

A LINGUISTIC 'SOUP' AND A SEMANTIC FALSE FRIENDSHIP

Alina-Andreea DRAGOESCU, Astrid-Simone GROSZLER

*Banat University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine 'King Michael I of Romania',
Timișoara, Romania
119, Calea Aradului, Timișoara – 300645, Romania
andreadragoescu@yahoo.com*

Abstract.

The paper surveys a variety of types of soup, with the purpose of differentiating between the meanings of 'soup', 'broth' and the Romanian 'borș' or the Eastern-European 'borsh'. A major hypothesis is that Romanian learners of English for specific purposes (in this case students specializing in food services) should discriminate between the meanings of these 'false friends' in order to grasp the differences between them correctly. The paper makes reference to the linguistic and semantic differences and similarities between the Romanian and English meanings of 'soup' (ciorbă), 'broth' (supă) and their derivatives, as well as to the borrowings from other languages (most often French and Asian) containing the word 'soup'.

Keywords: Soup; Noun phrase; Semantic Approach

INTRODUCTION

Romanians use the noun *supă* to refer to the simmered stock called *broth* in English, whereas native speakers of English use the similar-sounding word *soup* to refer to liquids exhibiting distinctively different features – for instance containing ingredients like meat and an infinite range of vegetables. This linguistic 'false friendship' has resulted in a series of confounding misunderstandings that need to be clarified through cross-cultural and linguistic input and acquisition.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A limited number of noun phrases containing the word *soup* have been inventoried by using language dictionaries, encyclopaedias, cookbooks and food dictionaries such as Bender & Bender's and Sinclair's, as well as the comprehensive **Webster's Dictionary**. Thereupon, these have been analysed with the essential aim of helping undergraduates better understand and learn them correctly in order to use them accurately. The criteria according to which the inventoried words and expressions are included within different categories depend on qualities ranging from the origin of *soup*-related loanwords to the thickness of the liquid and the ingredients they do (not) contain.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The word *soup* (< F *soupe* 'soup') is defined as 'liquid food especially of meat or fish or vegetable stock often containing pieces of solid food'. Thus, *soup* is the general term for various kinds of salty liquid food, which often also contains solid components, such as vegetables and/or meat, which is very rich in components and calories (W). However, this gives Romanian students enough reasons to mistake the word *soup* for *broth*, as Romanian 'soups' generally do not contain this wide range of ingredients, being closer to a 'broth' usually containing noodles.

On the contrary, English dictionaries provide a definition for the word *broth* which is similar to the definition Romanian dictionaries offer for *supă*. This is the major source of a series of confusions. Thus, *broth* refers mainly to a liquid in which bones, meat, or vegetables

have been simmered and strained out. At will, it may be used as a basis for other edible liquids such as soup. What is more, some culinary schools even differentiate between **broth**, usually made from animal meat, and **stock**, which may be less palatable, often made from vegetables. Broth is traditionally made by boiling such ingredients lengthily to extract the flavor and nutrients. In case the cook intends to clarify a broth, egg whites may also be added during simmering. In addition to this linguistic **soup**, **broth** and **stock** are terms which may sometimes be used interchangeably. The latter forms the basis of many dishes and it is prepared by simmering various ingredients in water, including some or all of the following: veal, beef, and chicken bones, vegetables, herbs and spices. The main dissimilarity between the two terms would be the fact that **broth** usually refers to a finished product, while stock is used as an ingredient for another product; hence, stock may *become* broth).

Another confounding situation is the fact that soups are traditionally classified into two broad groups: **clear soups** and **thick soups**, according to the established French taxonomy. Thus, clear soups are **bouillon** and **consommé**. Thick soups are classified depending upon the type of thickening agent used: **purées** are vegetable soups thickened with starch; **bisques** are made from puréed shellfish thickened with **cream**; **cream soups** are thickened with béchamel sauce; and **veloutés** are thickened with eggs, butter and cream. Other ingredients commonly used to thicken soups and broths include rice, flour, and grain.

Types of soup and broth can be classified according to provenance or by the use of words from a particular culture (**Miso Soup** > Jap, **bouillon** > F, **consommé** > F). Other soup names make reference to the place they originate from or where they are considered a local tradition (**Cheshire soup**, **Palestine soup**). Another criterion for describing soups by a certain noun phrase refers to the main ingredient they contain (**lentil soup**, **cauliflower soup**, **carrot soup**). Consequently, soups are usually denominated after their composition or some defining characteristic they present.

