

REIMAGINING INDONESIAN CULINARY IDENTITY FROM RIJSTTAFEL TO GLOBAL HOSPITALITY

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Abstract

This study investigates how Indonesian culinary identity is constructed and reimagined in global hospitality settings by analyzing the menu language of the Feast Restaurant at Sheraton Bandung. Drawing on linguistic, semiotic, and cultural perspectives, the research examines how menu naming, descriptive registers, and visual organization shape the representation of Indonesian dishes within an international hotel environment. This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach by analyzing 32 menu items (18 Indonesian and 14 Western dishes) collected from printed and digital menus between January and March 2025. Using discourse analysis, multimodal semiotics, and thematic interpretation, the findings suggest that the retention of original Indonesian dish names, supported by concise English explanations, functions as a strategy of cultural affirmation while ensuring accessibility for global guests. Sensory and process-oriented vocabulary further highlights traditional cooking practices and regional diversity. Semiotic features, such as the dedicated “Go Local” section, equal pricing, and visual prominence, indicate the repositioning of Indonesian cuisine within a global dining context. The study suggests that menu language plays a significant role in shifting Indonesian cuisine from its colonial framing in the Rijsttafel toward a contemporary identity grounded in cultural pride and global relevance.

Keywords: *culinary identity, Rijsttafel, semiotics*

1. Introduction

Culinary identity is never formed in isolation; it is built through encounters, negotiations, and historical layers that continue to shape how food is understood and represented in the present. Indonesian cuisine offers a distinctive case in which the past and present frequently overlap, especially when its culinary heritage is introduced to global audiences. One of the most influential historical layers is the *Rijsttafel*, a performative dining tradition orchestrated by the Dutch during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although it is often remembered as a colonial spectacle that reorganized diverse local dishes into a European-styled feast, the *Rijsttafel* played a significant role in shaping early foreign perceptions of Indonesian food which is abundant, exotic, regionally varied, and performative (Álvarez, 2023; Stano, 2021). Its legacy left a long-term imprint on how Indonesian cuisine is curated in professional hospitality settings, influencing menu design, naming conventions, and the narrative framing of “authenticity.”

In contemporary global hospitality, the menu has occurred as a crucial site where culinary identity is negotiated, constructed, and communicated. Researchers have long argued that menus are not merely functional texts; they are cultural artifacts that express ideology, identity, and branding (Ferrarotti, 2016; Hiippala et al., 2019). The linguistic features, such as lexical choices, descriptive strategies, storytelling techniques, and cultural cues, not only inform people about ingredients but also guide emotional responses, shape value perceptions, and establish expectations about cultural authenticity (Luo et al., 2023; McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2021). For international hotel chains operating in Indonesia, such as Sheraton Hotel, the menu becomes a strategic platform to articulate local heritage within a transnational brand environment. It interfere the tension between global uniformity and local distinctiveness, reflecting what (Holmes & Wilson, 2022) described as the *glocalized* performance of hospitality.

This negotiation is increasingly relevant as Indonesian cuisine achieves international traction in the context of cultural diplomacy and global tourism. Tourism researchers note that food has become a key channel through which destinations express identity and heritage, especially in Asia (Caled & Silva, 2022; Merchant et al., 2025). Indonesia's recent culinary diplomacy initiatives have framed its cuisine as an asset for national branding, leading hospitality venues to take on the role of cultural ambassadors, whether intentionally or as part of market expectations. Luxury hotels, in particular, occupy a unique position because they cater to travelers who often use hotel dining as their first or primary encounter with local food. This gives establishments like the Sheraton a responsibility to communicate Indonesia's diverse culinary heritage in ways that are accessible yet respectful, modern yet grounded in tradition (Zhang et al., 2024).

Nevertheless this task is not straightforward; yet the language used in menus can support stereotypes or challenge them, depending on how heritage is framed. Researchers in linguistic anthropology argue that language choices in food discourse often reproduce existing power structures, including colonial residues (Blackwood & Amos, 2023). For instance, the exoticizing vocabulary typical of colonial travel writing, which are "lush," "mysterious," "untamed," "spicy feast", continues to appear in contemporary menus and food tourism brochures, subtly framing non-Western cuisines as objects of discovery. In the Indonesian context, the historical influence of the *Rijsttafel* amplifies these dynamics. Although contemporary chefs have reclaimed Indonesian food with pride, many global-facing menus still reflect a curated presentation reminiscent of colonial-era representations, emphasizing abundance, spectacle, or "heritage" as a consumable aesthetic (Duizenberg, 2020).

