A semantic approach to the culinary terms of Jukun and English

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Abstract

This work examines the cooking terms of the Jukun and English languages. Data for the study were obtained through both primary and secondary sources. The result of the analysis of the data indicates that at the surface level, there seems to be differences in the way the two languages perceive, view and use the various cooking terms. This is because some of the terms present in English appear to be absent in the Jukun language. However, there is a unique feature of cooking terms across the two languages because both their semantic and syntactic analyses complement each other. For instance, the terms 'cook and bake' are the most general verbs in the field and the freest syntactically because they exhibit an 'ergative' feature. Furthermore, in the two languages, the cooking verbs could feature both transitively as well as intransitively. Whenever they appear intransitively, the subject of the construction belongs to the same class of noun phrases as the object of the transitive construction. Based on the above, the study concludes that cooking terms have certain universal applications.

1.0 Introduction

While many linguists have recognized the extent to which languages are subject to variation, they have also noted the extent to which all languages have certain common properties. Such common properties, known as language universals, can be described, from the point of view of the features common to human languages. Yule (1996) adds certain features which occur in every human society thus:

….every human language that can be learned by children, employs an arbitrary symbol system, and can be used to send and receive messages by its users.

Besides, much of what is known about the general character of languages is in form of certain established relationships. Yule further states:

> … every language has noun like and verb like components which are organized within a limited set of patterns to produce complex utterances. … if a language for example, uses fricative sounds, it invariably also uses stops. If a language places objects after verbs, it will also use prepositions.

The study of language universals is based on the premise that ‘underlying the endless and fascinating idiosyncrasies of the

world's languages, there are uniformities of universal scope. Amid infinite diversity, all languages are, as it were, cut from the same pattern; (Greenberg et al, 1966, Conrie, 1989 and Malmkjer 1992). In this work, we are going to examine the culinary terms of Jukun and English in order to support the above assertions.

As a verb, 'cooking' simply means to prepare as food for the table by 'boiling,' 'roasting' or 'baking'. Someone who cooks is also known as a cook. Lehrer (1974) has identified two terms which could be identified with the culinary field such as: the basic terms and peripheral terms. The basic terms include: *cook, bake, boil, roast, fry, grill (or boil in American English) steam, simmer, stew, poach, braise, sauté', French-fry, deep-fry, barbecue, and charcoal (or charcoal grill)*. The peripheral terms on the other hand include: *parboil, plank, shirr, seal lop, flambé, rissoler.* Other compound words such as *steam-back, pot-roast, oven poach, pan-boil, pan-fry and oven-fry* are also grouped under the peripheral terms.

All the culinary terms across natural languages are verb in nature as shown below in some Nigerian languages:

English	**Yoruba**	**Hausa**	**Igbo**	**Tiv**	**Jukun**	**Igala**
Cook	Se	Dafa	Sie	Jidi	Te	hi
Fry	Din	Soya	Ghe	Kaa	Fe	de
Steam		Turara	N]a			
Roast	Sun	Gasa	Hxq	Ngbag	Nwun	Ro

				h		
Boil	Bo		Gbo		Ne	Wo

Nevertheless, the meaning components and classifications of these cooking terms will be, for any given individual, based on cultural-cognitive validity. Therefore, the other properties of this lexical field will differ from language to language as well as society to society. Such properties include: nominalization, metaphorical extensions, syntactic characteristics, morphological characteristics and collocational restrictions.

Leherer (1974) applied semantic and syntactic analysis to the lexical field of cooking terms in English. She used a set of verbs, adjectives and some formal and semantically related nouns. These grammatical categories were commutable to other categories, like a verb becoming noun or an NP-V lexical compound formation can emanate. According to Leherer (1974) in Butari (2010):

> The productive or partially productive word-building process also constitutes an important part of the lexical fields and should be studied along with paradigmatic sets.

Leherer's treatment of culinary field invoked the notion of situation or field of discourse to establish semantic fields and it also looked at the denotational or notational aspects of the lexical items in the field. Salau (2004) has observed that the emphasis of the contemporary research in linguistics should be on universals

rather than relativism as it will help linguists to find out the basic modes of cognition that human beings share through establishing the similarities in cultures.

One way of establishing language universals is to investigate trans-cultural validity for some basic concepts which include heat or indirect heat, hence the need to investigate the cooking terms of English and Jukun. In order to fully understand the cooking terms in both languages, there will be a careful examination of their semantic exposes.

