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CONTEXT-INDUCED CREATIVITY AND THE FIGURATIVE USE OF TASTE TERMS

Introductory Word

In the cognitive linguistic view, we speak (and act) metaphorically because we think metaphorically. In turn, we think metaphorically because many abstract concepts (e.g. LOVE, MIND, LIFE, IDEAS) would otherwise be difficult to comprehend and – hence – to talk about. The extensive knowledge we have about such more *clearly delineated* (Kövecses 2002:15) areas of experience as food, cooking, and all the processes which are in any way connected with both, obviously makes FOOD an ‘ideal’ source domain (Kövecses 2002:18). Accordingly, instead of saying that the information we received was difficult or unexpected (or there was a lot of it) and that we, therefore, needed some time to understand it, we will often reach for such conventionalised linguistic metaphors as *digest*; clear evidence that we are trying to comprehend and give an account of all aspects of the situation by means of the underlying conceptual metaphor IDEAS ARE FOOD.¹

¹ *Food has many metaphorical associations, most notably perhaps with the sensual and erotic, but during periods of extreme social unrest one of the most important uses of food as signifier is political* (Bradshaw 2004:59). Consequently, all epochs draw extensively on food imagery. What is more, and as is evident in such famous movie scenes as the one in *The Gold Rush*, where a hungry Charlie Chaplin eats his shoe laces in a manner suggesting that *SHOE LACES ARE SPAGHETTI*, language is not always necessary for metaphor construal and interpretation (Forceville 2008:462). Many taste terms would be more difficult to present in graphic form than, say, steam coming out of someone’s ears to indicate ANGER, but I assume that *taste metaphor* (as defined in Osuchowska 2011 and Osuchowska and Kleparski 2011) need not be restricted to language. The most obvious cases are, probably, the facial expression of disgust, often called *the disgust face* and made, in relation to the sense of taste (as actually perceived or imagined), in response to bitter-tasting substances (e.g. medicines) and, *secondarily, to anything which causes a similar feeling, through the sense of smell, touch, and even of eyesight* (<http://www.facetum.com/disgust/>, accessed 15 June 2011). The disgust face may thus be depicted to represent a very

The cognitive linguistic view of metaphor is powerful and rich (Kövecses 2005:34); in consequence, the so-called conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) has won wide acclaim and been adopted by a large number of scholars. At the same time, many felt that whatever abstract concepts *practitioners of "traditional" conceptual metaphor theory* (i.e., Lakoff and Johnson and their followers) (Kövecses 2010:664) choose to talk about, such accounts would certainly be more reliable if both the conceptual metaphors discussed and the metaphorical linguistic expressions which make them manifest (and which they, therefore, use to illustrate their case) were not *set up, invented* ones (Kövecses 2010:664). This apparent shortcoming has, in turn, resulted in the rise of an alternative research strand (Cameron 2003, 2007, 2008; Deignan 2008; Dobrovolskij and Piirainen 2005) which postulates that *metaphor is a textual and social phenomenon as well as a cognitive one* (Deignan 2008:280). In consequence, the study of metaphor *must begin, not with hypothesis, but with specific instances, no matter how minute* (Paul Klee, cited in Cameron 2008:197); evidently, *some essential aspects of metaphor can only be accounted for if we investigate metaphors in real discourse* (Kövecses 2010:664).

The paper, which attempts to analyse a few metaphorically used taste terms and the context of which they are a part, is divided into four sections. In the first section, we take a closer look at some of these terms, more specifically their origins and function. In the second section, we provide a brief account of a framework Kövecses (2010) claims can be used while analysing metaphorical language as it appears in real discourse, as it is this very framework that we intend to use in the third, analytical section of the paper. In the concluding section, the need for more intense research into this phenomenon is emphasised.

Basic Taste Terms: Their Origins and Function

Before we present Kövecses's (2010:663) view on the role that context plays in *speaking, thinking* and *acting* metaphorically and before we apply the framework he proposes in an analysis of a few taste terms, a more basic issue that we would like to address might be formulated as follows: *Where did we recruit words to form our communicative system for the tastes of things? What were the words that we chose and why is it precisely those words that we*

strong sign of rejection and *social disgust* (Schiefenhövel 1997:57); the same can be said of the so-called sour face, although it is made on different occasions, but I am unable to say anything definite about the occurrence of both in other sign systems. In other words, both may be, primarily, a matter of language.

decided on? What was the function these words were supposed to serve? Given they were intended to communicate something about the foods and drinks we consume, what is it that they were supposed to communicate? For reasons of space, our discussion in this section will concentrate on words which are used in reference to the four main or *basic*² tastes distinguished by physiologists: sweet, bitter, sour and salty³ and terms which take root in the tactile domain.

