



The Linguistic Dimension of Restaurant Menus: Reflections on Language Education, Culture, and Social Mentalities

Edlira Troplini (Abdurahmani)^{1*}, Bitila Shosha¹, Mirela Metushaj¹, Luiza Lluri¹

¹ "Aleksandër Moisiu" University, Durrës, Albania

* edlira.troplini@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This study builds upon previous research conducted recently and highlights the influential role of language as a crucial catalyst for ensuring success across various aspects of daily life. Moreover, the mission of language is closely linked to fostering individual awareness through the process of linguistic education, emphasizing its role, significance, and weight in every sphere of human existence. The topic of this study is directly related to the social dynamics that shape language use, linguistic evolution across diverse contexts, and the intrinsic value of language choice, as well as phenomena such as linguistic individualism, conformism, bilingualism, multilingualism, and language variation across time and space. All these elements are clearly interwoven within the field of culinary arts, a domain that bridges specificity and interdisciplinarity. More specifically, this study investigates how the written language of restaurant menus embodies and communicates culinary creativity. These phenomena must be considered in the formulation of language education policies, with the aim of integrating them into language teaching across all educational cycles. They are distinctly intertwined with multiple fields, both specific and general, innovative and contemporary, linguistic and interdisciplinary. The language use in restaurant menus (as a basic argument of this study) constitutes the most interesting instrument that conveys culinary creativity. On the other hand, the restaurant menus also have the potential to reflect significant cultural intersections, tradition blending, and evolving social identities. Whether monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, their language provides valuable insights into how cultures interact and how traditions are shared across different populations. This study further illustrates the importance of linguistic formation in shaping the contemporary citizen. Through the written language of restaurant menus, not only is revealed culinary artistry, but a wide spectrum of linguistic and socio-cultural issues is also brought into focus.

Keywords: Language of success, Language Education, Linguistic interaction, Culinary discourse, Sociolinguistic analysis.

1. Introduction

The names of various dishes on restaurant menus perform not only a naming function, but they also embody aspects of the society's cultural heritage legacy. Therefore, various factors should be considered in linguistic uses of this type, such as cooking technique, the prevailing community mindsets, consumer attitudes during particular periods, contemporary tastes and preferences, reverence for tradition, openness to innovation, cross-cultural influences, increasing awareness of healthy eating Jurafsky (2014). Thus, menu language is crafted to positively inform and influence consumer decisions. In addition to the above factors, the names of the dishes serve as a marketing strategy such as aiming for positive impact, generate curiosity and ultimately guide customers' choices.

The field of culinary demonstrates cultural and linguistic diversity (Warde, 2016). Such diversity is visible both through direct contact with international cuisines and via global reach of social media and advertising (Coupland, 2021). Even without being present in other places, promotional materials showcase this culinary variety.

The names of the dishes illustrate the link between menu language, culture, economic development, and socio-historical context. Dish nomenclature not only reflects gastronomic practices (local or foreign, traditional or contemporary, etc.) but also encapsulates fragments of the social experience across different communities.

(Note: In this context, "dishes" refer to all menu items, including appetizers, main courses, mixed platters, beverages, cocktails, fast food, etc.)

Consequently, the terminology used for dishes and associated menu items are invariably shaped by cultural identity of each community. These terms evolve in time and space, keeping in mind on what the people have tasted and continue to taste, what they have enjoyed and continue to enjoy, what they have fantasized and continue to fantasize. Menu language frequently adapts to novel inventions, shifting societal influences, and ongoing developments. Underlying each menu item and the culinary ideas they represent, it embodies multiple intersecting disciplines, including cultural anthropology, nutrition science, biology, biotechnology, and organic chemistry.

Above all, this sphere, like every other domain of human activity, also reveals significant challenges regarding the implementation of language policies in education and the broader societal impact these policies generate.

2. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

In examining contemporary Albanian literature, it observes a predominant preoccupation upon a single concern: the standard language and the perceived threat

it faces under the pressures of global development. With regard to this concern, it should be underscored that disregarding or failing to comprehend the persistent influence of development, change, and the diverse historical, socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts upon language, is equivalent to denying the very processes of linguistic transformation and evolution.

Inevitably, a standard language is subject to such pressures, the management of which can only be achieved through the maintenance of linguistic balance.

The subject of this study clearly highlights the pressures exerted upon a standard language, pressures that appear even more uncompromising in the case of Albanian, which lacks legislative reinforcement. Absolute adherence to the standard language in its idealized form is unattainable. Empirical evidence of its use indicates that demands for compliance progressively diminish in proportion to the perceived importance of the communicative context. Thus, expectations are considerably higher within state institutions, whereas in private domains its application remains notably deficient. Furthermore, there is a conspicuous absence of an extensive linguistic corpus capable of supplying specialized terminology for distinct fields of human activity, including economics, politics, law, medicine, technology, and engineering, among others.

Reconsidering the topic under discussion, the issue at stake is first and foremost associated with the use of the mother tongue, and only subsequently with the standard language.

In this respect, the employment of the mother tongue in the written discourse of restaurant menus entails both advantages and disadvantages within this communicative domain.

