“Eat Your Words”
The Language of Food- Class #4

Fromm Institute
Winter Session 2020
Wednesdays 1 PM

Alice F. Freed, Ph.D.

Painting by Maurice Freed
Acrylic on masonite. 16 x 20.
Review of week #3 - MEANING

- Regional variation in meaning of food terms
- Words/expressions related to food in one language missing from another
- The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
- The meaning of “eating” and “drinking”
The semantics of cooking, eating and more...

1. The culinary triangle - Claude Levi-Strauss
2. Semantic cuisine and cooking vocabularies - Adrienne Lehrer
3. Food expressions: Idioms, proverbs and metaphors
The semantics of cooking and eating: searching for universals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD</th>
<th>NON-FOOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>raw food</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cooked food</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>rotten food</td>
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</table>
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• Claude Levi-Strauss, French anthropologist and structuralist

• Structuralism - method of interpreting and analyzing human behavior, culture, and language

  • Analyzes the relationships / contrasts between elements in a single conceptual system
The Culinary Triangle - Levi-Strauss.

- Claude Levi-Strauss created a “model of the semantic field of cooking”
- He included 3 major culinary terms:
  - RAW
  - COOKED
  - ROTTEN
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• The model is intended to be independent of any culture and universally applicable
• Looks at how culture, cooking, and society are organized
• Seen from the outside - not inside a culture
• Every culture determines the parameters for each category
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• He named three “states” of food:
  • Raw, the unmarked term
  • [Examples of unmarked terms: old, big, clean, oil, flour]
  • Cooked is a cultural transformation of the raw
  • Rotten is a natural transformation of the raw
RAW

COOKED

ROTTEN
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss:

RAW
(the unmarked term)

COOKED  ROTTEN
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• Next: COOKING TERMS:
  • Roasted
  • Boiled
  • Smoked
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss:

The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

- **Roasting (meat)** (USES FIRE AND AIR AND NO RECEP'TACLE)
  - more natural
  - meat exposed directly to fire
  - roasted meat can lose parts during cooking and so often associated with destruction (loss)
  - roasted meat commonly offered to guests
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

- **Smoking** (meat) (USES AIR AND A TEMPORARY STRUCTURE)
- also a natural way of cooking (no receptacle so more similar to roasting)
- slower method of roasting so also like boiling
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• Boiling (meat): USES WATER AND RECEPTACLE
  • seen as a cultural form of cooking
  • uses a receptacle to hold water (less natural)
  • preferred because none of the meat (or juices) are lost
  • usually served domestically to small groups (families)
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• Terms “roasting” and “boiling” are differentiated in two ways:
  
• 1. Nature versus culture:
  
  • Roasting is natural change in food
  • No cultural “intervention”

• Boiling is a cultural change in food
  • Receptacle and water are cultural adaptations
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

2. Elaborated vs unelaborated

Roasted is unelaborated
- nothing comes between food and fire
- meat is not uniformly cooked (may be raw inside)

Boiling is elaborated
- meat is “mediated” by both water and receptacle
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

Grilled
Roasted

Smoked
Steamed
Boiled
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

Still other distinctions:

- close to fire - (roasting)
- distant from fire (boiling)

Intermediate between fire and food:

- air (smoking) or water (steaming)
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

- Still other distinctions:
  - rapid cooking (roasting) vs slow cooking (boiling)
  - rapid cooking (grilling), like roasting
  - slow cooking (smoking and steaming), like boiling
  - smoking and steaming, like boiling, require some sort of contraption to hold the meat thus —> a cultural elaboration
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• Some similarity between rotten and boiled:
  • boiled is a cultural elaboration of the raw
  • rotten is a natural elaboration of the raw

• Some cuisines see an association between raw and rotten - need something to flavor the boiled meat - such as vegetables
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• Some traditional association between **boiling** and “in the home”  
  **roasting** and “outside the home”

• **boiling** is domestic and traditionally associated with women

• **roasting** traditionally associated with ceremonies, guests, and men
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

• Other distinctions:

• Roasting aristocratic - part of meat get destroyed and lost

• Boiling preserves entire piece of meat

• For some cultures, introduction of receptacle seemed like a possible introduction of infection
The culinary triangle of Levi-Strauss

Raw food versus cooked food

• Human evolution - cooking and the development of the brain, change in gut, teeth, etc.

