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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>THE CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF FOOD: SHAPING SOCIAL
INTERACTIONS AND DEFINING COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES**Gulistan Koshkinbaevna Jiemuratova***Trainer teacher of English language and literature Department**Nukus State Pedagogical Institute**E-mail: jgulistan@mail.ru**Nukus, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: Food plays a pivotal role in shaping cultural identities, traditions, and social structures across the world. Beyond its primary function of sustenance, food is deeply intertwined with cultural values, beliefs, and practices. It serves as a symbol of community, heritage, and historical continuity, reflecting the social fabric of a society. Culinary traditions, rituals, and the sharing of meals are central to social cohesion and the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations. Food can also act as a medium for expressing cultural pride, resistance, and adaptation in the face of globalization. This paper explores the multifaceted significance of food in culture, examining how different societies use food to define themselves, celebrate their heritage, and navigate the complexities of modern life. Through an interdisciplinary approach, we will investigate the ways in which food reflects and

shapes social norms, values, and group identities, highlighting the deep connection between culinary practices and cultural expression.

Introduction

Food is fundamental not only for survival but also as a reflection of our culture, history, and values. It plays a significant role in shaping identities, traditions, and social connections. In today's world, the way we eat impacts not only our health but also the environment and future generations. This article explores the cultural significance of food, the science behind nutrition, and how modern trends are influencing what we eat.

From elaborate feasts to humble family meals, food is deeply intertwined with human culture. Across the world, food serves as a marker of identity, heritage, and even religious beliefs. For example, in many cultures, certain foods are considered sacred or are eaten during specific rituals. In India, Hindu dietary practices often avoid beef because cows are considered sacred animals. Similarly, in Islamic cultures, pork is prohibited, and food must be prepared according to halal guidelines.

Food is central to celebrations and festivals, serving as a symbol of unity and tradition. Take Thanksgiving in the United States, for instance—this annual holiday is marked by families gathering around a feast of turkey, stuffing, and pie. Beyond just nourishment, this shared meal strengthens family bonds and celebrates gratitude, reinforcing the emotional power of food. In Chinese culture, the Lunar New Year is marked by the consumption of foods like dumplings, fish, and rice cakes, symbolizing prosperity, unity, and longevity. The act of sharing food fosters a sense of community and togetherness, making it more than just a physical necessity.

The ingredients used in different cuisines are often a reflection of the geography and climate of a region. In coastal areas, seafood is a major staple, while inland areas rely more on grains, vegetables, and meats. For example, Mediterranean cuisine, which is rich in olive oil, fruits, vegetables, and fish, is heavily influenced by the coastal climate of countries like Greece, Italy, and Spain.

In contrast, Scandinavian countries, with their colder climates, have historically relied on foods like fish, potatoes, and dairy products. In tropical regions, where fruits like mangoes, bananas, and coconuts grow in abundance, these ingredients are central to the local diet.

The availability of certain foods has also led to the development of iconic dishes that are now enjoyed globally. Think of pasta from Italy, sushi from Japan, or curry from India. These dishes have transcended their regional origins and have become staples in the international food scene.

Materials and methods

Food is a fundamental part of any culture and can bring people together and create a sense of community. Food tells the story of a people's history, traditions, and values, and offers a glimpse into their way of life. When you learn about a culture's food, you gain a deeper understanding of that culture and the people who make it up. Contemporary food systems at the local, regional, and global level can be analysed from a synchronic point of view, focusing on their various components and on the way they connect with each other and with the system as a whole in the present. However, it can be useful to consider issues with a diachronic approach, aiming at achieving a better understanding of their origin and their changes over time. This second possibility informs this module. Indeed, the goal is to look at food and food systems from a historical point of view in order to add further depth to the examination of the present-day issues that might constitute your specific interest. At the end of this module, you will have acquired a set of analytical tools in terms of concept and methodologies that you will be able to apply to your specific field of research or to your professional activity. This course will mostly focus on examples taken from the food history of Western Europe and the Americas,

not because they are intrinsically more interesting or more important than events and phenomena that took place in other parts of the world, but because more written bibliographical material is available in English, the language of this programme.

Since the analysis of food systems (production, distribution, marketing, consumption, and disposal) from a historical point of view can cover a very wide and varied array of events and phenomena, it is not surprising that there are several approaches to the topic that at times can provide us with interesting material and useful insights. This will provide answers to our second preliminary question. Researchers have been interested in the actual history of particular foodstuffs: Sidney Mintz's groundbreaking study on sugar, Mark Kurlanski's books on cod and salt, Andy Smith's work on specific products like peanuts or tomatoes exemplify just one among the many different methodologies to frame the vast material historians encounter when they start dealing with food. Another approach looks at culinary history (from the Latin word *culina*, meaning kitchen), which analyses the development of dishes, cooking techniques, and the roles and skills of cooks and chefs.