Understanding how culinary identity is formed today therefore requires examining not only ingredients and cooking methods but also the linguistic and semiotic choices through which cuisine is narrated. Studies in food semiotics demonstrate that menu language carries symbolic value, indexing authenticity, locality, luxury, or innovation depending on the descriptors used (Gorter, 2006; O'Hagan, 2024). Descriptions such as "Javanese aromatic broth," "Bali-inspired spice blend," or "heritage recipe" embed cultural narratives into the dining experience. At the same time, the increasing use of English in international hotel menus introduces new considerations regarding translation, accessibility, and cultural nuance. Translation studies scholars note that menu translation often involves negotiation between literal accuracy and cultural legibility, sometimes leading to the simplification or domestication of culturally dense terms (Setyawati, 2022). This linguistic balancing act becomes central to how Indonesian food is framed for non-Indonesian diners.

Within this landscape, the Sheraton's food and beverage (F&B) division serves as a microcosm of broader cultural, linguistic, and branding dynamics. As a global hotel brand with standardized service frameworks, Sheraton must establish consistency across locations; yet, it must also appeal to international travelers seeking meaningful encounters with local culture. Prior research suggests that global hospitality brands often address this dual requirement through "localized branding," where local cultural elements are integrated into menus, interior design, and service narratives to create a sense of place (Wei et al., 2024). In Indonesia, this often includes referencing regional cuisines, Indigenous ingredients, traditional cooking techniques, and cultural symbols. However, the way these elements are translated into menu language can either deepen cultural appreciation or produce superficial representations.

Although there is a growing body of literature on food tourism, menu linguistics, and hospitality branding, several gaps remain. First, existing research rarely connects colonial culinary history, specifically the symbolic legacy of the *Rijsttafel*, with contemporary hospitality practices. Scholars have examined the *Rijsttafel* as a colonial performance and as a historical culinary phenomenon (Pasqualone, 2020), but few have analyzed its influence on present-day menu narratives in global hospitality settings. Second, while studies in sociolinguistics and tourism discourse have explored how food is represented linguistically (Legère et al., 1994; Mehraliyev et al., 2021) there is limited scholarship focusing on how Indonesian culinary identity is shaped through English-language menus in luxury hotel environments. Third, the intersection of branding, heritage, and linguistic representation remains under-examined, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts where post-colonial histories continue to influence hospitality aesthetics and narratives.

Addressing these gaps is necessary not only for academic reasons but also for practical ones. As Indonesia positions its cuisine on the global stage, understanding how culinary identity is framed

through professional hospitality communication becomes essential. Menu texts, though often overlooked, shape how international guests conceptualize Indonesian cuisine, whether as a living tradition, a modern reinterpretation, or an exoticized artifact of the past. They influence expectations, affect perceptions of authenticity, and contribute to broader cultural narratives about Indonesia. This study, titled *Reimagining Indonesian Culinary Identity from Rijsttafel to Global Hospitality*, examines how Indonesian culinary identity is discursively constructed through menu language in the Sheraton F&B division. It explores how historical narratives, particularly the symbolic legacy of the *Rijsttafel*, intersect with contemporary branding strategies in global hospitality. By analyzing lexical choices, descriptive patterns, and cultural framing devices, the study explores to illuminate how Indonesian cuisine is represented, simplified, elevated, or reimagined for global audiences.

Therefore, the research contributes to three major discussions. First, it extends scholarship on menu linguistics by examining how language mediates cultural identity in high-end hospitality contexts. Second, it offers a postcolonial reading of culinary representation, questioning how historical narratives continue to shape present-day gastronomic branding. Third, it enriches hospitality studies by demonstrating how global hotel brands negotiate local authenticity within their standardized frameworks. Eventually, this research argues that culinary identity is not only cooked, it is written, framed, narrated, and performed. Understanding this narrative work is essential for appreciating how Indonesian cuisine is being reimagined today, from its colonial-era staging in the *Rijsttafel* to its contemporary presence in global hospitality.

Despite growing research on food tourism and menu discourse, limited studies have examined how Indonesian culinary identity is linguistically constructed in global hotel menus through a postcolonial lens. Furthermore, little attention has been given to how menu language mediates between colonial culinary legacies and contemporary hospitality branding practices. This gap is particularly significant as Indonesian cuisine is increasingly positioned within global culinary diplomacy initiatives, yet its representation in international hospitality contexts remains underexplored. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How Indonesian culinary identity is linguistically constructed in hotel menus?
2. How do menu language and semiotic features reflect postcolonial transformations of culinary identity?
3. How does global hospitality discourse shape the representation of local cuisine?

Culinary Identity and the Legacy of *Rijsttafel* in Contemporary Hospitality

Studies on culinary identity consistently emphasize that food functions not only as nourishment but as a symbolic medium through which societies narrate their histories, hierarchies, and collective memories (Perry, 2017; Wilks & Cognition, 2005). In the Indonesian context, this symbolic dimension is often tied to the colonial legacy of the *Rijsttafel*, a Dutch orchestration of Indonesian dishes presented as a grand performance of abundance and hierarchy. Although historically rooted in asymmetrical cultural encounters, recent scholarship highlights that its legacy continues to shape contemporary dishes, menu symbolism, and representations of “authentic” Indonesian cuisine (Begum et al., 2024).

