



## An Analysis of Language Use and Food Menu Naming of Thai Dishes on Social Media

Piyada Low\* 

*Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University Sriracha Campus, Chonburi, Thailand*

Received: 2024/12/29

Accepted: 2025/04/08

**Abstract:** The study investigates the popularity, language use, and food menu naming of Thai cuisine on international social media by analyzing 210 Thai food dishes from Allrecipes, a leading cooking and recipe website. Data were categorized to identify popular dishes and the top six food groups were found: curry, Pad Thai, soup, sauce, rice, and noodles. Curry dishes, particularly green and red curry, are the most popular followed by Pad Thai and soups like Tom Kha Gai and Tom Yum. Thai food names are predominantly translated into English with additional descriptors. English transliterations are used for iconic and national dishes like Pad Thai and Tom Yum, reflecting a global preference for accessible names. A free program called HK Coder was employed to analyze the data, determine word frequency, and identify keywords. The linguistic analysis revealed frequent terms such as "Thai", "chicken", and "curry" highlighting the significance of national identity and key ingredients of Thai cuisine. Remarkably, a less traditional dish 'Peanut Butter Noodles' also received high ratings as a popular dish, indicating a blending of Thai flavors with Western preferences. The study provides insights into how Thai food is perceived and adapted internationally, contributing to the understanding of cross-cultural culinary exchanges.

**Keywords:** Allrecipes, Culinary Linguistics, Food Names, Frequent Words, Thai Dishes.

---

\* Corresponding Author.

Authors' Email Address:

Piyada Low (fmspyl@ku.ac.th)



## Introduction

Food is at the heart of human life, serving as a fundamental necessity for sustenance and well-being. It not only sustains life but also brings people together across cultures and communities. As part of cultural systems, food is present in daily life and traditions (Ceisel, 2018). It shapes personal and collective identities and serves as a medium to express cultural heritage (Charron & Desjardins, 2011; Boutaud et al., 2016; Fitrisia et al., 2018). In this way, food acts as a cultural marker, reflecting the identity and values associated with cuisine, and playing a role in cultural exploration (Stajcic, 2013). The presentation of food—whether on menus, in meals, or through daily rituals—plays a significant role in shaping identity and cultural narratives. Food dishes can be described by exploring their names, meanings, ingredients, cooking methods, and the cultural contexts in which they are prepared and enjoyed (Fitrisia et al., 2018). Language and food are deeply intertwined, reflecting cultural identity and shaping the way people perceive and experience different cuisines.

### *Thai Food to the World*

Thai cuisine started to go internationally when the Thai government launched the “Thailand: Kitchen of the World” campaign to promote Thai cuisine internationally in 2002 (The Government Public Relations Department, n.d.). The Thai government has consistently introduced initiatives to establish Thailand as a leading gastronomy tourism destination. In 2017, the “Amazing Thai Taste” campaign highlighted six iconic Thai dishes: Phat Thai, Tom Yum Kung, Green Curry, Som Tam, Massaman, and Tom Kha Kai along with seasonal local fruits such as durian, rambutan, mangosteen and pineapple (Authority of Thailand, 2017). Most recently, in 2023, the “Amazing Thailand Culinary City” project showcased internationally acclaimed dishes like Tom Yam Kung, Phat Thai, and Green Curry, as well as lesser-known dishes from various regions, aiming to elevate the global recognition and value of Thai cuisine (Tourism Thailand, 2023).

In terms of food dishes, Cheung (2017), a journalist for CNN Travel, compiled a list of seven Thai dishes in the 50 best food dishes in the world: Moo nam tok (#36), Fried rice (#24), Green curry (#19), Massaman curry (#10), Som Tum (#6), Pad thai (#5), and Tom yam goong (#4). In 2021, CNN Travel’s Word Best Food List announced three Thai dishes in its ranking: Som Tam (#46), Tom Yam Kung (#8), and Massaman Curry, which was the top spot as No.1.

Thai cuisine was placed 17<sup>th</sup> on the list of “100 Best Cuisines in the World” by TasteAtlas Awards 23/24 (2023) as well as 5 Thai dishes in the list of “100 Best Dishes in the

World”: Phat Kaphrao or Pad Kaphrao (#3), Khao Soi or Khao Soy (#6), Phanaeng curry or Panang (#10), Tom Kha Gai or Tom Kha Kai (#15), and Massaman Curry (#73).

Lindblom and Mustonen (2015) pointed out that Thai food was ethnic and exotic for Finnish, and Thai restaurants could be considered the culinary mainstream in Helsinki. Thai food was one of the most popular cuisine types (7<sup>th</sup> rank at 82.3%) and Thai restaurant was the 6<sup>th</sup> visited cuisine type (77.4%).

In Ukraine, Thai cuisine was expected to gain more popularity as it was 3% of all restaurant types along with Italian and American cuisines (GlobalData, 2024). The most used significant ingredient was vegetables which was 33% of the menu items. Other significant ingredients were fish and seafood, noodles, and rice.

Dedeoğlu et al. (2019) pointed out that various Thai dishes were in the highest spots in the World’s most delicious food ratings, and Thai cuisine was one of the most well-known cuisines in the world as listed by CNN. Rice serves as the most important and basic ingredient of Thai cuisine. Fish is the second important ingredient used in various dishes and desserts. Sauce and seasoning are also significant as they are usually served with various Thai food dishes. For a single dish, Pad Thai is the most well-known dish of Thai cuisine.

The Michelin Guide also recognizes Thailand as one of the major dining destinations in Asia. Notably, Thai street food has received Michelin recognition as Raan Jay Fai, a street food restaurant, has been awarded one Michelin Star since 2018 (The Must-Try Dishes at Jay Fai, 2019). Moreover, the restaurant has consistently received positive reviews over 12 years (2012-2023) on TripAdvisor (Low, 2024).

## Literature Review

### *Culinary Linguistics: Language, Food, and Culture*

Sociolinguistics examines the relationship between language and society, focusing on how social factors influence language use and how language, in turn, shapes social structures. Culinary linguistics, a subfield of sociolinguistics, gained prominence through the work of Gerhardt et al. (2013) with the publication of *Culinary Linguistics: The Chef’s Special* providing a comprehensive exploration of the intersection of language, food, and culture. In Gerhardt’s chapter (2013), culinary linguistics was defined as the study of food from a linguistic perspective (p. 4). The chapter further explains the interconnections between food, language, and culture as follows:

1. Every language has its own food terminology. The language used in food preparation, consumption, and discussion is a rich site for sociolinguistic analysis (p. 15).

