



On extralinguistic motivation behind food-specific metaphorical transfers in the history of English

O motywacji pozajęzykowej zmian semantycznych w obrębie nazw pokarmów w historii języka angielskiego

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to throw some light on the nature of metaphorical transfers of English food names that historically have been employed in reference to human beings, their features, their body parts, sexuality and other characteristics of human existence. As we will attempt to show, the motivation behind the rise of foodsemic metaphors is most frequently of purely extralinguistic nature. The combined synchronic and diachronic perspectives, often referred to as panchronic perspective, allow us to show that metaphorical shifts in lexical items from the macrocategory FOODSTUFFS are not random but instead reflect the crucial influence of conceptual dimensions such as [TASTE], [COLOUR], [SHAPE], and [CONSISTENCY]. The given dimensions are a conceptual reflection of extralinguistic objects which are of certain colour or transparency, taste or its lack, as well as consistency. Our analysis draws on the model proposed by Kleparski and related studies that trace metaphorical shifts in the history of English across diverse social and regional contexts.

Key words: foodsemy, metaphor, extralinguistic characteristics

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest analiza metafor pojęciowych w obrębie nazw pokarmów w języku angielskim, a w szczególności przybliżenie pozajęzykowych czynników mających wpływ na zmiany semantyczne nazw pokarmów w języku angielskim na przestrzeni lat. Często nazwy te odnoszą się do makrokategorii konceptualnej ISTOTA LUDZKA, zarówno do człowieka, jak i do części jego ciała, seksualności i innych aspektów jego życia. Przyczyny i uwarunkowania tych zmian mają charakter pozajęzykowy. Wydaje się, że przyjęcie perspektywy diachronicznej i synchronicznej, określanej w literaturze przedmiotu jako panchronicznej, pozwoli wskazać, że metaforyczne zmiany semantyczne w obrębie kategorii konceptualnej POKARMY nie są przypadkowe, ale możemy mówić o pewnych powtarzających się schematach, w których kluczową rolę odegrały domeny konceptualne, takie jak [SMAK], [KSZTAŁT], [WIELKOŚĆ], [ZAPACH] lub [KONSYSTENCJA]. Są one, wraz z ich komponentami, odzwierciedleniem charakterystycznych cech poszczególnych produktów spożywczych i pokarmów, które możemy uważać za podstawę pozajęzykowych uwarunkowań stojących za metaforycznymi zmianami semantycznymi. Przeprowadzona analiza opiera się na opracowanym przez Kleparskiego modelu, który wprowadzono w celu zbadania zmian znaczeniowych, jakim podlegają wyrazy, w tym wypadku

odnoszące się do nazw pokarmów, na przestrzeni czasu w języku angielskim – jego społecznych i geograficznych wariantach.

Słowa kluczowe: nazwy pokarmów, metafora, pozajęzykowe uwarunkowania, charakterystyczne cechy pokarmów

Introduction

The last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have been marked by a particular rise in interest in the study of metaphor, which is one of the main targets of present-day semantic research, both in Poland and abroad (see, among others, Croft (1996, 2000), Deignan (2008), Fabiszak (2007), Gibbs (2017), Kiełtyka (2008, 2016), Kövecses (2002), Krzeszowski (1997), Kudła (2016), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff and Turner (1989), Langacker (1987, 1999), Littlemore (2019) and Szwedek (2000)).

Although Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) has received some criticism, it seems that it is still influential, widely used and further developed by, for example, Kövecses (2010). The main tenet of CMT is that metaphors are not mere figures of speech but cognitive mechanisms based on sets of systematic correspondences/mappings between the source and the target, where the source is a tangible concrete item used to understand a less concrete and more abstract concept, such as emotion, thought, desire, relationship and time. For instance, an argument may be understood in terms of war (e.g. *I defended my argument*), life in terms of a journey (e.g. *He had a head start in life*), love in terms of a journey (e.g. *We'll just have to go our separate ways*) or theories in terms of buildings (e.g. *We have to construct a new theory*) (Kövecses, 2010, p. 34).