Starting with the first issue raised, many scholars act on the assumption that *language has to start somehow, and its initial concerns would have been with items in a speaker's immediate vicinity. A plausible origin myth is that the most primitive linguistic resources provided rudimentary verbal representations for solid objects and for animal and (especially) human activities* (Grey 2011:2, based on Stanford 1936). Since such primitive linguistic resources were, naturally, *fairly parsimonious*, we had to extend and refine them in such a way that they would be able to embrace a wider and more complex repertoire of referents and activities (Grey 2011:2). And indeed, such hypotheses do seem to make a lot of intuitive sense once we learn how the Indo-European root, **sal* 'salt' gave rise first to *slony* 'salty' and, next, 'flavoured with salt', then 'tasting good' and, finally, *słodki* 'sweet',⁴ thus gradually encompassing a wide number of concepts that lay outside its original range of reference, but which 'somehow' resembled those originally denoted ones (in this case in terms of what is sometimes referred to as the two tastes' *positive affective value*).⁵ A similar process seems to have been at play in the case of all those taste terms which may be classified, after Williams (1976: 470), as *touch to taste* transfers, except that here the role of the source domain was played either by plants which 'prickled' (Eng. *pungent* < the Latin *pungent-* 'pricking' < *pungere*), animals that 'bit' (Eng. *bitter*) or sharp (Lat. *acer*

² Actually, this status of the four as the four taste basics *has frequently been called into question* (Backhouse 1994:2) and many scholars (Harper 1972:194) are of the opinion that *[t]here is relatively little evidence to support the concept of primary tastes*.

³ According to Ericsson (2008:62), words meaning 'sweet', 'sour', 'salty' and 'bitter' can be *found quite uniformly in [...] at least Afrikaans, Arabic, Albanian, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Maori, Nepali, Oromo, Papua, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Sanskrit, Scotch, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Yiddish*.

⁴ This sense development presented after *WSEHJP*.

⁵ Both sweet- and salty-tasting substances are perceived as pleasant, although the latter are *quickly felt as unpleasant as concentration increases* (Backhouse 1994:3). The large *affective*, or *emotional* component mentioned above simply means that *things that are bad for us often taste or smell unpleasant, and things that are good for us generally taste or smell good* (Goldstein 2010:356), thus aiding the two senses' 'gatekeeper' function referred to in Footnote 7 below.

‘biting’ < IE **akri-* ‘sharp’) as well as hot objects (e.g. fire) that ‘cut’ (Lit. *kartus* ‘bitter’ < IE *(s)*ker-t-* ‘cut’) and ‘burnt’ (Pol. *gorzki* ‘bitter’ < *gorzeć* ‘to burn’).⁶ The existence of some of these *touch to taste* (Williams 1976:470) transfers gives further substance to the claim that both animals and plants (and objects) are, and have always been, *extremely productive source domains* (Kövecses 2002:17).

Turning now to the remaining questions we posed at the beginning: *why it is precisely those words that we decided on? What was the function these words were supposed to serve? Given they were intended to communicate something about the foods and drinks we consume, what is it that they were supposed to communicate?* In a sense, the answer has already been given – the reader may have noticed that, in much the same manner as the sense they represent, terms representing the four basic tastes – sweet, bitter, sour and salty – *convey specific survival information* (Handel 2008:82).⁷ *Sweet*, *sour* and *salty* refer to foods and substances which are important for the proper functioning of the human body,⁸ whereas *bitter* refers to substances whose consumption may, possibly, be fatal;⁹ in short, foods and substances which are either good or bad to eat (Erickson 2008:62; Goldstein 2010:356).

Sweetness is thus often associated with compounds that have nutritive or caloric value and that are, therefore, important for sustaining life (Goldstein 2010:366) and salty tastes indicate the presence of sodium which, when lost, must be replenished. One may, therefore, assume that this has originally been the communicative value of words representing these nutritive basics – to inform those who, for various reasons, lacked this knowledge, of which foods to eat and which to avoid, a function which – as can be judged by observing how descriptive words such as *sweet*, genera such as *good* or expressives such as *yummy* are used while feeding little children – has been preserved to this day.

Context-Induced Metaphors

The aim of the section that follows is, firstly, to introduce the framework Kövecses (2010) claims may be applied in an analysis of factors which make speakers/

⁶ Indeed, such terms seem so voluminous that the list could go on indefinitely.