Culinary identity is also interpreted within frameworks of cultural heritage and globalization. (SaThierbach et al., 2015) argued that languages used to describe food, whether on menus, advertisements, or digital platforms, play a central role in reframing cuisine as a cultural artifact. In global hospitality settings, dishes acquire hybridized identities, negotiated through naming practices, translation choices, and curated narratives (Dao, 2022). Culinary heritage becomes legible to global audiences only when mediated through strategic forms of discourse, often involving simplification, rebranding, or selective historical framing (Kopf, 2025).

This tension between heritage preservation and global marketability is especially evident in luxury hospitality, where menus often oscillate between authenticity and cosmopolitanism. Research on heritage-based branding in hospitality demonstrates that hotels strategically mobilize historical motifs to enhance differentiation and cultural prestige (Ahmed et al., 2024; Duizenberg, 2020). In Indonesia, the symbolic capital of the *Rijsttafel* motif is undergoing reinterpretation, shifting from a colonial spectacle to a reclaimed emblem of Indonesian culinary sophistication (Cianga, 2017). When hotels such as Sheraton adapt elements of this legacy, they contribute to a broader cultural project: repositioning Indonesian cuisine within global gastronomic discourse.

Studies of menu discourse reinforce this view by showing how linguistic choices influence diners' perceptions of authenticity, value, and cultural identity (Guo & Yang, 2025; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Menu text is now understood as a form of micro-narrative, combining history, sensory description, and brand positioning (Sisilda, 2022). Through naming practices, English-Indonesian code choices, and narrative descriptors, menus craft specific identities for dishes, mediating between local heritage and global expectations. This main of literature underscores the relevance of analyzing Sheraton's menu language as a site where histories of *Rijsttafel*, Indonesian identity, and global hospitality discourse intersect.

Menu Language, Register, and Semiotic Framing in Hospitality Branding

The study of menu language has expanded through frameworks of register analysis, multimodality, and social semiotics. These approaches emphasize that linguistic choices, which is lexical selection, syntactic patterning, and semantic framing, carry cultural and ideological meanings (Paul & Handford, 2012; Yung & Yuan, 2020). In hospitality settings, menu writing functions as a specialized register characterized by persuasive descriptors, sensory cues, and curated cultural references (Fareed Majeed & Adisaputera, 2020). This register is shaped by the communicative goals of the establishment: conveying authenticity, modernity, luxury, or cultural prestige. Recent discourse studies show that globalization introduces new linguistic tensions in menu design. English often becomes the dominant framing language, while local terms serve as cultural markers or authenticity tokens (Veum et al., 2024). Scholars argue that this hybrid linguistic form, sometimes called "globalized culinary English", creates a space where local identities are re-signified through selective translation and cultural indexing (Ladzekpo et al., 2023; Van Mensel et al., 2016). For instance, inserting Indonesian culinary lexemes like "rendang," "sambal," or "nasi liwet" into an English sentence not only foregrounds local flavor but also associates the dish with a global cultural marketplace.

Menu descriptions also rely on semiotic layering; (Ladzekpo et al., 2023) highlighted that written text, layout, typography, and sometimes imagery operate as multimodal resources that shape meaning. Research on luxury hospitality menus showed that minimalistic layouts, curated typography, and selective use of local terms can symbolically elevate a dish's cultural value (Haryono et al., 2018). In this way, Sheraton's menu language can be seen as a semiotic artifact that strategically constructs Indonesian identity while remaining legible to international guests.

Register analysis is equally crucial. (Biber & Barbieri, 2007) demonstrated that hospitality texts often feature evaluative adjectives, procedural verbs, sensory metaphors, and narrative fragments that blend descriptive and promotional purposes. These linguistic patterns help shape diners' expectations, emphasize cultural narratives, and perform brand identity. When examined through Hallidayan register theory, field, tenor, and mode, hotel menus reveal communicative tensions between cultural storytelling and commercial intent.

Semiotics further contributes to understanding how cuisines acquire meanings beyond taste. (Van Leeuwen, 2021) asserted that foods become semiotic resources when associated with narratives, symbols, and social values. In the case of Indonesian cuisine, dishes tied to the *Rijsttafel* tradition undergo semiotic transformation: once embedded in colonial spectacle, they are now reframed as embodiments of Indonesian heritage (Stepaniuk, 2024). Sheraton, operating at the crossroads of local culture and global clientele, reinterprets these semiotic resources through language choices that signal authenticity, luxury, and historical depth.

The literature therefore supports a model in which menu language is not merely descriptive but is a deliberate cultural and branding strategy. It mediates between local culinary traditions, global hospitality expectations, and the hotel's positioning within international markets. Such discussions affirm the relevance of exploring menu discourse at Sheraton as an arena where Indonesian culinary identity is constructed, negotiated, and globalized.