Researchers consistently emphasize that the mother tongue, and national cultural heritage, particularly in countries shaped by immigration, is increasingly at great risk on the context of globalization and the continuous movement of people. Within this context, the presence of the native language on restaurant menus plays a critical role in preserving linguistic identity. Notably, there is a growing trend among foreign-owned restaurants to respect the mother tongue of host communities. This reflects a broader awareness of the respect that must be accorded to the native language, both as a marker of national identity and as a symbol of the host country's cultural integrity. The social value and significance of the mother tongue for local communities is undeniable. While local consumers often appreciate and prefer its use, foreign consumers are expected to acknowledge and respect the linguistic norms of the host country. Thus, the benefits of employing the mother tongue in this context are evident for both groups.

On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that extreme cases of using the local language can be problematic in certain contexts. Empirical observations indicate that some foreign-owned businesses intentionally present their menus solely in their

language of origin (occasionally providing translations into English). They often omit the host country's official language, such as German, Italian, or Albanian in this case. This practice reflects a conscious disregard for the linguistic and cultural norms of the host society. In these cases, incorporating translations into the host country's language or at minimum, into English, is strongly recommended.

Furthermore, the exclusive use of the local mother tongue in menu design may not be well received. Excessive linguistic fanaticism, does not necessarily contribute to commercial success and may not align with the inclusive values of a globalized society. In light of contemporary developments and today's interconnected world, it is generally advisable to adopt bilingual or multilingual menu formats, on both the native language and English.

Finally, it is important to clarify that references to the mother tongue do not necessarily imply strict adherence to standardized linguistic norms. The strict linguistic norms cannot fully accommodate the dynamics of change, development, and progress. It is insufficient to encompass the dynamic nature of language, which evolves individual expression, emotional nuance, creativity, social conventions, and cultural preferences.

Linguistic usage varies across different domains. Strict adherence to orthographic and punctuation rules may be required in the field of jurisprudence, but not necessarily in marketing, for instance. This divergence reinforces the conviction that language itself remains the most effective regulator of its own use, precisely because it embodies an inherent equilibrium. By analyzing menus through a semiotic lens, we can deconstruct these myths and understand how culinary language constructs a particular version of reality for the consumer, shaping their perceptions and desires (Beardsworth & Keil, 2022).

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach. Through in-depth analytical examination, it aims to identify interdisciplinary linguistic phenomena and beyond, while also offering recommendations for either their avoidance or promotion, depending on the optimal standards of linguistic usage.

This paper centers on linguistic usage within restaurant menus, which, on one hand, function as semiotic texts and hold particular significance within the domain of business language and on the other hand, they present important phenomena that reflect a strong intercultural and interlingual connection, approached through a wide-ranging interdisciplinary perspective. These menus serve as a crossroads where cultures and natural science disciplines intersect, and more importantly, where linguistic fields such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, onomastics, psycholinguistics, semantics and terminology actively interact.

Accordingly, this study is based on a corpus of 300 restaurant menus collected from three cities in three different countries: Stuttgart (Germany), Milan (Italy), and Durrës (Albania).

A synchronic analysis was conducted to examine current linguistic patterns, while a combined synchronic–diachronic approach emerges through a deeper investigation of naming practices. In contemporary contexts, these names convey elements of tradition and antiquity alongside innovation and creativity.

Data collection was carried out according to restaurant evaluation criteria, based on an average clientele ranging from the upper-middle to the lower-middle social strata, ensuring that the selected restaurants possessed a tradition of at least five years of operation.

For the sampling procedure, an empirical approach to data collection was preferred. The corpus was gathered by consulting both online menus and direct fieldwork menus (particularly in cases involving daily updated menus or when online versions lacked clarity). In Albania, for instance, due to long-standing deficiencies in education and a marked decline in quality over several decades, limited attention has been devoted to written materials of this type. Consequently, online menus often lack precision, which necessitated frequent reliance on physical menus, though these too present their own challenges. Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that the overall quality of Albanian restaurants remains notably high.

The linguistic uses in restaurant menus function not only as texts that provide culinary information but also as instruments that foster human interaction and stimulate social discourse. By their very nature, the language of menus communicates a wide range of dishes through diverse interferences of linguistic and non-linguistic disciplines. Stylistic effects are inevitable in such uses, with metaphor and metonymy being the most frequently employed figures. Linguistic variation is equally undeniable, as natural language and dialects are widely appreciated. The naming of culinary dishes through menus represents semiotic designations enriched with diverse elements of the aforementioned domains. Accordingly, the data analysis has been conducted by taking into account the diversity of all the analytical techniques outlined.

Employing a qualitative research approach, this study advances a set of proposals concerning contemporary linguistic practices within the restaurant industry. It further provides relevant recommendations for the development of language policies aimed at ensuring greater attention to domain-specific linguistic usage.

This research assigns primary importance to the social value of language, while also acknowledging its continual conditioning by various extralinguistic factors.

Despite these considerations, the study puts forward several valuable recommendations aimed to strengthen linguistic formation through education, with

the purpose of raising awareness about the adoption of accurate models in the practical use of language.

4. Analysis and Findings

Restaurant operators bear responsibility for the conceptualization and design of their menus. The designing of menus requires an understanding of customer knowledge and expectations regarding quality. Factors and strategies influencing menu selections encompass historical, cultural, and artistic contributions, consumer preferences, and strategic marketing goals.