⁷ *Because the stimuli responsible for tasting and smelling are on the verge of being assimilated into the body, the senses are often seen as “gatekeepers” that (1) identify things that the body needs for survival and that should therefore be consumed and (2) detect things that would be bad for the body and that should therefore be rejected* (Goldstein 2010:356).

⁸ *Sour* and *salty* additionally stand for the two most important food preservation processes: salting and fermentation

⁹ Of course, this correlation *is not perfect*. *People have often made the mistake of eating good-tasting poisonous substances* (Goldstein 2010:367).

conceptualisers reach for a particular conceptual metaphor (or the linguistic exponents thereof) and, secondly, determine how the concepts he introduces apply in the case of what we have referred to as *taste metaphor*. Starting with the former, one of the basic claims Kövecses (2010:666) makes is that when people produce novel and unconventional metaphors, *they do so under two kinds of pressure called the “pressure of coherence”: the pressure of their bodily experiences and the pressure of the context that surrounds them.*¹⁰ Within the latter, one may further distinguish between what Kövecses (2010:667) terms *global* and *local* contexts. By *global* Kövecses (2010:667) means *contextual factors that affect all members of a language community when they conceptualise something metaphorically*. In turn, *local* refers to *the immediate contextual factors that apply to particular conceptualisers in specific situations* (Kövecses 2010:667).

According to Kövecses (2010:667), contextual factors that may be said to apply globally include, among others, *the physical environment* in which a given linguistic community lives,¹¹ *social factors* and *the cultural context*. The first consists of *the particular geography, landscape, fauna and flora, dwellings, other people, and so forth that speakers of a language or variety interact with on a habitual basis* (Kövecses 2010:668). Regarding social factors, they may include the all-important *distinction between men and women* preserved, in Kövecses’s (2010:668) words, *in all societies.*¹² The last set of factors mentioned above simply means that every culture (or subculture, for that matter) is *characterized or governed by a number of unique and salient concepts and values or principles; since they permeate several general domains of experience for a culture or cultural group, they are more productive than those which the group in question does not consider salient*. In addition to these three, Kövecses (2010:669) briefly mentions two other sets of factors: the first of which he terms *differential memory [...]* – *the major and minor events that occurred in the past of a society/culture, group, or individual*. Finally, *a set of causes that produces metaphor variation is [...]* ‘*differential concerns and interests*’. For instance,

¹⁰ Note that both novelty and unconventionality should be treated as *graded concepts that range from completely new and unconventional through more or less new and unconventional to well-worn, entrenched and completely conventional cases* (Kövecses 2010:664).

¹¹ Once the immediate physical setting changes, the images that member of the linguistic community may want to use will also change.

¹² Coming under pressure from such *social factors*, the speaker/conceptualiser will be subconsciously resorting to such images which somehow ‘befit’ who they are. For American women between 1630 and 1860, such a ‘befitting’ metaphor was to think of *the frontier [...]* as *a garden to be cultivated* (Kövecses 2010:668; based on Kolodny 1975, 1984) – in doing so, they clearly differed from their men who saw it as *a virgin land to be taken*.

being given to action, Americans will be more sensitive to sports and games and, consequently, they will have them for a more extensive range of target concepts than, say, the more 'passive' British people (Kövecses 2010:669).

Regarding local contexts, the list produced by Kövecses (2010:663) starts with (1) *the immediate physical setting* (Kövecses 2010:663) in which one functions. Next, there is (2) the knowledge the conceptualiser has of the *major entities participating in the discourse* (Kövecses (2010:663): the *speaker*, the *addressee* and the *entity or process we talk about (topic)* (Kövecses 2010:673). The list of the kinds of local contexts examined in this particular study also includes (3) *the immediate cultural context*, (4) *the immediate social setting*, and (5) *the immediate linguistic context itself* (Kövecses 2010:663).

From what has been said up to this point, one may infer that since the selection and use of particular conceptual and/or linguistic metaphors may, potentially at least, be *triggered, prompted, or simply facilitated* by both body and context (Kövecses 2010:667), both should be treated as of *equal importance*. The difference between the two is that whereas the *primary metaphors* which originate 'in the body' *will be, or at least can potentially be, universal* (Kövecses 2010:666), *the contexts can be highly variable* (Kövecses 2010:663).