2.0 English culinary terms

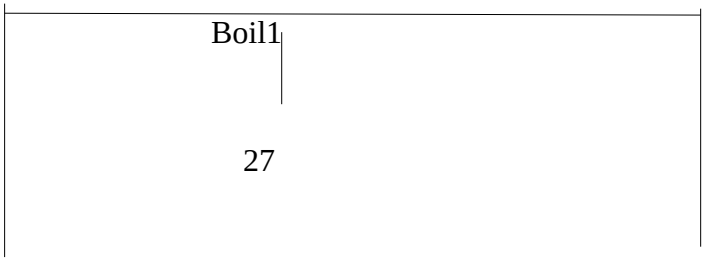
In order to examine the culinary terms in English adequately, the verbs will be taken as basic in describing the paradigmatic contrasts such as:

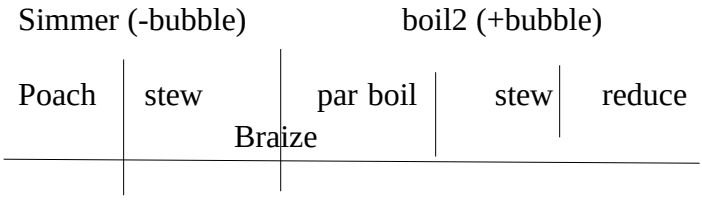
Parch	Cook	Shirr	Brown
reduce	charcoal	sauté	burn
roast	grill	boil	poach
rissole	simmer	braise	pan-fry
fry	stew	broil	deep-fry
flamber	scar	barbecue	plank
scallop	bake		

The semantic compounds found in English culinary terms include: *steam-bake, pot-roast, oven-poach, pan-boil and oven-fry*. Leherer has identified three senses in which the lexeme ‘cook’ can be used in English. First and foremost, in its general term, cook is “to prepare a meal” like any household duty. The second sense is less

general and contrasts only with bake i.e. it is the preparation of all foods other than those in bakeries. Its third usage is the most marked sense. This is because it is the application of heat in some way to food. Thus, the lexical field covered by cook3 can be divided into four main categories headed by the lexeme boil, fry, broil and bake. These four lexemes are therefore hyponyms of cook3 and therefore archlexeme.

Boil as a cooking term has both general and specific meaning. However, both senses involve cooking with liquid usually water or a water based liquid. Elements like oil (grease and fat) will be anomalous in this instance. The specific sense adds the component of (+ rigorous action), sometimes referred to as full boil. The second sense of boil contrasts with simmer. Simmer means “to cook just below the boiling point” without the rolling bubbles which characterize boil2. Boil 1 (the general sense) is unmarked with respect to the bubbling of the activity and includes both simmer and boil2. Simmer and boil2 collocate with (+ liquids_+ solids). Therefore, if whatever is boiled is solid, it is pre-supposed that some liquid is present e.g. tomatoes. Lexemes like poach and stew are hyponyms of simmer and boil1. To steam and reduce are incompatible with simmer. Reduce is a collocation of liquid and steam collocates with solid. Features of reduce is (-long) and (+rigorous boil). The hyponyms of boil can be illustrated with the aid of a diagram as:





With fry, words like sauté, pan-fry, French-fry, and deep-fry come into focus. Fry is characterized by the use of fat like oil and grease during cooking.

Broil has the following hyponyms: grill, barbecue, charcoal, and plank. This is because to broil is to "cook directly under heating unit or directly over an oven or on an open fire". The British English version of broil is grill. To bake is to cook by drying in an oven- that heat acts by conduction rather than by radiation. Bake1, refers to preparation of bread, cakes etc. Bake2 is the method of cooking contrasting with fry, broil and boil.

Brown heads another subset of lexemes subsumed under cook. To brown "is to give an appetizing golden-brown colour by placing it under the grill or in a hot oven or by frying, Leherer (1968) in (Maiyanga 1987). Brown is related to burn since to burn is to brown too much through over frying, baking minus over boiling. Brown has four hyponyms: sear, rissoler, roast and parch. Leherer (1974) has proposed nine parameters for determining a cooking pattern which are:

(1) water or no water;
(2) oil or no oil,
(3) food submerged in liquid or cooked by steam;

(4) small or large amount of liquid;
(5) gentle or rigorous cooking action;
(6) fast or slow cooking speed;
(7) the source of heat. This has three possibilities.
(a) radiated (open fire or electric grid)
(b) conducted (oven)
(c) hot surface (heat source under the pan)
(8) Special utensils like pot with lid frying pan;
(9) Special additional purposes (to soften, to preserve shape).