Effective menus serve as a critical tool for attracting clientele and supporting business growth, emphasizing the significance of precise and appealing language.

4.1 Strategies used in designing restaurant menus

"Finite knowledge" of language allows people to create endlessly, adapting to changing preferences. In any given period, it is important to suggest several suitable models, recognizing that the language is always evolving and nothing remains in a static form (Felecan, O. and D. Felecan (eds.), 2014).

To remain relevant, menu designs must be based on a strategy that is both unique and special, and that the food taste and the terminology used must enable customers' interest, curiosity and satisfaction. The artistry of culinary offerings is diminished without thoughtful naming conventions, making language a fundamental component of an extraordinary power.

Although the initial motivation for this study, as well as one of our concerns, was the lack of adherence to standard written forms in menus, some flexibility is necessary to accommodate natural linguistic variation (including dialects) and contemporary trends. Collaboration with linguistic experts ensures the currency and accuracy of menu language, supported by reference manuals developed for industry professionals.

However, it is important to emphasize that the strategy of language used in menus must be attractive, interesting, beautiful, emotional, impressive, creative language. Thus, the language must be a well-curated not only linguistically, but also spiritually, artistically and culturally as cuisine reflects nation's spirit and creativity.

4.2 What constitutes the most suitable model for written menu language in the present period?

Surely, the most appropriate language model is the one which is widely accepted and resisting the time. Given the dynamic nature of this field, language models are frequently exchanged and adapted.

Societal development both shapes and is reflected by language. Language is a social phenomenon, a free and highly dynamic tool. The nomenclature of the culinary sphere

has challenged linguistic theorists. They remain tied in against this fact which is not unique in discourse's sciences.

Nevertheless, despite modernization and change, many dish names show remarkable persistence, both in foreign and local restaurants. Original and borrowed cooking terms continue to stand out.

In order to analyze linguistic features of restaurant menu language, this study considers three cities of different countries including Durrës (Albania), Milan (Italy), and Stuttgart (Germany), with additional reference to cities like Tirana, Bologna, Munich, and Brussels.

Research into the restaurant menus of these three cities reveals wide-ranging socio-cultural and linguistic patterns. Social phenomena such as immigration (or internal migration), movement of people towards developed countries, development of the tourism industry and globalization have led to the emergence of various linguistic patterns that appears clearly in the written language of restaurant menus around the world.

4.3 What, then, is the genuine condition of these linguistic practices?

Assessment of Current Practices...

The following examples will address key questions: What are the predominant trends in menu language today? To what extent is the mother tongue used, and what are its implications? What are the respective advantages and disadvantages of using local versus foreign languages? Which socio-cultural and linguistic challenges are evident? What improvements can be recommended from a linguistic perspective?

(Note: For the purposes of this study, definitions of "written language" whether monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual do not imply absolute linguistic accuracy.)

4.4 The Use of Mother Tongue in Restaurant Menus

To begin, consider examples from menus predominantly composed in native languages. Analyses focus on three cities (Stuttgart, Milan, Durrës), where a significant number of menus appear in the local languages German, Italian, and Albanian and are subsequently translated into English. These menus typically exhibit a bilingual format, allowing for communication in both the native language and English, albeit sometimes with the order reversed. Representative examples are provided below. *(Note: All analyzed menu content is presented as found, without alteration.)*

4.4.1 German-English menu (Stuttgart- Germany):

On the first page of the menus *Wirtshaus Lautenschlager*, (2022); *Carls Brauhaus*, (2024), background information about each restaurant is available only in German (i.e., in the mother tongue), while the names of the dishes are provided in German and English. Certain sections may alternate the primary language, with English sometimes

preceding German. In the section “*hot drinks*” of both menus, are noted the origin names such as “*cappuccino*”, “*latte macchiato*”, “*espresso*”; In this case, the Italian origin of these names is obvious. Such a phenomenon is also noted in other restaurants indicating challenges in finding ideal native equivalents for some terms. English translations also face inherent limitations.

In this type of classification, it is also noted that a large percentage of restaurant menus written in the mother tongue are translated into English through the option of translation by the website. The following menus, written in the native German, belong to this category:

In the concluding section of the menu available at *Weinstube Kachelofen* (n.d.), beyond the language translation feature, particular attention is drawn to a segment dedicated to allergen information. This portion provides a direct and comprehensive explanation of various food items and their constituent ingredients, presented in English. The inclusion of this bilingual component exemplifies a deliberate instance of *code-switching*, employed to enhance accessibility and ensure that non-German-speaking patrons are adequately informed about potential dietary concerns.

The menu at *Speisekammer West* (n.d.), is primarily presented in German, (with some linguistic interferences typical of culinary contexts in all menus). The primary language of presentation is German and includes the presence of a translation option on the website indicates a deliberate effort to accommodate a broader, potentially international audience.

(Note: All linguistic analyses of the restaurant menus referenced necessitate direct engagement with the respective web pages to fully appreciate the phenomenon discussed.)

The language used in restaurant menus reveals human interaction, collaboration, and socialization. Through it, we find disciplines intertwined together such as anthropology, sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, semiotics, psycholinguistics... etc.