2. Food serves as a medium for cross-cultural communication and multilingual interaction. Borrowing words denoting food items identify the cultural contact. (p. 16).

3. Food name compounds often include toponyms, particularly when referring to local ingredients, regional specialties, or geographical indications. (p. 18).

4. Words in the domain of food are primarily nouns and verbs. Nouns refer to ingredients, food items, dishes, and kitchen utensils while verbs describe methods of food preparation and eating. (p. 20).

5. Food engages in the senses, particularly taste, smell, and color (p. 25).

6. Food writing exists at various linguistic levels and can be found in forms such as recipes, cookbooks, food blogs, restaurant menus, product labels, and cooking shows. These narratives function as a form of sociolinguistic practice, reinforcing group identity, cultural continuity, and shared culinary traditions (p. 39).

[Jurafsky](#)'s work (2014) also contributed to the field of culinary linguistics. He explored how language influenced and reflected social status, cultural interactions, and consumer identity. He recommended using computational and statistical methods to analyze large datasets of menu language, providing clear evidence of linguistic patterns. This quantitative approach complements qualitative studies in culinary linguistics, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how food language functions in different contexts. In terms of culinary linguistics, he explained it as follows:

1. The language of restaurant menus reveals how word choice, grammar, and style reflect social and economic factors. For example, expensive restaurants use longer words, more French terms, and fewer positive adjectives (e.g., "delicious" or "tasty"), while cheaper restaurants rely on shorter words, more positive adjectives, and emotional appeals.

2. The naming of dishes reflects cultural attitudes. The use of regional or ethnic names such as 'Thai curry' can evoke authenticity and cultural heritage.

3. Language in food marketing should target consumer culture by appealing to specific groups and reflecting broader trends in globalization, commodification, and identity.

Both [Gerhardt \(2013\)](#) and [Jurafsky \(2014\)](#) emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to culinary linguistics, integrating linguistics, history, anthropology, and food studies. This multidisciplinary framework deepens the understanding of the relationship between language, food, and culture.

### *Previous Studies*

Research studies on food menu descriptions have been conducted across various cuisines. Through food descriptions, dishes could effectively communicate their characteristics, appeal to customers (Elbadawy et al., 2013), and appear more delicious and of high quality (Luu, 2019). Wansink et al. (2001) suggested that menu descriptions could enhance the menus to meet customers' expectations. According to Bai et al. (2021), menu descriptions can be categorized into six main attributes: cooking method, sensory, affective, health, adjective, and ingredient. Customers tend to prefer the inclusion of sensory attributes and cooking methods in restaurant menu descriptions. Similarly, Fedosova (2022) emphasized that effective and creative menu descriptions should include positive adjectives and words indicating the origin of ingredients, taste, texture, and preparation method. Additionally, food images were visually appealing (Stajcic, 2013) and served as an effective means of communication with customers, particularly when showcasing exotic cuisine (Fedosova, 2022). Food photographs not only highlighted the authenticity of local dishes but also captured their mouthwatering appeal (Putra et al., 2023), especially colorful Asian food dishes with different ingredients and strong flavors (Sadiku et al., 2023). Putra et al. (2023) identified common ingredients of traditional Southeast Asian foods such as coconut milk, lemongrass, galangal, tamarind, fish sauce, shrimp paste, chilies, and herbs, and popular dishes include curries, stir-fries, noodles, and rice dishes.

In terms of language use, incorporating local language related to the cuisine alongside an international language could make menu items more interesting and attract attention (Binti Ruhizat et al., 2021). Jurafsky et al. (2016) observed that upscale restaurants preferred natural language and foreign terms from three high-status languages: French, Italian, and Japanese. This was particularly true for French words, which were often perceived as prestige, sophistication, and elegance presenting a sense of high-quality cuisine and social status (Luu, 2019).

English is commonly used in describing Asian food names, and foreignizing techniques are preferred to preserve the multicultural nature (Cozma, 2022). According to Low (2021), Thai food names, whether in Thai language or English transliteration, appeal to customers by conveying a sense of originality and exoticism. Menu descriptions should be short, simple, and precise (Low, 2021; Binti Ruhizat et al., 2021) with sensory characteristics to make the descriptions more appealing and effective (Tešanović et al., 2016; Binti Ruhizat et al., 2021).

Peng (2015) pointed out that Chinese dish names should reflect ingredients, cooking methods, and dietary functions. Yang (2017) emphasized the importance of cooking tools,



dressings, and taste in describing Chinese food as well as the use of transliteration of food names to promote Chinese culture. English transliteration of Chinese food, such as “wonton”, and Japanese food, like “sushi”, are internationally recognized. For the descriptions of Thai dishes, six main attributes were highlighted: the use of Thai names either in Thai or English transliteration (Somsin, 2019; Low, 2021); characteristics or the use of terms referring to the dish’s origin or regionality (Low, 2021); sensory cues describing the dish through the five senses: sight, taste, smell, sound, touch, or texture (Somsin, 2019; Low, 2021); cooking method; ingredients; and loan words or terms borrowed from other languages (Somsin, 2019).

The image of Thai cuisine is often associated with spiciness and exoticism (Lai et al., 2019; Lindblom & Mustonen, 2015; Low, 2021; Putra et al., 2023; Sadiku et al., 2023). Low (2019) identified specialized words of Thai cuisine that reflected its distinct flavors, including “chili”, “curry”, “spicy”, “lime”, “sour”, and “tamarind”. Sadiku et al. (2023) pointed out that a single bite of Thai food could offer five distinct tastes in one meal: sweetness, saltiness, spiciness, slipperiness, and crunchiness. Van Esterik (2018) emphasized the central role of chilies in Thai cuisine and noted the popularity of Thai chili sauce, Sriracha, which originated as a traditional dipping sauce in Thailand and is a well-known ingredient in Western cuisine.

Fitrisia et al. (2018) perceived that food and language were global characteristics, and culinary linguistics was interdisciplinary. This notion aligns with Gerhardt et al. (2013) and Jurafsky (2014). Food naming in culinary linguistics, particularly in local Indonesian cuisine, was categorized based on different aspects: main ingredients, color, cooking method, taste, cookware, spices and seasoning, shape and appearance, as well as philosophy and personality (Fitrisia et al., 2020; Rahmawati & Mulyadi, 2021). These categories align with the elements typically incorporated in food descriptions. Both food naming and food descriptions serve to communicate essential characteristics of a dish, including its primary ingredients, cooking techniques, color, and flavor profile. These elements are central to understanding and representing the culinary identity of a dish.

