



## **A Lexico-Semantic Study of Culinary Terms in Nigerian English: the Question of Intelligibility Revisited**

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the use of culinary terms among the educated Nigerian speakers of English and how this relates to intelligibility. Contextual Relativity (CR) is adopted as the theoretical framework as it bridges the gap between the study of the meanings of words and their linguistic and cultural environment. Ninety questionnaires were analysed. Data were complemented with selected Nigerian-based literary texts. The data were subjected to simple statistical and linguistic analyses. Findings reveal that most Nigerian speakers of English do not differentiate between the use of some of the culinary terms on the basis of their semantic properties. This is attributed to socio-cultural differences, poor knowledge of the existence of such differences and the lack of sufficient vocabulary to account for such cooking processes. The study concludes that there is the need to check the extent of innovativeness and to define the yardstick for the acceptable and intelligible usage. Unfortunately, Nigerian literary writers have not been able to enlighten Nigerians on the use of some unfamiliar culinary terms.

**Key Words:** Lexico-semantics, intelligibility, culinary terms, Nigerian English, contextual relativity, innovation, acceptability.

### **1. Introduction**

The global spread of English and its status and functions in the English Second Language (ESL) countries has continued to attract linguistic research. For instance in Nigeria, where English is not only the official language, but also gradually attaining the status of a first language, studies have examined some semantic changes that have taken place in some varieties of Nigerian English

(NE). For instance, Bamgbose (1971) explored semantic changes in selected lexical fields of Nigerian English, while Odumuh (1984) and Kujore (1985) carried out a comparative investigation of semantic variation of lexical items and expressions in NE and Standard British English (SBE). Bokamba (1982), Bamiro (1984) and Jowitt (1991) among others, also attempted to characterise the Nigerian English lexicon. Their

findings identified several innovative strategies creatively employed by Nigerians speakers, which reflect their socio-cultural environment. A more recent work on the lexico-semantic domain is Igboanusi (2001) who demonstrates that lexico-semantic innovations in NE are achieved through some linguistic processes such as semantic extension and shift, functional conversion, reduplication, analogical derivation and so forth. However, all the previous studies on the Nigerian English lexicon have concentrated on the variance of general terms with little attention to the description of words from specific lexical and semantic fields such as culinary and cooking terms. This paper explores the use of culinary terms among educated Nigerians; and examines the semantic peculiarities inherent in the use of some cooking terms. The culinary field is one of the semantic fields where speakers are not usually conscious when they make lexical choices. Unfortunately, there are no previous works on culinary terms. The authors' choice of culinary terms was simply based on their observation of domains where NE speakers are most likely to exhibit peculiarity and innovation. This study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

(i). What is the range of culinary terms common in

Nigerian English?

(ii). What semantic peculiarities exist among them and their British English counterparts?

(iii). What are the factors responsible for such peculiarities

## **2. Varieties of Nigerian English (NE)**

Whenever a language comes in contact with other languages, there is always language change which in most cases naturally leads to different varieties. In the process of the domestication of English in Nigeria, scholars of NE have attempted to identify emerging varieties of NE, based on different parameters. One of such parameters is ethnic, that is, the interference of mother tongues at the phonological level. Using the ethnic parameter, Jibril (1982) identifies Eastern English, Western English and Northern English, following Walsh's typology of Igbo English, Yoruba English and Hausa English.

A second parameter is linguistic criteria. According to Jowitt (1991), this parameter is applicable where groups of linguistic features are distinguished according to the degree of deviation which they manifest from the exoglossic standards. Using this parameter, Banjo (1993) identifies four varieties: variety I, marked by the transfer of speakers' Mother

Tongue (MT) features to English, it is socially unacceptable and internationally unintelligible. Variety 2 is close to Standard British English (SBE) in syntax, but with strongly marked phonological and lexical characteristics. It is socially acceptable but not internationally intelligible. Variety 3 is close to SBE in syntax and semantics, similar in phonology, different in phonetic features and with some lexical peculiarities. It is both socially acceptable and internationally intelligible. Variety 4 is identical to SBE in syntax, semantics, phonology and phonetics; it is socially unacceptable but internationally intelligible.

The third parameter is occupational criteria. Using this parameter, Adesanoye (1980) identifies three varieties: variety 1, associated with the average primary school leaver and low-grade workers; variety 2 associated with secondary school leavers and many university students, also with most magistrates and many journalists; and variety 3, representing the graduate class, associated with most university lecturers, superior judges, administrators, editors, the more sophisticated authors, and so on.

The fourth and final parameter is educational criteria. In classifying these varieties of NE using this parameter, Brosnaham (1958)

identifies four levels of usages corresponding to stages in education attainment. They are; Variety 1 (pidgin), with no formal education; Variety II, with only primary education completed; Variety III, with only secondary education completed; and Variety IV, with University education completed. This fourth parameter is relevant to the study of culinary terms by educated Nigerians. In this study, 'educated Nigerians' refers to those who have completed either secondary or tertiary education.

