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ON THE CONTIGUITY OF THE SEMANTIC FIELDS
'CAKES' AND 'HUMAN BEING':
THE CASE OF *TART*

Abstract. The major objective of this study is to provide evidence for a strong contiguity between the semantic fields *CAKES* and *HUMAN BEING*, on the example of *tart*. The paper gives a detailed insight into the historical development of *tart* by illustrating meanings that the lexical item in question has developed at different stages of its semantic evolution. The findings of this paper reveal the existence of bidirectional shifts between the fields *CAKES* and *HUMAN BEING*, the reasons for which lie primarily in metaphorical transfer. The illustration of other examples of words, both from the English and Polish lexicon, the semantic history of which displays overlapping between the two fields examined in the paper, makes it possible to presuppose a general tendency to apply terms denoting sweet food to people and vice versa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Following Maslow's (1943) principles of the hierarchy of needs, the most fundamental physiological human requirements without which the human body cannot function include, among others, food and sexual desire. Thus, it is true to say that it is the presence of the opposite sex and that of food which seems to be vital to human survival. What is more, the 'sensuality' component present both in food consumption and interpersonal relationships seems to be firmly ingrained in our minds. Therefore, the close relationship between man and food should be expected not only on the biological level, but also on the linguistic one.

The study of the semantic field *CAKES* reveals that there exists a historically universal connection between the lexical items from the semantic

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fields *CAKES* and *HUMAN BEING*. Therefore, the principal aim of the present paper is to provide evidence sufficient to illustrate the phenomenon of the contiguity of the semantic fields *CAKES* and *HUMAN BEING*, on the example of *tart*.

2. 'CAKES' AND 'HUMAN BEING' – SEMANTIC OVERLAPPING

The phenomenon of semantic shifts concerning the field *HUMAN BEING* has recently been the subject of enormous scrutiny. While the conceptual contiguity of the fields *CLOTHES* and *HUMAN BEING* has been examined by Rusinek (2008a, 2008b, 2009), Kiełtyka (2005, 2007, 2008) has dealt with the semantic development of words within the field *DOMESTICATED ANIMALS* targeting at the conceptual category *HUMAN BEING*. Rusinek (2008b:126) claims that “[...] not only do the movements between the two macrocategories suggest rather fuzzy boundaries between the conceptual fields [...], but they also make a substantial contribution to both qualitative and quantitative language change”. Therefore, it is true to say that the movements of meanings between different semantic fields presuppose rather fuzzy boundaries between the fields, which is at variance with Trier’s (1931) hypothesis about strict and clear boundaries.

While working on meaning changes of lexical items within the English field *CAKES* I have noticed that a considerable number of words linked to the semantic field *CAKES* have a tendency to acquire meanings which frequently exceed the boundaries of the field in question. More precisely, the semantic field *CAKES* appears to overlap considerably with the field *HUMAN BEING*, as evidenced by the historical development of *cake*, *cookie*, *cornet*, *crumpet*, *macaroon*, *puff*, *sponge*, *tart*. All these lexical items are examples of words linked to the semantic field *CAKES*, which, over time, have acquired meanings belonging to the field *HUMAN BEING*. What is more, since the shifts between the two fields appear to be of bi-directional nature, there are also several instances of the reverse process. Thus, words whose meanings are originally rooted in the field *HUMAN BEING* start to be applied in reference to confection, and, therefore, are shifted to the field *CAKES*, e.g. *Florentine*, *frangipane*, *garibaldi*, *Napoleon*. The bi-directional shifts between the field *CAKES* and *HUMAN BEINGS* are presented by means of the following table:

Table 1. Lexical items whose meanings shift between the fields CAKES and HUMAN BEING in English.¹