Building on the reviewed literature, the present study explores the naming of Thai food dishes in the context of intercultural exchanges on a social media platform focused on cooking and recipes. Allrecipes was selected as the primary source for this study due to its global reach, featuring a wide variety of cuisines from around the world, with 49 cuisines represented and organized alphabetically. This study specifically aims to identify the most popular Thai food dishes on international social media, examine the language used in naming Thai food dishes, and analyze high-frequency words commonly found in Thai food menu names.

### Research Questions

RQ1: What are the popular Thai food dishes on international social media?

RQ2: How are Thai food dishes named and presented from an international perspective?

RQ3: What are the high-frequency words commonly used in Thai food menu names on international social media?

### Methodology

To investigate the most popular Thai food dishes on international social media, the term "popular food websites" was searched online. Allrecipes ranked as the top result on Google and was recognized as the most prominent social network on food (Popovski et al., 2019). Therefore, Allrecipes was selected to represent international social media, offering a diverse perspective on Thai dishes.

Allrecipes was founded in 1997 as CookieRecipe.com. According to its 'About Us' page (n.d.), it is a food-focused online social networking platform and describes itself as the world's trusted recipe resource since its establishment. The website features cuisines from around the world, organized alphabetically from A to Z, with a total of 49 cuisines available.

### Data Collection

Data on food dishes were collected from the Allrecipes website in May 2024. Thai recipes are presented into five main groups: main dishes, appetizers, soups and stews, desserts, and Pad Thai. Figure 1 shows an image of Thai food recipes from the Allrecipes page.



**Figure 1.** An Image of Thai Food Recipes from the Allrecipes Page

Source: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipes/702/world-cuisine/asian/thai/>

On the main dishes page, five subtopics are categorized: curry, Pad Thai, pork dishes, chicken dishes, and seafood dishes as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Example of Thai Main Dishes Page

Source: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipes/17137/world-cuisine/asian/thai/main-dishes/>

### **Data Processing**

The collected data were analyzed into three parts according to the three research questions. For the first and second research questions, the data of Thai food dishes were listed and described with percentages. Thai food names were analyzed according to the use of the English language as English transliteration or English translation.

Wilson and Herrera (2019) recommended the use of computer software for analyzing word frequency and their contextual relationships, and KH Coder was identified as one of the recommended tools for word counting. Consequently, it was utilized to analyze the data in response to the third research question. KH Coder is a free software designed to extract words from data for analyzing word frequency and identifying keywords (Higuchi, 2016). The program includes a feature to exclude a stop word list, filtering out common words such as articles (e.g., a, an, the), prepositions, and conjunctions (e.g., but, and, so), allowing for more meaningful analysis of the remaining text. Findings are described with figures and examples of menu names.

### **Results**

Firstly, 362 Thai food dishes were collected from Allrecipes pages. After deleting the repetitive food dishes of all subgroups, 210 food names were used for further analysis in response to the three research questions.



**RQ1: What are the popular Thai food dishes on international social media?**

Of 210 Thai food dishes, the top six food dishes could be grouped: curry, Pad Thai, soup, sauce, rice, and noodles. The curry group was the most common ( $51/210=24.29\%$ ) followed by Pad Thai ( $25/210=11.9\%$ ), and soup ( $22/210=10.48\%$ ). Table 1 shows the popularity of Thai food dish groups.

**Table 1.** Popularity of Thai Main Food Dish Groups

Food names	Percentage
Curry	$51/210=24.29\%$
Pad Thai	$25/210=11.9\%$
Soup	$22/210=10.48\%$
Sauce	$17/210=8.1\%$
Rice	$16/210=7.62\%$
Noodles	$14/210=6.67\%$

Of 51 food names in the curry group, the most common dishes were green curry ( $17/51=33.33\%$ ) and red curry ( $12/51=23.53\%$ ). In the soup group, Tom Kha Gai ( $11/22=50\%$ ) and Tom Yum ( $8/22=36.36\%$ ) were the most common.

Three kinds of sauces were found in the sauce group. Peanut sauce was the most common ( $10/17=58.82\%$ ) followed by sweet chili sauce ( $5/17=29.41\%$ ) and coconut sauce ( $2/17=11.77\%$ ).

In the rice group, a Thai dessert which is sweet sticky rice with mango was the most common ( $8/16=50\%$ ). Other rice dishes were fried rice ( $6/16=37.5\%$ ), coconut rice, and Thai fragrant rice ( $2/16=12.5\%$ ).

Noodle soups were found most ( $5/14=35.71\%$ ) followed by the dish called noodles with peanut sauce ( $3/14=21.43\%$ ) which is not familiar in the Thai menu.

The top food dish names in each group are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** List of Top Food Dishes in Each Group

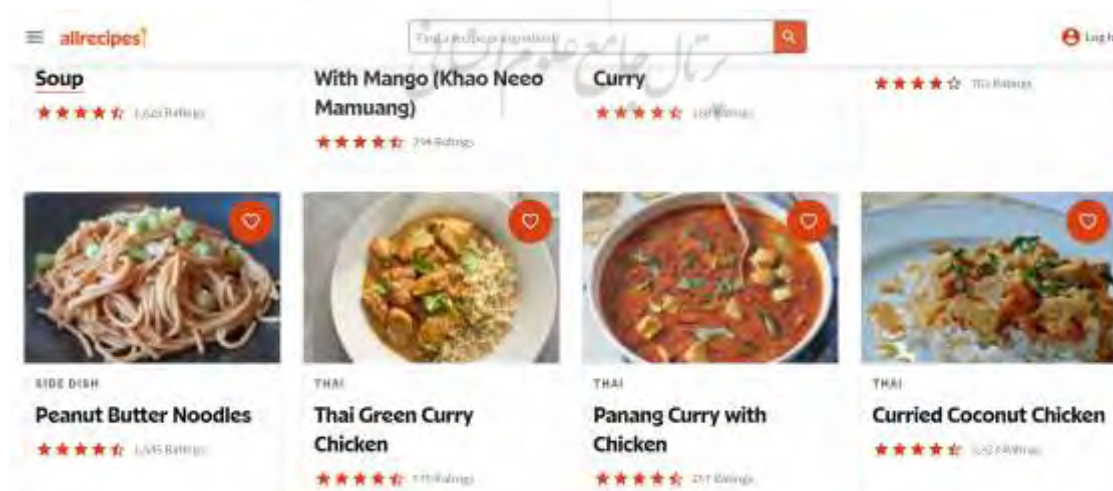
Curry	Pad Thai	Soup	Sauce	Rice	Noodles
Green curry	Pad Thai	Tom Kha Gai	Peanut sauce	Sweet sticky rice with mango	Noodle soup
Red curry	Phad Thai	Tom Yum	Sweet chili sauce	Fried rice	
			Coconut sauce		

Other findings on Allrecipes webpages that should be considered as they are related to the first objective of the present study are ratings. There are four dishes with over 1,000 ratings as listed in Table 3.

