

Chapter 2

Food Metaphors in Taiwan Hakka

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Abstract This chapter investigated food metaphors in Hakka to understand metaphorical expressions and subsequent cultural implications, with the ultimate goal of facilitating Hakka language learning. Data were collected from Hakka idiom books and dictionaries. Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) is the theoretical background used in this chapter. We aim to explore: (1) metaphorical expressions of *FOOD* in Hakka; (2) metaphorical categorizations of *FOOD*; and (3) Hakka people's cognitive and cultural perceptions behind food metaphors. Results show that, firstly, *FOOD* in Hakka maps onto several target domains: *LIFE*; *PERSONALITY*; and *HUMAN RELATION*. In addition, certain Hakka thought processes are visible in their idioms and suggest that Hakkas pay much attention to interpersonal relations. In sum, food idioms in Hakka reveal not only culture-specific attributes but also traditional Hakka thinking and behavior that fulfill the purpose of persuading and encouraging younger generations to be kind, industrious, and sociable.

Keywords Hakka idiom · Food metaphor · Conceptual blending theory · Hakka culture

2.1 Introduction

Life form beings need food to sustain life. Food-related vehicles are found abundantly in language too. For example, the relationship between food and metaphors has been considered an important issue as it, to some extent, reveals the develop-

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ment of society, economy, and technology (Zeng 2008). A number of studies (Liu 2009; Shang 2006; Hsu 2000; Wang 2008) have discussed foods and their flavors in Mandarin Chinese, but few have considered food-related topics pertaining to the Hakka language. Therefore, to capture metaphors from the Hakka perspective, the current study applied food as the linguistic vehicle and focused on the Hakka people’s conceptual thinking and cultural background embedded in Taiwan Hakka.

The purposes of this study aim to: (1) explore the metaphorical expressions of food types in Hakka; (2) examine the metaphorical categorizations of food concepts; and (3) identify the Hakka cognitive and cultural perceptions behind food metaphors.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows: (Sect. 2.2) literature review; (Sect. 2.3) theoretical framework; (Sect. 2.4) metaphorical categorization of *FOOD*; ¹ (Sect. 2.5) discussion; and (Sect. 2.6) conclusion.

2.2 Literature Review

Recently, food metaphors have increasingly attracted the attention of linguists. In the studies reviewed, food metaphors were found to be closely related to human activities, thought, and life experiences.

Lai (2008) suggested that two-part allegorical sayings are closely related to human daily lives, such as the example below, which translates to ‘do not spend all your money in case of poverty’: *iu24 giong24 mog5 pau11 pi11, oi55 xiong31 mo11 giong24 sii11* 有薑莫刨皮, 愛想無薑時 ‘have ginger not peel skin, to think (of) without ginger time = Do not waste any food for fear that we may not have any sometime.’ Hakka folk knowledge presented in sayings enriches daily conversations and linguistic developments.

Zeng (2008) examined dish naming from cross-linguistic perspectives. Chinese and English data were collected and analyzed in terms of two theories: (1) base-profile organization; and (2) metaphorical mapping and blending. Zeng’s findings indicate that in the dish-naming process, Chinese people think highly of the flavoring while Westerners pay much more attention to cooking style. On the other

¹Conventions of the present chapter:

Schematic types	Capitalized e.g. PERSONALITY IS FOOD
Source and target domains	Capitalized and italicized e.g. TASTE, FOOD and PERSONALITY
Target lexemes in the data	Italicized and lower case e.g. sweet, sour, bean curd, and gourd

hand, many Chinese dish names are metaphorical, which is closely related to the different views of catering between Chinese and Westerners. The strong emphasis on eating in Chinese life has resulted in a close relationship between food and life experiences.

Liu and Kao (2008) discovered that food metaphors can be divided into three categories in Mandarin Chinese: (1) homonymic *FOOD* metaphors; (2) innate characters of *FOOD* metaphors; and (3) *TASTE* metaphors. Further, they revealed some specialties in Chinese, where on the one hand, some homonymic resemblances and biological features of food represent luckiness or good fortune, which easily evokes the intended metaphorical meanings, while on the other hand, *TASTE* words are mapped onto personality domains.