• Civilization - associated with cooking (Chinese cuisine traditionally has no raw food)

• History of raw diets (first in the 1800s)
Semantic Cuisine - Adrienne Lehrer


“Semantic Cuisine” - Adrienne Lehrer


• Analyzes the semantic qualities of a “field” of 30 cooking terms in English

• She uses a technique called *componential analysis* to do this
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<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC COMPONENT</th>
<th>age</th>
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<th>male</th>
<th>marital status</th>
<th>special behavior</th>
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“Field” of 30 culinary terms in English

• Set of COOKING verbs:
  
  *cook*, *boil*, *simmer*, *stew*, *poach*, *braise*,
  *parboil*, *steam*, *reduce*, *fry*, *saute*, *pan-fry*,
  *French-fry*, *deep-fry*, *broil*, *grill*, *barbecue*,
  *charcoal*, *plank*, *bake*, *roast*, *shirr*, *scallop*,
  *brown*, *rissoles*, *sear*, *parch*, *toast*, *burn*,
  *flamber*  [Not included: *smoke*, *thaw*]
“Field” of culinary terms in English

• A subset of food preparation verbs not included:
  • mixing, chopping, coating, adding ingredients, preserving, etc.
Lehrer on meanings of “COOK”

- **Cook**₁ Most general: “Prepare a meal” (a household task: vacuum, dust, shop, etc.)
- **Cook**₂ Less general: *contrasts with bake* which means “to cook cakes, breads, etc.”
- **Cook**₃ Most specific: *to apply heat to a food thereby changing it*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>boil</th>
<th>fry</th>
<th>broil</th>
<th>bake</th>
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Table 1

$\text{cook}_3$
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC COMPONENTS OF COOKING</th>
<th>cook with water (non-fat liquid)</th>
<th>cook with fat (oil)</th>
<th>cook with direct heat</th>
<th>cook with vigorous action</th>
<th>cook wheat/other ground grain</th>
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<tr>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
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</table>
Table 1

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<th>simmer</th>
<th>boil₂</th>
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<td>poach</td>
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<td>parboil</td>
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<tr>
<td>steam</td>
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<td>reduce</td>
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<td>SEMANTIC COMPONENT</td>
<td>non-fat liquid</td>
<td>fat</td>
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<td>reduce</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>broil</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Review of Culinary Triangle

• Adrienne Lehrer examines whether Levi-Strauss’ “Culinary Triangle” applies to 9 different languages
  • French and Chinese - noted for their cuisine
  • Navajo, Jacaltec, Yoruba, Amharic - not noted for their cuisine
  • English, German and Japanese
Review of Culinary Triangle

• Discusses her disagreements with Levi-Strauss’ analysis

• Correct that:
  • there ARE general cooking terms that are not connected to particular languages
  • there IS a small set of cooking terms (oppositions) that applies to all languages (though not all languages use all of them)
Review of Culinary Triangle

• Found absences of terms and differences among languages
• French doesn’t have *cook* vs *bake* but *cuire* (=cook) and *faire du pain* (=make bread)
• Japanese doesn’t have a single verb “*cook*₃” = to apply heat
Review of Culinary Triangle

• Found that languages

  1. DO differentiate + or - water
  2. DO differentiate + water versus + fat vs + direct heat
  3. BUT + boil vs something else (not necessarily roast)
  4. NOT culture vs nature but pot vs no pot
Review of Culinary Triangle