**Table 3.** List of Top-rated Thai Dishes

Food names	Rating
Curried Coconut Chicken	3,919
The Best Thai Coconut Soup	1,622
Peanut Butter Noodles	1,545
Spicy Thai Basil Chicken (Pad Krapow Gai)	1,190

The top two dishes were curry and soup. The dish with the highest rating was chicken coconut curry while the second rank was coconut soup. These top two dishes are commonly cooked with chicken meat. The third rank was an unfamiliar fried noodle dish in Thailand. The dish's name is "Peanut Butter Noodles" which can not refer to any Thai noodle dishes, but the dish appears on the first page of Thai recipes as shown in Figure 3. Similarly, another dish "Chicken Pad Thai with Peanut Sauce" was found. In Thai cuisine, there are no fried noodle dishes with peanut sauce as peanut sauce is traditionally associated with "Satay", a dish consisting of skewered and grilled pork or chicken accompanied by peanut sauce. Figure 4 shows images of the "Peanut Butter Noodles" page and photos posted by the reviewers. The fourth rank is a stir-fried dish with basil and garlic. It is one of Thai signature dishes called "Pad Krapow" (Pad=fried, Krapow= basil leaves); which can be cooked with pork, chicken, and seafood.



**Figure 3.** An Image of the First Page of the Thai Recipe

Source: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipes/702/world-cuisine/asian/thai/>



**Figure 4.** Sample Images of “Peanut Butter Noodles” Page and Dishes

Source: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/11835/peanut-butter-noodles/>

***RQ2: How are Thai food dishes named and presented from an international perspective?***

The classification of 210 Thai food menu naming was based on English translation and transliteration, with English translation being more commonly used. There are five categories as follows:

1. English translation (22/210=10.48%)

This method directly translates the meaning of the Thai dish name into English, making it more accessible to non-Thai speakers. It conveyed information about key ingredients, cooking methods, colors, flavors, or textures based on original Thai names.

Examples: Red Curry with Tofu, Crab Fried Rice, Stir-Fried Mushrooms with Baby Corn, Sweet Sticky Rice and Mango

2. English translation with additional descriptors (113/210=53.81%)

This approach incorporates adjectives to enhance the dish's appeal. These descriptors emphasize authenticity, characteristics, ease of preparation, or traditional essence of Thai dishes such as authentic, amazing, quick, Thai, and the best.

Examples: Authentic Thai Coconut Soup, Amazing Simple Thai Tofu, Quick Red Curry Soup, Thai Green Curry, The Best Thai Coconut Soup

3. English transliteration and translation (29/210=13.81%)

This approach preserves the Thai name and identity while providing an English explanation for global audiences.

Examples: Goong Tod Kratiem Prik Thai (Prawns Fried with Garlic and White Pepper), Mango with Sticky Coconut Rice (Kao Niaw), Tom Ka Gai (Coconut Chicken Soup)

4. English transliteration with additional descriptors (23/210=10.95%)

Popular Thai dishes are presented with their original Thai names and adjectives that enhance their appeal. These adjectives primarily emphasize the authentic and distinctive characteristics of Thai cuisine. Examples include 'classic,' 'homemade,' and 'Dad's.'

Examples: Classic Pad Thai, Homemade Tom Yum Soup, Dad's Pad Thai

#### 5. English transliteration, translation, with additional descriptors (15/210=7.14%)

This method maintains a balance of authenticity, clarity, and appeal. Thai dish names are presented in English transliteration along with descriptive information that highlight their authenticity and the distinctive characteristics of Thai cuisine.

Examples: Easy Panang Curry with Chicken, Khao Man Gai Thai Chicken and Rice (Healthy Version), Ajad (Authentic Thai Cucumber Salad), Real Thai Green Curry Paste (Nam Prik Gen Kayo Wan)

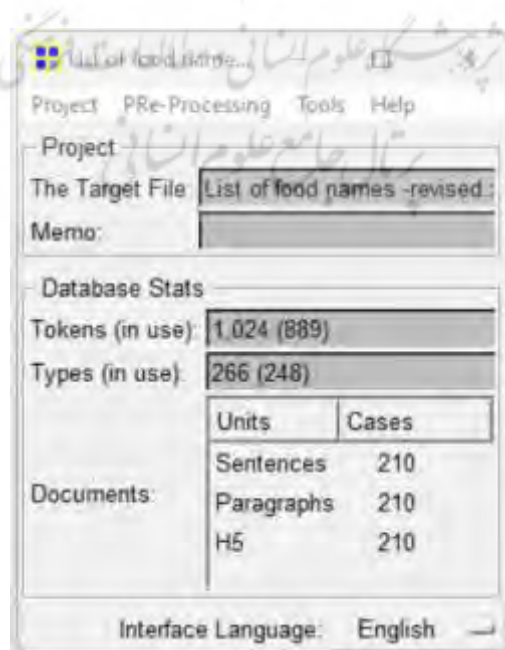
#### 6. English transliteration only (8/210=3.81%)

This method emphasizes Thai identity by presenting Thai dish names exclusively in their transliterated forms without translation. As a result, it is primarily accessible to individuals who are already familiar with Thai cuisine.

Examples: Pad Thai, Tom Kha Gai, Pad Kee Mao, Larb Gai

### ***RQ3: What are the high-frequency words commonly used in Thai food menu names on international social media?***

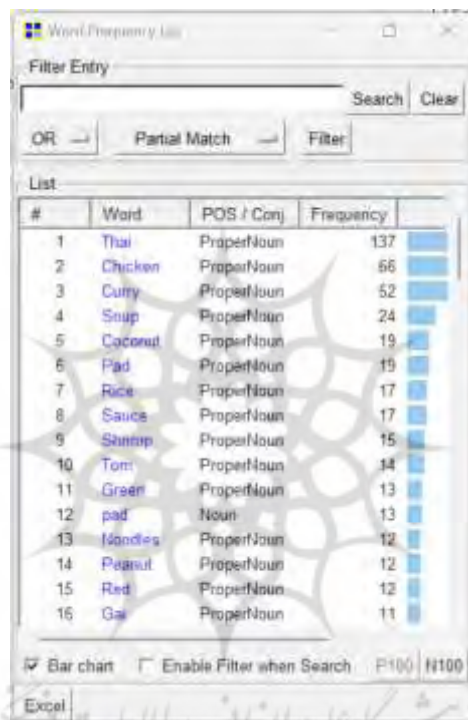
From the collected 210 food names, there were 1,024 tokens or the number of words in 266-word types as analyzed by KH Coder and shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Number of Tokens from 210 Food Names Analyzed by KH Coder