Other common source domains comprise the human body, animals, food, plants, buildings and/or machines. It goes without saying that food plays an enormous role in our everyday existence, thus it seems to be an influential trigger in the rise of metaphorical senses. In what follows we shall concentrate on specific qualities of food items and their influence on semantic changes. Generally speaking, our common everyday knowledge about food and particular foodstuffs plays an important role in the conceptualization of certain complex notions. As far as the metaphor IDEAS ARE FOOD is concerned, this knowledge allows us to state that food can be cooked, chewed, swallowed and digested. Kövecses (2002, p. 73) compares these processes to thinking and reasoning, as ideas may be metaphorically *cooked* (thought of), *chewed* (considered), *swallowed* (accepted) and *digested* (understood). The outcome of these mappings is the set of the following metaphors proposed by Kövecses (2002, p. 73): <THINKING IS COOKING> (e.g. *Let me stew this over*), <CONSIDERING IS CHEWING> (e.g. *Let me chew over the proposal*), <ACCEPTING IS SWALLOWING> (e.g. *I can't swallow that claim*), <UNDERSTANDING IS DIGESTING> (e.g. *I can't digest all these ideas*).

In order to account for semantic changes affecting food-related vocabulary based on metaphor, we implement the model of analysis proposed by Klepanski (1997). It employs conceptual domains, which may be defined as sets of attributive values which, when connected with an element of a lexical category, enable us to classify and locate its position within a conceptual category and figure out the possible attributive paths of foodsemic transfers. In a nutshell, the model may be said to be an outcome of the joint venture of the tenets of CMT and Roland Langacker's (1987) conceptual domains.

The English lexico-semantic inventory of food-related metaphorization processes is difficult to determine with absolute precision, but all in all, one can speak of at least two hundred documented cases of foodsemy that have emerged in the period 1300–1950 counted on the basis of material registered and evidenced in a variety of historical lexicographic works.¹ The earliest cases of foodsemic metaphorical transfer are attested in 14th–15th century English, when such Middle English lexical items as *nut*, *bacon*, *shrimp*, *cod* and *eggs* developed secondary senses.²

In viewing individual cases as instances of foodsemy rather than other related categories of semantic change (e.g. zoosemy or plantosemy),³ we relied on the classification proposed in Glazier's (1997) *Random house word menu*. The lexicographer listed 1388 food-related lexical items. All the listed lexical items were examined using the dictionaries cited above, and the analysis indicated that 30% of them tended to develop food-related metaphorical or metonymic extensions. They were frequently related to such general conceptual categories as **HUMAN BEING**, **INANIMATE OBJECTS** and **ABSTRACTS**. Here, we shall concentrate mostly on the **HUMAN BEING** conceptual macrocategory.

Foodsemic Metaphors

Originally, almost two decades ago, in Kleparski (2008) the term *foodsemy* was introduced and first used for all kinds of food-related metaphors targeted at the macrocategory

¹ They include, among others, the *Oxford English dictionary* [OED] (n.d.), *Green's dictionary of slang* [GDS], *Historical dictionary of American slang* [HDAS] (n.d.), *Dictionary of word origins* (Ayto, 1990), *The diner's dictionary* (Ayto, 1993), *Word origins: The secret histories of English words from A to Z* (Ayto, 2005), *Partridge's dictionary of slang* (Beale, 1984), *The Probert encyclopaedia of slang* (n.d.), *The Routledge dictionary of modern American slang and unconventional English* (Dalzell & Victor, 2008), *The Oxford dictionary of English etymology* (Onions, 1966), *A dictionary of historical slang* (Partridge, 1978a), *The Penguin dictionary of historical slang* (Partridge, 1978b) and *The Oxford essential dictionary of word histories* (Chantrell, 2003).