5. NOT the case that boiling and smoking are always slow and roasting always fast

7. Rejects association between raw and boiled

8. Argues that partial cooking always possible

9. Some languages associate cooking and ripening + ready to eat vs - ready to eat
Meaning and imaginative uses of language

- Food expressions in English: imaginative uses of language

- Idioms, proverbs, metaphors, adages, similes, sayings, figures of speech - or just clever language
Examples: Imaginative uses of language and meaning involving food

1. To drop something like a hot potato.
2. That’s the best thing since sliced bread.
3. That’s not my cup of tea.
4. Wake up and smell the coffee.
Examples: Imaginative uses of language and meaning involving food

5. Don’t spill the beans.

6. This is bananas.

7. I’ve got bigger fish to fry.

8. Take it with a grain of salt.

9. Pie in the sky.
More imaginative uses of language involving food

• We *devour* a book of *raw* facts, try to *digest* them, *stew* over them, let them *simmer on the back-burner*, *regurgitate* them in discussions, and *cook up* explanations, hoping they do not *seem half-baked*.
Idioms

- **Idiom** – an expression whose meaning does not equal the meaning of the separate words

- an expression that conveys something different from its literal meaning
Examples of idioms:

• *Between a rock and a hard place*
• *Kick the bucket*
• *She is the apple 🍎 of my eye*
• *Don’t egg 🥚 him on*
Proverbs

- **Proverb** - a short, traditional saying

- a concise sentence, that states a general truth or piece of advice
Examples of proverbs:

• A penny saved is a penny earned

• A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush

• Don’t cry over spilled milk 🥛

• When life gives you lemons 🍋, make lemonade
Metaphors

- **Metaphor** - a phrase used to describe one thing in terms of another
- a phrase that refers to one thing by comparing it to another
Examples of metaphors:

• *Life is a journey*

• *All the world's a stage*

• *Life is a bowl of cherries*

• *It is as American as apple pie*

• More about metaphors to follow
MORE EXAMPLES: Talking about life by mentioning food

• These phrases are reflections on the structure of:
  • society and culture
  • life, thought, ideas,
  • religion,
  • family,
  • sexuality, gender, identity
Analyzing the words in food expressions: eat and drink

1. Eat your words.
2. Eat humble pie.
3. Eat crow/ dirt/ shit.
4. Eat like a bird.
5. Eat like a horse.
6. Can’t have your cake and eat it too.
7. You are what you eat.
8. Drink like a fish.
9. You can take a horse to water but you can’t make him drink.
10. I am fed up.
Analyzing the words in food expressions: cooking terms

1. Cook up trouble.
2. My goose is cooked.
3. I might be able to cook up something.
4. Half-baked idea
5. He makes my blood boil
6. The argument reached a boiling point.
7. A watched pot never boils.
8. My brain is fried.
9. Out of the frying pan into the fire.
Analyzing the words in food expressions: baked goods

1. That’s the way the **cookie** crumbles.
2. It’s a piece of **cake**.
3. It’s the frosting (icing) on the **cake**.
4. Easy as **pie**.
5. She’s one tough **cookie**.
6. Sell like **hotcakes**.
7. **Pie** in the sky.
8. **Cupcake**.
Analyzing the words in food expressions: baked goods

9. He’s a fruitcake.
10. You can’t have your cake and eat it too.
11. Everyone wants a slice of the pie.
12. She’s sweeter then apple pie.
13. Toss your cookies.
14. As nutty as a fruitcake.
15. Eating humble pie.
16. He got his just desserts.
Food terms as terms of endearment

1. Darling
2. Dear
3. Sweetie
4. Sweetheart
5. Sweet pea
6. Cutie pie
7. Honey
8. Honey bun
9. Sweetie pie
10. Sweet pea
11. Pumpkin
12. Sugar plum
Conceptual Metaphors