We proceed now with the analysis of the dichotomous pattern in mother tongue-English writing, focusing on the **Italian-English menus** characteristic of Milan's monopolistic urban context.

The menu of *Bauscia Milano* (2025) is accurately composed in Italian and partially translated into English. It opens with a quote in the Milanese dialect: “*Com'è chi sun mi?? La sà tutt Milan chi sun mi! El Bauscia no!*” Cit. Tino Scotti. This strategic use of vernacular language as a rhetorical device aimed at evoking a sense of cultural authenticity and reinforcing the consumer's emotional connection to local identity (Prasetyo, 2021; Trudgill, 2023).

The attempts to find similar techniques are noticeable across numerous menus such as: including the incorporation of culinary quotations from globally renowned figures; the thematic alignment of dish names with concepts of *art*, *beauty*, and

passion; and the implementation of pragmatic, financially oriented strategies in menu design.

The menu of *La Società Milano* (n.d.) presents a reasonably accurate Italian-English menu (excluding names that preserve some dishes and products that retain their original cultural identity). Despite its predominantly Italian appearance, the menu inevitably incorporates international elements such as: *barbecue*, *curry*, *chips* and *teriyaki*.

Meanwhile, the menu of *Voglia Restaurant* (n.d.) playfully combines types of dishes with erotic themes to entice customers a concept reflected in the restaurant's name, "*L'eros in tavola*" ("*Eros at the table*"). The menu is available in four languages, indicated by country flag icons, including English. Across all versions, the phenomenon of code mixing is clearly evident: dish names are selectively preserved in Italian, English, or the language of their cultural origin, depending on context and appeal.

The option to change the menu language by electronically selecting country flags appears to be quite common in Italy.

Another Milanese menu at *Sapori Solari* (n.d.) stands out for its clean and well-organized graphic layout. The main content is in Italian, accompanied by an English translation included in the same document. The menu uses various stylistic techniques to make the content more engaging, such as using expressions phrases like: "*Chi l'ha detto che i sapori della terra e del mare non possono andare d'accordo?*", "*Quattro portate simbolo di questo locale per farvi cambiare idea*" translated as "*Who said that the flavors of land and sea can't go together?*" and "*Four signature dishes of this place that will change your mind.*"

At the end of the menu, several symbolic words are used to express the restaurant's core values, such as *qualità* / *quality* (*ciləsi*), *cultura* / *culture* (*kulturë*), and *felicità* / *happiness* (*lumturi*, *gëzim*). Although the menu is carefully curated, the presence of foreign terms like *roastfish*, *roll*, *wrap*, *ribs*, *cheesecake*, and *brownie* appear unavoidable. The intentional use of English names, even when alternatives exist, suggests that English is often granted more prestige than necessary. As seen across many menus, English tends to serve as a marker of value or sophistication. Notably, even menus written in the native language, they frequently adopt the word "*desserts*", which seems to have become deeply embedded in culinary vocabulary.

The menu of *Sporer Ristorante* (n.d.) stands out for its clarity and consistency. It offers fixed-rate packages tailored to specific group sizes (e.g., 7 people – €60, 4 people – €45, etc.). The menu is available in both Italian and English, with translations provided directly by the restaurant. Notably, the Italian version includes international terms such as *cream cheese*, *chimichurri*, and *cheesecake*, reflecting the global influence on contemporary Italian cuisine.

The menu of *Al Baretto San Marco* (n.d.) is linguistically simple and clear. It is presented in both, the native language and English. In this case, the original language of the dish names is also prominently featured, with examples such as: *Ravioli alla St' Jaques, insalata di King Crab, Astice al Beurre Blanc, Black Cod, wagyu* translated as *St. Jaques Ravioli, King Crab Salad, Lobster with Beurre Blanc, Black Cod, and Wagyu*.

The menu of *Locanda Carmelina* (n.d.) is primarily written in Italian, with occasional English elements, such as the title of the “*Business Lunch*” section. An English translation is also available directly through the website.

Meanwhile, the menu of *A' Riccione Bistrot* (n.d.) stands out for its reversed language order, presenting English first followed by Italian. Notably, the temporary A notable detail is the temporary Easter menu, which is displayed exclusively in Italian, highlighting a departure from the otherwise bilingual format.

We now turn to **Albanian-English menus**, examining them within the framework of a dichotomous language pattern: *mother tongue* versus *English*.

The dichotomous model of *mother tongue* and *English language* use is evident in Albania as well, particularly in the coastal city of Durrës. The strong influence of foreign cuisines, especially after the 1990s, (following the end of totalitarian isolation and the opening of borders), has significantly affected the linguistic integrity of menus in the city. As a result, the use of Albanian in menu writing, both in Durrës and across the country, has become highly distorted. Nevertheless, Durrës has developed a major urban center with a thriving tourism industry. Addressing this linguistic imbalance would further enhance the quality and professionalism of the city's restaurant sector.

For example, the menu of *Rimini Restaurant* (n.d.), reflects a strong influence of Italian culinary tradition. Unlike the Albanian custom where all dishes are typically served at once, with *dessert* following at the end, the Italian model structures meals are served in distinct courses such as: *antipasti, first courses, second courses, and dessert*. This format, adopted in the menu, represents a direct borrowing from Italian dining culture, introduced after the opening of Albania's borders and strengthened through ongoing contact with the Italian community. Even during the dictatorship, Albania has maintained a virtual connection with Italy, notably through the influence of Italian television broadcasts.