CAKES		→	HUMAN BEING	
Lexical item	Primary sense (CAKES)			Secondary sense (HUMAN BEING)
<i>cake</i>	'a sweet bread-like food made of flour, eggs, butter, sugar; typically round and flat in shape'			'a foolish or stupid fellow'
<i>cookie</i>	'a small, sweet and flat cake'			'an attractive woman or girl'
<i>cornet</i>	'a piece of bread cut in a conical form' 'a conical wafer, especially one filled with ice-cream'			'the instrumentalist who plays on the cornet'
<i>crumpet</i>	'a soft cake made of flour, beaten eggs, milk and barm or baking powder, mixed into batter and baked on an iron plate'			'women regarded collectively as a means of sexual gratification'
<i>macaroon</i>	'a small sweet cake or biscuit consisting chiefly of ground almonds (or coconut), egg white and sugar'			'a buffoon, a blockhead, a dolt'
<i>puff</i>	'a type of very light pastry made of thin layers'			'a person or a thing regarded as insubstantial, ephemeral or inconsequential' 'a male homosexual or an effeminate man'
<i>sponge</i>	'a very light sweet cake made with flour, eggs and sugar'			'an immoderate drinker, a soaker' 'one who meanly lives at the expense of others, a parasite, a sponger'
<i>tart</i>	'a flat piece of pastry with no crust on the top, filled with fruit preserve or other sweet confection'			'an endearment term for a beloved woman' 'a prostitute'
HUMAN BEING		→	CAKES	
Lexical item	Primary sense (HUMAN BEING)			Secondary sense (CAKES)
<i>Florentine</i>	'a native or inhabitant of Florence'			'a kind of pie or tart, especially one baked in a dish with a cover of paste'
<i>frangipane</i>	Don Cesare Frangipani, a 13 th century Italian aristocrat, the inventor of an almond scented perfume for scenting the gloves of Louis XIII.			'a variety of almond-flavoured confectioner's custard used in cakes, pastries, etc.'

¹ The analytical corpus of the bi-directional changes between the fields CAKES and HUMAN BEING in English comes from Rusinek, M. (2011) *Semantic changes in the field CAKES in the history of English*. Lublin: The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, an unpublished MA thesis.

<i>garibaldi</i>	Giuseppe Garibaldi, an Italian revolutionary and one of two prominent figures in Italian unification movement.	'a sandwich biscuit containing a paste of currants'
<i>Napoleon</i>	Napoléon Bonaparte 'a person regarded as resembling Napoleon I, especially in having gained supremacy in any field by ambition and ruthlessness'	'a rich confection consisting of thin layers of puff pastry with a filling of cream or custard', also called a <i>mille-feuille</i>

It is certainly interesting in this context that the phenomenon of bi-directionality of semantic shifts concerning the fields **CAKES** and **HUMAN BEINGS** is also a common tendency observable in the Polish lexicon. Thus, *murzynek*, *babka*, *napoleonka*, *Biała Dama*, *ambasador*, *Pani Walewska* and *adwokat* are examples of words originally linked to the semantic field **HUMAN BEING** which, with time, have acquired meanings belonging to the semantic field **CAKES**. The reverse change, i.e. shifts from the field **CAKES** to the field **HUMAN BEING** is also present in Polish, e.g. *ciacho*, *pączek*, *piernik*, *wafel*, as presented in the table below:

Table 2. Lexical items whose meanings shift between the fields **CAKES** and **HUMAN BEING** in Polish.²

HUMAN BEING → CAKES		
Lexical item	Primary sense (HUMAN BEING)	Secondary sense (CAKES)
<i>murzynek</i>	'diminutive of black man'	'a chocolate cake'
<i>babka</i>	'an old woman'	'a rich yeast cake'
<i>napoleonka</i>	'feminine of Napoleon'	'Napoleon'(cake), 'mille-feuille'
<i>Biała Dama</i>	a fictional character, literally 'a white woman'	'a rich layer cake consisting of sponge and whipped cream with dried coconut and pineapple'
<i>ambasador</i>	'an ambassador'	'a rich cake having a basis of sponge and two layers of cream with fruit and raisins'
<i>Pani Walewska</i>	'Ms Walewska'	'a layer cake consisting of sponge, covered with blackcurrant jam, cream with raisins and a top meringue'

² The analytical corpus of the bi-directional changes between the fields **CAKES** and **HUMAN BEING** in Polish comes from Rusinek, M. (2011) *Semantic changes in the field CAKES in the history of English*. Lublin: The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, an unpublished MA thesis.

<i>adwokat</i>	'a solicitor'	'a layer cake consisting of a chocolate and a coconut sponge with vanilla cream'
CAKES —> HUMAN BEING		
Lexical item	Primary sense (CAKES)	Secondary sense (HUMAN BEING)
<i>wafel</i>	'a wafer'	'a toady'
<i>ciacho</i>	'a cake'	'a handsome man'
<i>paczek</i>	'a doughnut'	'a fat person'
<i>piernik</i>	'a gingerbread'	'a stupid and silly person'

3. *TART*: A CAKE OR A WOMAN?: A CASE STUDY

The study of the semantic development of *tart* reveals that the lexical item in question has developed meanings which link the word to the field HUMAN BEING. Therefore, it is possible to divide the path of semantic evolution of *tart* into two major stages: (a) the first stage including meanings categorized as belonging to the semantic field CAKES; (b) the second stage incorporating senses belonging to the field HUMAN BEINGS.