- Metaphors are not just linguistic or literary devices
- **Conceptual metaphor** is an understanding or experiencing of one thing in terms of another
- A conceptual is a mapping of a concrete source onto an abstract target
Conceptual Metaphor
(Lakoff and Johnson)

• We use the concrete source that we “know” as a physical reality…

• ... to gain an understanding of the abstract target that is harder to understand

• *Life is a journey*
Examples of conceptual metaphors

• *Argument is war*
  • *war* is the source
  • *war* is concrete
  • *argument* is the target
  • *argument* is abstract
  • e.g., *She killed it in the debate*
Examples of conceptual metaphors

- *Time is money*
  - *money* is the source
  - *money* is concrete
  - *time* is the target
  - *time* is abstract
  - e.g., *That is time well spent*
Examples of conceptual metaphors

- *Food for thought*
  - *food* is the source
  - *food* is concrete
  - *thought* is the target
  - thought is abstract
  - e.g., *This course provides food for thought.*
Conceptual Metaphor

- There are two parts of conceptual metaphors:
  - Source: the conceptual domain that we use to draw metaphorical expressions (e.g., love is a journey).
  - Target: the conceptual domain that we are trying to understand (e.g., love is a journey).
Conceptual Metaphor

• The source domain gets “mapped” onto the target domain (via metaphoric language) to describe the target

• Mappings describe the mental organization of the information in the source domain

• It is the mapping there brings about the metaphorical language
Evidence for conceptual metaphor

• From Lakoff and Johnson (2003)

• “Is all ordinary, conventionalized, everyday language literal or can common everyday linguistic expressions be metaphorical?”

• The answer is empirical….In short. metaphor is a natural phenomenon. Conceptual metaphor is a natural part of human thought….” (p 247)

• Passages from p. 247-248
Ideas are food (Lakoff and Johnson)

• What he said left a bad taste in my mouth.
• All this paper has is raw facts, half-baked ideas, and warmed-over theories.
• There are too many facts here for me to digest.
• The argument smells fishy.
• Let me stew over that for a while.
• Now there’s a theory you can really sink your teeth into.
Ideas are food (Lakoff and Johnson)

• We need to let that idea percolate for a while.
• That’s food for thought.
• He’s a voracious reader.
• We don’t need to spoon-feed our students.
• He devoured the book.
• Let’s put that idea on the back burner.
• I have to let that idea simmer for a while.
• This is the meaty part of the paper.
• Let me see if that idea jells over time.
Explaining food metaphors

• Eating and drinking are the source domain

• The target domains include:
  • the emotional domain,
  • the intellectual domain,
  • the psychological domain

• The key concepts of eating and drinking are the source domain
• These are mapped onto concepts in other domains
Explaining food metaphors

• Eating involves some degree of hunger and desire
• Almost always initiated by the eater (except in babies and the ill)
• Drinking involves some degree of thirst
• Also enjoyable and occasional intoxication
• The eater/ drinker initiates the act
• The agent being acted on (the food or drink) becomes invisible
Explaining food metaphors

• In the examples below, “something is being taken in”

• Emotional nourishment:
  • She swallowed her sorrow.
  • Drink in her love
  • Feed my soul
  • Feed my heart
  • He ate up the adoration
Explaining food metaphors

- **Sexual appetite**
  - A hungry look
  - He devoured his lover

- **Intellectual nourishment**
  - A thirst for information
  - Food for thought
  - Swallow the idea
  - Can’t digest all the information
  - Swallow the official line
  - Swallowing information/ an idea/ the suggestion
Explaining food metaphors

- Physical and emotional destruction
  - The river ate away the mountains
  - The fear ate away at him
  - The memories swallowed him whole
  - To eat one’s words
  - To eat one’s heart out

- Experiencing life
  - The fruits of your labor
  - A recipe for disaster
Week #5 - Recipes

• Recipes as an example of a literacy practice
• Recipes as stories
• The structure of recipes
• The unusual grammar of recipes
• Recipes and identity