The Italian menu format has been adopted in response to the preferences of local consumers, who have been deeply influenced by Italy's rich culinary tradition. Moreover, the majority of foreign visitors in Durrës are Italian citizens. While tourists from other countries also frequent the city, but as we know, Italian food enjoys global popularity. Given this format is now dominant in the ancient city of Durrës, we will proceed by highlighting some specific features

In the Albanian-English menu, we find items such as, *Antipastë, “Karpaçio oktapodi / Octopus carpaccio,”* and *“Miks sallamrash dhe djathrash / Mixed meats and cheeses.”* The next section is labeled *“Të para peshku,”* (which is neither translated into English

nor correctly structured in Albanian). The proper phrasing should be “*Pjatë e parë, peshk*” (first dishes, fish). This section includes dishes like, “*Taliolini me salmon / Tagliolini with salmon*,” “*Njoki me karkaleca dhe kunguj / Gnocchi with shrimp and zucchini*,” “*Krudo / Crudo*,” and “*Ravioli peshku me karkalec / Ravioli with fish and shrimp*.” The second course follows with “*Të dyta peshku*,” (which should be: “*Pjatë e dytë, peshk*” - *Second dishes, fish*), featuring items such as “*Peshk i egër / Wild fish*.” Similarly, the meat section is labeled “*Të dyta mishi*,” (instead of the correct form in Albanian “*Pjatë e dytë, mish*” - *Second course, meat*), and includes dishes like “*Miks zgare / Mixed grill*.” The menu also features a “*Pica*” section, among others.

As observed, many words that should appear in standard Albanian have been borrowed or adapted from Italian. In some cases, there is an effort to approximate pronunciation through phonetic spelling, but these remain linguistic borrowings nonetheless. Retaining the original Italian names has also exposed to inconsistencies and shortcomings in the English translations, a recurring phenomenon across menus. Such usage is considered normal and common, especially in coastal cities like Vlorë and Shkodër, where the influence of the Italian language is particularly strong.

Due to its strategic geographical location, linguistic and cultural influences from other European countries are also evident in Durrës and across Albania, reflecting the historical and ongoing interactions between Albanians and various European populations. For instance, Greek lexical borrowings are particularly prevalent in menu terminology, especially in southern Albania. Similarly, in the northeastern regions of the country, one can observe a range of Serbian loanwords, stemming from sustained contact between Albanian and Serbian communities...etc.

Let us proceed with additional examples....

Although *Blue Marine Restaurant Beach Bar* (n.d.), located in Durrës, is both highly regarded and widely frequented, its online menu is notably difficult to read. Nevertheless, despite this digital limitation the physical menu compensates this shortcoming through a diverse selection of dishes and commendable quality.

Similar linguistic phenomena are evident here: foreign language interference dominates the written content. The menu is organized into distinct sections, beginning with the Italian dish “*Pizza*,” followed by bilingual *Albanian-English* subsections. The dish names reflect their Italian culinary origins, e.g., *linguini*, *tagliatelle*, *risotto*, *orecchiette*, *ravioli*, *fileto*, retaining their origin forms. Additionally, terms such as *krudo* (from *crudo*) and *friturë* (from *la frittura*) demonstrate phonetic adaptation into Albanian. This results in noticeable *code-mixing* among Albanian, Italian, and English. Furthermore, the Albanian-language entries exhibit frequent spelling inconsistencies, reflecting broader challenges in standardizing written Albanian.

A similar observation is evident in the menu of another highly regarded restaurant located in the historic city of Durrës. The bilingual menu of *Restaurant Oaz Durrës*

(n.d.) appears well-structured; however, instances of *code-switching* and *code-mixing* are also present there.

One particularly striking example is the use of the Greek term “*Tzatziki*”, replacing the traditional Albanian name “*Salsë kosi*”. This substitution remains widely used in contemporary Albanian culinary vocabulary.

The same pattern is evident in another well-known and highly frequented restaurant in Durrës, namely *Meison Bistro* (n.d.). The restaurant offers a bilingual *Albanian-English* menu that features a noticeable presence of foreign lexical items. As with many restaurants in the area, the full menu is not easily accessible online. Instead, it is represented through a series of dish photographs posted on social media platforms; a practice that has become increasingly common among restaurants in Durrës as a visual marketing strategy.

The coastal city of Durrës boasts a wide range of high-quality restaurants. Compared to many European countries, prices remain highly competitive and accessible. In these establishments, the issue is not the absence of physical menus or a lack of culinary quality; rather, it stems from insufficient attention to the design and digital presentation of menus, which are often overlooked despite their growing importance in the modern hospitality industry.

In line with previous examples, it is important to highlight that the prevalence of trilingual menus, “*Albanian, English, and Italian*”, are particularly prominent in the city of Durrës. This phenomenon is clearly reflected in the naming of restaurant establishments such as *Aragosta*, *Restorant Rimini*, *Milano*, and *Arturo...* etc., which exemplify the integration of Italian linguistic elements into local business identities. Moreover, the naming conventions and overall design aesthetics of many restaurants incorporate Italian stylistic features.