² In fact, of the five secondary senses developed by the lexical items at that time, three are still in use with their original metaphorical meanings. The earliest recorded is *nut* meaning 'something of trifling value.' This sense has become obsolete, but the word has acquired other secondary senses within its course of development, such as 'a question difficult to answer, a problem,' 'the head,' 'the glans of the penis,' 'money, profit,' among others. Consequently, the word *nut* seems to be one of the most productive and rich in secondary senses. Similarly, *bacon* used in reference to human flesh, a human being, is last recorded in the first half of the 19th century. However, *bacon* has also developed other long-lasting secondary senses, including 'the genitals,' 'the penis,' 'the prey.' Additionally, the initial and body-oriented metaphorical sense may be said to be still traceable in the two following expressions *save one's bacon* 'to escape safely from a place or situation' and, on the other hand, *lose one's bacon* 'to fail to escape safely.'

³ The three mechanisms, namely zoosemy, plantosemy and foodsemy, may be defined as the mechanisms of metaphorical extension onto the conceptual macrocategory **HUMAN BEING** from the lexical resources linked to such other conceptual categories as the macrocategory **ANIMALS** (e.g. *cow* > 'a fat obese woman,' *pig* > 'a nasty and unpleasant person'), **PLANTS** (e.g. Polish *kwiatuszek* 'a diminutive of *kwiatek* 'a flower,' *różyczka* a diminutive of *róża* 'a rose,' *stokrotka* 'a daisy' > 'an attractive or beloved female') and **FOODSTUFFS** (e.g. *mutton* > 'a prostitute,' *cheesecake* > 'an attractive female').

HUMAN BEING. In a nutshell, it is the mechanism in which the source domain is formed by an element from the category **FOODSTUFFS** and the target domain is the macrocategory **HUMAN BEING**, and the process involves a set of mappings between them involving the projection of attributive features and values associated with members of the source category onto the target category. Foodsemy is regarded as a highly productive phenomenon comprising a variety of forms, e.g. fixed phrases, idiomatic expressions or individual nouns, adjectives and verbs. It is possible to claim that, as food and nourishment are essential in human life, the cases of foodsemy may be easily found and belong to the set of those metaphorical transfers that tend to be deeply rooted in human thought and cognition. Moreover, foodsemy may be viewed as part of a wider approach to metaphor of food and consumption that is a subject of academic dispute represented in current linguistic research by such scholars as Berrada (2007), Gutiérrez-Rivas (2011), Korthals (2008), Kudła (2016), López-Rodríguez (2014), Negro (2019) and Newman (2009).

Evidently, some foodsemic innovations have spread in all possible directions, such as Internet fora, comments and memes. While surfing the Internet, it is possible to discover that the force of food-gearred metaphor is still there for all of us to see. For instance, it was reported that a Finnish grocery chain store released an advertisement for mozzarella cheese under the name *Moomin liha* in Finnish, which translates into English as *Moomins' meat*. Recently, some Moomin-themed memes comparing the character to mozzarella have sparked heated and multi-directional discussion among Moomins' fans. Many of them accepted the innovation, claiming that mozzarella can be perceived as cognitively comparable both to an imaginary creature and to a kind of meat.⁴

In fact, wherever they may exist, the Moomin family consists of individuals who outside their mental and verbal qualities are characterized physically by snow-white complexion and solid body build. For some Moomin fans, the extralinguistic motivation of quality of [COLOUR], in this case [WHITENESS], and that of [SHAPE], here [ROUNDISH], is in no way sufficient to justify the extension from the **DOMAIN OF FICTITIOUS CREATURES** [...] to the **DOMAIN OF FOODSTUFFS** [...], or to be more specific the **DOMAIN OF MEATS** [...]. The fact is that, extralinguistically speaking, mozzarella is in certain respects comparable to a spongy body through the parameter of [TEXTURE]. For others, these obvious similarities fully justify the equality mark that was individually drawn by the anonymous instigator of the innovation. Consequently, it seems that the case of *Moomins' meat* may serve as an illustrative example of the mechanism of foodsemy, the working of conceptual domains and attributive features in action, even though it seems to be just a moment in the continuum of foodsemic transfers.