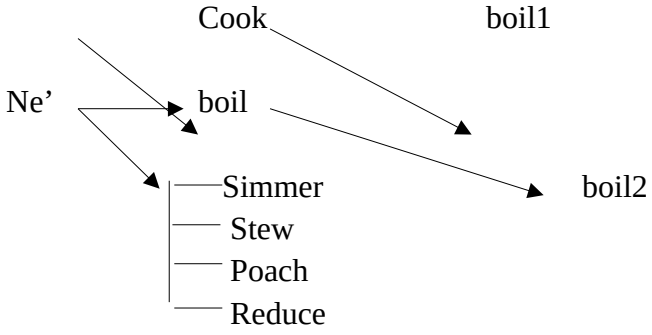
The table below culled from Leherer (1974:63) shows the list of the basic cooking terms in English and a summary of what they mean. *means a component is inapplicable.

	Water	Oil or fat	Vapour	uid Amount of	heat Kind of	ction Cooking	ensils Special	ional Special	peed Cooking
Boil1	+	_	_						
Boil2 (Full)	+	_	_			(Vigorous)			
Simmer	+	_	_			(Gentle)			
Stew	+	_	_			(Gentle)		(To soften)	(slow)
Poach	+	_	_			(Gentle)		(To preserve shape)	

Braise	+	+	_	(Small)			(Pot with lid)		
Steam	+	_	+				(Rack, sieve)		
Fry	_	+	*				(Frying pan)		
Sauté	_	+	*	(Small)					(fast)
French fry	_	+	*	(Large)					
Deep fry	_	_							
Boil	_	*	*	*	(Radiant)	*			
Grill	_	_	*	*	(Radiant)	*	(Grill, griddle)		
Barbecue	_	_	*	*	Radiant	*			
Charcoal	_	_	*	*	(Hot coal)	*			
Bake	_	_	*	*	(conducted)	*	(Oven)		
Roast	_	_	*	*	(Radiant or conducted)	*			

3.0 Jukun culinary terms

Cook (té) is a verb in the Jukun language and it means to prepare food through the use of heat. It is therefore a cover term for the process of preparing for consumption. The word for cook in the Jukun language is 'té'. Besides this super ordinate term, the following lexemes have been identified: 'Té'2 'cook', **'nè'**-boil, **'fé'**-fry, 'ǹ**wun**'-roast, **'pén**'-smoke, **'shì**'-parboil'. The word 'té' generally means 'to cook' mould food 'tuwo'. 'N**è**' on the other hand encompasses "to boil ordinary water, egg, yam, cassava, cocoyam, etc." 'N**è**' in Jukun encapsulates boil1, boil2 in English. The English lexemes like *simmer, stew, poach,* fall under the semantic reference and sense of 'ne' in Jukun.



By this illustration, 'ne' is a divergent generality; as well as a partial hyponym of poach in English because of (+shape).

Fe 'fry' in Jukun shares with English the parameter of (+ fat and /or + grease). In Jukun, we can fry certain food like groundnuts and bambara nuts with the sand. This leads to the formation of a

neutral component for 'fe' as (+Fat) where (_fat) means food like the various nuts stated above. **Shi** in Jukun shares all the characteristics of the English word parboil. **Nwun** 'roast' in Jukun is a lexeme that covers many English cooking lexemes. It is therefore the only name for *broil, plank, charcoal, brown and burn.*

The analysis of cooking terms in the Jukun language can be demonstrated by the use of a table like this:

Jukun	English	water	Oil or fat	Vapour	Amount of liquid	Kind of source of heat	Cooking action	Special utensils	Special additional pose	Cooking speed
Ne'	Boil1	+	_	_		X		Clay pot		
Te'	Boil2 (Full)	+	_	_		X		Clay pot		
Ne	Simmer	+	_	_		X				
Ne	Stew	+	_	_		X			(To soften)	(slow)
Ne	Poach	+	_	_		X			(To preserve shape)	
*	Brais	+	*	*		X				

	e									
*	Steam	+	*	*		X				
Fe’	Fry	_	+	*		X		(Frying pan)		
*	Saute’	*	*	*		X				
Fe’	French fry	_	+	*	Large	X				
Fe’	Deep fry	_	+		Large	X	*			
Ne’	Broil	_	_	*		X	*			
*	Grill	_	_	*		X	*			
Fe’	Barbecue	_	_	*		X	*			
Fe’	charcoal	_	_	*		X	*			
*	Bake	_	_	*		X	*	(Oven)		
N wun	Roast	_	_	*		X	*			

*means a component is inapplicable.