Methodological Perspectives on Language, Heritage, and Hospitality Discourse

The methodological literature relevant to this study spans qualitative, discursive, and semiotic traditions. (Braun & Clarke, 2022) reflexive thematic analysis offers a grounded approach for identifying patterned meanings in menu narratives, particularly in uncovering how cultural identity is articulated or muted. Meanwhile, discourse-analytic methods by (Fairclough, 2021), and (Mao & Wang, 2022) provided tools for examining how power, ideology, and cultural positioning emerge in

hospitality texts. Multimodal discourse analysis expands this perspective by integrating visual design, typography, and layout (Jewitt, 2021; Van Leeuwen, 2021). Given that hotel menus function as aesthetic objects as much as textual documents, multimodality offers an important lens for interpreting how cultural meanings are conveyed beyond linguistic choices.

Ethnographic and hospitality-focused methods also contribute. (Pink, 2021) worked on digital and sensory ethnography highlights the value of situating food discourse within context, dining environments, sensory cues, and interactions between staff and guests. Similarly, (Fan et al., 2021) proposed that hospitality spaces should be understood as “cultural performances,” where narratives and identities are continuously enacted. The intersection of textual analysis with ethnographic sensibilities allows researchers to capture the lived dynamics of culinary identity in hotel settings.

Heritage-centred methodologies enrich the interpretive dimension. (Smith, 2022) highlighted the process of “heritage making” as a deliberate act of selection, framing, and narration. (Qiu & Li, 2022) emphasized that culinary heritage in Asian contexts is constantly reshaped by tourism and global hospitality markets. These concepts help contextualize how Sheraton’s menus draw from the *Rijsttafel* legacy, reinterpreting heritage to fit contemporary global aesthetics.

Taken together, this methodological literature supports an analytical approach that is multi-layered, combining discourse analysis, multimodal semiotics, and heritage studies. Such an integrated method aligns with the purpose of the present research: to explore how Sheraton constructs Indonesian culinary identity through menu language by bridging historical legacies, contemporary branding, and global hospitality discourse (Kumar & Reddy, 2022).

2. Method

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive methodology to examine how Indonesian culinary identity is constructed through the language used in Sheraton’s food and beverage (F&B) menus. Because menu texts serve as cultural, historical, and commercial artifacts, a multi-layered approach is required to capture their linguistic, semiotic, and heritage dimensions. The procedures outlined below draw on established frameworks in discourse studies, multimodal analysis, and heritage research to ensure analytical depth and cultural sensitivity.

Research Design and Data Collection

The study follows an interpretive qualitative design suitable for uncovering meanings embedded in textual and semiotic practices. Reflexive thematic analysis, as stated by (Bagna et al., 2020), provided the central framework for identifying patterned meanings related to authenticity, heritage framing, identity cues, and globalized rebranding. This orientation aligns with recent cultural and hospitality research that emphasizes the importance of interpretive depth in understanding how food narratives function symbolically (Fan et al., 2021; Pink, 2021).

Primary data were collected from Sheraton’s printed menus, digital menu displays, and official online menu descriptions. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the selected menus prominently feature Indonesian dishes or incorporate Indonesian culinary lexicon. Scholars note that purposeful sampling is effective for capturing culturally dense discourse in hospitality settings (Duizenberg, 2020). To contextualize contemporary representations, historical sources and secondary literature on *Rijsttafel* were also reviewed, following heritage methodology principles that emphasize examining both past texts and their modern reinterpretations (Smith, 2022). The corpus therefore consists of contemporary Sheraton menu texts enriched with comparative historical references, offering a foundation for tracing the transformation of Indonesian culinary identity from colonial representation to present-day global hospitality. The dataset consists of 32 menu items collected from the Feast Restaurant at Sheraton Bandung, including 18 Indonesian dishes and 14 Western dishes. Data were obtained from printed menus, digital menu displays, and official online menu sources between January and March 2025. The analysis focuses specifically on dishes categorized under Indonesian cuisine, while Western dishes are included for comparative purposes. This study is limited to textual and semiotic analysis of menu content and does not include customer perceptions, interviews, or observational data.

Analytical Framework and Procedures

Analysis proceeded through three interconnected lenses: discourse analysis, multimodal semiotics, and heritage interpretation. The analysis was conducted in three stages:

1. Discourse Analysis: examining naming strategies, lexical choices, code-mixing, and descriptive patterns.
2. Multimodal Semiotic Analysis: analyzing layout, typography, visual hierarchy, and menu categorization.
3. Thematic Analysis: identifying recurring themes related to authenticity, heritage, and global representation.

First, discourse and register analysis were applied to examine lexical choices, sensory descriptors, code-mixing patterns, naming strategies, and the promotional tone characteristic of hospitality language (Biber & Conrad, 2020). Following (Luca, 2020) register theory, menu language was analyzed in terms of field, tenor, and mode to understand how identity and cultural value are constructed through linguistic patterning. Studies of menu discourse (Mukhtar et al., 2024) guided attention toward features such as evaluative adjectives, authenticity markers, and the hybridization of English with local culinary terms—practices that often signal cultural prestige in global dining contexts (Berno & Bricker, 2001).