### Word Frequency Analysis

Of 1,024 tokens or 889 words in use, the most frequent word was “Thai” followed by “chicken” and “curry”. The word “Pad” was analyzed and categorized as a pronoun and a noun by KH Coder. However, in Thai, the word “Pad” is a verb meaning “to fry or to stir fry”. Since KH Coder cannot identify Thai words, in this case, the word 'Pad' should be treated as a single entity, resulting in a combined frequency of 32 (19 occurrences as a pronoun and 13 occurrences as a noun). This places 'Pad' as the fourth most frequent word on the list. The list of top frequent words is shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** List of the Top Frequent Words Analyzed by KH Coder

### Co-occurrence Network of Words

The co-occurrence network of words was generated to show the relationship of the connecting words as illustrated in Figure 7. There are twelve subgraphs in the co-occurrence network of words:

Subgraph 1 comprises 14 words: crab, Mahi, grilled, chili, Prik, paste, Nam, Po, Piah, spring, rolls, dipping, sauce, and peanut.

Subgraph 2 shows the connection of 12 words: sticky, mango, sweet, rice, fried, Goong, Kao, Yum, Tom, Kha, Gai, and soup.

Subgraph 3 shows the connection of 3 words: Massaman, cooker, and slow.



Subgraph 4 comprises 2 words: spicy and basil.

Subgraph 5 indicates 2 words: coconut and milk.

Subgraph 6 shows the connection of 5 words: Thai, chicken, curry, green, and red.

Subgraph 7 comprises 2 words: steamed and banana.

Subgraph 8 shows 2 words: salad and cucumber.

Subgraph 9 indicates 2 words: noodle and bowl.

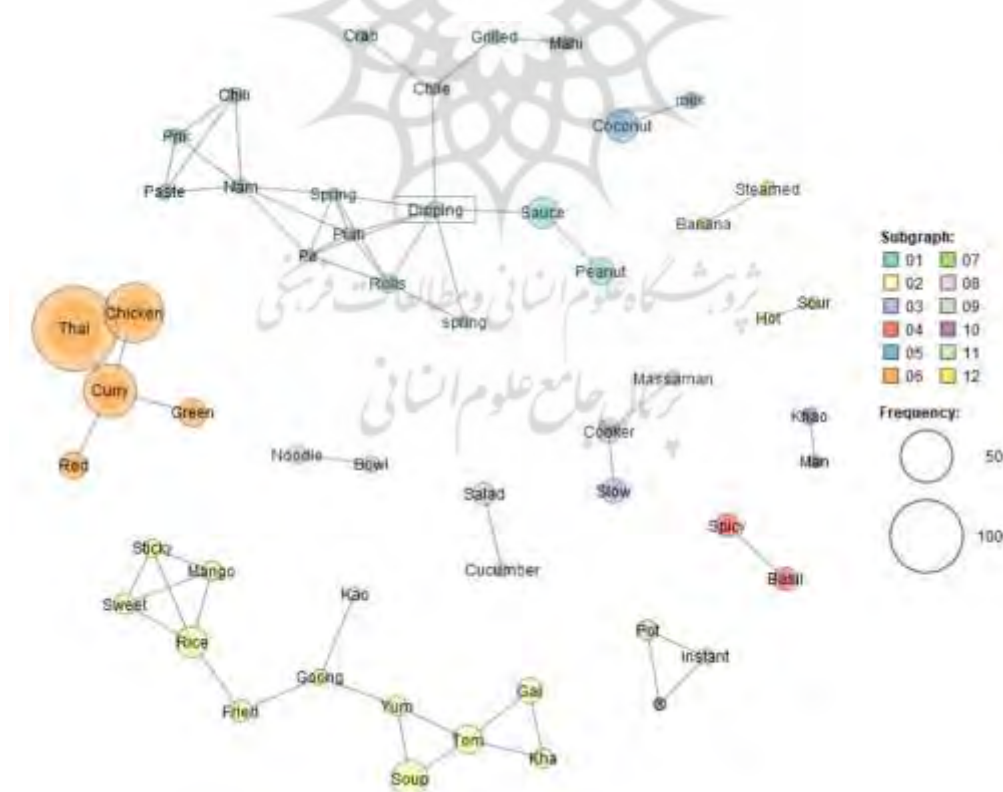
Subgraph 10 shows the connection between 2 proper nouns: Khao and Man (Thai words).

Subgraph 11 comprises 2 words: pot and instant.

Subgraph 12 shows the connection of 2 words: sour and hot.

The top key frequent words were found in five subgraphs: subgraph 1 (2), subgraph 2 (4), subgraph 5(1), subgraph 6 (5), and subgraph 9 (1). Significantly, all 5 words in subgraph 6 were top frequent words. The other 4 frequent words were in subgraph 2: soup, rice, Tom, and Gai.

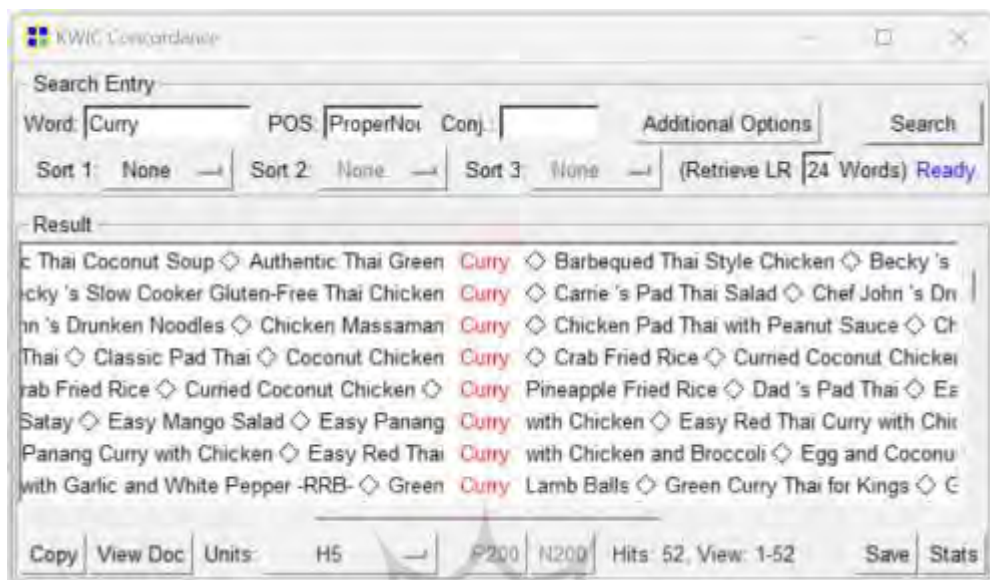
Notably, two frequent words were not found in any subgraphs. The words were Pad and shrimp.