As it is the case with the loanwords **soup** and **consommé**, the names of many items in the French repertoire have been taken over wholesale into the English language (Sinclair 2005). In English, the loanword **soup** occurs in a large number of noun phrases, whether as a first (**soup bowl**, **soupe du jour**) or second element (**vegetable soup**).

THE WORD SOUP AS FIRST ELEMENT OF A NOUN PHRASE

Only ten noun phrases in which the word **soup** occurs as a first element have been inventoried, seeing that this type of occurrence is greatly outnumbered by the use of **soup** as a noun (second element). In most cases, these noun phrases are either borrowings from French or they describe kitchen utensils, thus behaving as noun modifiers. Some of the scarce examples would be the following: **soupe à l'ail** (< F 'garlic soup'); **soupe aux rognons** (< F 'kidney soup'); **soup bowl** ('a bowl for serving soup'); **soupe de poisson** (< F 'saffron-flavoured and coloured fish soup, usually passed through a chinois to remove all large pieces of fish and bones; served in the south of France with rouille, toast and grated cheese'); **soupe du jour** ('the soup that a restaurant is featuring on a given day'); **soup herbs** ('herbs used in soup, such as: basil, bay, borage, caraway, chervil, chives, dill, juniper, lemon balm, lovage, marjoram, mint, parsley, rosemary, summer savory, sorrel, tarragon, thyme, wild celery, and winter savory'); **soup ladle** ('a ladle for serving soup'); **soup plate** ('a plate used for eating soup'); **soup spoon** ('a large oval-bowled (France) or round-bowled (UK) spoon, used to eat soup (even in other countries)'); **soup tureen** ('a large dish with a lid and ladle from which soup is served at the table').

THE WORD SOUP AS SECOND ELEMENT OF A NOUN PHRASE

The word *soup* occurs as a second element in a large number of noun phrases, only a relatively small number of which have been inventoried for the present study. The great majority of these noun phrases refer to a variety of types of soups from the international cuisine: *artichoke soup* ('basic soup made with artichokes'); *asparagus soup* (basic soup without leek and using chicken stock and fresh asparagus trimmings or a tin of asparagus, finished with cream or milk'); *Asian soup* ('typically broths, *clear soups*, or starch thickened soups often containing tofu'); *autumn vegetable soup* ('England: a variety of diced vegetables, sweated in butter and cooked in vegetable stock with a bouquet garni until just tender'); *beetroot soup* ('shredded beetroot and onion sweated in butter, flour added and cooked out, stock added, simmered and skimmed for 30 minutes, seasoned, consistency adjusted and finished with lemon juice and cream or sour cream'); *bird's nest soup* ('a delicacy in Chinese cuisine made from the saliva nests of cave swifts which are used to produce the unique texture of this soup'); *carrot soup* ('basic soup with carrots and a small amount of tomato purée. Served accompanied with croûtons'); *cauliflower soup* ('basic soup with cauliflower, garnished with small cooked florets of cauliflower'); *Cheshire soup* ('England: a soup made from pork stock, diced potatoes, grated carrots and chopped leeks with oatmeal added after the vegetables have softened. It is simmered until thick and finished with grated Cheshire cheese'); *chicken soup* ('a mirepoix of onion, leek and celery sweated in butter, flour added and cooked out without colour, chicken stock and a bouquet garni added, simmered and skimmed for 1 hour, bouquet garni removed, liquidized, strained and finished with cream; garnished with diced cooked chicken meat'); *cream soup* ('1. A soup made from a vegetable purée soup with added cream, milk or yoghurt; 2. A vegetable purée type of soup mixed with béchamel sauce'); *egg drop soup* ('a savory Chinese soup made from cracking eggs into boiling water or broth'); *fisherman's soup* ('Hungarian *Halászlé*, hot and spicy river fish soup with a lot of hot paprika'); *mock turtle soup* ('gelatinous soup made from calf's head, beef, bacon and veal; similar to turtle soup, but without the turtle; mock turtle is a calf's head dressed to resemble a turtle'); *noodle soup* ('a variety of soups with noodles and other ingredients served in a light broth. Noodle soup is an East and Southeast Asian staple; less well known, a form of fresh (typically home made) noodle is used in soup in certain parts of Europe'); *Palestine soup* ('English, 19th century, made from Jerusalem artichokes and named in the mistaken belief that the artichokes came from Jerusalem'); *pea soup* ('a thick soup made of dried peas usually made into a puree'); *winter melon soup* ('a Chinese soup, usually with a chicken stock base, often including other vegetables and mushrooms.; technically, the winter melon is a fruit, since it is a seed bearing body, but in practical use, it is a vegetable.; winter melon soup is often presented as a whole winter melon, filled with stock, vegetables and meat that has been steamed for hours.; the flesh of the melon is scooped out with the soup').