Famous individuals often express the significance of food beyond mere sustenance, highlighting its role in social connections, cultural identity, and even love. Quotes like "Food is our common ground, a universal experience" by James Beard and "There is no sincerer love than the love of food" by George Bernard Shaw demonstrate this. Food is also seen as a source of comfort, pleasure, and a way to share love and connection with others, as evidenced by Julia Child's saying, "People who love to eat are always the best people".

According to a report by the, the current food model is precisely the most unsustainable of all systems (more so than the transportation sector) and the one that causes the most damage to the planet. It is estimated that 60% of biodiversity loss and 24% of greenhouse gases are caused by our food production model. [3, 3331]

Even if we all human beings belong to the same species, each of us bears their own preference and eating habits. Furthermore, sometimes it seems that what is food for a specific human being is not so for another one, e.g., people who eat stones or objects made of

iron. More often, personal tastes and habits underlie the concept of food that each of us personally employ for picking food items out of the world. Not only what is a good food for me can be bad for you, but what is a food for me can turn out to be inedible for you. Due to the social life such food habits often overlap each other but it seems that just as often they are disjointed.

According to this account, food is most plausibly generated individualistically: something turns into a food if and only if it is edible for at least one individual. Under this view, some class of entities C turns into a food even when only one item in that class is eaten only once by only one person (i.e., even when it has not and will never be considered as food elsewhere). For instance, a human being can turn a species of reptiles into food simply by eating one of them, despite of such reptiles never having been regarded as food by anyone else.

According to Rozin , the meaning of food is determined by learning and cultural transmission. Functionally, food acts as a social vehicle, facilitating social distinctions and linkages. In addition, food takes on a culturally symbolic and moral significance. This is the case regarding the consumption of certain products (e.g. the type of meat consumed) in some religions. Similarly, food is conceived as a means of aesthetic expression, to the extent that certain ways in which food is prepared can hardly be justified from a nutritional perspective [3, 3332]

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Historians have long paid attention not just to what people ate, but to how, where, with whom, and on what occasions meals were shared—offering vital insight into the social dynamics of the past. Eating is never just a biological act; it is deeply reflective of values, beliefs, and social structures. People also think about what they eat: what is considered appropriate, healthy, or sacred varies widely depending on religion, upbringing, and cultural context. Food reflects social status, economic access, and evolving ideas of nutrition. The history of food can be approached through multiple lenses, including economics, demographics, and other frameworks borrowed from the social sciences. In addition, disciplines such as biology, ecology, botany, and zoology offer crucial insights into the availability and evolution of foodstuffs, while geography and environmental science help explain how different communities have adapted their diets to specific landscapes and climates. Together, these perspectives reveal that the story of food is also the story of civilization itself.

"Throughout history, food has been central to human socialization, shaping and anchoring the development of unique cultural identities. Food is more than sustenance—it is a vessel of meaning, memory, and identity. When examining a country, region, or people, food serves as a tangible expression of their cultural fabric. As humans gathered, shared, and celebrated meals, distinct cultures began to form, with cuisine often becoming their cornerstone. Dishes reflect stories of class, geography, migration, and belief systems, preserving knowledge passed down through generations. Much like literature or art, food communicates values, struggles, and aspirations. In cultures such as Uzbekistan, proverbs like

“Elga bersang go’shingni, erlar silar boshingni; itga bersang oshingni, itlar g’ajir boshig’ni” (“Give your food to the people and they will pat your head. Give your food to the dogs, and they will gnaw your head”) reveal how deeply culinary practices are tied to moral and communal values. Thus, understanding food means understanding people—it is a profound entry point into the soul of a culture.