In the present paper I intend to present partial evidence for the role of extralinguistic motivation in the rise of foodsemic transfers, using language material from various stages in the history of English, which points to the universal nature of foodsemy. Obviously, in this context one could address other research questions, such as:

⁴ The Moomins are fairy-tale creatures and central characters in the books authored by the Finnish writer and illustrator Tove Jansson. The family, accompanied by their friends, experience countless adventures. Importantly here, they are characterized by a round shape of their bodies covered in soft white fur, pointy little ears and a large round snout. Because of the snout and the roundish body, they may be compared to a hippopotamus.

1. In what way is the mechanism embedded in human cognition?
2. Can one speak of the presence of linguistic factors in the rise of foodsemic transfers?
3. Why does it happen that some foodsemic innovations are accepted and spread while others end in a *cul de sac*?
4. Why are certain foodsemic innovations accepted in some varieties of natural language while in others appear once in a blue moon?

In order to attempt to answer these questions, or at least some of them, we shall delve into the history of selected foodsemic transfers and concentrate on the nature of English food names that historically have been employed in reference to human beings, their characteristics, their body parts, sexuality and other elements related to human existence. It seems that the mechanism is deeply rooted and profoundly embedded in the conceptual domain **FOODSTUFFS** and, therefore, we shall demonstrate that metaphorical shifts affecting lexical items related originally to the macrocategory **FOODSTUFFS** are seldom arbitrary. Their non-arbitrariness may be evidenced by the existence of a definite number of conceptual bridges, in the sense of Sornig (1981), that tend to appear and reappear in the rise of historical foodsemic transfers targeted at the macrocategory **HUMAN BEING** and many other conceptual categories that are in some intricate ways cognitively related or bound with it. To be more specific, such bridging domains as, among others, [COLOUR], [SMELL], [TASTE], [CONSISTENCY], [SHAPE], [SIZE] may be evidenced to be extralinguistic decision makers for the rise and spread of a great variety of foodsemic innovations in English and other natural languages. Here, we shall restrict our discussion to a limited number of extralinguistic bridges understood as domains that form the basis of successful, that is commonly accepted, foodsemic metaphors, i.e. the parameters of [TASTE], [SHAPE] and [SMELL].

The DOMAIN OF TASTE [...]

Kleparski (2008, p. 36) illustrates the mechanism of foodsemy with the following cases of metaphorical extensions: Polish *cukierek*, Spanish *bombón*, Romanian *bomboana*, Slovak *cukrik* – all meaning ‘candy’ – may be used metaphorically to denote ‘young, attractive girl.’ Likewise, Italian *zucchero* ‘sugar’ may be used in the sense ‘kind, pleasant or handsome person.’

Besides, the lexical item *sugar*,⁵ in both British and American varieties of English, has developed a number of secondary metaphorical senses, starting with the 17th century ‘a general term of endearment,’ as illustrated in the following material:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1658 | Good morrow, my honey my <i>suggar</i> -candy, my little pretty mouse. (OED) |
| 1767 | I call him Cooney, cock-a-pigeon, <i>sugar</i> -plum, cock-a-dandy and all the sweet things I can think of. (GDS) |
| 1926 | You’ll find the answer if you take a look / In Mr. Webster’s dictionary book. The name is <i>sugar</i> ! / I call my baby my <i>sugar</i> . (GDS) ⁶ |

⁵ Together with its numerous compounds, for example *sugar-candy*, *sugar lump*, *sugar baby* or *sugar doll*.

⁶ Illustrative quotations included in the paper are taken mostly from the OED, GDS, or HDAS.

Additionally, at the beginning of the 19th century, especially in American English, *sugar* started to be used in reference to an attractive female:

- 1803 There would have been no Shugar there for you except Some of the Ruth-
erford Ladies. (GDS)
- 1939 Was that *sugar* at Matehuala right or was she? (GDS)

Later, in the first half of the 20th century the sense of *sugar* was extended to ‘an attractive man’:

- 1937 My old *sugar* – my old boyfriend, that’s who I mean. (GDS)

Historically, sugar was not the first sweetener; rather it is honey – the natural substance known for centuries – that has been profoundly embedded in human culture and, naturally, language. Hence, the lexical item referring to honey has a longer history of development. The lexical item *honey* together with its compounds, including *honey-chops* and *honey-comb*, among others, started the long history of semantic development in the 14th century. At first, it functioned as a general term of endearment, irrespective of sex, and the OED provides the first illustrative quotation:

- 1350 William seide, ‘mi *hony*, mi hert al hol þou me makest.’