### **3. The Notion of Educated Nigerian English**

The educated Nigerian English adopted as a model of Standard Nigerian English (SNE). However, there has been a longstanding debate as to which of the varieties qualifies as a model. According to Banjo (1993), the choice of an appropriate model should be based on the twin criteria of social acceptability and international intelligibility, on the assumption that such a model, given the second language situation, should possess high prestige at home and reasonably easy intelligibility abroad. Jowitt (1991) rather identifies the existence of a broad concept of Popular Nigerian English (PNE), thus basically addressing an inclusive definition of Nigerian English. He suggests that "the usage of every Nigerian user is a mixture of standard

forms and Popular Nigerian forms, which are in turn composed of errors and variants” (Jowitt, 1981:38). He sets up a cline of varieties as in Banjo (1971), ranging from those very heavily influenced by mother-tongue transfers to those approximating to standard English and at the same time, correlates these generally with educational attainments. Close to the latter end of the scale is ‘Near-Standard Nigerian’ English which is presumably the emerging SNE. In the views of Jibril (1982), the candidate for the standard variety has to be the union of sophisticated Hausa and sophisticated southern varieties, with the sophisticated variety in each case being that variety which is closer to Standard British English (SBE) and exhibits less mother-tongue transfers.

This study is of the view that the debate on which endonormative variety to be adopted as a model of the educated variety, possessing both social acceptability and international intelligibility, will continue as long as NE is not standardized and codified, with a dictionary of NE lexicon to serve as a reference. However, for the purpose of this work, Banjo’s Variety III, is adopted as the model. This is in line with Jowitt’s (1991) observation of the proficiency of different levels of graduates and professionals. For

instance, in Nigeria today, There are secondary school leavers, who have attained higher proficiency in the use of the English language than some graduates and lecturers. Thus, educational attainment alone cannot serve extensively for a detailed empirical research.

In addition, Banjo’s Variety III is close to Standard British English in syntax and semantics, similar in phonology, different in phonetic features with some lexical peculiarities. It is both socially acceptable and internationally intelligible. According to Jowitt (1991), this variety has the highest number of speakers, ranging from secondary school certificate holders, undergraduates, graduates and those in graduate schools, university lecturers, professionals, journalists, editors, and professors. Thus, this study supports this variety as the endonormative model of the educated standard Nigerian English.

#### **4. Lexical Innovations in Nigerian English and Acceptability**

Lexico-semantic innovations in NE are described in terms of Bamgbose’s (1998) internal measures of innovation, which include, demographic (number of speakers), geographic (the spread of an innovation), codification (putting the innovation into a written form in a grammar, a

lexical or pronouncing dictionary, course books or any other reference manual), authoritative (the actual use or approval of an innovation by writers, teachers, media practitioners, examination bodies, publishing houses, and influential opinion leaders), and acceptability (the acceptance of an innovation). According to Igboanusi (2001) although many Nigerian English innovation have attained the demographic, geographical and authoritative factors, they lack the most important factors of codification, intelligibility and acceptance. This is why innovations continue to be labelled as errors even by people who frequently use them.

However, Bamgbose (1998) does not stop at classifying innovation as an acceptable variant but also points out the need to differentiate an innovation from an error, saying that the former is seen as an acceptable variant, while the latter is simply a mistake or uneducated usage. He also opines that innovations are well motivated, while errors are not. In the same vein, Bokamba (1982) classifies lexico-semantic innovation in terms of semantic deviation. Nevertheless, this study argues that lexical innovations may not function appropriately in the use of registers, since they comprise lexical items for specific professional fields and tend to be universally fixed in nature. Igboanusi (2001) identifies

semantic extension, which is the process where words are made to acquire additional meaning; and semantic shift, which is the process where an English word is made to acquire a meaning different from its original meaning. These occurrences are clear proofs that English can effectively express the Nigerian cultures and experiences.

### **5. English Usage in Nigeria**

Soneye (2003: 2) citing Babalola (2000), concludes that language and culture are interwoven because “social integration and development are practically non-existent where the people have no deep linguistic affinity, sympathy and accommodation.” This perhaps is the reason why the English Language has been embraced by Nigerians who have been able to bend it to to express cultures that are different from its native home. However, Soneye argues that English is not efficient enough to translate the Nigerian experience. This assertion appears to contradict the creative tenets of a natural language as English. The creative potentials of a language make it possible to translate any indigenous concept to the English language. For instance, Soneye argues that “iya oko” does not always mean “mother-in-law,” but could also mean a younger or older sister to one’s husband. This is a case of semantic extension, which is common in several contexts of the

Nigerian English usage. It should be noted that English has such words as “sister-in-law” and “brother-in law,” to express one’s husband’s siblings, which in Igbo are expressed as:

“nne di” - mother-in-law  
“nwanne ndi” – sister/brother-in-law

Palmer (1981) also notes that although there are difficulties often encountered in translation, translators never totally fail to translate from one language to another. In addition, second language (L2) users tend to internalise what they read in their First Language (L1), relating it to their world view and experiences. Thus, Nigerian users of English should be encouraged to also acquire or learn their indigenous languages, in order to be able to approximate between the L1 and L2 whenever necessary.