The relation between global and local contexts as briefly described above allows one to treat the elements of the latter as narrower in scope than those listed as examples of the former. Being part of the (global) *physical environment* as defined above, the elements a conceptualiser can draw upon (potentially, at least) are those available to other members of the linguistic community he belongs to. The moment he finds himself at a particular location, his choices narrow down to those which are specific to this particular location only and thus unavailable to others who are at different locations. The use of the attributive *immediate* with reference to factors listed as elements of the local context gives further substance to this claim.

Numerous examples we are provided with allow us to assume the same can be said of the remaining concepts introduced above. For instance, in one of them, a protagonist of the text being analysed is *rebuilding his house that was destroyed by the hurricane in 2005* (Kövecses 2010:683). Rebuilding (or building) a house is, essentially, a *social situation* that *all* members of a given linguistic community may be affected by. However, the moment it becomes part of the immediate physical setting the journalist is describing, its status changes from a global to a *local* factor.

One of the strongest claims Kövecses (2010:683) makes in this context is that – given there is always a certain meaning that the conceptualiser will want to express – *[i]f the meaning can be activated by means of a metaphorical mapping that fits the actual social setting, speakers/conceptualizers will prefer to choose that mapping (together with the linguistic expressions that are based on the mapping.*

Translated into the house-building context, this would, in a nutshell, mean that the conventionalized linguistic metaphor *to rebuild one's life* has appeared in the text precisely because of what the conceptualiser (the journalist) saw when he arrived at the scene. Of course, the expression is so deeply entrenched in contemporary English that sceptics can always claim that it could have been used even if the man who is the subject of the article were not rebuilding his house. But the scenario drawn by Kövecses (2010:683) is definitely not an unlikely one.

This, roughly, is the context (pun indeed) which inspired the present study and the framework which we intend to use in the analysis of the material collected. Regarding the second aim announced for this section, providing a few remarks on how the notions introduced apply in the case of *taste metaphor*, one has grounds to assume that being under pressure from their bodily experiences, the conceptualisers in the texts analysed will, in all likelihood, resort to images which are coherent with what constitutes a natural bodily reaction to a particular stimulus. For instance, sweetness will connote pleasure, excess of sweetness will be perceived as negative and so on. But one should also not forget that firstly, *taste terms are predicated of items of diet, and not indiscriminately of objects in the environment* (Backhouse 1994:13) and, secondly, that *gustation is, actually, an [i]nter-sensory experience par excellence* (Stillman 2002). Below we take a brief look at the implications both statements may have for the study of those figuratively used taste terms which could be treated as a manifestation of Kövecses's (2010:665) *context-induced creativity*.

Starting with the first statement, we already know that taste terms are normally used with reference to specific items of food and the activities of eating and drinking. *Since this is so, and since the contents of diet and methods of cuisine vary considerably across cultures, we must expect a great deal of cross-linguistic variation, both in the nature of dietary items with which taste terms are typically associated, and in particular aspects of the taste experience which are lexically emphasized* (Backhouse 1994:13). Food – and with it tastes (and taste words) typically associated with a particular food item – *serves as a semiotic system and [...] interacts with other semiotic systems and systems of values: gift-giving, personal beauty, theories of health, conspicuous consumption, and advertising* (Lehrer 1991:398), to name but a few.

Translated into the context of this study, statements such as these may, in this author's opinion, be interpreted as follows. If taste preferences were based on nothing else but human biology, then the *pleasant-connoted* (Rousmans *et al.* 2000:714) sweetness of chocolate – and chocolate itself – would have predominantly positive associations. Because of the factors mentioned above, it may quickly cease to do so for all those health-conscious individuals who

associate it with empty calories,¹³ unhealthy lifestyle, stress and frustration. Regarding the cultural setting this author belongs to, chocolate bars, given as a thank-you gift to one's doctor, usually demonstrate that the individual cannot afford something better (usually another traditional gift given on such occasions, cognac); consequently chocolate is treated as a symbol of one's low economic status and comments suggesting that it is, actually, the only little pleasure 'these poor people' can afford are not infrequent.¹⁴

Paradoxically, however, one often witnesses that 'these poor people' reject it, too. Some time ago, I was told that a ten-year-old commented on the sweets she was given by saying: 'We are not *that* poor'. Giving sweets to children as part of a Christmas gift is a tradition in Poland, but the girl, whose parents had divorced a short time before that and whose mother – a university graduate, had to take a part-time cleaning job to make ends meet – obviously felt humiliated: a perfectly understandable behaviour once we consider that people may display very negative reactions to foods they are unable to obtain *on a regular basis* (González Turmo 1997:123). Gender may also play a part: sweets are often rejected by men as typical 'feminine' food (González Turmo 1997:119).¹⁵

