Online]. Available: https://www.kudamononavi.com/graph/category/ca%3D26?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- [11] A. Muto. Synesthetic expressions of taste in Japanese and other Asian languages. [Online]. Available: <https://eaje.eu/pdfdownload/pdfdownload.php?index=316-316&filename=muto-abstract.pdf&p=online2020>
- [12] N. Fukaya, “Expressions of deliciousness: An analysis of consumer reviews of Japanese rice,” in *Proc. Workshop on “Sustainable FVC Development through Agricultural Technologies: Government-Industry-University Partnership in ASEAN and Japan-Phase 3, 2024*.

- [13] National Agriculture and Food Research Organization. Compilation of Expressions Describing the Deliciousness of Cooked Rice. [Online]. Available: https://www.naro.go.jp/publicity_report/press/laboratory/nfri/159423.html.
- [14] F. Sharifian, *Cultural Linguistics: Cultural Conceptualisations and Language*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017.
- [15] A. Majid, S. G. Roberts, L. Cilissen *et al.*, “Differential coding of perception in the world’s languages,” in *Proc. National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 2018, pp. 11369–11376.

Copyright © 2026 by the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0).