Furthermore, Bokamba (1982), Bamiro (1984) and Igboanus (2001) explored some range of lexical innovations in Nigerian English and demonstrated that English like every other natural language can significantly express the Nigerian cultures without losing any aspect of the culture. However, the meanings of certain English words have been extended to accommodate some aspects of the Nigerian culture. For instance, in his study of the meanings of kinship terms in Yoruba English, Alo (1989) shows that certain semantic

properties that are associated with the use of ‘father’, ‘mother’, ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ in the Yoruba English usage, are lacking in British English, but correlate with different conceptions and patterns of family and social relationships in Yoruba and English cultures. For instance, in British English, the basis of operating kinship category is the nuclear family, where the terms ‘father’, ‘mother’, ‘brother’, and ‘sister’, refer to members of the nuclear family. In Yoruba English however, the references of the terms get greatly extended both in reference and address. The terms cover several persons outside primary kinship with whom blood bonds can be traced. Beyond this also, each term is used in reference to affinal relatives and sometimes in order to show respect for people who are older in age and generation.

In his study of the semantic components of the Igbo science and technology terms using Componential Analysis (CA), Ogbulogo (2005) concludes that lexical innovation includes leaving some cultural terms that lack English equivalent in their indigenous form. Some of the Igbo English terms as well as their component features he used in the study are:

Igwe (machine)	- [iron]
[bicycle]	[machine]
[engine]	

Ogbunigwe (missile) -  
[missile] [bomb] [grenade]  
[machine gun]  
Ogwu (medicine) -  
[medicine] [drug] [charm]  
[talisman]  
Mmiri (water) - [water]  
[liquid] [solvent] [solution]  
[syrup]

However, there are words such as 'agbada' (flowing gown) and 'oriki' (praise name) that lose some of their cultural meanings when translated. Thus, while innovation allows Nigerian speakers of the English language exercise their creative power as L2 users, there is the need to distinguish between innovation and error.

## 6. Theoretical Framework: Contextual Relativity

This study is based on the Whorfian proposition (1956), which acknowledges the close relationship between language and culture; maintaining that they are interrelated in such a way that one cannot describe one without acknowledging the other. In Whorf's view, different speakers will experience the world differently as long as the languages they speak differ. The bases for these differences as identified by Ogbulogo (2005) include the natural environment, the stage of intellectual development and levels of technological innovations. For instance, in their analysis of two Setswana colour terms, *ntsho*

(black) and *tsheu* (white), Otlogetswe and Bawasi (2008) posit that both colours emanated from their natural environment, with *ntsho*, as a colour similar to darkness or soot and *tsheu* being the colour of milk or salt. They also demonstrate that Setswana has seven colour terms: *ntsho* (black), *tshwen* (white), *tshetiha* (light brown), *tala* (grue), *khibidu* (red), *thokwa* (brown) and *serolwana* (yellow) - this classification of colours varies in different languages and cultures. This aspect of linguistic relativity (Whorf, 1956) though highly controversial, is found useful in this work, as it explains why Nigerian users of English use the culinary terms the way they do. According to Cruse (1986), the meaning of a word is fully reflected and constituted in its contextual relations; in this case, both linguistic and cultural contexts. Thus, the pattern of affinities and disaffinities a word contracts with other words and the cultural environment it is used, bequeath additional semantic properties to it. For instance, the word 'father', used in the Yoruba English domain would include 'any elderly male' whereas in Standard British English, it refers to one's biological father. A combination of these perspectives results in the concept of Contextual Relativity (CR), which translates as the impact of both cultural and linguistic contexts in

the meaning making mechanism of Nigerian English.

The study is situated within the domain of lexical semantics. Lexical semantics, according to Pustejovsky (1995), covers the study of how and what the words of a language denote; it seeks to answer the question of whether the meaning of a lexical unit is established by looking at its linguistic context or if meaning resides in individual words. He goes on to add that lexical semantics also considers how to disambiguate one word from another, and how to analyse multiple meanings for a single word. Thus, it examines how lexical items work to build sentences. Such investigations lead to theories about how the words of a language are entered in the mental lexicon and other references. Using the case of the domestication of English in Nigeria, several aspects of the English lexicon have also been nativised in order to play their role in a new linguistic and cultural environment. According to Kachru (1980), the existence of non-English contexts and the need to use contextually appropriate words, justifies the occurrence of innovations in language use, although not at the expense of a shift from the core features of the target language. Nigerian English being a member of the outer circle of the English Language (Kachru, 1982), displays a large array of

innovations which consequently have a lot of implication for the development of Global English. Banjo (1995:214) thus rightly observes;

“it appears to be generally recognised that it is in the lexico-semantic area; together with distinctive idiomatic expressions, that Nigerian English is likely to make a real contribution to the development of the English Language worldwide...”