Since *taste in foods has [...] the capacity to become an instrument* of not only such identity factors as one's gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity or religion, but also age (González Turmo 1997:125), one may well expect one's attitude towards the taste typically associated with the food item in question to depend on what Kövecses (2010:669) has termed the linguistic community's *differential memory*. This means the social and economic changes that have occurred in Poland during the past twenty five years. The times when chocolate had to be bought at special stores which only accepted dollars still linger in the memories of many:¹⁶ for people in this age group, the sweetness of chocolate may have retained largely positive connotations. With younger generations, the factors mentioned above

¹³ For more on the relation between one's food preferences and health concerns see Harbottle (1997:180); for a brief yet succinct discussion of how the status of chocolate and sugar changed in British society, from a *noble treat, unaffordable to all but the few, only to become necessities for all nearly two centuries later* and how both, *along with spice tastes, drove the earliest successes of globalized markets*, see Cutting (2008:78).

¹⁴ Note in this context that here, too, chocolate appears in situations which are somehow connected with the feeling of guilt. Chocolate bars have become a traditional gift given by older, not-so-well-off relatives who do not fit with many family gatherings.

¹⁵ In the study in question (González Turmo 1997), the liking for sweets is reported as a typical *gender-related* one.

¹⁶ Note in this context the well evidenced evocative power of taste and odour in reconstituting a clear memory from one's past (de Garine 1997:188).

may have stigmatized chocolate to some extent. What also seems to count is where the food has been purchased: little positive mention is, these days, made of food which comes from large stores which are interpreted as markers of industrialised food processing, multinational agribusinesses, foreign ‘oppression’ (large stores such as Tesco usually represent foreign capital), a factor contributing towards or directly responsible for the degeneration of family bonds and – not infrequently – religious values. In this context, small corner stores (which typically shut on Sundays, a time reserved for church and family), home-made (family values again) and home-grown (at least one knows what one eats) are ‘in’ again.

Although many adult, educated Poles from the professional classes appreciate food whose source and mode of preparation are known, they also clearly seek out and claim they enjoy ‘unusual’ food. This relatively recent behavioural pattern may probably be accounted for in terms of a few factors which, after de Garine (1997:195), might be identified as the underlying wish for one’s diet to become more like *the far more adventurous combinations of Western cuisine*, a wish to avoid a relatively *repetitive, monotonous* diet which characterizes the older generations (as well as poorer people), a desire for one’s sensory experiences to become *more stimulating*, a desire to *demonstrate ‘distinction’ through exotic choices*, or a combination of all of these. However, such fashions are changing rapidly: what was in a year ago may be *passé* now but, generally speaking, exotic-sounding ingredients such as piri-piri lose their cachet as soon as everyone else has learnt what it is – and tasted it.

Turning briefly to the second factor specified above, it seems that while analyzing the figurative use of taste terms one needs to keep in mind that, as noted by, among others, González Turmo (1997:125), *taste for a given food or dish is forged through the conflation of flavour, texture, consistency, smell, etc.*¹⁷ Coupled with *different preferences* and *different implicit taste norms* (Lehrer 1991:393), all of these body-based physical sensations may potentially come into play when a conceptualiser uses a taste term metaphorically. From this it follows that while analysing context-induced taste metaphors one should be careful not to resort to hasty generalizations of the sweet-pleasant, bitter-unpleasant kind, as they may only be a part of the picture.

As results from this brief exposition above, the number of factors which may affect *the overall metaphorical patterns of a community* (Kövecses 2010:668)

¹⁷ In the citation above, González Turmo (1997:125) obviously uses *flavour* as a synonym of *taste* and lists smell as a separate factor, but it is important to note that for many (de Garine 1997; Goldstein 2010; LeMagnen 1951) flavour, as defined in de Garine (1997:187), is *a complex notion encompassing taste and smell [...], and also touch, vision and even hearing if we refer to the ‘crunchy’ quality of certain foods in some cultures (e.g., Japan).*

when this community uses FOOD as a source domain is quite large. [T]he physiological perception of and response to foods are socially conditioned, and an individual's taste is inextricably linked with that of the group into which s/he is acculturated (Harbottle 1997:175, based on Lalonde 1992). Research into the phenomenon of context-induced creativity undertaken with respect to this particular subset of the lexicon may, in consequence, be expected to reveal at least as much variation as biologically-determined similarity.