Berrada (2007) investigated the contrastive approach of food metaphors and attempted to reconcile the metaphor *IDEAS ARE FOOD* in both Moroccan Arabic and Classical Arabic; however, there are slight differences between the two dialects. More specifically, Classical Arabic is a more variant and vernacular dialect than Moroccan Arabic, but has few examples of *IDEAS ARE FOOD* and *HUMAN DISPOSITIONS ARE FOOD* metaphors than Moroccan Arabic. Moreover, based on the Arabic experiential basis and culture-specific attributes, Berrada suggests the mappings *IDEAS ARE FOOD* and *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD*.

In brief, languages reveal not only cultural issues but also how people think and perceive. The above studies revealed cultural aspects from their findings, the ideas of which facilitated and inspired us to conduct this study.

2.3 Research Framework

This section first provides a description of how our data were collected and analyzed, followed by an introduction to the theoretical base of the study. *FOOD* metaphors in Hakka are analyzed based on Conceptual Blending Theory (hereafter CBT) in order to reveal the thinking and culture of Taiwanese Hakkas when they use and understand these food metaphors.

The data were gathered from several idiom books and an idiom dictionary. These sources cover approximately 90 % of the collected data. They are: (1) *sheng1 qu1 ke4 jia1 hua4* 生趣客家話 ‘Interesting Hakka Language’ (Deng 1993), (2) *ke4 jia1 hua4 shun4 kou3 liu4* 客家話順口溜 ‘Hakka Jingling Rhymes’ (Deng 1996), (3) *ke4 yu3 ji1 ben3 ci2 hui4 yu3 liao4 xuan3 cui4* 客語基本詞彙語料選粹 ‘Basic Hakka Vocabulary Anthology’ (Council for Hakka Affairs Executive Yuan 2007), and (4) *tai2 wan1 ke4 jia1 li3 yan4 yu3 yu3 dian3* 台灣客家俚諺語語典 ‘Taiwan Hakka Idiom Dictionary’ (Huang 2005). The remaining 10 % of the data were gathered from magazines, newspapers and Hakka studies, such as *A Study on Hakka Idiomatic Materials and Rhetoric* (Hsu 2000), *A Comparative Study of Taiwan Southern Min and Hakka Idioms* (Huang 2005), and *A Study on Taiwan Hakka Proverbs* (Hsieh 2005).

The Hakka language has few fixed written forms (Hsu 2000; Hsieh 2005) because Hakka idioms were passed down through oral tradition. Therefore, we referred to the *Taiwan Hakka Idiom Dictionary* (Huang 2005) and consulted the phonetic transcription used therein. We do not detail the tone differences of each Hakka dialect. Readers can identify those transcriptions in accordance with their habitual tones or the tones provided in this study (Appendix 2.1 Hakka phonetic transcription).

Now let us turn to the theoretical background of this study. CBT (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) is mainly concerned with how human mental spaces are integrated or blended during language processing. CBT, also known as Conceptual Integration Theory, was developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002). Originally, CBT was applied for explaining linguistic means like metaphors, leading to creative meaning construction in communication and facilitating language processing. Later, CBT was extended to account for non-linguistic data in various fields, such as art and science. The operation of conceptual blending is a significant and critical cognitive process responsible for the central thought of humans.

Moreover, conceptual blending is a network of mental spaces interweaving with their semantic contents and transferring in various directions. The process of conceptual blending takes on numerous aspects according to diversified contexts or activities. A mental space is defined as a kind of conceptual structure formed in the process of communication, the primary purpose of which is for the exploration of complicated and synthetic cognitive processes. In CBT, there are at least four mental spaces involved: two input spaces, one generic space, and one blended space.

The frame of conceptual blending is established in three steps. First, there are two input spaces, each being a partial structure, that share corresponding elements and associations with each other. As a consequence, semantic content necessary for the blending process is projected from the input spaces. Second, regarding elements shared by the two input spaces, abstract representation is generated in the generic space; that is, the generic space contains features common to both input spaces. Finally, the output of the whole process takes place in the blended space, i.e., the blending of the two input spaces and the generic space into a new mental space. The structure of the blended space is not merely a coherent combination of selective elements derived from the input spaces, but also an innovative construction with additional newly attached components and features.