The metaphorical transfer has flourished successfully throughout the following centuries up to the present.⁷

- 1606 Now I set my cap oth to side on this fashion (do ye see?) then say I, /
Sweet *hony*, bonny, sugar candie, Pegge. Sweet Pegge, *honny* Pegge [...] my
Love, my dove, my *honnie*. (OED)
- 1802 Arrah, *honey!* you’re an Irishman, whoever you are, and have spoke your
mind in character. (OED)

In the course of the 14th century the initial metaphorical meaning was followed by the sense ‘a sweetheart, a lover,’ which may be traced in the illustrative material:

- c. 1386 Hym thynketh verrailly that he may see Noees flood come walwyngre as
the see To drenchen Alisoun, his *hony* dere. (Chaucer, *Miller’s tale*)

⁷ Additionally, the forms *hon* and *hun* seem to be popular in informal varieties of American and Australian English, also in their current varieties: 1943 – And I wish you’d stop calling me baby. I’m Chloe Calverson. [...] Have it your way, *hon* (HDAS); 2010 – Shit, sorry, *hon*, is something wrong? (GDS); 2024 – She brought them down to the table and set the tray down. Thanks, *hon*, Fontana said (GDS).

- 1661 Come hither my own sweet duck, / And sit upon my knee [...] If thou wilt be my *honey*, / Then I will be thine own. (OED)
- 1825 She cried, oh, Guineapig, my dear, you are my dearest *honey*. (GDS)

Undoubtedly, the conceptual element [SWEET] seems to be responsible for the rise of positively loaded attributive values in the resulting foodsemic metaphors. Such attributive values as [PLEASANT], [DEAR], [ATTRACTIVE], [GOOD LOOKING], [HANDSOME] and/or [BEAUTIFUL] are highlighted in the target domains and the secondary senses acquired by the lexical items mentioned above. Additionally, the conceptual element [SWEET] can be evidenced in the rise of a number of foodsemic extensions most often linked to the category **ATTRACTIVE FEMALE HUMAN BEING**. Here, one may enumerate such lexical items as *bun*, *biscuit*, *cake*, *cheesecake*, *chocolate*, *cookie*, *creampuff*, *cupcake*, *candy*, *arm candy*, *lollypop*, *sweet meat*, *jam*, *cherry pie*, *hot gingerbread*, *peach* which all acquired the secondary metaphorical sense 'an attractive female human being.'

All the above cases of metaphorical transfers may be said to be rooted in the metaphorical schema formulated as <SWEETNESS IS PERCEIVED AS POSITIVE>. Here, the two domains, the **DOMAIN OF TASTE** [...] and the **DOMAIN OF PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS/APPEARANCE** [...] seem to provide the most relevant link between the original senses of the listed lexical items and the foodsemic metaphors that crop up at various stages of the history of English. The overall metaphorical schema operative in the cases given above may be formulated as <AN ATTRACTIVE FEMALE HUMAN BEING IS PERCEIVED AS A SWEET FOOD ITEM>.

However, the element of [SWEETNESS], evoking positive associations, may be realized in different ways and it is not just related to the qualities [NICE] and [ATTRACTIVE], it may be related to the general pleasure understood differently. Hence, the attributive element [SWEET] may be said to have been also responsible for the rise of secondary senses of lexical items *bun*, *biscuit*, *brownie*, *cake*, *cookie*, *pie*, *doughnut*, *muffin* and *candy*, all of which refer to sweet food items evoking positive associations, also in the context of sexuality and sexual pleasure, and metaphorically stand for the vagina. Also here, the value [SWEET] is at play in foodsemic transfers of these cases, as one may distinguish the path that conditions the development <FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS ARE PERCEIVED AS A SWEET FOOD ITEM>.

What is more, the lexical items given above may be said to form metaphorical networks of interwoven transfers following one or two replicable patterns. In other words, a lexical item linked to the category **FOODSTUFFS** may develop a secondary sense or senses related to the category **FEMALE HUMAN BEING** or **FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS**, or both of them.