The following examples illustrate the use of trilingual menus, *Albanian, English, and Italian*, employed by some of the city’s top restaurants, such as *Aragosta Restaurant* (n.d.), *Kodra e Kuajve* (n.d.), and *Bar Restorant Belvedere* (n.d.).

4.5 Menus presented exclusively in mother tongue (monolingual format)

Returning to the central discussion, we now examine selected examples of restaurant menus that are presented exclusively in mother tongue (or native language) only.

4.5.1 Menus are available exclusively in German in Stuttgart.

We proceed now with the analysis of the word “menu” itself... In most cases, German menus use the word “*Speisekarte*”; by contrast, languages like Italian and Albanian, as well as many others worldwide, adopt the word “menu”, reflecting its status as a globally recognized term."

"The menu available at *Cannstatt's Alte Schmiede* (n.d) is written in the German language. Despite its commendable structural clarity, the presence of foreign lexical

items is notable, particularly in the names of internationally recognized products (the original names). Examples include *coca-cola*, *coca-cola light*, *fanta*, *sprite*, *bitter lemon*, *espresso*, *cappuccino*, *latte macchiato* and *glas tee*, among others.

The menu featured on the *Rotenberger Weingärtele's* (n.d.) is written in German. However, it incorporates a range of globally recognized words such as, *vegan*, *dessert*, *kinder*, *risotto*... etc.

The menu featured for *Goldener Adler* (n.d.), is notable for its simplicity and consistent use of the German language. On the other hand, across German menus, notably the term '*Kaffee*' is frequently observed. Although not originally a German word, it has been fully assimilated into the German lexicon and is now considered an integral part of everyday culinary vocabulary."

4.5.2 Menus presented exclusively in Italian are common in Milan.

The Italian menu available at *Pitbeef Milano* (n.d), despite the restaurant's English name, is both visually well-structured and linguistically rooted in the native language. Nevertheless, it contains a substantial number of foreign lexical items, particularly English terms. This phenomenon is often attributable to the international origin of certain culinary products, such as "*Finnish beef*" or "*Japanese cuisine*" ... etc. As is common in many menus, the beverage section is dominated by foreign brand names and terminology. While the menu demonstrates clear respect for the Italian language, the restaurant's English name, '*Pitbeef Milano*', remains prominently visible, underscoring the globalized nature of contemporary culinary branding.

A similar case is observed in the menu available at *Cesarino Milano* (n.d.), which, although generally composed correctly in the native Italian language, it opens with the English phrase '*Tasty Menu*', a choice that could have been avoided.

Italian menus often incorporate terms that have become fully integrated into the national culinary lexicon, such as *macedonia*, *tiramisù*, *speck Alto Adige*... etc. Additionally, many beverage names retain their original foreign forms. In the menu under consideration, examples include: *spritz aperol/campari*, *Gin lemon*, *Gin tonic*, *Mojito*, *Americano*, *coca-cola*, *sprite*, *fanta*, *Tennet's*, *Menabrea*... etc. Notably, the menu also demonstrates a high degree of creativity in naming, particularly in the section dedicated to post-meal digestive drinks labeled "*centrifugati*". These are imaginatively named according to their intended effects, such as *abbronzante* (*tanning*), *dissetante* (*refreshing*), *anti-stress*, *bruciagrassi* (*fat-burning*), *vitaminica* (*vitamin-rich*) ...etc. This inventive approach illustrates the Italian capacity to blend linguistic creativity with culinary expression."

The menu available at *Cipiacesano* (n.d.) is well-composed in Italian. Nonetheless, it includes sporadic instances of foreign terminology, such as *topping suggeriti*, *mix*, *mousse*, *humus*...etc.

The menu of the pizzeria *Pizzium* (n.d.) stands out for its linguistic precision in Italian. However, even in this case, occasional foreign terms, such as “würstel”, appeared. A similar observation applies to the menu of *Pizza Shambo* (n.d.), which, although highly precise and consistent in its use of Italian, it begins with a section titled “Cocktails”, a conspicuous use of English that immediately draws attention.

In contrast, other menus such as those of *Ristorante Glauco* (n.d.) and *Osteria del Balabiott* (n.d.) are characterized by their clarity, conciseness, and consistent use of the Italian language throughout.

4.5.3 Albanian-Language Menus in the Coastal City of Durrës

In the historic city of Durrës, as throughout Albania, many restaurants exhibit a strong dedication to preserving the use of the Albanian language, a practice common in countries seeking to maintain linguistic identity. At the same time, Albania also experiences the inevitable presence of foreign linguistic influences, particularly in the culinary domain.

he menu available at *4 Stinet Restaurant* (2024) is written entirely in Albanian, yet it includes occasional lexical borrowings from foreign culinary terminology, such as *Linguini, taliatelli, ravioli, paella...* “etc. A similar pattern applies to the menus of *Meison*(n.d.) and *Pastarella* (n.d.) Durrës”, which are also composed exclusively in Albanian. However, the foreign ergonym “Meison” stands out immediately, signaling the influence of international branding elements despite the linguistic consistency of the menu content.

Similar phenomena are observable in the menus written in Albanian within this city. Due to space constraints, we will not explore this aspect in greater depth....