Accordingly, we see that mental spaces can show how language users think and talk. They introduce a typical blending network, where the two mental spaces project people's folk knowledge to the blended space and link the cross-space mappings based on vital relations. The goal of compressing ideas into two mental spaces is achieved in the blending network. How Hakka food metaphors can reveal Hakka thinking and culture will be revealed below to also elaborate the mental spaces that these metaphors exhibit.

2.4 Metaphorical Categorizations of *FOOD*

FOOD metaphors are commonly used in daily Hakka communications. In general, food is applied to indicate human-related matters, including *LIFE*, *PERSONALITY*, and *HUMAN RELATION*.

2.4.1 *Life Is Food*

Farming is a common task in Hakka villages. Due to the unpredictable nature of harvests, Hakka people highly praise thrifty attitudes rather than squandering behavior. Scrimping in households is considered a proven method for survival and personal enrichment. This attitude toward life, to some extent, has impacted the Hakka language. In general terms, life in Hakka can be described through *FOOD*. For example, a frugal life can be understood via an image of ginger, as in examples (1)–(2), whereas an extravagant lifestyle is extended to a gourd's image, as in examples (3)–(4).

- (1) *iu24 giong24 mog5 pau11 pi11, oi55 xiong31 mo11 giong24 sii11*
 有薑莫刨皮, 愛想無薑時
 have ginger not peel skin, to think (of) without ginger time
 'Do not waste any food for fear that we may not have any sometime; do not spend all your money in case of poverty.'
- (2) *ngau24 giong24 cod2 cii55*
 咬薑啜醋
 bite ginger sip vinegar
 'to have a very economical and poor life.'
- (3) *siid5 pu11 e31, mo11 liu11 zung31*
 食瓠仔, 無留種
 eat a gourd no keep seeds
 'Enjoying rich life without leaving money for future life.'
- (4) *siid5 pu11 e31 gua55 zii31 tun24*
 食瓠仔掛子吞
 eat gourd and seeds swallow
 'Enjoying rich life without leaving money for future.'

In one famous Hakka song, *hag2 ga24 bun31 sed2* 客家本色 'Hakka peoples' originality,' the lyrics illustrate the many difficulties Hakkas encountered when just arriving to Taiwan and how hard they strived to make a living. They encountered deep poverty when first coming from Tangshan in China because most of their dwellings were near mountains and not conducive to farming. They tried to scrimp and save what they had in case of food shortages. Therefore, we see that inT

examples R(1)–(2), the image of poor life is discussed in terms of *giong24* 薑 ‘ginger.’ *Ginger* is a commonly pickled food in ancient Hakka villages. Hakkas usually eat rice with fermented dishes to satisfy their appetites. From their point of view, people should be grateful for what they own, even though their food is as cheap as fermented *ginger*. To elaborate example (1), life in input space 1 is mapped to ginger in input space 2. The concept, frugality, induced by both spaces is projected to the blended space. The tentative cross-space mapping refers to a relation of frugality between life and ginger, as shown in Fig. 2.1. This idiom further induces the concept that people should remember the poor life they used to have and learn to cherish everything, including inexpensive foods, like ginger.

By the same rationale, *ngau24 giong24 cod2 cii55* 咬薑啜醋 ‘bite ginger and sip vinegar = to have a very economical and poor life’ (example 2), the life space is mapped onto the ginger space. Ginger and vinegar are common foodstuffs in ancient Hakka villages, and the saying reminds people to be grateful for what they own.

Luxurious life, on the other hand, is described as a gourd, as we can see from examples (3)–(4), because gourds with plentiful seeds are synonymous with abundant biological attributes. In example (3), life in input space 1 is compared to a gourd in input space 2. The concept, richness, induced by both spaces is projected to the blended space. The tentative cross-space mapping is a relation of richness between life and a gourd, as shown in Fig. 2.2. This idiom advises people to take precautions before it is too late. Example (4) is also the metaphorical expression of LIFE IS FOOD. This saying discourages the luxurious life and encourages people to leave some money for their future.

