

Call for Abstracts

Edited Volume: “Language and Food: Macro, Messo and Micro Analysis of Food Discourse”

Editors

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Overview and scope

Language and food both function as semiotic systems that rely on shared conventions to convey meaning and to organize social life. As Roland Barthes (2008: 24) argued, food is not simply nourishment but “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior.” In much the same way, language is never a neutral tool. It structures perception, mediates social relationships, and encodes the values, hierarchies, and ideologies of a community. Eating, just like a form of communication such as language, is therefore always both a material and a symbolic act.

The parallels between language and food extend across social, cultural, and political dimensions. Both are shaped by norms that define what counts as appropriate, authentic, refined, or desirable. Bourdieu’s (1984) work on taste demonstrates how linguistic and culinary preferences function as forms of cultural capital, marking social distinction and reproducing inequality. Accents, registers, and genres may index prestige in language, just as particular cuisines, ingredients, or eating practices do in food cultures.

Language and food are also powerful resources for identity-making (Gordon & Tovares, 2024). Through the ways in which people speak about food, choose what to eat, and represent culinary practices, individuals and communities express belonging, difference, and hybridity. As Appadurai (1981) and Cabral et al. (2025) argue, gastro-politics highlights how food practices are deeply entangled with power, nationalism, and globalization, while sociolinguistic work on style and performance shows how identities are actively produced through linguistic choices (Coupland, 2007).

These processes are especially visible in contexts of migration, tourism, media circulation, and cultural branding, where food and language travel together and acquire new meanings in order to shape a certain image of the destination and, thus, attract the prospective visitor’s or customer’s attention.

The relationship between language and food begins early in life, when cries and gestures signal hunger and comfort, and continues throughout adulthood in everyday practices of shopping, cooking, ordering, evaluating, and sharing food. Genres of food discourse, ranging from family mealtime conversations to restaurant menus, cookbooks, television shows, and online reviews, shape how taste, authenticity, health, and value are understood (Gerhardt, 2013). As Barthes (2008) again notes, food-related meanings must be studied wherever they appear, in economic practices, technologies, advertising, and in the mental and symbolic life of society.

Both language and food are dynamic and constantly changing. They are reshaped through contact,

migration, and media, and they circulate within broader political and economic structures. The borrowing of words parallels the blending of cuisines, while discourses of “proper language” and “authentic food” often serve to legitimize certain norms and marginalize others. This fluidity challenges static understandings of culture and value and calls for a process-oriented approach to meaning-making that accounts for circulation, contestation, and change (Järlehed & Moriarty, 2018).

Bringing these domains together, the interdisciplinary field of language and food studies examines how practices of speaking, writing, and representation intersect with practices of eating, cooking, and sharing (Riley & Paugh, 2018). At a global scale, food discourse plays a central role in constructing cultural identity, nationalism, and belonging. Cuisines are marketed as authentic for tourism, culinary terms move across languages, and food metaphors permeate political speech and everyday idioms. As researchers demonstrate, food circulates alongside discourse, shaping values and power relations at both local and global levels (Scarpato & Daniele, 2004).

This edited volume aims to advance and consolidate the growing field of language and food studies by bringing together interdisciplinary perspectives from linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, discourse studies, food studies, cultural studies, and communication research. The volume explores the co-constitutive relationship between language and food and examines how they jointly produce, circulate, and transform meaning and value in social life (Karrebæk et al., 2018). Food is approached not only as a material object or cultural practice, but also as a communicative resource through which identities, emotions, moral positions, and political stances are expressed.

The main aims of the volume are fourfold. First, it seeks to consolidate scholarship on language and food by showcasing a wide range of empirical and theoretical approaches. Second, it aims to foster dialogue across disciplines by building conceptual bridges between sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, discourse studies, and food studies. Third, it foregrounds global and multilingual perspectives, highlighting case studies from diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. Finally, the volume aims to serve as a valuable resource for scholars, students, and practitioners interested in how language and food intersect in everyday life, institutions, and global processes.

What We’re Looking For

We invite contributions that analyze food discourse at the micro, meso, and/or macro levels. We welcome both empirical and theoretical works that reflect a wide range of approaches and methods. Contributions from all relevant disciplines are encouraged, including linguistics, sociology, political science, economics, tourism studies, and ecology. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

Micro Level: Producers, Consumers, and Individuals

This level focuses on how individuals and small groups produce, interpret, and negotiate food-related meanings through language in specific contexts, such as:

- Everyday food talk (ordering, tasting, evaluating, recommending)
- Language, taste, and sensory experience
- Food, emotion, affect, and memory
- Storytelling around food
- Identity performance through food discourse
- Digital food practices (reviews, vlogs, and social media posts)
- Multilingual and intercultural food practices

Meso Level: Institutions, Organizations, and Communities

This level examines how institutions and communities shape, regulate, mediate, and standardize

food-related discourse, such as:

- Community-based food practices
- Professional and institutional food discourse
- Norms, expertise, and authority in food communication
- Heritage food organizations and certification bodies
- Alternative food networks
- Media and mediated representations
- Media genres (menus, cookbooks, food journalism, television shows)

Macro Level: Ideologies, Histories, and Policies

This level addresses how food-related meanings are shaped by broader ideological, historical, and political-economic forces, often operating across borders and over time, such as:

- Heritage, authenticity, and tradition
- Political economy of food
- Governance, regulation, and power
- Food in nationalist, populist, and geopolitical discourse
- Colonial and postcolonial food histories
- Migration, globalization, and cultural identity
- Crisis, sustainability, and environmental discourses

Submission Guidelines

Please submit an abstract of **300–350 words** outlining your research questions, focus, methodology, theoretical framework, and key contributions. Each abstract should include a proposed working **title** and **5–7 keywords**. Please also include a short **author biography** (maximum **100 words**) with your institutional affiliation, relevant research interests, and email address.

Please submit/upload your abstract and biography here: [Language and Food Abstract submission](#)

- Abstract length: **300–350 words** (excluding references)
- Abstract submission deadline: **May 1, 2026**
- Notification of acceptance: **June 1, 2026**
- Full chapter submission deadline: **December 1, 2026**
- Chapter length: **Up to 7,000 words** (including references)

All submissions must be original and must not be under review or published elsewhere.

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