The idiosyncratic ways in which people eat also offer valuable insight into cultural narratives. In India, for example, it is customary to eat foods like roti with the hands—specifically the right hand, as the left is considered impolite for such use. This tactile engagement with food reflects both practicality and deeply rooted social norms. In Japan, where minimizing waste is a cultural value, it is respectful to finish everything on one’s plate, symbolizing appreciation and restraint. In contrast, in nearby China, finishing a plate entirely may be seen as impolite, subtly suggesting that the host did not provide enough. These eating habits, seemingly simple or automatic, are in fact steeped in historical, social, and ethical codes that vary widely between cultures. [4,10]

Food—and the ways in which we consume it—has become nearly synonymous with cultural identity. A dish as iconic as pizza is as powerful a symbol of Italy as an Olympic athlete competing under its flag. Cuisine, in this sense, becomes a kind of national ambassador, evoking pride, memory, and shared heritage. Yet as humans migrate, interact, and travel, these culinary traditions evolve, merging with others to form new and unexpected creations. This cultural blending gives rise to dishes that are no less magical—fusion cuisines that tell stories of adaptation, resilience, and creative exchange. Swiss chocolate, Chicago-style pizzas, and even classic dishes like fish & chips. During the Sephardi expulsion from Iberia, Portuguese Jews came to the UK to seek refuge, bringing with them their recipe of battered white fish, which preserved the fish to last during Shabbat, their day of rest where no cooking is allowed.

We can look at new cuisines created from the blending of cultures, telling stories of cultural amalgamation. Nikkei is a cuisine born from Japanese migration to Peru, where cooks use Peruvian ingredients prepared with Japanese methods. In this cuisine, we not only

experience delicious, new flavors and textures. We gain an insight into the cultural history of Japanese migration. [8,18]

When viewed as more than merely a means of sustenance, food serves as a powerful symbol of personal and collective identities. An individual's cultural heritage and social belonging can be signified through his or her culinary choices, just as they can act as a reminder of displacement and memory for those who are exiled from their native culture. When focusing on a community, the employment and adaptation of traditional foods can play a role in shaping the narratives of and fostering an alliance between its members. Moreover, familial bonds are frequently enacted and deepened throughout the process of preparing and sharing dishes. As a means of expressing and establishing differences, food can also be employed to demarcate societal boundaries; it is through meals, the offering and sharing of home-cooked dishes, however, that cultural barriers can be simultaneously enforced and breached. The phenomenological and symbolic links between cooking and familial commitments offer a perspective on how the acts of meal preparation and shared eating can conjointly produce a sense of identity and belonging. In multicultural settings, the consumption and preparation of food can both preserve and transgress cultural boundaries as a performance of cultural identities. Recent research has focused on how food relates to rituals of identity enacted in the domestic sphere, in family gatherings, and on cultural holiday occasions, and it is this adaptation of culturally informed rituals on a public and municipal scale that the discussion examines. Through an examination of three such events within a multicultural city, that of a diaspora Chinese performance group celebrating the New Year in New York, the City of Melbourne's celebration of Australia Day, and a Māori festival held in Wellington, the underexplored idea that food is central in building a sense of belonging that exists at the intersection of national, cultural and community identities is examined. Finally, the finding that the symbolic relationship between (traditional) foods and the cohering of place-based identities is accentuated when experienced in diasporic settings is presented. The rural component of displacement, as well as the possibility for a renegotiation of the quotidian

because of this uprooting, is probed to better understand the politics of representation and encounter when food acts as a mediator between the self and others [7,105]

Food terminology has evolved through various historical and cultural influences, changing the landscape of professional translation services. One significant aspect is the borrowing of words from other languages. As cultures interacted and exchanged goods and ideas, they also adopted and adapted culinary terms. For example, English has borrowed numerous food-related words from French, such as 'cuisine,' 'sauté,' and 'croissant.' Similarly, Italian words like 'pizza' and 'spaghetti' have become commonplace in many languages. These borrowings not only enriched the vocabulary but also reflected the cultural connections and influences between different regions. Globalization and increased international trade have facilitated the spread of culinary concepts and the incorporation of foreign terms into local languages and app translation service for food.

Food-related idioms and expressions play a significant role in language, often employing metaphors and symbolism. Food is used metaphorically to express emotions, experiences, and concepts. For example, phrases like "spill the beans," "piece of cake," or "bitter pill to swallow" use food-related terms to convey non-literal meanings.[5,79]

Regional dialects and accents influence language, and this is particularly evident in the language of food. Pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary can vary significantly across different regions, resulting in distinct regional accents and dialects in food language. For example, the pronunciation of certain food items like 'tomato' or 'herbs' can vary between British English and American English, playing a vital role in professional translation services.

Regional variations in food language extend beyond accents to encompass the names and vocabulary used to describe ingredients and dishes. Different regions often have their unique names for the same food item. Moreover, regional variations can be observed in the naming of specific dishes and ingredients. Certain words may have different names in different regions, reflecting local culinary traditions and preferences. For example, a bread-based dish topped with tomato sauce and cheese is called 'pizza' in Italy, but in France, it is known as 'tarte

flambée' or 'flammekeuche.' Similarly, the terminology used in recipes can vary regionally, with different terms used for cooking techniques, measurements, and ingredients. [9]

Result and discussion

The language of food encompasses a vast array of technical and professional jargon specific to the culinary world. This specialized terminology serves to differentiate between various cooking techniques and methods. For example, terms like 'braising,' 'sautéing,' and 'grilling' indicate specific ways of preparing food, each with its own set of principles and desired outcomes. Additionally, the pastry, baking, and beverage industries have their specialized vocabulary.