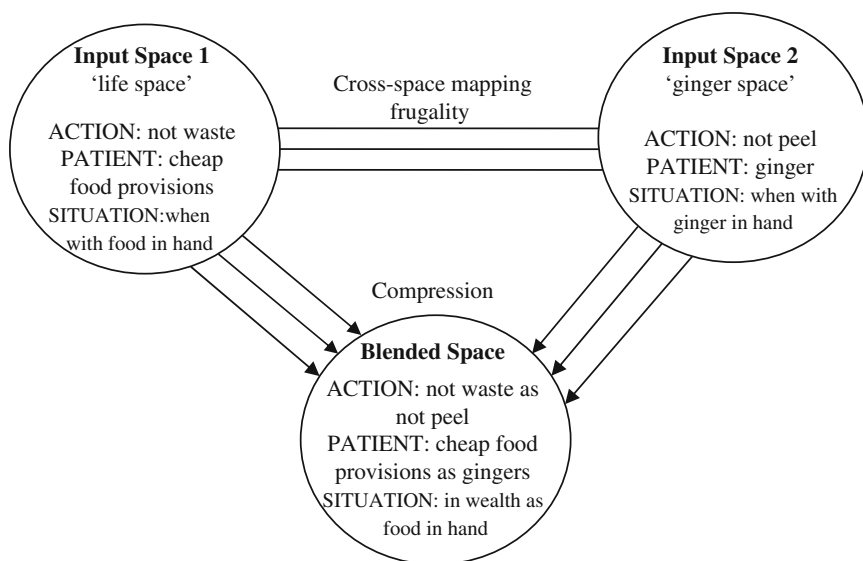


Fig. 2.1 Example (1) *lu24 giong24 mog5 pau11 pi11, oi55 xiong31 mo11 giong24 sii11* ‘do not spend all your money in case of poverty’

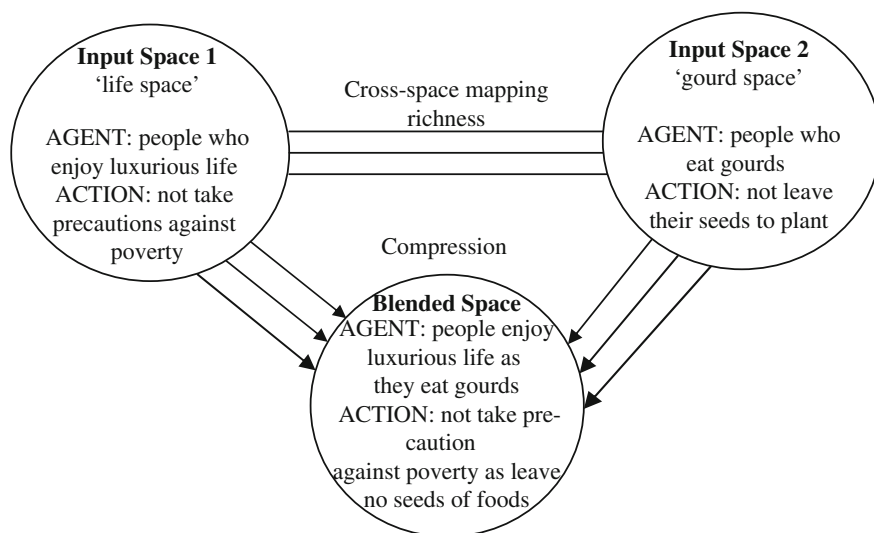


Fig. 2.2 Example (4) *Siid5 pu11 e31, mo11 liu11 zung31* ‘enjoying rich life without leaving money for future’

2.4.2 Personality Is Food

Examples (5)–(10) are the metaphorical expressions of PERSONALITY IS FOOD after being analyzed through CBT. Food types such as *watermelon* and *licorice* discussed in this section are metaphorically mapped onto the PERSONALITY domain, the majority of which have negative connotations.

- (5) *xi24 gua24 va31 tai55 pien31*
西瓜大片
watermelon lean on big piece
‘A person who always gets close to others for benefit; a person who usually flatters important people.’
- (6) *vu24 xim24 lo11 ped5 ho31 mien55 pi11*
烏心蘿蔔好面皮
dark hearted radish sleek face skin
‘Evil-hearted people with friendly looks.’
- (7) *fa24 lo11 xim24*
花蘿心
flower radish heart
‘People who are two-timing players.’

- (8) *zung24 iog5 diam55 ge55 gam24 co31*
 中藥店的甘草
 Chinese medicine store liquorices
 ‘Easy-going people; people who get along well with others.’
- (9) *iab5 ha24 to11*
 葉下桃
 leaf below peach
 ‘People who are overly protected; people who enjoy comfort of shelter from their parents.’
- (10) *vu55 ho11 hin11*
 芋荷形
 taro lotus type
 ‘People who are not good at saving money.’