Context-Induced Creativity and the Figurative Use of Taste Terms

In what follows, we shall take a closer look at one of the texts collected in connection with research on taste vocabulary, which the author of this paper has been engaged in for some time. The titular *creativity means the production and use of conceptual metaphors and their linguistic manifestations* (Kövecses 2010:664); the discussion conducted above should have made it clear that both the conceptual and linguistic metaphors that we will encounter can be expected to range from well-worn, cliché, entrenched to completely novel ones. Since the text in question was retrieved for purposes unconnected with those pursued within the present paper, it should be treated as a pure coincidence that it represents what Kövecses (2010:666) classifies as *more ordinary forms of language use, such as journalism* (Kövecses 2010:665).

The text, an article from this year's Easter issue (25 April 2011) of *Newsweek Polska*, was chosen because it contains not one but a few taste terms. Broadly speaking, the article describes three men and the life choices they once made. As in the case of a well-known poem by Robert Frost, the road they took is *the one less traveled by*; as in Frost's poem, it is apparent that *that has made all the difference*. The whole text may, therefore, be treated as based on the conventional LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor¹⁸ and one has grounds to assume that what prompted the use of this particular metaphor may have been episodes¹⁹ from the former as well as present life of one of

¹⁸ We find the evidence for this in the opening lines of the text, which read: *Everyone would like to be someone different from time to time. However, only a few have the courage to seek happiness away from life's safe, well-marked path* (Pol. *Każdy czasami chciałby być kimś innym. Niewielu ma jednak odwagę, żeby szukać szczęścia poza wytyczoną, bezpieczną życiową ścieżką.*)

¹⁹ The references to the *path* can be found in the fragment which informs the reader that walking in the mountains has always been the topic's (the man's) favourite pastime; based on who he is and his life philosophy, the reader may assume that even in his 'old' life, whenever he went to the mountains, he rather tried to stay off the main, crowded (and littered) trails; a photo attached shows that one such trail, only a few metres away from his doorstep, is also an important element of his *immediate physical setting* as it is these days.

the text's protagonists: a once successful lawyer who gave up living in one of the largest Polish cities and moved to the nearby Sowie Mountains, where he has been living peacefully – and happily – for the past twenty nine years.²⁰

In the case of the other two, the metaphor is still there: they, too, gave up their successful careers at large international corporations and, like the narrator in Frost's poem, *took a different one*. However, describing their lives before taking the decision, the author of the text, Bartosz Janiszewski, writes that it was *a bit like chocolate from a hypermarket. Seemingly sweet and pleasant but something was missing*.²¹ The statement is thus clearly based on another, fairly conventional LIFE IS FOOD metaphor²² and I suggest Janiszewski chose to extend it by this particular element of the source (chocolate from a hypermarket) because, in their new life, the two are owners of a small chocolate manufacturer which produces high-quality chocolate. Provided my interpretation is correct, we can explain Janiszewski's choice of this particular metaphorical expression (*seemingly sweet*, with reference to their old life) as directly linked with the knowledge he has of his *topic* (the two young entrepreneurs), their *immediate physical setting* (their business, which is located near Warsaw) and the knowledge he has of his addressees: the readers of *Newsweek Polska*, who tend to connect hypermarket food with bad quality, excessive consumerism and, generally, a lifestyle which takes little cognizance of things that are really important in life. I furthermore claim that writing the way he does, Janiszewski directly refers to the linguistic community's *differential memory*: as briefly mentioned in the foregoing, many readers of the

²⁰ Bągiel (this is the man's name) is thus portrayed as one of many, to use Bradshaw's (2004:72) words, *figures living peacefully on the margins of society, refusing to participate in its economic structures*. The ethical values he lives by are well encoded in his diet consisting of, as we may infer, only very basic food. At the same time, he is not a *hermit* (*Wbrew pozorom, wcale nie jest pustelnikiem*) – he lives with his life partner, a poet, Joanna Mossakowska. I guess the author includes this fact because in Poland one's LIFESTYLE – here not having a (female partner) – still stands for ODDITY – a man who has not managed to find a partner is not really a man (relevant expressions in Polish [and, indeed, other languages] that convey the idea that MENTAL HEALTH IS WHOLENESS being *moja lepsza połowa* 'my better half' [to refer to one's female partner] and *znaleźć swoją drugą połowę* 'to find one's other half').

²¹ Pol. *Jeszcze dwa lata temu ich życie było trochę jak czekolada z hipermarketu. Niby słodkie i przyjemne, ale czegoś brakowało*.