_ means absent in the language

+ means present in the language.

4.0 Contrasts in Jukun and English culinary terms

Although all the culinary terms in both Jukun and English are verbs in nature, their meaning components and classifications differ for any given individual, based on cultural cognitive validity. Based on this, the other properties of this lexical field will differ from language to language. Some of these different properties in our data are:

(i) *Nominalization*: at the level of naming, English has more terms than most of the languages as depicted in the first table. For instance, the terms *simmer, stew, poach, reduce, brown, plank, bake* are all absent terms from the examples seen in the selected Nigerian languages.

(ii) *Metaphorical extensions*: the metaphorical extensions involving cooking terms are based on the world view of the speakers of any given language. For instance, the expression "to be turned to a roasted yam" to a Jukun speaker could connote 'a scapegoat' but to an English speaker, it may not connote the same sense.

(iii) *Overlap of meanings*: in the Jukun language for instance, in addition to the superordinate term 'ne' the following lexemes have been identified: **ne2** 'cook', **fe** 'fry', **nwun** 'roast', **pen** 'smoke' and **fan** 'parboil'. However, the word 'ne' generally means 'to cook'; it also means 'to boil ordinary water, egg, yam etc. **Ne** in Jukun therefore overlaps with English *cook* because it swallows boil1 and boil2 in English. Besides, Jukun considers frying, pot frying in which fat and oil are not used of food items such as groundnuts, bambara nuts, beans or soya beans as 'frying'. This overlaps with English in which frying is only done with fat. In

Jukun therefore, 'fry' has the components (+ fat and/or + grease) while fry in English has the component (+ fat). German, according to Salau (2004), also has the same overlaps of meaning with English because it groups together *frying, boiling and roasting* as one under the heading " braten".

From our discussion so far, English culinary lexemes seem to be richer than Jukun. This is because as Maiyanga (1987) asserts, English is a nomenclature conscious language. For instance, the difference between *brown and burn* is slight that it may escape recognition. Similarly, terms such as *plank* and *charcoal* only differ in the types of materials employed in their cooking yet; in English they are perceived as two different cooking terms. Another difference in the cooking terms of the two languages is the web of classifications in the English language. For instance, the web of classification into *poach, stew, reduce, braise* may cause some confusion in the psyche of the Jukun L1 learner of English.

5.0 Universal analysis statement of culinary terms

The culinary terms of both English and Jukun at the surface level may seem to present some differences but at the deeper level, they seem to share so much in common. One of such similarities is that cooking in both languages and by extension other human languages involves 'water', 'fat' and 'direct heat.'

One unique feature of cooking terms across languages is that both the semantic and syntactic analysis complement each other. For instance, the terms *'cook and bake'* are the most general verbs in

the field and the freest syntactically because they exhibit an 'ergative' feature. For instance, cooking verbs could feature both transitively as well as intransitively.

Whenever they appear intransitively, the subject of the construction will belong to the same class of noun phrases as the object of the transitive construction. For instance:

	cooking	
	boiling	
	roasting	
My sister is		the maize
	cooking	
	boiling	
the maize is	roasting	

Cook and *bake* are the only terms that occur freely with human subjects in intransitive constructions. For instance, *my mother is cooking* and *my sister was baking mean* that *my mother is cooking something* and *my sister is baking something.*

As rightly asserted by Salau of the Pyam language in plateau state, some of the culinary terms could be employed idiomatically by way of semantic extension to the realm of emotion, temperature and torture in many languages. For instance, to show emotional states, *boil, simmer, steam, stew and burn* could be used while to show torture, anger, deceit and punishment, the terms *fry and burn* could be employed. Similarly, to show the extent of the temperature of something, culinary terms such as: *roast, cook, steam and bake* could also be employed.