However, Nigerian English speakers must be conscious enough to avoid being ‘too’ innovative; this is because, in as much as NE is a language in its own right, deviating from the norms that define words in British English will probably result in the language losing its root and as such, equally losing global relevance.

## **7. Data Analysis**

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire which asks questions on how thirty-four (34) selected culinary terms are understood by participants; (the 34 culinary terms where the most recurrent in NE usage; this was further justified in the selected Nigerian literary text); the participants were also required to supply collocates for the selected terms. This is in order to find out the compatibility of their combinations. The questionnaires



were administered to a hundred (100) educated Nigerian users of English drawn from the university circle and professionals in the field of catering. Out of the corpus, only a total of ninety (90) were retrieved and analysed; the remaining ten (10) were not accessible as at the time of analysis. Data were also generated from Oyegoke's (2002), *Ill Winds* Adichie's (2004) *Purple Hibiscus*, Osammor's (2004) *The Triumph of the Water Lily*, Nukoya's (2006) *Nine Lives*. Data from these four (4) Nigerian literary texts helped to find out

how writers use some of the selected culinary terms in context. The terms were discursively examined to see how NE speakers perceive and use them. Percentage method was used to determine the aggregate number per option selected by each respondent. Following the *New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of English Language* and the *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary*, the following are the meanings of the identified cooking terms in the data.

**Table 1: Dictionary Meanings of Cooking Terms**

<b>Cooking Terms</b>	<b>Dictionary meaning</b>	<b>Possible collocates</b>
<b>Bake</b>	To cook by dry and continuous heat, as food in an oven.	Cake, bread
<b>Beat</b>	To stir (eggs etc) vigorously into a frothy mixture.	Egg yolk
<b>Boil</b>	To cook in liquid agitated by gaseous bubbles.	Potato, rice
<b>Cook</b>	To prepare for consumption by the action of heat as in roasting or boiling.	Beans, yam
<b>Crumble</b>	To disintegrate food into small particle for cooking	Oat, seasoning (maggi)
<b>Deep fry</b>	To fry in large quantity of fat with high degree of heat.	Potato, yam
<b>Dice</b>	Cutting in cubic shape.	lamb, carrots, onions
<b>Drain</b>	To drawn water or any liquid from food.	vegetables, rice
<b>Dredge</b>	To sprinkle or dust with flour before cooking.	Cakes, fish
<b>Fluff</b>	To shake or pound so as to cause to puff out and become fluffy.	Rice, spaghetti
<b>Fry</b>	To cook or be cooked in hot fat, usually	Mushrooms, egg

	over direct heat.	
<b>Dredge</b>	To sprinkle or dust with flour before cooking.	Cakes, fish
<b>Fluff</b>	To shake or pound so as to cause to puff out and become fluffy.	Rice, spaghetti
<b>Fry</b>	To cook or be cooked in hot fat, usually over direct heat.	Mushrooms, egg
<b>Garnish</b>	To decorate or embellish food.	Food
<b>Griddle</b>	To cook on a griddle	Oat, mosa
<b>Grill</b>	To cook on a gridiron; by tormenting with heat.	bacon ,suya,
<b>Heat</b>	To make or become hot or warm	Oil
<b>Knead</b>	To mix and work, as dough or clay into a uniform mass.	Dough, elubo, amala
<b>Mash</b>	Crushed or ground grain or malt, infused in hot water to produce whip.	Potatoes
<b>Parboil</b>	To boil partially.	Rice
<b>Poach</b>	To cook egg, fish etc without their shell in boiling water, milk or other liquid until coated.	Puddings, fish
<b>Roast</b>	To cook before an open fire or by placing in hot ashes or embers etc – heat to an excessive degree.	Meat, yam
<b>Scramble</b>	To cook (Eggs) with the yolks a white stirred together, usually with milk and butter.	Egg, fish
<b>Season</b>	To flavour food with salt, herbs etc	Meat, fish
<b>Sift</b>	To pass through a sieve in order to separate the fine part from the coarse particle.	Cassava, flour
<b>Simmer</b>	To boil gently or with a signing sound.	Source, stew
<b>Slice</b>	To cut into broad, thin pieces; divide apportion	Vegetables
<b>Smoke</b>	To treat food (fish , meat) with smoke.	Fish, meat
<b>Soak</b>	To place in liquid until thoroughly saturated.	Beans, peas
<b>Steam</b>	To cook until it gives off vapour.	Water, vegetables
<b>Stir fry</b>	To stir while cooking in hot fat	Onion, egusi,
<b>Toast</b>	To brown before or over a fire, especially, to brown (bread or cheese) before a fire in a toaster.	Bread