In example (5), a benefit-oriented person in input space 1 is compared to a watermelon leaning on its big piece in input space 2. The concept induced by both spaces is projected to the blended space. Analyzed via CBT, the two spaces project an idea of a person who wants to be a member of a powerful group in the blended space. The vital relation is the identity building a connection between a watermelon leaning on its big piece and a benefit-oriented person. Therefore, the watermelon is a component of PERSONALITY, as shown in Fig. 2.3.

In the same reasoning, *lo11 ped5* 蘿蔔 ‘radish’ is conceptualized as PERSONALITY as well. In example (6), on account of the connection of vital

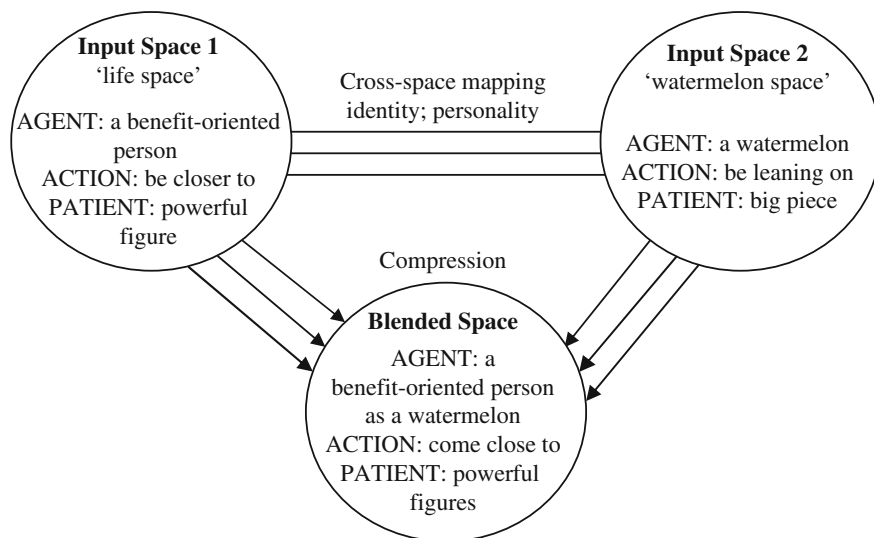


Fig. 2.3 Example (5) *Xi24 gua24 va31 tai55 pien31* ‘a person who usually flatters important people’

relation of identity, the SD, radish with dark heart but sleek skin is mapped onto a person with a friendly look but evil heart in the TD. The two spaces project a concept that *radish* is a component of PERSONALITY.

Fa24 lo11 xim24 花蘿心 ‘flower radish heart’ (7) is another instance. *Radish with flower heart* indicates a person who is a two-timing player and dates more than one woman at the same time. In general, the radish is conceptualized as a man’s personality rather than that of a woman’s.

Licorice is an easily found ingredient in Chinese herbal medicines because it can be integrated with other herbal medicines and further enhance certain properties of remedies. In example (8), the connection of vital relation of identity, the TD, easy-going person (input space 1) is understood as *licorice* in input space 2. The two spaces projected a concept to the blended space that *licorice* is the component of PERSONALITY.

Iab5 ha24 to11 葉下桃 ‘leaf below peach’ (9) literally means peaches are beneath and covered by leaves. This idiom conveys a situation about people who are over-protected. A person in input space 1 is compared to a *peach* in input space 2. The concept induced by both spaces is projected to the blended space. The tentative cross-space mapping refers to a relation of identity between a peach and an over-protected person. Therefore, ‘peaches under leaves’ refers to a component of PERSONALITY, which means that people enjoy comfort in their families.

Vu55 ho11 hin11 芋荷形 ‘taro lotus type’ (10) literally refers to how a taro lotus easily leaks water for there are many holes in their leaves. Water is conceptualized as money that easily departs; taro lotus ironically means a person who isn’t in the habit of saving money. With CBT, via the two emergent figures, a money-expending person (input space 1) is understood as a water-leaking taro lotus (in input space 2) in terms of the connection, identity. The tentative cross-space mapping refers to a relation of PERSONALITY between the taro lotus and a person who has no savings. A person who is described as *vu3 ho5 him5* (10) is mapped onto a person’s bad habit of living paycheck to paycheck.