Second, multimodal analysis was conducted to explore the semiotic framing of identity through layout, typography, item ordering, and spatial hierarchy, using principles from (Van Leeuwen, 2021). Even in the absence of imagery, multimodal design plays a central role in signaling luxury, modernity, or cultural depth in hospitality menus. Semiotic analysis, further supported interpretation of symbolic values attached to Indonesian terms, historical references, and curated descriptors.

Third, thematic interpretation was carried out following (Clarke & Keller, 2015) reflexive framework. Codes were developed inductively to identify themes such as the reinterpretation of *Rijsttafel*, the interplay between authenticity and cosmopolitanism, and the ways in which Indonesian dishes are positioned for global audiences. Reflexive memo writing and iterative re-coding ensured analytic consistency, a practice widely recommended in qualitative cultural research (Stepaniuk, 2024). Through the combination of these analytical lenses, the study captures the layered processes through which Sheraton's menus articulate, reshape, and globalize Indonesian culinary identity.

Trustworthiness, Reflexivity, and Ethical Considerations

To ensure accuracy, the study followed qualitative criteria of credibility, dependability, and reflexivity (Merchant et al., 2025). Credibility was enhanced through triangulation across printed menus, digital materials, and historical sources. Analytical dependability was strengthened by repeatedly revisiting codes and themes, discussing interpretive decisions, and ensuring alignment between evidence and interpretation. Reflexive notes supported awareness of researcher position, particularly in dealing with the colonial legacy of *Rijsttafel* and its contemporary reframing. Ethically, the study posed minimal concerns because all data were publicly accessible and did not involve human participants. Nevertheless, ethical standards in heritage and cultural analysis were observed, especially in respecting the sensitivities surrounding Indonesia's colonial culinary history and avoiding reductive representations, as advised in heritage research (Mulyawan et al., 2019). To enhance analytical reliability, the study employed iterative coding and cross-checking of themes. Reflexive memo writing was used to maintain consistency in interpretation. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing printed menus, digital menus, and relevant historical references.

3. Result and Discussion

Result

A close examination of the Feast Restaurant menu reveals several key linguistic patterns that illuminate how the hotel constructs and communicates Indonesian culinary identity within a global hospitality setting. First, the register of the menu uses a formal yet approachable culinary style, characterized by short descriptive noun phrases such as "slow-cook oxtail broth," "creamy mushroom soup," or "deep-fried banana served with chocolate sauce." These syntactic structures follow international menu-writing conventions, aligning the Sheraton's culinary language with global hospitality norms while still accommodating local dishes. The analysis reveals that

Indonesian dishes retain their original names, such as *Nasi Campur Bali*, *Gudeg Jogja*, and *Ayam Betutu*. These names are accompanied by concise English descriptions. For example, “Nasi Campur Bali” is described as “chicken satay, boiled egg, lawar salad, and sambal,” indicating a strategy of maintaining cultural identity while ensuring clarity.

Indonesian dishes frequently use sensory and process-oriented descriptors such as “slow-cooked,” “aromatic broth,” and “turmeric-based,” while Western dishes rely on standardized descriptors such as “crispy,” “grilled,” and “creamy.” The menu also features a dedicated category labeled “Go Local,” which groups Indonesian dishes separately from Western offerings. These dishes are visually emphasized through layout positioning and detailed descriptions.



Figure 1. Sheraton's Menu "Go Local"

The naming strategy for Indonesian dishes shows a hybrid approach. Iconic names such as *Nasi Campur Bali*, *Nasi Tutug Oncom*, *Ayam Betutu*, and *Gudeg Jogja* are kept in their original Indonesian forms, signaling authenticity and cultural pride. These names are not translated, which functions as an identity marker. Instead, clarification is provided via English explanatory phrases, “*chicken satay skewer*,” “*fried banana*,” “*shredded chicken*,” “*spicy broth*”, suggesting a communicative strategy of retaining cultural specificity while ensuring international comprehensibility. This strategy reflects what Kress and van Leeuwen call “translation for accessibility within global communicative contexts.”

The menu's lexical choices for Indonesian dishes also employ sensory and process-oriented verbs and adjectives, such as slow-cook, aromatic, shredded, turmeric broth, *sambal*. These descriptors position Indonesian food as flavorful, artisanal, and rooted in local culinary techniques. In contrast, Western dishes rely more on standardized global culinary descriptors such as crispy, creamy, grilled, beef patty, tartar dressing, suggesting the use of a familiar gastronomic lexicon for international visitors.



Figure 2. Sheraton's Menu

From a semiotic perspective, the use of English ingredient descriptors with Indonesian dish titles creates a code-mixed linguistic environment, which enhances intelligibility for global guests while preserving Indonesian identity signals. This aligns with contemporary hospitality discourse, where bilingual or hybrid lexical strategies are used to bridge cultural distance.