Out of the nine lexical items related to the vagina, *bun*⁸ has the longest history of secondary developments, as its first use in this sense may be traced in the course of the 17th century, as illustrated in the following material:

- 1661 If pretty *Bun* the stalk devour, Twil up again in half an hour; When once the *Bun* it doth espy Twill mop most prettily. (OED, GDS)

⁸ In its early stage of development, *bun* was also used in the sense 'pubic hair,' as in: 1720 He swore by the jolly fat Nuns; / If Cards come no better than those that are past, / Oh! Oh! I shall lose all my *Buns*. (GDS)

In fact, the lexical item in question is not always used in reference to sweet food items, but may also belong to the **BREAD AND ROLLS** category; however, here we shall focus on its constant presence in the language, demonstrated by the quotations taken from GDS:

- 1935 You got the hotdog, I got the *bun*, / Let's get together and have a little fun, / If you can dish it, I can take it.
- 2004 Joey would catch Chaz with his weenie in the wrong *bun*.

The sense 'vagina' gave rise to two, however not particularly popular and now obsolete, expressions *to touch the bun for luck*, which in British English means 'to touch one's wife's or girlfriend's genital area for luck before leaving on a journey' and *to butter a bun* which in American English conveyed the sense 'to have sexual intercourse.'

- 1786 To touch *Bun for Luck*; a practice in fashion among sailors going on a cruise. (*1811 Dictionary of the vulgar tongue*)
- 1957 This is number one / And I'm buttering her *bun* / Roll me over, lay me down, and do it again. (HDAS)

On the other hand, food items with sour taste may evoke negative associations. Therefore, the positive connotations are absent in the semantics of *lemon*. The metaphorical meaning *lemon* is 'foolish, incompetent person' or 'a person of sour disposition' in British English, and 'something disappointing, anything worthless,' 'something or someone undesirable' in American English, as evidenced in the well-known motivational saying *if life gives you lemons, make lemonade*. The above cases follow the metaphorical path of the development that may be formulated as <SOURNESS IS PERCEIVED AS NEGATIVE>. They are well established cases of secondary development, and this metaphor seems to be productive; however, on the quantitative level, in comparison to sweet-centred senses, such structures appear to be sparse.

The DOMAIN OF SHAPE [...] and the DOMAIN OF SIZE [...]

Not only do the dimensions of **TASTE** count, but the domains of **SHAPE** and **SIZE** are also involved in the rise of foodsemic extensions. In this context, we shall implement some language material related, mostly, to the categories **FRUIT** and **VEGETABLES**. It seems that the attributive values that quite frequently form the bridges between the original senses and the derived ones are [ROUND]/[ROUNDISH], [LONG]/[LONGISH]. As evidenced by historical material taken from the English language, these attributive values have been actively present and played a crucial role in the rise of foodsemic senses of such lexical items as *apples, avocados, coconuts, chestnuts, grapes, grapefruits, lemons, mangoes, melons, pumpkins, watermelons* used at various stages of the history of English in the sense 'female breasts.' It is particularly evident that the importance of the attributive value [ROUND]/[ROUNDISH] has been responsible for the rise of the transferred senses coupled with the activation of such attributive values as [GREAT] involved in the metaphORIZATION of *melon, pumpkin,*

watermelon used in reference to large female breasts as contrasted with the obvious presence of the attributive value [SMALL]/[SMALLISH] in the historical metaphorization of *chestnuts*, *grapes* and, possibly, yet understandably, *lemons*, which stand for small female breasts.

Likewise, in the cases of semantic evolution of *banana*, *carrot*, *cucumber*, *gherkin* employed in reference to male private parts, one may speak of the activation of values from the **DOMAIN OF SHAPE** [...], namely [LONG]/[LONGISH]. Note that such domains as the **DOMAIN OF SHAPE** [...] and the **DOMAIN OF SIZE** [...] must ultimately be viewed as subordinate entities that are logically subsumed within the limits of the **DOMAIN OF VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS** [...].