²² The Polish language has a few fairly conventionalized expressions such as *a recipe for life* (*przepis na życie*), *life has lost its usual flavour* (*życie straciło swój zwykły smak*), *to add spice* (lit. *flavour*) *to life* (*nadać życiu smak*), *the bitter-sweet taste of life* (*gorzko-słodki smak życia*), and so on, in which LIFE is conceptualised either as FOOD or, more specifically, A DISH), which may be treated as a variant of a more general and schematic A NON-NUTRITIONAL ENTITY IS FOOD).

magazine remember the times when chocolate (and supermarkets) were part of a totally different frame: they symbolized the nation's dream to become part of the 'normal' Western culture, to be able to buy ordinary things (e.g. chocolate) in normal shops just like people outside the communist bloc could, but whose *concerns and interests* have, since, changed significantly: once the 'normality' became part of their lives, they started to notice its negative aspects, not just the positive ones.

The LIFE AS FOOD metaphor is also visible in the title Janiszewski uses for this section of the article: *Dolce Vita*. Again, we may assume that choosing this title results from what he knows about his addressees: the Polish intelligentsia, who can easily be trusted to recognise such cultural icons as Federico Fellini. Not being played in Polish cinemas at the time the article was written, the movie in question is not part of *the immediate cultural context* in quite the same manner as in one of Kövecses's (2010:679) examples. At the same time, the author has reasons to believe his addressees know it: after all, every educated person knows it. Since they know the movie, they also know what the expression meant there; and those very few who do not, certainly know the standard dictionary meaning attached to it. As a result, they will quickly realize that a life full of heedless pleasure and luxury that many Polish people identify a corporate career with is not the real *dolce vita* – in much the same manner as supermarket chocolate is not 'real' chocolate.

In a sense, the title of this section of the article is, in a sense, misleading. Firstly, it is misleading because of its location in the whole text and secondly, because it means something different to what the addressee normally associates it with. Having it at this particular point in the entire text, the addressee will be slightly confused; after all, the moment he encounters it is after reading the first section of the article (about the lawyer) and this section clearly suggests the article is about spiritual rebirth and the courage to give up an unsatisfying life. In such a context, *Dolce vita*, with its standard dictionary (and cultural) meaning, simply does not fit. But it is precisely because it does not fit that the addressee will be curious to continue reading the article's second part.

I suppose another thing Janiszewski was hoping for in choosing the title was for the reader to feel a little flattered. What I mean is that to come up with a correct interpretation of the title, the addressee must demonstrate considerable knowledge. One aspect of this knowledge we have not mentioned so far is the knowledge of foreign languages. Knowing English does not count – everyone knows English these days. But knowing less common languages such as Italian is different. Knowing such less well-known languages means you are really someone. Janiszewski knows that and it does not really matter that the knowledge his addressee is required to demonstrate is not 'real' knowledge (let us note that Janiszewski is careful not to serve the addressee with something 'more difficult',

for instance the Biblical *Iugum suave*, or Latin *Melle dulcior* ‘sweeter than honey’). All he wants is to be nice and establish a pleasant atmosphere – which implies that he cannot be too inquisitive about how much it is that they really know.

The last figurative use of a taste term (*pusta słodkość* ‘empty sweetness’) is also interesting, and for a number of reasons. The section on the two young men and the life choices they have made opens with a brief description of one of the article’s topics: the chocolate the two manufacture. Unlike *ordinary chocolate that can be eaten by bars. As soon as you finished one bar, you feel like stuffing yourself with the next one*,²³ *real chocolate* must be eaten *slowly*.²⁴ Importantly – and it is at this point that Janiszewski decides to step back and let his two young protagonists take the floor – *the difference between the rich flavour of the latter and the empty sweetness of its cheap, low quality, hypermarket counterpart can be felt by everyone. All one has to do is to try*.

To understand the actual meaning of these sentences (and that both can be interpreted either literally or metaphorically), the reader must first get to a fragment which appears later in the text and in which Janiszewski describes the lives of those who – like the two young protagonists and the majority of their high school friends – *naively went with the flow (popłynęli z prądem)* and chose a ‘safe’ (and, hence, very popular) field of study, computer science. Once the reader gets there, he realizes that *ordinary chocolate* from these opening lines stands for ordinary lives and ordinary lives means here the lives of those who prefer obvious (often conformist) choices. The urge to stuff yourself with another one as soon as you have finished the first bar represents the urge on the part of corporate employees to accumulate more ‘earthly goods’. By contrast, discovering the taste of slowly consumed real chocolate is a metaphor for a life in which one deliberately reaches for experiences which – though unattractive at first sight – bring the hope of revealing what is really important in life. Contrary to popular opinion, this kind of life is not reserved for the few chosen ones (*you do not have to be a gourmet to make good chocolate* (= make your life a satisfying one). Everyone can have a satisfying life of that kind, as long as he is willing to try.