<b>Whip</b>	To beat egg or cream into a froth with a fork or mixer.	Cream, egg
<b>Whisk</b>	To beat or mix with a quick movement, as egg, cream etc	Egg white,

### 7.1. Semantic properties of selected Cooking Terms

The following common cooking terms were identified in the questionnaire: fry, boil, roast, cook, bake, par boil and smoke. The semantic properties are diagrammatically represented as follows:

**Table 2: Semantic Features of Selected Cooking Terms**

SEMANTIC FEATURES							
ITEM	Edible	Water is added	Mixture in oil	High degree of heat	Direct exposure to fire	Extraction of water content	Exposure to heat
fry	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
Boil	+	+	-/+	+	-	-	+
Roast	+	-	-/+	+	+	+	+
Cook	+	+	-/+	+	-	-	+
Bake	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Parboil	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
Smoke	+	-	-	-	-	+	+

(The positive (+) sign means that a feature is present, negative means that a feature is absent and the negative – positive sign (-/+), means that a feature can either be present or not to still retain its meaning.

**Table 3: Classification of Cooking Terms According to Stages**

Cooking Stages		Culinary Terms
<b>Preparatory Terms</b>	<b>Cooking</b>	Beat, Crumble, Dice, Drain, Dredge, Fluff, Knead, Mash, Season, Sift, Slice, Soak, Whip, Whisk
<b>Actual Cooking Terms</b>		Bake, Boil, Deep Fry, Griddle, Grill, Heat, Parboil, Poach, Roast, Scramble, Simmer, Smoke, Steam, Stir Fry, Toast
<b>Finishing Cooking Terms</b>		Garnish

## 7.2 Results

**Table 4: Frequency Analysis of the Semantic implications of the Cooking Processes**

Cooking Processes	Frequency of Occurrence			
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Do not know
Add water to fry	15.5%	40.0%	44.5%	0%
Add oil to boil	4.4%	51.1%	44.5%	0%
Use high degree of heat to roast.	15.6%	61.1%	22.2%	1.1%
Add water to roast	22.2%	40%	34.5%	3.3%
Expose directly to fire to roast.	24.4%	45.6%	30%	0%
Expose directly to fire to cook	24.4%	45.6%	30%	0%
Extract water content to cook	8.9%	66.7%	21.1%	3.3%
Expose directly to fire when baking	6.7%	17.8%	75.5%	0%
Expose directly to heat to bake	56.7%	18.9%	24.4%	0%
Add water to bake	22.2%	24.4%	52.2%	1.1%
Use high degree of heat to bake	17.8%	53.3%	28.9%	0%
Add water to parboil	77.8%	20%	2.2%	0%
Add oil to parboil	2.2%	37.8%	60%	0%
Extract water content when parboiling.	46.7%	36.7%	15.5%	1.1%
Add water to smoke	4.4%	11.1%	83.3%	1.1%
Use high degree of heat to smoke	17.8%	48.9%	30%	3.3%
Is what you cook always edible?	77.8%	14.4%	2.2%	5.6%

Table 4 above shows some of the semantic properties of common cooking terms by the participants. For the majority, the term ‘fry’ does not require the addition of water, this is in agreement with what the consulted dictionaries refer to as ‘fry’; however, 40.0% of the participants suggest that sometimes water is required in the frying process. Even though this suggestion almost looks true, as in the case of frying stew, frying

*egusi* and so on; if one has to be definite with the use of the term *fry*, it must be noted that the frying process ends once water is added to whatever is being fried; hence, any other cooking that continues after water has been added could either be termed steaming or boiling. The 15.5% of the participants that opine that they always add water when they fry represent those that perceive the term from a different semantic

perspective or those not involve in the act of cooking altogether as was seen by participants responses to suggested collocate.

Also, more than half of the participants, that is, 61% agree that they use a high degree of heat to roast however, 40% of them say they add oil in the course of roasting. This is most likely to be as a result of Nigerian speakers mixing up the processes of grilling and roasting or using both terms as synonyms. This is further proved as 30% of the participants opine that they never expose their food to fire while roasting.

For the term 'bake', majority of the responses concur with what the dictionaries refer to as 'to bake', 56.7% agree that they expose directly to heat when they bake, 52.2% say they do not add water in the process of baking and 53.3% say they sometime use high degree of heat to bake. Also, the way NE speakers use the term 'parboil' seems to agree with the way the dictionaries define the term. 77.8% of the participants agree that water is needed to parboil and 46.7% agree that they extract water content after parboiling.