Interestingly, one may speak about a certain polysemantic potential of some domains that are involved in the rise of transferred senses. In the case of metaphorization of *melon*, *pumpkin*, *watermelon*, *chestnut*, *grapes* and *lemon*, the extralinguistic attributes [GREAT], [SMALL]/[SMALLISH] are present both in the historically original, as well as transferred senses, and the value is a concrete one. The polysemantic potential of the **DOMAIN OF SIZE** [...] may be documented by the semantic history of such lexical items as *nut* and *shrimp*, the denotata of which are characterized by relative smallness (i.e. the attributive value [SMALL]), which was translated on the metaphorical level to the abstract quality of [INSIGNIFICANCE], [WEAKNESS], [BEING TRIFLING]. This may be evidenced by the early 14th century rise of metaphorical senses of *nut* and *shrimp* that acquired use in the sense of 'something of trifling value' (*nut*) and 'a person characterized by weakness and insignificance' (*shrimp*).

In fact, *nut* seems to be the very first example of food metaphor, as the lexical item acquired the secondary sense 'something of trifling value' at the beginning of the 14th century, which may be illustrated by the following quotation taken from the OED:

c. 1301 He ne yaf a *note* [*nute*] of his Þes. (...) Nouth Þe worth one *nouthe* [*nute*].

Actually, *nut* developed and has developed a number of secondary senses, and is thought to be one of the most productive words, with dozens of secondary transfers, such as 'a question difficult to answer,' 'the head of the penis,' 'head,' 'intelligence,' 'something pleasant,' or 'sexual intercourse.' *Shrimp*, and its secondary sense 'a person characterized by weakness and insignificance' has proved to be both frequent in use and long-lasting, as evidenced by numerous quotations drawn from the lexicographic sources listed below:

- c. 1386 Religioun hath take up al the corn Of tredyng, and we borel men ben *shrimpes*! (Chaucer, *The Canterbury tales*, "Monk's Prologue," lines 1893–1894)
- 1592 This is a child, a silly dwarf: It cannot be this weak and writhled *shrimp* Should strike such terror to his enemies. (Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 1*, 2.3.22–24)
- 1840 All for a '*Shrimp*' not as high as my hat. (GDS)
- 1982 Little *shrimp* of a guy he is. (GDS)

The DOMAIN OF SMELL [...] and the DOMAIN OF CONSISTENCY [...]

Much the same applies to those domains that have been less frequently involved in the rise of foodsemic senses in the history of the English lexico-semantic system. In the case of certain lexical items that appear to have been affected by metaphorization processes yielding various secondary female-related senses, the semantic evolution of *fish* may serve as an example: here, the active presence of the attributive element from the **DOMAIN OF SMELL [...]** can justifiably be said to have been activated. Human private parts may be said to be associated with the smell that may hardly be viewed as pleasant. Hence, such attributive values as [SMELLY] and [FISHY] may be conjectured to have been responsible for the emergence of secondary female-related senses 'the vagina' and 'a woman.' The former may be testified by means of the following illustrative material:

- 1546 Olde *fish* and young flesh (quoth he) doth men best feede. (OED)
- 1607 'Twas merry when You wager'd on your angling; when your diver Did hang a salt-*fish* on his hook which he With fervency drew up. (Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 2.2.90–93)
- 1890 When you go fishin', you try to flirt. The fish you fishin'for got on a skirt. (HDAS)
- 1937 If you wanna somethin', smell like *fish* / Down in the alley you can find that dish [...] So take me down in the alley if you wanna satisfy me. (GDS)

The latter is also deeply rooted in language, in fact in the British, American and Australian varieties of the English language, survived until now and are easily traceable in sources:

- 1595 'Tis know I am a pretty piece of flesh. – 'Tis well thou art not *fish*. (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.1.27–28)
- 1721 The fairest Ladies smell most fishy: If so, then who would not by marrying, Enjoy *Fish*, Flesh and good Red-Herring. (HDAS)
- 2023 I'm probably bestest off chasing fishing *fish*, palones, jolly fillies. (GDS)