Importantly, the Polish noun *słodkość* ‘sweetness’ is normally used with reference to food and drinks only; abstract sweetness is referred to by means of *słodycz*. As such, *słodkość* does not normally collocate with *empty*. The reference to emptiness may, in our opinion, stand for two things. Firstly, it

²³ *Zwykłą czekoladę można jeść całymi tabliczkami. Człowiek skończy jedną i już ma ochotę napychać się następną.*

²⁴ *Prawdziwą czekoladę degustuje się powoli* – the next few lines describe all the possible unusual sensations that await all those who decide to try ‘the real thing’.

may be read as indicative of the fact this particular item may taste good but has no nutritional value. Secondly, *empty* and *emptiness* (and its derivatives) are standardly used with reference to LIFE. Janiszewski's use (we cannot be sure whether it is a conscious decision on his part) of *empty* with reference to the literal sweetness allows the addressee to interpret it (the sweetness) both literally (the taste of ordinary chocolate, pleasant but deceptive because it makes you crave something which is otherwise worthless) and metaphorically: as the quality of an empty life – a life led by all those who failed to summon up the courage and do what they always wanted to do; who traded their dreams for safe corporate jobs (with all the benefits one is normally entitled to in such circumstances).

Significantly (and in a manner befitting an *Easter* issue), even those who fell into the trap can always make a change and – as it is called in the article's title – 'Be Born Again'. To do so, they have to give up their orthodox food preferences (the taste metaphor at work being TO HAVE A SATISFYING LIFE IS FOR ONE TO GIVE UP HIS USUAL FOOD PREFERENCES). However, since the 'real chocolate' described is, in fact, plain (=bitter) chocolate, Janiszewski clearly suggests that he is far from condemning the choices of those who chose a corporate career. Quite the opposite: most people would go for the sweetness of ordinary chocolate rather than the bitterness of real chocolate. And there is, basically, nothing wrong with that kind of life as long as one accepts it.

But the article is meant for a different addressee – those who, perhaps, are not happy with the lives they are leading. And for all those the hope of a spiritual rebirth remains strong as long as they are willing to try – yet another metaphor which Janiszewski knows can only be understood by those who are part of this particular culture and know the meaning of this particular holiday.

Conclusions

For reasons of space, we only discussed one text in which the metaphors used seem to take their root in the context in which it has been written. One text is definitely not enough to make any definite claims on how widespread this phenomenon is. Given what we know about the two domains – FOOD and TASTE – one has reasons to believe that when speakers/conceptualisers (e.g. journalists) describe something which stands in some relation to both, they may intuitively be reaching for taste metaphors of the kind described above on the premise that this kind of 'ornamentation' will add some spice to what the addressee might otherwise consider a trivial (and boring) topic.²⁵ At the same time, taste is only one among many properties a particular item of food

²⁵ On the one hand, *writing about food is so extensive that it constitutes a virtual genre of its own, including not only recipe books but also extended encomia to eating, its purposes, and its pleasures* (Korsmeyer 1999:3). At the same time, one has a feeling that food is not a serious topic

or a substance (e.g. sugar) has. In consequence, one may well imagine contexts in which it is not its taste, but other properties (e.g. what Harbottle [1997: 183] refers to as *its 'pure white and deadly' image*) that will make the conceptualiser reach for a particular linguistic or conceptual metaphor.

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to write about. The same goes for terms describing taste sensations. Taste vocabulary is apparently poorly developed and uninteresting – as such, it has afforded much less theoretical interest than two all-time perennials – colour and kinship terms and studying (and talking about) taste is often limited to taste as a metaphor for aesthetic sensitivity. All this gives us grounds to believe that especially more language-conscious conceptualisers such as journalists who, for this or other reasons, may need to write about something connected with food (e.g. the rising prices of sugar) may subconsciously go for metaphor (e.g. refer to the consequences this will have on the economy – and our purses – by means of the figurative *it's getting bitter*) perhaps because they remember that the 'ornamentation' we referred to above will make even the most plain ingredients of their text (taste words such as *bitter*) a bit more palatable.

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