The term 'smoke', which implies to cure food such as fish, meat etc, with smoke, is used as a synonym of roast among NE speakers. This is so because even though "smoke and roast" share

the semantic property of (-water), however, to smoke, we do not expose directly to fire as in roasting. 42.2% of the participants ticked that they sometimes expose to fire while smoking, only 31% say they do not expose to fire. Also, in roasting we need a high degree of heat unlike the process of smoking. However, 48.9% of the participants ticked that they use high degree of heat for smoking and only 30% ticked that they do not use high degree of heat for the same process. In other words, NE users of the English could be said to conceptualise the terms grill, smoke and roast as synonyms. This is no wonder an NE user could be noticed to refer to a grilled piece of chicken as roasted chicken or to a smoked piece of fish as roasted fish. The term 'cook' in NE, like in its British or American English usage, is a broad term that entails all other cooking terms that involves contact with heat. Thus, the term 'cook' could be said to be a superordinate word, with hyponyms such as fry, boil, roast, smoke, bake, grill, etc.

The next table for analysis empirically helps to ascertain the NE speakers' levels of usage of some of the common cooking terms in British or American English and the linguistic context in which they use these terms.

**Table 5: Collocation Analysis for Preparatory Terms**

Process	Total nos of item expected	Nos of items provided	% nos of item provided	Received Collocates
Season	180	122	67.8%	meat, fish,
Slice	180	109	60.6%	Onion vegetable, tomatoes
Dice	180	103	57.2%	Onion, carrots, <u>cucumber</u>
Mash	180	100	55.6%	Potatoes, yam, * <i>elubo</i> (local yam flour),
Soak	180	94	52.2%	<i>Garri</i> (cassava flakes), corn flakes, bread)
Drain	180	65	36.1%	*Water, *oil, rice
Sift	180	62	34.4%	Pap
Beat	180	60	33.3%	Egg, <u>cassava</u> , maize
Whisk	180	54	30%	Egg, *fish
Knead	180	51	28.3%	Flour, <u>fondant icing</u>
Whip	180	46	25.6%	*Rice, *beans
Crumble	180	42	23.3%	Biscuit, bread
Fluff	180	24	13.3%	*Bread, fufu
Dredge	180	22	12.2%	Fish, *rice

Table 5 above displays the preparatory cooking terms and the number of collocates expected from participants, the number of collocates received and the percentage number of collocates received from the questionnaire. It is discovered that out of the fourteen (14) preparatory cooking terms, only four (4) had a 50% and above collocates vis a vis dice, mash, slice, and season and - these would be referred to as the popular Nigerian preparatory cooking term (PNPCT). However, the remaining nine (9) preparatory terms were all below 40%, with ‘dredge’ and ‘fluff’ having 12.2% and 13.2% respectively. It could thus be assumed that these terms are highly unfamiliar to Nigerian users. It is not because Nigerians

do not practise these terms rather it is because they are not exposed to such lexical items (‘beat’, ‘crumble’, ‘drain’, ‘dredge’, ‘fluff’, ‘knead’, ‘whip’, ‘sift’, ‘whisk’). In order to ascertain this, the following last column presents the collocates that participants provided for these preparatory cooking terms.

The asterisked collocates represent wrong items that were mostly picked by participants while the underlined collocates were suggested by few of the participants. From Table 5 above, even for a familiar preparatory term like ‘mash’, ‘*elubo*’ was wrongly suggested as a collocate whereas *elubo* is ‘kneaded’, also kneaded are ‘semovita’ ‘wheat’, ‘fufu’ and a host of other Nigerian

foods. Also, rather than to ‘sift’ (a verb meaning to pass through a sieve), most educated NE speakers say to ‘sieve’ (a noun meaning a utensil). This represents a case of functional conversion, where class shift occurs in NE. Again, in Nigeria, we dredge ‘fish’ with flour before frying, we fluff baking mixture and even spaghetti, to keep them separated, we also whip egg before frying and cream before baking.

We also find the appearance of strange collocates (water and oil) for the term ‘drain’. This is yet another case of functional conversion. For instance we drain ‘vegetables’, ‘rice’ (after parboiling), to draw water from them, but we do not drain ‘water’! The use of the terms ‘beat’ and ‘whisk’ are used specifically for ‘egg yolk’ and ‘egg white’ respectively in British or American English. That is, ‘they beat egg yolk’ and ‘whisk egg

white’. However, in NE, both terms are used interchangeably for treating egg before frying. Also, in British or American English, Peas is ‘soaked’ in soda before cooking while in Nigeria, beans is soaked in water to remove the skin before grinding. The term ‘slice’ is synonymously used in NE with ‘cut’, ‘shred’ or ‘chop’, as also sometimes obtainable in British or American English. These preparatory cooking terms can thus occur in the Nigeria context as:

It can thus be deduced from Table 5 that though the collocates of the terms in NE and British or American English may differ as a result of cultural diversity, the semantic features are not altered in any way in both environments- the challenge is simply that Nigerians are not familiar with most of the preparatory cooking terms. Table 6 below presents the actual cooking terms as well as the analysis of responses received.