2.4.3 Human Relation Is Food

Examples (11)–(14) are the metaphorical expressions of HUMAN RELATION IS FOOD. In example (11), the uncle’s tender heart in input space 1 corresponds to the soft attributes of bean curd in input space 2. The tentative cross-space mapping is a relation of quality between the uncle’s soft heart and the bean curd’s softness. This relation is compressed in the blended space into an emergent structure where bean curd serves as a component of HUMAN RELATION. Figure 2.4 shows the network representation of the food blending. Meanwhile, this saying reveals the Hakka family’s tradition of uncles on the maternal side often looking after their sisters’ children with great care.

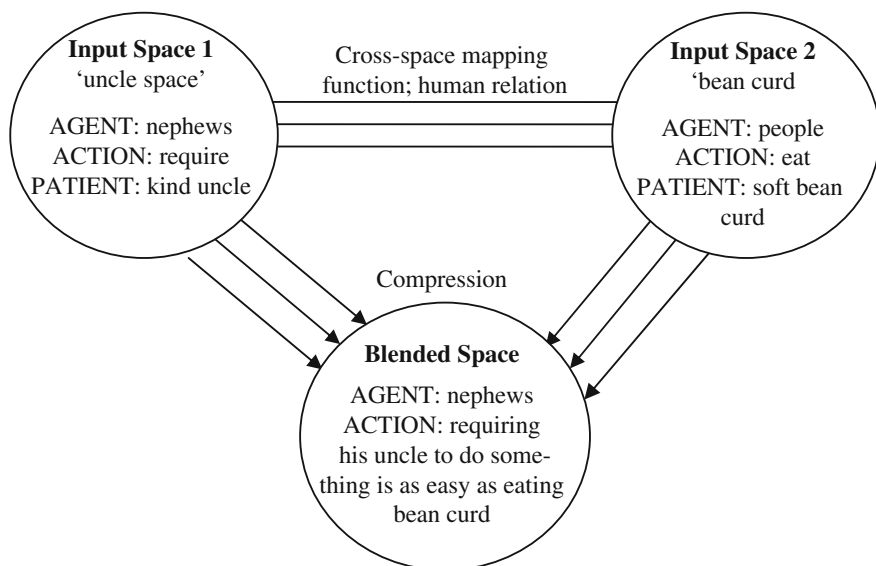


Fig. 2.4 Example (11) *ngoi55 sen24 siid5 mu24 kiu24, qin24 qiong55 siid5 teu55 fu55* ‘uncles are so kind to their nephews that they would not refuse their needs’

- (11) *ngoi55 sen24 siid5 mu24 kiu24, qin24 qiong55 siid5 teu55 fu55*
 外甥食母舅，親像食豆腐
 nephew eat uncle, like eat bean curd
 ‘Uncles are so kind to their nephews that they would not refuse their needs.’

In the same reasoning, in example (12), relation in input space 1 is compared to bean curd in input space 2. This functional relation between the two spaces is projected in the blended space. Making bean curd is an important and essential task for Hakkas; socializing, on the other hand, acts as a way to make friends and build interpersonal relationships. Therefore, when analyzed with CBT, the two emergent matters create a conceptual connection between working on interpersonal relationships and making bean curd. The tentative mapping cross-space is the function between making bean curd and working on human relationships. Figure 2.5 shows the blended network in detail.

- (12) *ngin11 qin11 oi55 zo55, teu55 fu55 oi55 mo55*
 人情愛做，豆腐愛磨
 people relation must do, bean curd must grind
 ‘Socializing with others is as necessary as making bean curd.’

In the same reasoning, in *teu55 fu55 mo11 iu11 nan11 tod2 vog5* 豆腐無油難脫鑊 ‘bean curd without oil hard to escape wok = without the help of others, one can not