The available etymological sources (see the *OED*, the Online Etymology Dictionary) agree that *tart* entered English in the early 15th century from O.F. *torte* 'a disc-shaped cake or loaf, also pastry' (cf. French *tarte*, Spanish *torta*, Italian *torta*, Dutch *tart*, German *Torte*, Welsh *tarten*). According to the *OED*, the diachronically primary meaning of *tart* was 'a name for various dishes consisting of a crust of baked pastry enclosing different ingredients, e.g. meat, fish, cheese, fruit, etc,' (sense A: 1400 > 1756). This meaning of *tart* unquestionably belongs to the field CAKES and can be equated with *pie*, as evidenced by the following *OED* quotations:

1400) With tendre gees, and with capons, with *tartes*, or with chesis fat, with deynthe flawnes, brode and fat.

1523) The Balade also of the Mustarde *Tarte*; Suche problemis to paynt it longyth to his arte.

In the middle of the 15th century the word *tart* was employed for the first time to denote 'a flat, usually small piece of pastry with no crust on the top, filled with fruit preserve or other sweet confection' (sense B: 1430 > onwards). There are three hugely important things to remember about this meaning of *tart*. First of all, this sense has survived to our times and con-

stitutes the contemporary meaning of *tart*. Secondly, this time *tart* was distinguished from *pie* by the fact that the former did not contain a top crust of pastry. Thirdly, the feature of sweetness substituted for the savoury or sour taste of the original *tart* (sense A). While the primary meaning of *tart* could incorporate different savoury ingredients such as cheese, meat or vegetables, this time the word in question denoted a dish with only a sweet filling only. Therefore, the process that we find to be operative in the derivation of this meaning is that of narrowing of the earlier sense. Consider the following *OED* quotation referring to sweet tarts:

1430) *Tartes* of frute in lente.

1584) Boyle them [fruit]... till they be soft, then to draw them, as yee doe a *tart*.

1899) Her rejection of a nice little jam *tart*... ‘she never touched *pâtisserie*’

Davidson (1999:785) explains the transition in the taste of tarts from sour and savoury to sweet – although in the 15th century sour tarts were predominant, a mixture of both sour and sweet tastes in tarts were no less common in medieval cuisine. However, in the course of time there was a perceptible trend towards sweet tarts which accompanied the fashion for colourful dishes among cooks. This is why 15th century tarts

[...] usually contained egg custard and fruits of various kinds, which could be used to provide the brilliant colours of which medieval cooks were fond: red, white, and pale green from fruits [...]

(Davidson, 1999:785).

Interestingly, according to the *OED*, the contemporary *tart*, in the sense of a cake, is a cake with a sweet filling (sense B). *Tart*, including other ingredients such as fish, meat or cheese (sense A) is considered by the *OED* to be an obsolete term. What is more, as recorded by many other sources, including Samuel Johnson’s (1813) *A dictionary of the English language*, Klein’s (1966) *A comprehensive etymological dictionary of the English Language* and more contemporary dictionaries such as *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (1992), *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1993) and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2001), the existing meaning of *tart* is only the one which includes a sweet filling. However, I have noticed that a large number of contemporary cooks give recipes for tarts which are by no means sweet, as evidenced by the following names of recipes:

Mushroom Tart and Gravy (ALLINSON, 1915),

Onion Tart (ALLINSON, 1915),

Sausage tart (COOPER and HILDESLEY, 1975: 17),
Tomato and Fontina cheese tart (ROMBAUER, ROMBAUER BECKER and BECKER, 2002: 112),
Goat cheese tart (PARSONS, 2003: 34),
Smoked salmon tarts with gherkins (CHOK, 2007: 45),
Crabmeat filo tart (CHOK, 2007: 93),
Roasted tomato and cheese tart (WESTMORELAND, 2008: 86),
Salami, eggplant and artichoke tart (ARMSTRONG, 2009: 105),
Spicy chicken tarts (ARMSTRONG, 2009: 120).

What is more, numerous contemporary cookery books use the term *savoury tart* to denote a tart whose filling is not sweet and contains such ingredients as: meat, fish, vegetables, cheese, etc. (see Armstrong, 2009; Crambell, 2011; Van Wyk, 2007). The question that arises at this point is: how to explain this inaccuracy? There are two possible interpretations. The first explanation for why the *OED* along with other dictionaries provides definitions of *tart* incorporating only its sweet taste may lie in the fact that savoury and sour *tarts* could have indeed become obsolete by the end of the 18th century. However, at a certain point in time, the original medieval non-sweet *tarts* must have become reborn among cooks and thus, came back into fashion one more time. However, the most likely explanation is that there was no change of the word *tart* at all. Thus, we might conjecture that the original sense of *tart*, i.e. the one which does not imply a sweet taste has been present since the beginning of its existence till the modern times. Thus, the 'sweet' component within the sense of *tart* did not replace the 'sour' or 'savoury' components, but it rather extended the sense of the word in question. The reason why the *OED* along with other dictionaries regards the primary meaning of *tart* as obsolete today might lie in the fact that non-sweet tarts could have been pushed to the background and thus, overshadowed by more trendy sweet tarts. What is more, while sweet tarts were a major delicacy at the royal courts from the beginning of the 15th century, savoury tarts, in turn, could have remained popular only among the poor. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the primary meaning of *tart* will be reintroduced by the dictionaries in the not too distant future.