4.6 Analyzing the Language of Menus in Foreign-Owned Restaurants

In this context, foreign-owned restaurants offer a wide spectrum of menu formats that reflect diverse linguistic configurations. These include bilingual or multilingual menus structured around various dichotomies or trichotomies, such as: (1) the language of origin and the local (host community) language; (2) English and the local language; (3) the language of origin and English; or (4) a triadic combination of the language of origin, the local language, and English. In cases where ownership is shared among individuals from different linguistic backgrounds, menus may incorporate two or three source languages, either translated or left untranslated. Some businesses opt monolingual menus exclusively in the language of origin, which may pose accessibility challenges for local clientele.

Immigration involves more than simple adaptation or integration; it also raises a deeper concern about the potential loss of the language of origin and the cultural heritage of the immigrant’s homeland. Culinary vocabulary, in particular, reflects a dual tendency: it is simultaneously drawn toward innovation and change, shaped by new contexts and influences, on the other, it remains deeply rooted in tradition. In

this domain, creative culinary expressions are welcomed rather than avoided. Foreign recipes consistently evoke curiosity, while traditional dishes retain their enduring cultural significance. Culinary art thus emerges as a dynamic field in which individuals continuously explore, acquire, borrow, preserve, and transmit cultural values. All of this unfolds through the remarkable medium of language, its boundless expressive power and, most importantly, its role as the vessel through which cultural meaning is shaped and sustained.

The cuisine of one's homeland always lives on in the soul and heart. While traditional foodways may be at risk, they often gain renewed appreciation when integrated into host societies. This dynamic has also encouraged immigrants to occasionally promote their native cuisine, even in foreign countries.

Below, we explore some examples from the menus of international restaurants (including fast foods) operating in various locations across three cities in different states.

In Stuttgart, the menu at *Ristorante Valle* (n.d.) reflects a bilingual Italian-German format. The original Italian text is presented clearly and it has been carefully translated into German. However, the first section of the weekly menu, titled *Wochenkarte*, appears to interrupt the consistent pattern of Italian-German translation.

The Japanese-German menu at *Hiami* (n.d.) is notable for preserving the original Japanese names of various sushi types and their accompaniments, now popular worldwide. Examples include *crab maki* (maki with crab), *duck maki* (maki with duck), and *avo maki* (maki with avocado). The use of Japanese script in this menu, remains to be discussed also. However, we considered that a separate topic for another time.

The menu at *Jose y Josefina* (n.d.) is primarily in Spanish but includes German translations throughout. Meanwhile, the Italian-German menu at *Da Salvo* (n.d.) stands out for its section headings, such as *pasta*, *dessert*, and *pizza*, which remain in Italian, whereas other subsections are translated into German.

The Thai menu at *Keankao* (n.d.) is notable for prioritizing first the host country's language, German, followed by an English translation.

In both Chinese and Korean restaurants, the menus typically follow a German-Chinese or German-Korean format, depending of the cuisine. In contrast, the menu at *Beef Burger Brothers* (n.d.) gives priority to English, reflecting the American origin of its offerings.

We turn now our attention to a selection of *foreign-owned restaurant* menus found in Milan and Durrës....

The menu at *Iyo Omakase* (n.d.) prioritizes the original language, Japanese, which is then followed by English translations.

Similarly, the menu of *Mabuhay Restaurant* (n.d.) in the same city offers a Japanese and Filipino street food selection that stands out for its vibrant code-mixing. Here, the languages of origin are frequently interwoven with English translations, creating a dynamic and culturally rich presentation.

The menu at *Kebabbar* (n.d.) reflects a notable instance of linguistic and cultural blending. Although the restaurant's Turkish name is widely recognized internationally, it is also translated into English on the menu. A pronounced form of *code-mixing* is evident throughout, with dish names and descriptions incorporating Kurdish, Spanish, English, and Italian terms, each corresponding to the culinary origin of the item.

Similar examples can also be found in the city of Durrës, Albania. Notably, Italian restaurants are particularly prominent in this area, as evidenced by their names, such as Restaurant "Milano", "Arturo", "Rimini" etc., which clearly reflect their cultural and culinary origins.

Italian cuisine has had a significant impact on the culinary landscape of Durrës. The quality and popularity of certain dishes often lead to the retention of their original names, which are adopted into the local linguistic repertoire. Today, many Italian dish names have become embedded not only in the everyday language of Durrës but also in broader global usage. As previously illustrated, this phenomenon is widespread: internationally recognized food terms such as *sushi*, *hamburger*, *burger* and their various subcategories across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

As evidenced by the examples discussed, restaurant menus reflect their continual adaptation to contemporary culinary trends.

In recent years, this practice has expanded to include various dynamic formats, such as daily menus, often handwritten on blackboards; spontaneous offerings crafted by chefs in real time (featuring the chef's on-the-spot creations); increasingly popular digital menus accessible via QR codes... etc. These evolving formats enable restaurants to present their culinary innovations in real time, aligning their offerings with contemporary dining trends and technological advancements.