Finally, the placement of Indonesian dishes in a distinct category labeled “Go Local” functions as a meta-linguistic framing device: it explicitly invites diners to engage with local culture. The category name uses imperative mood (“Go”), which indexes exploration, movement, and discovery. Its linguistic framing encourages guests to experience local identity through culinary choices, revealing how hospitality menus use language not merely to describe food but to position cultural experiences.

Discussion

The linguistic patterns observed in the menu highlight how language functions as a strategic tool in the construction and performance of Indonesian culinary identity in global hospitality settings. The decision to retain original dish names, without translation, positions Indonesian culinary terms as cultural signifiers that do not require simplification or domestication. This shift reflects postcolonial linguistic reclamation, moving away from earlier colonial practices such as the *Rijsttafel*, where Indonesian foods were reorganized, renamed, or re-contextualized through Dutch culinary discourse. Here, the menu asserts Indonesian linguistic identity by foregrounding indigenous terminology in a luxury hotel context.

The bilingual descriptive structures used alongside these indigenous names illustrate how linguistic accessibility is balanced with identity preservation. For example, *Nasi Campur Bali* is accompanied by English descriptions that break down the components (“Chicken satay, boiled egg, *lawar* salad, smoked *sambal*,” etc.). This strategy reflects what sociolinguists identify as expository localization, which making culturally specific items globally interpretable without erasing their cultural form. It supports global diners in navigating unfamiliar dishes while reinforcing authenticity. The findings suggest that the retention of original Indonesian dish names functions as a form of cultural affirmation, reflecting a shift away from colonial practices that often translated or recontextualized local cuisine. This strategy can be interpreted as a form of postcolonial linguistic reclamation.

The use of English explanatory descriptions indicates a balancing act between authenticity and accessibility. This aligns with global hospitality practices where local identity is preserved while ensuring international comprehensibility. The “Go Local” category can be interpreted as a discursive strategy that frames Indonesian cuisine as a curated cultural experience. Rather than presenting local food as peripheral, the menu positions it as central to the hospitality offering. However, these representations also suggest a degree of selective framing, where cultural elements are curated to fit global expectations. This raises questions about the commodification of culinary identity within international hospitality contexts.

Table 1: Linguistic Features of Indonesian vs. Western Dishes

Category	Indonesian Dishes ("Go Local")	Western/International Dishes	Linguistic Notes
Naming Style	Original Indonesian names retained (e.g., <i>Nasi Campur Bali</i> , <i>Gudeg Jogja</i> , <i>Ayam Betutu</i>)	Standardized English names (e.g., <i>Fish and Chips</i> , <i>Spaghetti Carbonara</i>)	Indonesian names serve as cultural identity markers; English names indicate global familiarity.
Descriptive Register	Use of sensory, process-oriented descriptors (<i>slow-cook</i> , <i>aromatic broth</i> , <i>shredded</i> , <i>sambal</i>)	Use of conventional global culinary descriptors (<i>crispy</i> , <i>creamy</i> , <i>grilled</i> , <i>tartar dressing</i>)	Indonesian dishes foreground heritage techniques; Western dishes remain universally recognizable.
Lexical Strategy	Code-mixed format: Indonesian dish name + English explanation	Fully English lexical structure	Balances authenticity with accessibility for global guests.
Cultural Elements	Frequent reference to locality (<i>Bali</i> , <i>Jogja</i> , <i>Sundanese</i>)	No cultural-geographical indexing	Local indexing constructs regional identity.
Semantic Emphasis	Focus on tradition and heritage processes	Focus on ingredients and preparation method	Reinforces Indonesian cuisine as artisanal and culturally embedded.

Source: author's analysis

As it can be seen, table 1 illustrates clear linguistic contrasts between Indonesian dishes and Western dishes on the Sheraton Feast Restaurant menu. The most striking pattern is the preservation of original Indonesian dish names such as *Nasi Campur Bali* and *Gudeg Jogja*. These names appear without translation, signaling a deliberate strategy to foreground Indonesian cultural identity. Retaining indigenous terminology allows the names themselves to function as linguistic icons of heritage, indexing authenticity and resisting Western culinary standardization. On the other hand, Western dishes use fully English, globally recognizable names (*Fish and Chips*, *Cheese Burger*), making them instantly accessible to international guests.

The table also highlights register differences: Indonesian dishes are described with process-oriented and sensory verbs, slow-cooked, aromatic, and shredded, turmeric broth, etc., which emphasize artisanal tradition and local cooking techniques. In contrast, Western dishes rely on global culinary descriptors like *crispy*, *creamy*, *grilled*, suggesting familiarity rather than cultural storytelling. This contrast points to a deeper linguistic function: Indonesian dishes are framed through a narrative of craftsmanship and regional specificity, while Western items rely on standard gastronomic terminology. Thus, Table 1 shows that Sheraton uses language to elevate Indonesian cuisine as culturally rich and worthy of gourmet positioning, while still maintaining the universal accessibility expected in international hotels.