**Figure 7. Co-occurrence Network of Words by KH Coder**

### Keywords in Context (KWIC)

To check how keywords appeared in the data, keywords in context were generated. Examples of the word “curry” in the contexts are shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8.** Examples of the Contexts with the Word ‘Curry’

Key frequent words found in five subgraphs are explained in the contexts of the words as follows:

Subgraph 1, two key frequent words are “sauce” and “peanut”. These two words suggest the famous peanut sauce.

Examples of contexts:

- Chicken Pad Thai with Peanut Sauce
- Chicken Satay with Peanut Sauce
- Chicken Stir-Fry with Thai Peanut Sauce

Subgraph 2, the key frequent words are “soup”, “rice”, “Tom”, and “Gai”. The words “soup”, “Tom”, and “Gai” indicate the two Thai famous soups: Tom Yum Soup and Tom Kha Gai Soup (Tom=soup, Gai=chicken). The word “rice” suggests a popular fried rice as well as a famous Thai dessert, mango sticky rice.

Examples of contexts:

- Crab Fried Rice
- Curry Pineapple Fried Rice
- Sweet Rice and Mango

Subgraph 5, one key frequent word is “coconut”.

Examples of contexts:

- Sweetened Bananas in Coconut Milk
- Tendered Taro Root Cooked in Coconut Milk

Subgraph 6, all five words are key words: “Thai”, “chicken”, “curry”, “green”, and “red”.

Examples of contexts:

- Authentic Thai Green Curry
- Easy Red Thai Curry with Chicken and Broccoli

Subgraph 9, one frequent word is “noodles”.

Examples of contexts:

- Chef Jonh’s Drunken Noodles
- Thai Noodles

## Discussion

The study examined 210 Thai food names from Allrecipes to explore the popularity and naming patterns of Thai food dishes on international social media. The results highlight important trends in how Thai cuisine is perceived, named, and communicated globally, reflecting the interplay between food, culture, and language. These findings align with previous research on culinary linguistics and food descriptions and offer new perspectives on the internationalization of Thai cuisine.

### *Popularity of Thai Food Dishes*

The first research question aimed to identify the most popular Thai dishes worldwide. The analysis showed that curry dishes, especially green and red curry, were the most prominent, making up 24.29% of the total dishes. Pad Thai, a national dish of Thailand, is categorized as a separate section and ranks second at 11.9%. Globally recognized, it has been included in several online dictionaries, such as the [Cambridge Dictionary \(n.d.\)](#), [Dictionary.com \(n.d.\)](#), [Merriam-Webster \(n.d.\)](#), and [Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries \(n.d.\)](#).

Soup dishes (10.48%) were also popular with Tom Kha Gai and Tom Yum being the leading soups. Regarding the dish ratings, curry and soup dishes were the most popular. The popular dishes align with previous research studies ([Dedeoğlu et al., 2019](#); [Harmayani et al.,](#)

2019; Putra et al., 2023). Tom Yum is also included in the [LanGreek Dictionary \(n.d.\)](#) and the [Oxford English Dictionary \(n.d.\)](#).

Interestingly, the unconventional dish “Peanut Butter Noodles” also ranked among the top-rated, despite being unfamiliar in Thailand. Similarly, “Chicken Pad Thai with Peanut Sauce” cannot be found in Thailand. In Thai cuisine, only roasted and ground peanuts are added to Pad Thai and noodle soup but not peanut sauce. This suggests that Thai flavors are being adapted into more familiar dishes for Western consumers, highlighting a potential gap between authentic Thai cuisine and the adapted versions popular in other cultures.

### ***Thai Food Menu Naming***

The second research question explored how Thai food menu names were presented from an international perspective. The study reveals a clear preference for English translation with additional descriptors (53.81%) in naming Thai dishes. This indicates an emphasis on presenting Thai cuisine to non-Thai while enhancing its appeal through adjectives that highlight authenticity and characteristics. The use of descriptors to convey key ingredients, cooking methods, color, taste, or texture aligns with the findings of [Somsin \(2019\)](#), [Low \(2021\)](#), [Fitrisia et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Rahmawati and Mulyadi \(2021\)](#). Moreover, the findings support [Gerhardt's \(2013\)](#) framework of culinary linguistics emphasizing the role of language in shaping perceptions of food. Adjectives play a crucial role in conveying authenticity and the distinctive characteristics of Thai cuisine. This implies that effective food communication is not just about direct translation but also about using persuasive language.

Naming conventions play a critical role in preserving cultural identity and authenticity in culinary discourse. The use of the English transliterated form of Pad Thai, a fried noodle dish, consistently appears in all entries emphasizing its status as a recognizable and iconic dish of Thai cuisine. Similarly, soup dishes such as Tom Kha Gai and Tom Yum relied heavily on transliteration, reflecting how international audiences are willing to adopt foreign terms for iconic dishes. The use of English transliteration not only preserves the cultural identity of these dishes but also enhances their exotic appeal, as observed by [Binti Ruhizat et al. \(2021\)](#), [Jurafsky \(2014\)](#), [Yang \(2017\)](#), and [Low \(2021\)](#). Furthermore, transliteration serves as a cultural marker, distinguishing Thai cuisine from other Asian culinary traditions and reinforcing its unique identity in global contexts.

Significantly, food names especially in the curry group, were translated into English, with words like "green curry" or "red curry" reflecting both color and flavor without direct

translations of Thai words. This approach highlights a global preference for accessible names that convey flavors rather than strict translations from the original Thai language.

Translation makes Thai dishes more accessible with descriptors of ingredients, sensory profiles, and cooking methods while transliteration helps preserve cultural authenticity and familiarize non-Thai speakers with the original dish names. Additional descriptors enhance appeal making the dishes more attractive and marketable to international audiences.

While translation with additional descriptors is the most used approach for naming Thai dishes on international social media platforms, a hybrid method combining transliteration, translation, and additional descriptors is recommended. This strategy ensures a balance between clarity and authenticity, preserving cultural identity while enhancing accessibility for global audiences. By adopting this approach, Thai dishes can achieve broader international recognition while maintaining their cultural essence.