**Table 6: Analysis of Responses on the Actual Cooking Terms**

s/n	Terms	Total no. of item expected	Total no. of item received	% no. of item received	Received Collocaes
1	Boil	180	146	81.1	Water, rice, yam
2.	Stir fry	180	100	55.6	Onions
3.	Smoke	180	68	37.8	Fish, meal
4.	Scramble	180	62	34.4	Egg
5.	Cook	180	177	98.3%	Rice, yam
6.	Fry	180	151	83.9%	Eggs, *yam, * chinchin
7	Bake	180	140	77.8%	Cake, bread
8.	Roast	180	132	73.3%	Yam, boli, (planting), *suya
9.	Parboil	180	125	69.4%	Rice, beans

10.	Steam	180	68	37.8%	Water, soup
11.	Grill	180	108	60%	Chicken, fish, sausages
12.	Deep fry	180	108	60%	Buns, chinchin
13.	Heat	180	94	52.2%	Water, oil
14.	Toast	180	90	50%	Bread
15.	Simmer	180	62	34.4%	*Yam, moimoi
16.	Poach	180	58	32.2%	Egg, rice
17.	Griddle	180	15	8.3%	*Beans, *cake

Out of the seventeen items listed above, twelve have a percentage response of above 50% thus; about 71% of the actual cooking terms are familiar to Nigerian speakers of English. The unfamiliar actual term comprises ‘griddle’, (8.3%), ‘poach’ (32.2), ‘scramble’ (34.4), ‘simmer’ (34.4), and ‘steam’ (37.8). However, as earlier noted, these lexical terms may not be unfamiliar because Nigerian do not practise term, rather they may be unfamiliar because Nigerians are not exposed to them either in literature or in verbal exchange; this is further seen from the literary texts examined. For instance, Nigerians ‘griddle’ ‘*mosa*’ (Hausa pancake), ‘poach’ fish, scramble egg (but do not differentiate it from frying egg), ‘simmer’ vegetables, fish, and ‘steam’ water for tea.

Furthermore, when asked to provide collocates for these actual terms, strange collocates were encountered even for the familiar terms. The last column on Table 6 provides those collocates.

The asterisked collocates represent strange items while the

underlined collocates represents those provided by a very few number of the participants. From Table 6, we discover that most Nigerian speakers do not differentiate between *stir fry*, *fry* and *deep fry*. This is seen from the fact that some participants suggested ‘yam’ as collocate for fry and many of them suggested only ‘onion’ as a collocate for stir fry whereas Nigerians stir fry ‘*egusi*’ and ‘sauce’ for rice. Also, we find ‘suya’ occurring as a collocate for ‘roast’ instead of ‘grill’. Almost all the collocates supplied for griddle appear strange. Apparently, the word ‘griddle’ is also strange to Nigerians. Whereas, *mosa*, the Hausa pancake is usually griddled, oat is also griddled to produce an oat cake.

Consequently, the actual cooking terms as used in the Nigerian context would only show variability in collocates while the semantic properties remain the same in both the British or American English and the Nigerian context. What remains is for Nigerians to acquaint themselves with the unfamiliar



terms. Table 7 presents the analysis of responses received. finished cooking term as well as

**Table 7: Finish Cooking Term Analysis**

s/n	Term	Total nos of items expected	Nos of item received	% received	Received Collocates
1.	Garnish	180	93	51.7%	Salad, drinks, and food in general

From Table 7 above, it can be deduced from the percentage responses for the item that Nigerians are averagely familiar with the term ‘garnish’. This is not very encouraging because it shows that about half of the participants are not familiar with the terms. However, judging from the collocates provided for ‘garnish’ it can be deduced that NE speakers are familiar with the process but not with the lexical word itself. Collocates for ‘garnish’ is almost the same as the collocates that British or American English would have for it:

### 7.3 Instances of Culinary Terms in Nigerian Literary Texts

From the above discussion, it is clear that some of the unfamiliar cooking processes take place in Nigeria even though they are not known by their British or American English equivalent. This could be as a result of NE speakers’ insufficient exposure to these English terms. For instance, words from the popular culinary terms are mainly used in Nigerian literary texts. The following usages are observed in the selected texts:

*“The soup was thick with chunks of boiled beef and dried fish and dark green onugbu leaves ...” (Purple Hibiscus p. 20)*

*“Lunch was jollof rice, fist – size chunks of azu fried until the bones were crisp, and ngwo – ngwo” (Purple Hibiscus P. 40)*

*“....cooked in a rich melon and green vegetable stew, with lots and lots and lots of prawn”. (The triumph of the water lily p. 85)*

*“My mother was busy roasting the turkey....” (The Triumph of the Water lily p. 104).*

*“He put some of the spiced grilled beef in his mouth” (Ill Wind – p. 269).*

From the above extracts, there are culinary terms from the familiar stock such as *boiled, dried, fried, grilled, cooked* and *roasting*. It is from the familiar stock of cooking terms that most writers mainly draw from. Most educated

Nigerian speakers are thus, kept ignorant of the wide range of lexical choices available within the culinary domain. As a result, apart from cultural differences, literary bias is also one of the reasons why the wide range of culinary terms is not fully employed by most NE speakers.