It is well known that English, with its rich history of invasions and global influence, has an extensive lexicon for food that reflects a wide range of cultural

influences. The hypernym "food" encompasses a variety of hyponyms that denote different types of cuisine, preparation methods, and dietary preferences. For example, "vegetarian", "seafood", and "desserts" are all categories under the broad umbrella of food, illustrating the diverse culinary landscape of English-speaking countries. The hypernym "Food" in English contains a wide range of hyponyms, which reflects the English-speaking world's multiculturalism and global influence. The word "tacos", which is taken from Mexican cuisine, and "sushi", which comes from Japan, represent a global mosaic of culinary customs and tastes. Such diversity shows the globalization of cuisines within English-speaking cultures and the inclusiveness of the language. It also demonstrates gastronomic curiosity. Furthermore, if we take the hyponym "tea", it is beyond just a beverage, "tea" symbolizes a significant part of British culture, embodying a tradition of socializing and comfort. The term evokes images of afternoon tea, a practice that dates back to the 19th century, representing a moment of relaxation and class elegance. The term "comfort food" could be another example of hypernyms with cultural connotation. Comfort food is a term used to describe food that provides a nostalgic or sentimental value to someone. It is often associated with feelings of warmth, familiarity, and

emotional well-being. Comfort food, as a linguistic concept, is primarily associated with the emotional and cultural significance of certain foods.

These names can vary across cultures and regions, reflecting the local culinary traditions and preferences. For example, in English, terms like “macaroni and cheese”, “meat and potatoes”, or “chicken soup” are commonly used to describe comfort foods. [2,87]

Referring to the ideas of Levi-Strauss, James proposes that the adult meaning of the term ‘ket’ becomes especially significant. She observes: ‘If sweets belong to the adult world, the human cultural worlds of cooked foods as opposed to the natural, raw food of the animal kingdom, then ‘kets’ belong to a third category. Neither raw nor cooked, according to the adult perspective, ‘kets’ are a kind of rotten food’. By eating ‘kets’, James argues that children are, metaphorically speaking, chewing up the adult order. For them, ‘kets’ are an important vehicle for self-identity. By analysing a childish attachment to ‘kets’, James is able to reveal an order incomprehensible to or unnoticed by adults, in which children create for themselves their own system of shared meanings. It is here that the cultural significance of children’s sweet-eating lies. The two examples already considered deal in the metaphoric rather than the literal; only relatively rarely do children really eat rubbish, and the potency of health foods lies precisely in their symbolic rather than actual ‘naturalness’. My third illustration, however, involves the literal as much as the symbolic. Based on a working paper I recently prepared, it derives from my current research on food concepts among young mothers in South Wales. Once again, questions such as the selection of food items, their preparation and the manner of their consumption are involved. The study shows that people readily identify a meal known as a ‘cooked dinner’. This is so in England as well-though apparently less evident in Scotland-and while familiar to those in different socio-economic groups is not straightforwardly a matter of social class. Effectively it refers not so much to a whole meal, composed of different courses, but ‘meat and two veg’-a plateful. How far those who took part in the study could afford ‘cooked dinners’ three times a week and once on Sundays-the frequency considered suitable-is not

known, nor is the effect of continuing high rates of unemployment, in South Wales and elsewhere, fully documented. [7, 207]

As food culture has undergone transformations and developments, so has it also caused changes in some places? Without discarding its own customs and traditions, food culture in many regions could gain a new visual identity, and help us to better understand our own culture and those of others. The multicultural character of contemporary different cuisines is the result of the specific circumstances in which regions identify themselves, and yet its authenticity and cultural preservation is maintained. [9]

Professional kitchens and restaurants have unique jargon and slang that are used among chefs and kitchen staff. This insider language helps to streamline communication and foster efficiency in fast-paced culinary environments. Chefs and kitchen staff might use code words to communicate orders or refer to specific ingredients or equipment. For example, they may use terms like '86' to indicate that a particular dish is no longer available or 'behind' to communicate their movements in a crowded kitchen.