Besides these inventoried phrases, a number of soup names which are often loanwords do not contain the word *soup* at all, which need all the more to be learned by students as purely linguistic knowledge. For instance: *bawd bree* ('Scotland: a rich soup made from a jointed hare browned in lard with bacon and winter vegetables, simmered in water with minced shin beef, bay, cloves and peppercorns until all soft, strained, and the puréed vegetables and finely shredded hare meat returned.; the soup is thickened without boiling using a little of the acidulated hare's blood and finished with redcurrant jelly, lemon juice and port'); *bisque* ('France: thick rich soup, generally made from fish or shellfish stock'); *bouillabaisse* ('France: fish stew or soup flavoured with saffron, spices and herbs; specialty of the Mediterranean region'); *chowder* ('thick soup made from shellfish or other fish, with pork or bacon, originally French, now mainly New England and Newfoundland'); *congee* ('Chinese soft rice soup or

gruel, may be sweet or savoury'); *mulligatawny* ('Anglo-Indian: curry-flavoured soup made with meat or chicken stock'); *vichyssoise* ('cold leek and potato cream soup'). It may be inferred from the definitions and results presented above that, of all soups, only *chicken soup* is to some degree similar to the R *supă*. On the other hand, the English variant is garnished with diced meat and finished with cream, which brings it back again in the vicinity of the R *ciorbă*. It may also be noted that *noodle soup* is defined as a variety of soup usually containing other ingredients as well or a dish used in certain parts of Europe. Thus, what Romanians generally call *supă* appears to be only one of the few and far between uses of the word *soup* in English. It is also worth discussing the issue regarding R *borș*, and E *broth*. The Webster's offers the following Romanian translations of the latter: *bulion* ('soup'), *borș* ('borsch', 'soup'), *supă de carne* ('clear soup', 'gravy-soup'), *fiertură* ('concoction', 'infusion', 'soup'). A close similarity may be noticed between the E *beetroot soup* and the R *borș*, as they contain beetroot, have a sour taste and are finished with lemon juice or sour cream. Wikipedia defines *borscht* (also *borsht* or *borshch*) as a vegetable soup from Eastern Europe traditionally made with beetroot as a main ingredient. Romanians refer to *borș* as a kind of sour soup made from fermented wheat bran, which gives it a sour taste. Traditional borscht made from beetroot is sometimes called *borș rusesc* ('Russian borscht') or *borș de sfeclă* ('beetroot borscht'). Finally, it should be mentioned that the noun phrases in which *broth* appears as a second element (*beef broth*, *chicken broth*, etc.) are poorly represented. They seem to be outnumbered by noun phrases in which it is a first element (*broth fondue*, *broth swanson*, etc.). These lists remain open and could become the subject for another possible research.

CONCLUSION

For all these reasons, the similarities in the resonance of these words have led to a series of confusions and misuses. It appears as a necessity for students specializing in food services to acquire correct linguistic and cultural input regarding such pairs of 'false friends' as the ones studied above.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BENDER, DAVID A. & ARNOLD E. BENDER. (1999). *Benders' Dictionary of Nutrition and Food Technology*. Cambridge: Woodhead Publishing Limited.
- MORTON, MARK. *Cupboard Love: A Dictionary of Culinary Curiosities* (2004). Toronto: Insomniac Press
- SINCLAIR, CHARLES (2005). *Dictionary of Food*. London: A & C Black.
- Soup: *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* [Online: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>]
- <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definition/Soup> (W)