Similarly, in the secondary sense of *oyster* – 'the vagina' – one may speak of the presence of the value [SMELLY]/[FISHY]; however, it seems that here the **DOMAIN OF CONSISTENCY [...]**⁹ may have been a joint venture trigger, if not the leading trigger, with such inherent

⁹ Returning to *mozzarella* and its semantic potential, the term appears in the analysis presented by Grzegorz Kleparski (2008), where it is discussed within the framework of Italian food metaphor. According to the author, *mozzarella*, despite denoting a type of cheese appreciated worldwide, is also used metaphorically in the sense 'a weak and flaccid person.' One may claim that here the attributive feature [IMPERMANENCE] translates into the sphere of characteristics that is encoded by such attributive features as [WEAKNESS] and [FEEBLENESS] used in an abstract way. In this case, the consistency of the cheese is likely to have conditioned the sense extension from the soft, limp consistency of the

attributive values as [SMOOTH], [SPONGY] and [WETTISH]. The extended metaphorical sense seems to have risen in the second half of the 16th century and has survived successfully to the present.

Concluding Remarks

The main aim of the present paper has been to discuss major foodsemic motivations triggered by the operation of conceptual domains and conceptual mappings based on diverse qualities of source foodstuff items translated onto the conceptual level of target domains, and hence to show the importance of certain extralinguistic factors behind semantic changes. The cases of transfers provided above do not exhaust the whole potential and range of foodsemic productivity, but rather they should be treated as subjectively chosen illustrative material and representation of the main mechanisms responsible for the rise of new secondary cases. The potential of foodsemic transfers is seen in the great number of domains that are extralinguistically loaded and related to physical/concrete domains of human experience, such as the **DOMAIN OF PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS** [...] including the **DOMAIN OF SIZE** [...], the **DOMAIN OF SHAPE** [...], the **DOMAIN OF COLOUR** [...], the **DOMAIN OF TASTE** [...], **DOMAIN OF SMELL** [...], the **DOMAIN OF AGE** [...] and/or the **DOMAIN OF FUNCTION** [...], and others.

Since food is one of the most basic items in everyday life, it obviously has an enormous impact on our existence. It seems that long-standing semantic extensions involve vocabulary items denoting popular, well-known, basic and staple elements of human diet, rather than sophisticated names of delicacies. It goes without saying that the very core of the nature of metaphor is the implementation of concrete elements of source domains having some specific features that can be translated metaphorically onto target domains to highlight their intended characteristics, for example attractiveness. What is more, food metaphor seems to be 'a handy tool' that is used by language users intuitively, effortlessly and effectively to refer to senses sometimes difficult to be uttered or expressed in a different way. Interestingly, the majority of cases listed in the present paper are still in use in the varieties of English, such as British, American and Australian English.

Additionally, it seems that the lexical items whose secondary senses are anchored in the language for longer tend to develop further meanings as they become well established and rooted in language and therefore in human thought and cognition. They appear to form sets of senses developed by lexical items forming a kind of net of associations based on certain mappings. In other words, well-established metaphorical transfers may be said to have given rise to other senses associated with the first one, for example, the direction of development of female-specific vocabulary items, such as *bun*, *cookie* and *cake*, where the direction of semantic developments taking place may follow the direction from female to female private parts, or the other way round; from female to sexual intercourse, or from female private parts to sexual intercourse. However, an indication, if possible, of the

food product to the level of human being, where the person, one may claim, is not firm in thought and morals.

actual course of such changes is possible only after a thorough investigation carried out on a larger corpus of data.

Current linguistic research, especially one aimed at finding motivating forces behind semantic change, should never underestimate extralinguistic factors, conditions and conditionings. This applies to linguistic disciplines ranging from phonological innovations to, in particular, innovations related to the lexico-semantic system. The hundreds of foodsemantic metaphorical extensions in English – beginning with the original transfer of *nut*, the earliest recorded case of foodsemy in the history of English, and extending to the recent example of the meaty nature of the essentially non-meaty Moomins' 'meat' – constitute a substantial body of historical evidence. Apparently, history repeats itself with variations.

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