In addition to kitchen jargon, specialized terminology is used in the front-of-house operations for service and customer interactions. Restaurant staff may use terms like 'mise en place' (preparation and organization before service) or 'comp' (to provide a complimentary dish or drink) to ensure smooth service and enhance the customer experience.

Food advertising utilizes various language techniques to capture consumers' attention and influence their purchasing decisions. Persuasive language and emotional appeals are commonly employed to create a desire for certain food products. [4;13]

Advertisements and app translation services often use words like 'delicious,' 'tempting,' or 'mouthwatering' to evoke positive emotions and entice consumers. Descriptive language also creates sensory appeal, with vivid descriptions of flavors, textures, and aromas. Phrases like "crispy golden crust," "rich and creamy," or "bursting with flavor" are used to stimulate the senses and enhance the perceived quality of the food product.

Popular media, such as cooking shows and celebrity chefs, significantly impact food language. Cooking shows not only introduce viewers to new recipes and cooking techniques but also influence how they talk about food. Celebrity chefs often introduce and popularize culinary terms, creating a shared food language among enthusiasts. Additionally, the rise of food blogging, social media, and hashtag trends has further shaped food-related language. Food bloggers and social media influencers introduce new food vocabulary, share food experiences, and create food-related hashtags that reflect current culinary trends and preferences.

Politeness is highly valued in food language and is essential for maintaining harmonious social interactions during meals. Politeness strategies include using polite forms of speech, such as “please” and “thank you,” when interacting with servers or hosts. Expressing gratitude and compliments for the food and hospitality is customary in many cultures, acknowledging the effort and skill involved in preparing the meal. Additionally, navigating dietary restrictions and preferences with tact and consideration is crucial. Politeness in these situations involves communicating needs or limitations, expressing gratitude for accommodations, and avoiding criticism of the food or choices made by others.

Culinary professions have often been associated with gendered language and stereotypes. Specific culinary terminology and job titles have traditionally been assigned gendered connotations. For example, terms like ‘chef’ and ‘cook’ have often been associated with masculinity, while words like ‘pastry chef’ or ‘baker’ have been more associated with femininity. These gender biases in culinary terminology can perpetuate stereotypes and limit opportunities for individuals in the profession. However, efforts are being made to promote inclusivity and diversity by challenging these stereotypes and promoting gender-neutral language in culinary settings.[10]

Certain foods and eating behaviors have been culturally associated with gender. For example, meat-heavy dishes are often associated with masculinity, while salads or light meals are often associated with femininity. Gendered metaphors and expressions related to food, such as “strong as a steak” or “sweet as sugar,” further reinforce these associations. Cultural and

historical factors play a role in shaping these gendered food associations, reflecting societal norms.[3,16]

Technological advancements are shaping the future of food language in various ways. AI-driven recipe generators and smart kitchen devices are revolutionizing how people access and create recipes. These advancements can have linguistic consequences as AI-generated recipes may introduce new terminology or innovative cooking techniques. Additionally, language-based food recommendations and personalized menus are becoming more prevalent, using algorithms to analyze individual preferences and dietary needs. This customized approach to food selection and menu creation can result in new language patterns and terminology tailored to individuals' tastes and nutritional requirements.

Changing food trends are likely to influence food language in the future. Sustainable food practices, such as plant-based diets and zero-waste cooking, are gaining popularity, and their language representation is evolving. New terms and expressions related to sustainability and ethical food choices are emerging, reflecting the shift towards environmentally conscious consumption. Similarly, health and wellness movements are impacting food language, with terms like 'superfoods,' 'clean eating,' and 'mindful eating' becoming more prevalent. These movements introduce new language patterns and expressions highlighting the connection between food, health, and well-being. [6,11]

Conclusion

In conclusion, food is not merely a source of nourishment but a dynamic cultural artifact that shapes identities, preserves traditions, and fosters social cohesion. As we navigate global challenges related to sustainability, health, and cultural preservation, understanding the cultural and symbolic significance of food becomes increasingly important. Equally vital is the role of language in shaping and communicating food culture. The "language of food"—from culinary terminology to the way food is described, shared, and celebrated—serves as a bridge between cultures, enabling individuals to express identity, convey appreciation, and participate in shared culinary experiences.

In professional and cross-cultural contexts, effective communication about food depends on accurate translation and cultural sensitivity. Services such as language localization and dubbing play a critical role in making culinary knowledge accessible, preserving emotional and historical nuances, and promoting inclusivity. By examining the intersection of food and language, we gain deeper insight into how culinary practices are transmitted and transformed across borders. This intersection offers rich potential for future research, innovation, and intercultural dialogue, reinforcing the idea that both food and language are central to the human experience.

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