5. Discussion

The names of specific dishes, whether traditional, shaped by contemporary trends, or newly invented, presented on restaurant menus (local or international) are profoundly influenced by a constellation of extralinguistic factors. These names bear the imprint of the individual's inner world: the language of the mind and soul, of conscience and ambition, of time, place, and circumstance. They resonate with the language of context, culture, tradition, history, and heritage, as well as the spirit of modernity and progress (Piller, 2017). When someone chooses a name for a recipe, its resulting dish, or the drinks that accompany it, they are not simply label food items, they are capturing a meaningful fragment of human experience. The act of naming a dish reflects the individual's internal cognitive and affective landscape, it is shaped by

personal and societal values, evolving tastes, and the interplay of all the aforementioned forces. Thus, culinary designations are deeply intertwined with both individual identity and the collective life of a society.

The linguistic uses of menus affirm the individuality and culturally specific adaptations that different societies articulate through their culinary vision. At the same time, however, this field also reveals a paradoxical tendency toward solidarity and conformity, where shared norms and collective identities prevail.

From a linguistic perspective, the language of menus exemplifies a range of phenomena associated with language contact and sociolinguistic dynamics. These include lexical borrowing, bilingualism and multilingualism, and their inevitable consequential practices such as *code-switching* and *code-mixing*, as well as the *parallel use* of lexical usage across languages (Troplini- Abdurahmani, 2021). Such manifestations reflect not only linguistic hybridity but also deeper cultural processes.

"The meaning is never fixed; it is always contextual, depending on the way it is read and interpreted." (Barthes, 1977, *Image-Music-Text*, p. 146)

The written language of menus, in particular, serves as a compelling site for examining broader sociocultural dynamics: the intersection of cultures, processes of social integration, intercultural communication, the reciprocal influence between language and culture, divergent conceptualizations of culinary reality, and the fusion of tradition with modernity.

In light of the foregoing, it becomes both necessary and imperative that the entire process of language education take into account the full dynamics of language as an invaluable human faculty, its diversity, its linguistic variation, its temporal changes, the lifestyle patterns of human beings at specific historical moments, and the preferences of each era. Above all, language education must remain attentive to and address the challenges arising from linguistic practices across different domains, while critically examining the overall functioning of language itself.

The written language of menus, despite all considerations, remains one of the essential aspects without which the image of a reputable restaurant would be perceived as incomplete. Accordingly, it deserves appropriate attention. At the same time, menu writing serves only partially as an evaluative parameter, since the language employed does not necessarily reflect the quality of the restaurant itself. Although it may attract immediate attention and influence initial impressions, this form of communication once again demonstrates how our linguistic behavior is shaped, influenced, and stimulated by the dynamics of social life.

As the examples demonstrate, the domain of culinary naming proves resistant to the standardization of language. This underscores the crucial role of language education in this regard. Societies with stronger educational systems tend to experience fewer linguistic difficulties. In our specific case the linguistic usage within the communities

under examination does not appear uniform: it is most accurate in Germany, relatively precise to a certain extent in Milan, and more problematic in Albania.

In Albania, this phenomenon is connected to multiple factors, among the most significant being the country's isolation under dictatorship lasting nearly 45 years. Such isolation generated serious problems, as it created a stagnant phase of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47) and simultaneously intensified extreme economic deprivation, ultimately resulting in the erosion of cultural heritage.

In recent years, in Albania, linguistic perspectives have increasingly been contextualized, yet this remains insufficient. Awareness of accurate language use, both written and spoken, must be cultivated from the preschool cycle through pre-university and university education. Language is not only an image but also an action, an interaction, a medium of socialization, a tool of representation, authority, identity, value, balance, sovereignty, peace, success, and power, among others.

6. Conclusions

Language reflects the societal vision in which we live, functioning both as a fundamental element and as a powerful catalyst for success across diverse spheres of human activity.

Language education constitutes a central factor in shaping the individual's linguistic competence across varying contexts, situations, and historical periods.

The field of culinary arts reflects both cultural and linguistic diversity. The language used in restaurant menus illustrates the intersection of various cultures and traditions, highlighting the deep interconnection between language, culture and the collective mindset of different communities.

Naming practices in the culinary field reflect a deep commitment of the dual forces at play: the strong preservation of tradition and the triumph of innovation. These linguistic expressions reveal the resilience and richness of human experience, its expressive power and diversity, showcasing its capacity for adaptation, creativity, and diversity in response to contemporary cultural encounters and evolving gastronomic landscapes.

The names used to designate types of dishes, as well as various accompanying elements, are consistently influenced and invariably shaped by the cultural identity of certain community.

The names of various dishes on restaurant menus fulfilling not only a descriptive and a referential function but also embody elements of the cultural heritage of nations and peoples.

The use of language in restaurant menus, central to the argument of this study, serves as a compelling instrument for conveying culinary creativity. The naming of dishes

functions not only to describe but also to inform and positively influence the consumer.

The use of the mother tongue in the written discourse of restaurant menus presents both advantages and disadvantages in this context. On one hand, it is essential to consider conclusions of linguistic experts; on the other, rigid norms cannot always adapt to change, innovation, development, progress and, most importantly, the individual's inner world, his emotions, sensibilities, feelings ... etc.

The written language of menus remains a vital component in shaping a restaurant's public image; without it, the establishment's presentation would be considered incomplete. In light of current global developments, it is generally advisable to adopt bilingual or multilingual menus, prioritizing the mother tongue as the primary language of communication, alongside English as a widely accessible lingua franca and global medium.

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