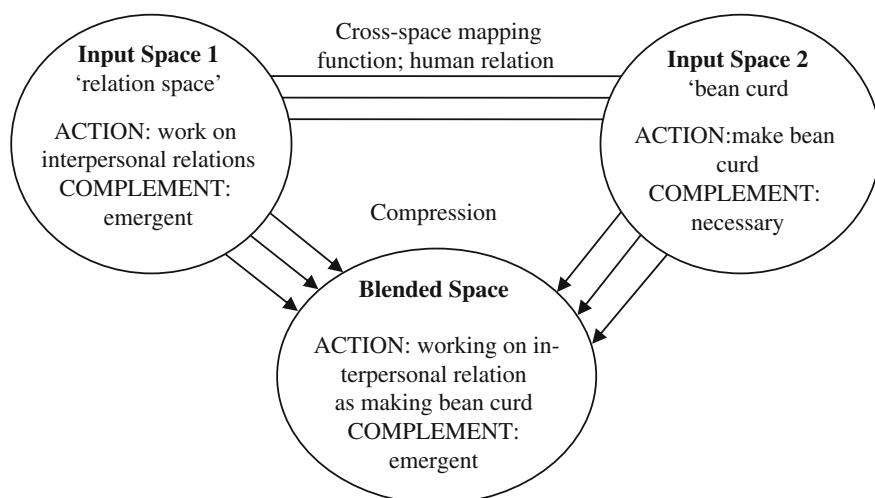


Fig. 2.5 Example (12) *Ngin11 qin11 oi55 zo55, teu55 fu55 oi55 mo55* ‘socializing with others is as necessary as making bean curd’

easily solve their troubles’ (13), human relations are understood in terms of bean curd. The help from other people is compared to the oil. Bean curd cooked without oil easily sticks to the wok, an undesirable result; thus, people without friends are lonely and helpless. The tentative cross-space mapping refers to a relation of identity between bean curd without oil and people without help from others. This relation is compressed in the blended space into an emergent structure, where bean curd serves as a component of HUMAN RELATION. The two images induce the same concept: People who do not receive help from others cannot easily cope with or solve their troubles.

- (13) *teu55 fu55 mo11 iu11 nan11 tod2 vog5*
 豆腐無油難脫鑊
 bean curd no oil hard escape wok
 ‘Without the help of others, one cannot easily solve troubles.’

- (14) *mo11 xiong31 ng11 ge55 ham11 teu55 fu55*
 無想你个鹹豆腐
 not thinking (of) you one salty bean curd
 ‘(I) do not want to make friends with you.’

Likewise, bean curd in example (14) is typified as an element of friendship. Salty bean curd portrays an economical concept and is compared to unreachable benefits or friendship. What triggers this image of saltiness is that Hakka people put a lot of salt in fermented dishes in order to preserve them for a long time. Meanwhile, saltiness, analyzed with CBT, also indicates a poor quality of friendship. Therefore,

‘not thinking of your salty bean curd’ further brings about the concept that the speaker is not amicable and will not make friends with others. The tentative cross-space mapping is a relation of identity between unreachable benefits/friendship and salty bean curd.

The symbol of human relations, in the above examples (11)–(14), is depicted in Hakka through a more concrete object, bean curd. This type of linguistic expression reveals the Hakka cultural background and their tendency to highly praise inter-personal relations.

2.5 Further Discussion

From the above data analysis, we found that the metaphorical processes of *FOOD* are both worthy of further discussion. The metaphorical processes of *FOOD* shown in Fig. 2.6 are understood by three TDs: (1) *LIFESTYLE*, (2) *PERSONALITY*, and (3) *HUMAN RELATION*.

FOOD, being analyzed with CBT, is mapped onto its TDs because the interaction between *FOOD* and the TD projects the significant features of food types and their figurative meanings. In the *LIFESTYLE* TD, as examples (1)–(4) indicated, *ginger* and *gourd* are conceptualized as poverty and richness, respectively. In the *PERSONALITY* TD, as examples (5)–(10) showed, *watermelon* is conceptualized as a good flatterer, *licorice* as an easy-going person, and *peach* as an over-protected person. *Taro lotus* is