Since there has been a marked tendency to apply words denoting sweet food, like *honey*, *sugar* or *pumpkin* to people as terms of endearment, *tart* also came to be used endearingly as a term of approval to females in the 19th century in the sense 'beloved woman' (sense C: 1864 > onwards). This newly acquired meaning shifted the word concerned from the semantic field CAKES to the field HUMAN BEING, as the following *OED* contexts illustrate:

1864) *Tart*, a term of approval applied by the London lower orders to a young woman for whom some affection is felt.

1898) And his lady love's his 'donah', or his 'dinah', or his '*tart*'.

It is necessary to mention here that all later meanings that *tart* developed in the course of time and which are discussed below are categorized as belonging to the semantic field HUMAN BEING. What is more, the mechanism most frequently set to work in the analysis of semantic evolution of *tart* is that of metaphorical transfer. Hence, in accordance to what has been mentioned above, *tart* designates also 'a wife' or 'a girl-friend' in Liverpool dialect. Mills (1995) explains how it was possible for a term denoting cake to start to be used with reference to women or girls:

Like honeybun, sweetie-pie, cupcake and other terms employing a similar image, *tart* presumably derives from the notion of the supposed — and required — sweetness in a woman and perhaps from a male view that women are small, quick-to-consume, edible morsels.

(MILLS, 1995: 234-235).

Therefore, sense C must have been derived from sense B, referring to sweet *tart*, through the process of metaphorization due to the fact that women, just like tarts, can be conceived of as being sweet. Thus, since both senses B and C share the feature of sweetness, it should not come as a surprise that *tart* became a term of endearment used by men for their beloved women.

In the course of the 19th century the meaning of *tart* underwent pejoration as it became a term of abuse denoting 'a female of immoral character' or 'a prostitute' (sense D: 1887 > onwards). The reason of this shift of meaning is attributed to the fact that men tend to conceive of women as sweet and quick-to consume objects of sexual gratification. The following data quoted from the *OED* exemplify the pejorative use of *tart*:

1887) The paragraph... referred to the young ladies in the chorus at the Avenue and spoke of them as '*tarts*'. It was suggested on the part of the prosecution that the word '*tart*' really meant a person of immoral character.

1936) A woman policeman kept an eye on the *tarts* at the corner.

1979) I evolved a new way of dressing: five-inch high-heeled shoes, tight straight skirts, very very tight cheap sweaters, and masses of make-up... I looked just like a *tart*.

What is more, it is worth noting in this context that the word *tart* functions also in the form of the verb *tart yourself up* in informal British English,

which means 'to try to make yourself look attractive by putting on nice clothes, make-up, etc.'. This meaning undoubtedly connotes prostitutes and therefore, may be linked with sense D of the noun *tart*.

Moreover, the word under consideration started to be also used in the middle of the 20th century, during the Second World War, in the sense of 'a young favourite of an older man' or 'a male prostitute' (sense E: 1935 > onwards), as recorded by the *OED*:

1935) Being a *tart*. The sort of thing you were getting up to with Black last Easter term.

1952) I can usually manage a *tart's* holiday at Cannes or Ischia.

1976) He nearly loses the boy to a male *tart* in the city.

Another pejorative use of *tart* with reference to female prostitutes is exemplified by a fixed expression *tart with a heart* (also *tart with a heart of gold*) denoting 'a woman, frequently a prostitute, portrayed as apparently disreputable or unprincipled but intrinsically good-hearted' (sense F: 1961 > onwards). This phrase appeared in the second half of the 20th century and although it still carries evaluatively negative elements, it shows a weakening of the earlier pejorative load. Consider the following data quoted after the *OED*:

1961) The 'Never on Sunday' *tart with a heart* as she has been called in the movie – Melinda Mercouri – made this film in 1955, toward the beginning of her career.

2005) And while Elizabeth Shue as the hooker sharing his final binge is at times dangerously close to being the *tart with a heart*, she avoids being overshadowed by Cage's performance.