### **8. Findings and Conclusion**

This study has examined semantic issues in the lexical field of cooking with the view of exploring the range of use in the selected domains. It has also analysed the factors motivating their usage and offered suggestions on how to maximize their use. The analysis shows that the culinary terms as used in NE could be classified as familiar terms and unfamiliar terms. The familiar terms are those accurately described by the participants, while the unfamiliar cooking terms are those not described according to dictionary definitions. However, it is also observed that the unfamiliar terms, are not frequently used not because Nigerians do not practice these

cooking processes, but because they are not aware of the English equivalent of such terms. The study further observes that several educated NE users do not fully understand the dividing line between such terms as ‘grill’, ‘roast’ and ‘smoke’. Thus, they are sometimes used as synonyms. Furthermore, the results show that most of the collocates that occur with culinary terms in NE are different from those that occur in the British or American English. The reason for this variation has been ascribed to cultural differences. The study concludes that variation occurs among the collocations that occur with the cooking terms in NE and British or American English and that cultural differences are the motivating factor behind the extra semantic properties bequeathed to some of the terms in this field. Also, from the few literary texts examined, it may be necessary for literary writers to increase their use of culinary terms from the unfamiliar stock. This will go a long way in educating Nigerians on the existence and appropriate usage.

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## **Appendix**

### **Semantic Questionnaire**

I am Chimunya Lily, a researcher from the department of Languages, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State. This questionnaire is directed to collect information on the selected semantic field of cooking in order to investigate how educated Nigerians understand and use selected culinary terms.

Your co-operation will be appreciated and information given will be treated confidentially.

Kindly fill the questionnaire by ticking one of the provided options.

Thank you.

### **Personal Data**

Age: a) 15 – 19 (     ) b) 20 – 30 (     ) c) 31- 40 (     ) d) 41- 50 (     )  
e) 51 – 60 (     ) f) 61 – 70 (     )

Level of Education: Secondary school (     ) University (     ) Graduate School (     ) Vocational (     ) Occupation: Student (     ) Teacher (     ) Lecturer (     ) Professional (     ) Others (     )

**Instruction:** Please tick the answer you best agree with (A = always, S- Sometimes, N = Never).

### **Section One**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>
1.	When you fry, do you add water?	( )	( )	( )
2.	When you boil, do you add oil?	( )	( )	( )
3.	When you roast, do you use high degree of heat?	( )	( )	( )
4.	When you roast, do you add water?	( )	( )	( )
5.	When you roast, do you add oil?	( )	( )	( )
6.	When you roast, do you expose directly to fire?	( )	( )	( )
7.	When you cook, do you expose directly to fire?	( )	( )	( )
8.	When you cook, do you extract the water content?	( )	( )	( )
9.	When you bake, do you expose directly to fire?	( )	( )	( )
10.	When you bake, do you expose directly to heat?	( )	( )	( )
11.	When you bake, do you add water?	( )	( )	( )
12.	When you bake, do you use high degree of heat?	( )	( )	( )
13.	When you parboil, do you add water	( )	( )	( )
14.	When you parboil, do you add oil?	( )	( )	( )
15.	When you parboil, do you extract the water content?	( )	( )	( )
16.	When you smoke your food, do you add water?	( )	( )	( )
17.	When you smoke your food, do you expose directly to fire?	( )	( )	( )

18. When you smoke your food, do you use high degree of heat? ( ) ( ) ( )  
19. Is what you cook edible? ( ) ( ) ( )

**Section Four:** (Please suggest kinds of foods that undergo the following processes)

You fry	_____	_____
You grill	_____	_____
You bake	_____	_____
You boil	_____	_____
You heat	_____	_____
You stir fry	_____	_____
You simmer	_____	_____
You poach	_____	_____
You toast	_____	_____
You whip	_____	_____
You mash	_____	_____
You deep fry	_____	_____
You whisk	_____	_____
You garnish	_____	_____
You knead	_____	_____
You sift	_____	_____
You steam	_____	_____
You fluff	_____	_____
You dice	_____	_____
You slice	_____	_____
You drain	_____	_____
You season	_____	_____
You griddle	_____	_____
You beat	_____	_____
You crumble	_____	_____
You dredge	_____	_____
You scramble	_____	_____
You roast	_____	_____
You parboil	_____	_____
You smoke	_____	_____