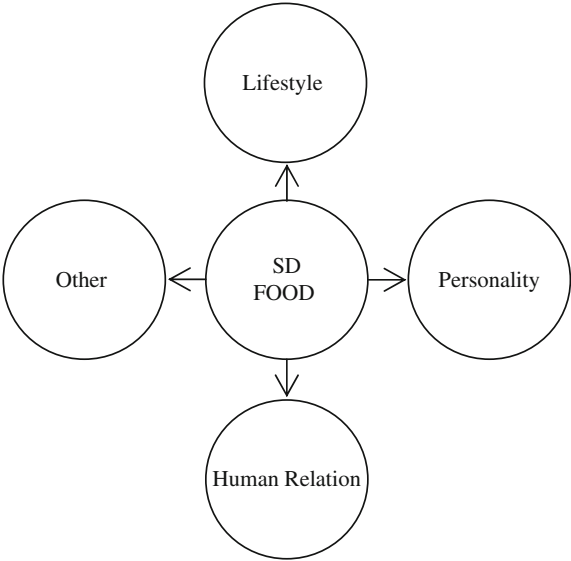


Fig. 2.6 Metaphorical processes of FOOD

conceptualized as a money-expending person, while *radish* is conceptualized as a two-timing player. Most food types express a certain degree of irony.

In the *HUMAN RELATION* TD, see the examples (11)–(14), *bean curd* is usually conceptualized as interpersonal relations. Bean curd is prevalent in Hakka proverbs because it is an inexpensive source of protein in Hakka daily lives.

Our data analysis shows that the attributes employed in conceptualizing *FOOD* were mapped onto human-related issues in the TDs; therefore, we arrive at the following findings.

First of all, *FOOD* in Hakka reveals metaphorical expressions which are highly related to Hakka village life. The most frequently occurring foodstuffs employed in expressions are bean curd, ginger, radish, and fermented dishes. For example, *teu55 iu55 mo11 iu11 nan11 tod2 vog5* 豆腐無油難脫鑊 ‘bean curd NEG oil hard escape wok; without the help of others, one cannot easily get rid of troubles’ (example No. 13) shows the importance of developing human relations in Hakka society, while *iu24 giong24 mog5 pau11 pi11, oi55 xiong31 mo11 giong24 sii11* 有薑莫刨皮, 愛想無薑時 ‘Do not waste any food for fear that we may not have one sometime = do not spend all your money in case of poverty’ (example No. 1) portrays a situation that people should cherish what they possess, even if it is only inexpensive ginger. From such examples we can understand more about Hakka thinking and traditions.

In addition, some linguistic and cultural implications are found in the Hakka cultural background. For example, some idioms carry ironic meanings, but the intention behind those sayings tends to be positive-oriented to some extent. On the one hand, *ham24 gieu31 xiong31 siid5 zu24 gon24 gud2* 憨狗想食豬肝骨 ‘stupid-dog-want-eat-pig-liver-bone’ is used in a more ironic way to mean that one endeavors to achieve an almost impossible mission. On the other hand, *sam24 tiau24 xi55 tiau24, tiau24 do55 lan55 pu11 sog5* 三挑四挑, 挑到爛瓠杓 ‘three pick four pick, select reach rotten gourds’ also has an ironic meaning. That is, one had better not be too picky when selecting a spouse; otherwise, you may end up marrying one that is below your standard.

2.6 Conclusion

The metaphorical process of *FOOD* in Hakka is understood by three TDs: (1) *LIFE*, (2) *PERSONALITY*, and (3) *HUMAN RELATION*, in which *PERSONALITY* is the most common TD.

Some foods are conceptualized as certain images with respect to the mapping relations. For instance, *bean curd* represents human relations in general, and *ginger* is conceptualized as the symbol of a frugal life; but in contrast, *gourds* are most commonly conceptualized as an extravagant life.

Overall, we gained insight into Hakka traditions and thinking from the provided examples above. For instance, *cun24 tien24 sun31, qiu24 tien24 zug2, cun24 tien24 pi11 liau55 qiu24 tien24 gug2* 春天筍, 秋天竹, 春天肥料秋天穀 ‘spring bamboo sprouts, fall bamboo, spring-manure, fall-crops’ reveals the Hakka hardworking

attitude of growing crops in farming seasons. In addition, *teu55 fu55 mo11 iu11 nan11 tod2 vog5* 豆腐無油難脫鑊 ‘bean curd NEG oil hard escape wok’ suggests that one cannot easily solve troubles without help from others. This idiom suggests the strong Hakka attitude toward interpersonal relations.

In sum, food idioms in Hakka not only reveal culture-specific attributes, but also pass down traditional Hakka thinking and behaviors for the purpose of persuading and encouraging the younger generations to be kind, industrious, and sociable. The next chapter goes on to discuss pragmatic functions of food metaphors in Taiwan Hakka.

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