What is more, in the late 20th century the pejorative sense of *tart* was incorporated into a British colloquial compound expression *tart card*, meaning 'a business card advertising the services of a prostitute' (sense G: 1994 > onwards), as exemplified by the following *OED* quotations.

1994) Oxford Street, Baker Street, Edgware Street, Marylebone Road and areas around main line stations are all blackspots in the explosion of **tartcards*.

2002) Two years ago it was estimated that the carding system was so popular that around 650 prostitutes were advertising through the use of *tart cards* in London.

It is worth noting here, that all the pejoratively loaded senses of *tart* referring to women survived until modern times. Today, most dictionaries of

contemporary English³ give predominantly two definitions of *tart*: the first sense 'a pie without a top on it, containing something sweet', belonging to the field CAKES, and the second meaning 'a prostitute', linked with the field HUMAN BEING.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper an attempt has been made to demonstrate the historical connection between the semantic fields CAKES and HUMAN BEING. The study of the semantic history of words linked to the field CAKES provides evidence for a tendency of 'cake' vocabulary to acquire meanings belonging to the semantic field HUMAN BEING, a perfect example being the semantic evolution of *tart*. Thus, it is true to say that although the movements of meanings are rather difficult to predict, there exists an observable tendency to call people with terms originally applied to cakes. As shown in the paper, the semantics of *tart* provides a variety of sense changes shifting the lexical item concerned from the field CAKES to the field HUMAN BEING, the reasons for which lie primarily in metaphorical transfer based on similarities subconsciously perceived between cakes and people.

On the extralinguistic level the paper shows how the relationship between man and food influences one's perception of other people. Since experiences of sensuality are present both in food consumption and interpersonal relations, the sensual attitude to food tends to be translated to the human level. The way man perceives food, particularly cakes (e.g. as being sweet, rich, appetizing) translates into a similar perception of people. Thus, since cakes, in general, connote something sweet and appetizing, they tend to be used often with reference to women who are regarded as pretty, cute and physically attractive. Therefore, it is true to say that we tend to subconsciously find similarities between cakes and people (which on a linguistic level would be called metaphORIZATION).

The historical study of the semantic field CAKES shows, however, that there is an overwhelming tendency to derive pejoratively loaded meanings which shift words from the field CAKES to the field HUMAN BEING. The example of *tart* shows that the majority of meanings of the word in question

³ See *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2001), *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (1992).

denoting 'a woman' appear to be negatively charged and possess sexual connotations. Thus, 'cake' terms used for a woman appear not to be so sweet after all. The reason for this may lie in the fact that cakes and sweets have been considered to be sinful sweetness for so long, that the sinful element of cakes became deeply rooted in people's minds. Therefore, when different 'cake' terms started to be applied in reference to people, the newly derived meaning predominantly possessed a negative component.

It is hoped that the analysis of the phenomenon of shifts of meanings between the fields CAKES and HUMAN BEING, conducted in the present paper, may contribute to further discussions and analyses of words belonging to this limited fragment of lexicon. Needless to say, a deeper understanding of this phenomenon could be gained through not only linguistic studies, but also a psychological perspective.

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PRZENIKANIE SIĘ PÓL SEMANTYCZNYCH ‘CIASTA’ I ‘CZŁOWIEK’
NA PRZYKŁADZIE LEKSEMUM *TART*

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zilustrowanie zjawiska zażębiania się pól semantycznych CIASTA i CZŁOWIEK w historii języka angielskiego na przykładzie jednostki leksykalnej *tart*. Znaczna ilość słów związanych z polem semantycznym CIASTA wykazuje tendencję do nabywania znaczeń należących do pola semantycznego CZŁOWIEK. Poza tym, słowa pierwotnie związane z polem CZŁOWIEK również przejawiają skłonność do przesunięcia i nabywania nowych znaczeń zaklasyfikowanych do pola semantycznego CIASTA. Z tej przyczyny, artykuł ma na celu zilustrować zjawisko dwukierunkowego przesunięcia semantycznego pomiędzy wyżej wymienionymi polami semantycznym. Głównym celem artykułu jest szczegółowa analiza rozwoju historycznego słowa *tart*, które dobrze ilustruje opisywane zjawisko. Mechanizmem najczęściej występującym w przesunięciach semantycznych między polami CIASTA i CZŁOWIEK jest metafora.

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Key words: pole semantyczne, pola semantyczne CIASTA i CZŁOWIEK, przenikanie się pól semantycznych, zmiana semantyczna, metafora.

Słowa kluczowe: semantic field, semantic fields CAKES and HUMAN BEING, semantic overlapping, semantic change, metaphor.