Table 2. Semiotic and Structural Positioning of Menu Items

Semiotic Feature	Implementation in Menu	Linguistic/Cultural Effect
Category Labeling	Dedicated section titled “Go Local”	Frames local dishes as a distinctive cultural offering.
Visual Hierarchy	Indonesian dishes shown in high-resolution images at page top	Positions local cuisine as visually central and culturally prestigious.
Price Uniformity	Most Indonesian and Western dishes priced equally (IDR 99k)	Linguistically indexes equality in culinary value and prestige.

Semiotic Feature	Implementation in Menu	Linguistic/Cultural Effect
Layout Distribution	Local dishes given more narrative descriptions; Western dishes are shorter and more standardized	Suggests greater cultural storytelling role for Indonesian dishes.
Color & Typography	Earth-tone palette and elegant serif typefaces	Connotes heritage, warmth, and upscale cultural branding.

Source: author's analysis

Furthermore, table 2 presents the semiotic dimensions of the menu layout and how they contribute to constructing Indonesian culinary identity. One of the most significant semiotic indicators is the dedicated “Go Local” section, which linguistically frames Indonesian dishes as a curated cultural experience rather than ordinary menu items. This labeling uses imperative language that invites diners to explore local cuisine, suggesting that consuming Indonesian food is part of the hospitality experience itself.

The table also shows that Indonesian dishes receive more visual prominence through high-resolution food photography placed at the top of the menu layout. This visual hierarchy positions local dishes as central to the brand narrative, reflecting hospitality trends in which local foods serve as identity anchors for global travelers. Price range, Indonesian and Western dishes both priced at IDR 99k, has symbolic meaning as well. By valuing Indonesian food at the same price as internationally recognized Western dishes, the menu linguistically indexes parity of prestige, countering historical hierarchies that placed Western cuisine above local cuisine.

Finally, the table notes the use of color, typography, and layout to support cultural messaging. The warm earth tones and refined serif fonts evoke heritage and sophistication, embedding Indonesian identity not only in language but also in visual and material design. In addition, table 2 demonstrates that the menu uses semiotic and linguistic strategies synergistically to position Indonesian cuisine as an integral element of global hospitality branding.

Table 3. Linguistic Identity Construction in the Menu

Linguistic Strategy	Example from Menu	Identity Function
Retention of Original Names	<i>Nasi Tutug Oncom, Gudeg Jogja, Ayam Betutu Khas Bali</i>	Preserves cultural authenticity and asserts Indonesian identity.
Hybrid Expository Descriptions	“Chicken satay, boiled egg, lawar salad, grilled fish jerkon”	Translates cultural meaning for global audiences without erasing local identity.
Use of Local Ingredients in English	<i>turmeric broth, fried banana, coconut milk, sambal</i>	Maintains cross-cultural intelligibility while grounding dishes in Indonesian sensory identity.
Imperative Framing	“Go Local”	Encourages engagement with Indonesian culture as an experience.
Sensory Adjectives and Cooking Verbs	<i>aromatic broth, slow-cooked, fried, creamy</i>	Constructs a gourmet, artisanal impression of Indonesian dishes.
Geographical Labeling	<i>Bali, Jogja, Sundanese, Bandung</i>	Reinforces Indonesia's regional diversity and local pride.

Source: author's analysis

Nevertheless, table 3 highlights how specific linguistic strategies work together to construct Indonesian culinary identity. Retaining original dish names functions as a core identity affirmation strategy. Labeling like *Nasi Tutug Oncom* are not only labels but cultural signifiers that signal authenticity, heritage, and a refusal to dilute cultural meaning for Western consumption. Alongside these names, the menu employs hybrid explanatory descriptions, English phrases that unpack dish components without altering the indigenous name. This bilingual strategy maintains authenticity while ensuring clarity for international guests, reflecting what discourse scholars describe as cultural translation without erasure.

Geographical labeling, Bali, Jogja, Bandung, adds another layer of identity construction. Instead of presenting Indonesian cuisine as monolithic, the menu linguistically highlights its regional diversity, reinforcing Indonesia's plurality and rich culinary landscape. The sensory and process-

oriented adjectives used in the descriptions further construct Indonesian dishes as artisanal, flavorful, and deeply rooted in cooking traditions.

The category name “Go Local” stands out as a linguistic cue that frames Indonesian food as an experience rather than a commodity. The imperative form “Go” positions diners as cultural explorers and encourages engagement with local identity. Together, these linguistic strategies create a coherent identity narrative: Indonesian cuisine is authentic, diverse, artisanal, and integral to the experience of staying at an international hotel. Table 3 thus reveals the central role of language in reconstructing Indonesian culinary identity within modern global hospitality.

Importantly, the register of the menu adopts a globalized culinary discourse, marked by the use of nominal groups, sensory adjectives, and cooking-process vocabulary. This linguistic style aligns with international fine-dining genres and signals professionalism, consistency, and modernity. By embedding Indonesian dishes within this global register, the menu linguistically elevates them to the same status as Western dishes, reinforcing culinary parity.