Our data seem to agree with the above view and to further ascertain that, the linguistic features of the idiomatic uses of some cooking terms in both English and Jukun are presented and analysed below:

5.1 **Cook:** Across human languages, this is the cover term for the process of preparing food for consumption. Besides this basic meaning of the term, it can be employed as symbol of discouragement, suspense or bad news. Examples of the metaphorical use of the term in Jukun are:

Jukun: Uka **ne** m nene ana
Transliteration: you don't cook me cooking not
Translation: do not cook me
Meaning: don't attempt to scheme against me

Jukun: Nwunu ri **ne** ne diriba
Transliteration: man is cooking body his
Translation: a real man does cook himself
Meaning: a real man protects himself against enemies with charms.

Jukun: Ba'a pere ka **ne,** a ba'a ka ji
Transliteration: thing person cook is thing he eat
Translation: whatever a person has cooked is what a person will eat
Meaning: every person should live according to his ability.

Data in English

You don't want to **cook your goose** by saying something (Salau, 2004)

It has gone into bankruptcy after it had discovered to have **cooked its books**.(The Economist, may 18th 2002).

Some political opponents **cook up evil stories** against their opponents.

How **cooked are the books?** (The Economist, march 16th 2002).

Too many cooks spoil the broth.

Data in Hausa

Mai hakuri yakam dafa romu har ya sha romomnsa

He who is patient can cook the stone and drink the stew

(Patience is rewarding)

5.2 **Boil**

In Jukun, the term is either *fan* o*r shi*. Outside the cooking world, boil in every language could symbolize either anger or provocation. Other universal components of the term include the use of water and heat with a cooking action that is rigorous. To further demonstrate its universality, the following metaphorical uses of the term in both Jukun and English are cited:

Jukun: pere a **fan** pikina

Transliteration: person that boil heart

Translation: a person with a boiled heart
Meaning: a hot tempered person.

Jukun: **Fan** huen
Transliteration: boil neck
Translation: boiled neck
Meaning: to be angry.

Jukun: m ri **shi**shi
Transliteration: I am boil boil
Translation: I am boiling
Meaning: I am terribly angry

Jukun: shina a **fan fan**
Transliteration: head that boil boil
Translation: a boiled head
Meaning: a confused situation.

Data in English

Trouble is **boiling up** as a result of the upward review in tuition.
To have option that **boils down** to a much looser (The Economist April 20th 2000).
The country is to **boil dry its resources** (Salau, 2004).
It is a good **pot boiler** (BBC World News 20th June, 2002).
Please **keep the pot boiling** (BBC News 20th June , 2002).

5.3 **Roast**

Across languages, the term shares certain characteristics. For instance, 'fish or yam' are roasted by being exposed to the direct radiant heat of the fire. Roast could also mean symbolically a bitter experience. The following data in English and some Nigerian languages are further proof of their extended uses.

Jukun: taman m kan sura a **nwunwun** ra?
Transliteration: now I turn yam of roast?
Translation: so I have turned into your roasted yam?
Meaning: so I have become your scapegoat?

Jukun: uka **nwu** m nwun wun ana
transliteration: do not roast roast me
translation: do not roast me
meaning: do not destroy my image.

Data in English

With **political fire roasting** the regulators, the energy companies and their proctors in the white house (The Economist, May 18th 2002).

Fun as it is the health ministers get **a roasting plan** to reform local government and likely to have much bearing or the likes ordinary Vietnamese (The Economist, April12th 2000).

A colleague gave me a **good roasting** (Salau, 2004).

The critics really **roasted her play.**

6.0 Conclusion

From our data, some of the more specific cooking terms across languages seem to exhibit unique features. For instance, the meaning of some of these terms implies certain utensils. In English, a term such as frying pan (meaning a utensil for frying) is an example. In the Jukun language, some cooking terms also imply certain utensils, for instance **para biru**, **pa shan**, **pa kira** (pot for cooking soup, alcohol and mould food respectively) are all utensils for cooking each of these dishes.No language groups together some cooking terms at a primary level and at a secondary level make a contrary distinction. For instance, they don't group together cooking in liquid and at secondary level draw a distinction between cooking in water and fat.

At the surface level, English may appear to have more cooking terms than Jukun but at deeper level, some of these absent terms in Jukun are being encapsulated. For instance, **ne** (cook) could encapsulate*: simmer, cook, poach and reduce* while **nwun** could encapsulate: *brown, charcoal, burn.*

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