### *Word Use and Cultural Insights*

The word frequency analysis highlights key linguistic patterns in naming Thai dishes on global platforms. The prominence of the word “Thai” in dish names underscores the importance of national branding in promoting Thai cuisine internationally.

The keyword analysis reveals “Thai”, “chicken”, and “curry” as the most frequent and interconnected terms, aligning with findings from previous studies (Low, 2019; Putra et al., 2023). The finding suggests that dishes combining these elements are among the most prominent in international representations of Thai cuisine, as evidenced by two of the top four highest-rated dishes “Curried Coconut Chicken” and “Spicy Thai Basil Chicken (Pad Krapow Gai)”.

The co-occurrence network analysis further highlights the relationships between key ingredients and dishes of Thai cuisine. The frequent pairing of “coconut” with “milk” reflects the central role of coconut milk in Thai curries. The finding aligns with Putra et al. (2023), who identified coconut milk, chili, and herbs as common ingredients in Southeast Asian cuisine.

Interestingly, the co-occurrence network of “peanut” and “sauce” highlights the popularity of peanut-based sauces even though in Thailand peanut sauce is traditionally served only with satay.

In addition to peanut sauce, various dipping sauces are commonly served with specific Thai dishes. These sauces play a significant role in Thai culinary culture, serving as essential condiments as noted by Dedeoğlu et al. (2019). For example, chili fish sauce is typically



paired with fried rice, while sweet chili sauce accompanies fried dishes, particularly fried chicken.

### ***Implications for Food, Culture, and Language***

The findings of this study emphasize the relationship between food, culture, and language in the globalization of Thai cuisine. From a culinary linguistics perspective, the use of Thai names and transliterations with descriptions serves as a bridge between Thai culinary traditions and global audiences, preserving cultural authenticity while making the cuisine accessible. At the same time, the adaptation of dish names through translation and the inclusion of sensory descriptors reflects the need to cater to international tastes and preferences.

In conclusion, culinary linguistics, translation, and transliteration are closely interconnected, aiming to represent a culture's cuisine through language in transliterated forms and translation with descriptions. Food descriptions should highlight key ingredients, cooking methods, and sensory profiles while also utilizing adjectives to emphasize authenticity and cultural identity.

The study also highlights the role of social media platforms like Allrecipes in shaping global perceptions of Thai cuisine. The platform functions as a site of culinary linguistic exchange, where user-generated content such as ratings and reviews contribute to the popularization and democratization of Thai food. However, the presence of unfamiliar or inauthentic dishes, such as "Peanut Butter Noodles" and "Chicken Pad Thai with Peanut Sauce", raises questions about the potential dilution of Thai culinary identity in the process of globalization.

### **Conclusion**

This study provides insights into how Thai cuisine is perceived internationally and how Thai dish names are adapted for global audiences. Curry dishes, especially green and red curry, are the most prominent in perceptions of Thai food, followed by Pad Thai and soups like Tom Kha Gai and Tom Yum. The inclusion of dishes like peanut butter noodles highlights the fusion of Thai flavors with Western tastes.

The analysis of dish names revealed that Thai cuisine is marketed internationally through English translation, focusing on key ingredients and descriptors to enhance accessibility for international audiences. At the same time, the use of Thai names and transliterations in menu descriptions plays a crucial role in preserving the cultural identity of

Thai food. These findings highlight the importance of language in shaping perceptions of food and culture, as well as the role of social media in promoting culinary diversity. As Thai cuisine continues to evolve in a global context, understanding these linguistic and marketing dynamics will be essential for maintaining its authenticity and appeal.

One limitation of the study is its focus on Allrecipes, which may not fully capture the diversity of social media platforms or represent all international audiences. Future research could extend beyond Allrecipes to explore how Thai cuisine is perceived on other digital platforms and investigate how naming conventions evolve as global audiences become more familiar with authentic Thai flavors. Additionally, the translation and adaptation of dish names may differ across platforms, potentially introducing cultural biases. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the topic, future studies should include data from a broader range of media sources to account for these variations and provide a more holistic perspective.

## References

- About us. (2023, August 17). *allrecipes*. <https://www.allrecipes.com/about-us-6648102>
- Bai, Y., Jung, S., & Behnke, C. (2021). Do words matter? Consumers' perceptions of words used to describe restaurant menu items. *Proceedings of the 26th Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism*, Houston, Texas, January 2021.
- Boutaud, J., Becuț, A., & Marinescu, A. (2016). Food and culture. Cultural patterns and practices related to food in everyday life. Introduction. *International Review of Social Research*, 6(1), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1515/irsr-2016-0001>
- Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Pad Thai. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved February 12, 2025, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pad-thai>
- Ceisel, C. (2018). Food studies. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. <https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-580>.
- Charron, M., & Desjardins, R. (2011). Introduction: Food, language, and identity. *Cuizine the Journal of Canadian Food Cultures*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1004725ar>
- Cheung, T. (2017). Your pick: World's 50 best foods. *CNN travel*. <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/world-best-foods-readers-choice/index.html>

- Cozma, M. (2022). On the multicultural character of restaurant menus: a translational perspective. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Onomastics” Name and Naming”*.
- Dedeoğlu, S. B., Aydın, Ş., & Onat, G. (2019). A general overview on the Far East cuisine: cuisines of Thailand, Korea and China. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic Tourism*, 4(2), 109–121. <https://doi.org/10.31822/jomat.642619>
- Dictionary.com (n.d). Pad Thai. In *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved February 12, 2025, from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/pad-thai>
- Elbadawy, A., Mohammed, A., & Jones, E. (2013). Menus as marketing tools: Developing a resort Hotel restaurant menu typology. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2324-8807.1000116>
- Fedosova, K. (2022). Development of an effective restaurant menu. Research and recommendations. *Technology Audit and Production Reserves*, 1(4/63), 32–35. doi: <http://doi.org/10.15587/2706-5448.2022.253040>
- Fitrisia, D., Sibarani, R., Mulyadi, & Ritonga, M. U. (2018). Traditional food in the perspective of culinary linguistics. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 5, 24-27. <https://www.allsubjectjournal.com/assets/archives/2018/vol5issue2/5-1-58-598.pdf>
- Fitrisia, D., Sibarani, R., Mulyadi, N., Ritonga, M. U., & Suhairi, L. (2020). The naming of Acehese traditional culinary. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 8(2), 815–823. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2020.8290>
- Gerhardt, C. (2013). Food and language-language and food. In Gerhardt, C., Frobenius, M., & Ley, S. (Eds.), *Culinary linguistics: The chef's special* (pp. 3-49). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/clu.10>
- Gerhardt, C., Frobenius, M., & Ley, S. (2013). *Culinary linguistics: The chef's special*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/clu.10>
- GlobalData. (2024, August 23). *Thai cuisine menu analysis: market share and price trends in the Ukraine in H1 2024*. Verdict Food Service. <https://www.verdictfoodservice.com/data-insights/thai-cuisine-price-trends-ukraine/>
- Harmayani, E., Anal, A. K., Wichienchot, S., Bhat, R., Gardjito, M., Santoso, U., ... & Payyappallimana, U. (2019). Healthy food traditions of Asia: exploratory case studies from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Nepal. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 6(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-019-0002-x>