At the structural level, the categorization “Go Local” is rhetorically significant. It constructs Indonesian dishes as both a cultural offering and a curated experience, reinforcing the idea that local cuisine is central to destination branding. Linguistically, the imperative phrase “Go Local” functions as a narrative invitation, framing Indonesian cuisine as something to explore rather than something peripheral. This reflects contemporary hospitality branding practices where menu language carries experiential and cultural messaging, not just informational content.

The descriptive phrases for Indonesian dishes also construct identity through lexical emphasis on traditional processes (e.g., slow-cooked, simmered, aromatic broth, turmeric, sambal), which highlight heritage cooking techniques. Such descriptors create a linguistic narrative of authenticity rooted in locality, craftsmanship, and cultural memory. The prominence of sensory adjectives conveys richness and depth, aligning Indonesian cuisine with global standards of gourmet dining.

By contrast, the language used for Western dishes adopts more standardized global descriptors, creating a linguistic contrast that subtly distinguishes Indonesian dishes as unique cultural offerings. This reflects a semiotic layering within the menu: Indonesian dishes are presented not only as food items but as carriers of cultural identity and heritage.

Overall, the linguistic analysis shows that the Sheraton menu is not merely a list of dishes but a carefully constructed semiotic and discursive artifact. Through naming conventions, register choices, lexical strategies, and category framing, the menu performs the dual function of hospitality communication and cultural identity construction. It demonstrates how contemporary Indonesian hotels engage in linguistic branding practices that promote local culinary heritage while ensuring accessibility to global audiences. This aligns seamlessly with your research theme, showing a clear continuum from the colonial-era *Rijsttafel*—where language mediated exoticization—to today's hospitality menus, where language is used to reclaim, articulate, and globalize Indonesian culinary identity.

4. Conclusion

This study set out to explore how Indonesian culinary identity is constructed, reframed, and communicated through the language of a contemporary hotel menu, using the Feast Restaurant at Sheraton as a representative site of global hospitality. The findings demonstrate that menu language functions not merely as a tool for listing dishes but as a semiotic and cultural instrument that shapes how local food is perceived, valued, and experienced by diverse audiences. While the colonial-era *Rijsttafel* once refracted Indonesian cuisine through exoticized and hierarchical representations, the contemporary menu reimagines Indonesian food through a framework of pride, heritage, and global visibility.

The linguistic analysis shows that the menu strategically balances authenticity and accessibility. Indigenous dish names are retained in their original Indonesian form, serving as linguistic emblems of cultural identity. These names are supported by English explanatory descriptions that do not replace or dilute them but instead make local dishes intelligible to international diners. This hybrid naming strategy illustrates how modern hospitality sites engage in cultural translation that respects local specificity while accommodating global communicability. Moreover, the use of sensory-rich and process-oriented vocabulary, such as “slow-cooked,” “aromatic broth,” and “turmeric-based”, strengthen Indonesian food-ways as artisanal and deeply rooted in culinary tradition.

This study suggests that menu language plays a significant role in constructing Indonesian culinary identity within global hospitality settings. Through naming practices, descriptive strategies, and semiotic framing, Indonesian cuisine is repositioned as both culturally authentic and globally accessible. Further immediate findings, the study highlights broader implications regarding how postcolonial identities are negotiated within commercial spaces. The menu, as a seemingly ordinary text, reveals deeper cultural dynamics between heritage preservation and market-driven representation. This suggests the need for more critical engagement with how local identities are curated and potentially commodified in global hospitality industries.

Future research may expand this analysis by incorporating customer perspectives, cross-hotel comparisons, or corpus-based approaches to examine broader patterns of culinary representation. The semiotic and structural features of the menu also play a crucial role. The visual prominence of Indonesian dishes, the dedicated “Go Local” section, and the equal pricing of local and Western items signal an intentional repositioning of Indonesian cuisine as equivalent in value and sophistication to international offerings. These choices challenge historical hierarchies that once privileged European culinary norms and instead propose a contemporary identity model in which Indonesian cuisine stands confidently within global gastronomic discourse. Through these linguistic and visual strategies, the menu articulates a narrative that situates Indonesian food not as an exotic alternative but as an essential expression of cultural identity worthy of global recognition.

Overall, the findings highlight that Indonesian culinary identity in global hospitality is not static but continually negotiated through language, presentation, and cultural framing. The Sheraton menu reflects a broader movement in which local food is reclaimed, recontextualized, and celebrated through modern hospitality platforms. This reimagining aligns with Indonesia’s growing commitment to promoting its culinary heritage as a form of soft power, cultural diplomacy, and identity branding. Ultimately, the study underscores that menu language is a powerful cultural text, one that reveals how nations, histories, and identities are performed and communicated in everyday hospitality encounters. For further research, it may extend this analysis through comparative studies across different regions, brands, or levels of hospitality, or through corpus-based linguistic methods that map evolving patterns of culinary representation. Nevertheless, this study affirms that menus remain important cultural documents, offering insight into how culinary identity is continually reshaped in the shifting interplay between local heritage and global hospitality.

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