- Higuchi, K. (2016). A two-step approach to quantitative content analysis: KH coder tutorial using Anne of green gables (part I). *Ritsumeikan Social Sciences Review*, 52(3), 77–91. <http://www.ritsumei.ac.jp/file.jsp?id=325881>
- Jurafsky, D. (2014). *The language of food-A linguist reads the menu*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Jurafsky, D., Chahuneau, V., Routledge, B., & Smith, N. (2016). Linguistic markers of status in food culture: Bourdieu's distinction in a menu corpus. *Journal of Cultural Analytics*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.22148/16.007>.
- Lai, M. Y., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Wang, Y. (2019). Food and cuisine image in destination branding: Toward a conceptual model. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 19(2), 238–251. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1467358417740763>
- LanGreek. (n.d.). *Tom Yum*. LanGreek Dictionary. Retrieved February 12, 2025, from <https://dictionary.langeek.co/en/word/218178>
- Lindblom, T., & Mustonen, P. (2015). Culinary taste and the legitimate cuisines. *British Food Journal*, 117(2), 651–663. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-02-2014-0054>
- Low, P. (2019). Identifying specialized vocabulary in Thai food menus using computer-based approach. *Journal of Advances in Information Technology*, 10(3), 91–94. <https://doi.org/10.12720/jait.10.3.91-94>
- Low, P. (2021). Descriptive language of 'Thai SELECT Premium' restaurant menus: Appealing perception and collocations. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 1669–1683. <https://doi.org/10.52462/jlls.122>
- Low, P. (2024). Computerized content analysis of tripadvisor reviews: A case study of a street food restaurant with one Michelin Star. *TEM Journal*, 13(1), 326–333. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18421/TEM131-34>
- Luu, C. (2019). Putting words in your mouth: the whimsical language of food. *JSTOR Daily*. <https://daily.jstor.org/putting-words-in-your-mouth-the-whimsical-language-of-food/>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Pad Thai*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pad%20thai>
- Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). *Tom Yum*. [https://www.oed.com/dictionary/tom-yam-kung\\_n](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/tom-yam-kung_n)
- Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. (n.d.). *Pad Thai*. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/pad-thai>
- Peng, A. (2015). Translating dish names: Food cultural representation in Hong Lou Meng. *Open Access Library Journal*, 2, e1316. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1101316>.

- Popovski, G., Korousic-Seljak, B., & Eftimov, T. (2019). FoodBase corpus: A new resource of annotated food entities. *Database: The Journal of Biological Databases and Curation*, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/database/baz121>
- Putra, F. K. K., Putra, M. K., & Novianti, S. (2023). Taste of asean: traditional food images from Southeast Asian countries. *Journal of Ethnic Food*, 10(1), 20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-023-00189-0>
- Rahmawati, R., & Mulyadi, M. (2021). Naming Culinary in Mandailing Society: A Culinary Linguistic approach. *Budapest International Research and Critics in Linguistics and Education (BirLE) Journal*, 4(1), 486–493. <https://doi.org/10.33258/birle.v4i1.1677>
- Binti Ruhizat, S., Binti Che Rahimi, S. N., Binti Ngali, N., & Binti Rahmat, N. (2021). The Influence of Menu Description on Customer Purchase Intention. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(13), 332–343. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v11-i13/8552>
- Sadiku, M. N. O., Chukwu, U. C., & Sadiku, J. O. (2023). Food around the world. *International Journal of Culture and Modernity*, 27, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.51699/ijcm.v27i.490>
- Somsin, P. (2019). Target language adaptation in Thai dish name translation. *Proceedings of RSU International Research Conference* (pp. 1141–1151). Rangsit University
- Stajcic, N. (2013). Understanding culture: food as a means of communication. *Hemispheres. Studies on Cultures and Societies*, 28, 77–87. <https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-3b71a1ed-2c03-499a-8884-ab5ec51e1f56>
- TasteAtlas. (2023, December 13). *TasteAtlas Awards 23/24: These are the 100 best cuisines and dishes of the world*. <https://www.tasteatlas.com/tasteatlas-awards-23-24>
- Tourism Authority of Thailand. (2017, May 29). *Amazing Thai Taste Festival 2017 to showcase authentic cuisine of Thailand*. <https://www.tatnews.org/2017/05/amazing-thai-taste-festival-2017-showcase-authentic-cuisine-thailand>
- Tešanović, D., Banjac, M., Kalenjuk, B., & Radivojević, G. (2016). The impact of the names of dishes on the guest's choice of restaurant food. *Proceedings of the Singidunum International Tourism Conference - Sitcon 2016*, 169–173.
- The Government Public Relations Department. (n.d.). *Thailand: Kitchen of the world*. Retrieved May 25, 2024, from <http://thailand.prd.go.th/ebook2/kitchen/intro.html>
- The Must-Try Dishes at Jay Fai. (2019, May 2). *Michelin Guide*. <https://guide.michelin.com/th/en/article/people/the-must-try-dishes-at-jay-fai>



- The world's 50 best foods. (2021, April 13). *CNN Travel*. <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/world-best-food-dishes/index.html>
- Tourism Thailand. (2023, May 30). *Amazing Thailand culinary city*. <https://www.tourismthailand.org/Articles/amazing-thailand-culinary-city>
- Van Esterik, P. (2018). Culinary colonialism and Thai cuisine: The taste of crypto-colonial power. In *Proceedings of the Dublin Gastronomy Symposium 2018*. Dublin Gastronomy Symposium.
- Wansink, B., Painter, J., & Ittersum, K. (2001). Descriptive menu labels' effect on sales. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 42(6), 68-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010880401426008>
- Wilson, S. L., & Herrera, Y. M. (2019). Teaching computerized content analysis for undergraduate research papers. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 52(3), 536–542. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S104909651900026X>
- Yang, X. (2017). Study on translation of Chinese food dishes. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 7, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2017.71001>.

