

Linguistic Features of Banyuwangi Traditional Culinary Terms and Osing Cultural Identity

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Abstract

Culinary language helps express and preserve cultural identity; however, the linguistic features of Banyuwangi traditional culinary terms and their links to *Osing* culture remain underexplored. This study analyzes the phonological, morphological, semantic, and pragmatic characteristics of these terms and examines how they function as markers of *Osing* identity. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the research combines semi-structured interviews, participant observation in traditional food settings, and document analysis of local recipe books and menus. The findings demonstrate that these terms constitute a robust yet flexible lexicon with basic sound symbolism, wide use of compounding, many descriptive meanings and lots of metaphorical creativity that enhance memorability, oral transmission and change. While showing these words being pragmatically deployed as semiotic resources in actions localizing identity and voicing community pride, also participates in cultural branding of Banyuwangi as different by combining them with Indonesian or English classifiers to create hybrid tourism labels. Linking a detailed formal analysis of terms for foods with identity-oriented socialist, this study cries out for linguistics and provides a valuable lexical resource for classroom teaching about cultural difference in local-content and intercultural curricula as well as its contribution to local culture heritage and tourism program.

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INTRODUCTION

Culinary linguistics demonstrates that food-related language is a powerful medium through which communities construct, negotiate, and transmit cultural identity across generations (Yeoman et al., 2015 & Cao et al., 2024). In many ethno-linguistic groups, traditional dish names encode local histories, ecological knowledge, and social values, making them an important part of intangible cultural heritage (Heslinga et al., 2017). In Banyuwangi, East Java, the *Osing* community maintains a rich repertoire of traditional foods such as sego tempong, rujak soto, and pecel rawon, whose names and uses are closely tied to local rituals, everyday practices, and regional branding (Vanoutrive & Huyse, 2023). However, rapid globalization, culinary commercialization, and the dominance of national and global food chains create pressure toward linguistic and gastronomic homogenization, which can marginalize local culinary lexicon and weaken its cultural functions (Nyarota et al., 2022 & Proctor & Cormier, 2023).

Recent studies on Indonesian regional cuisines have increasingly focused on the linguistic and cultural dimensions of food naming, including ethno-linguistic descriptions of culinary terms in Aceh, Mandailing, Sunda, and other local communities in Indonesia (Turgarini & Abdillah, 2016; Rahmawati & Mulyadi, 2021; & Pinandoyo et al., 2023). These works typically document naming patterns, semantic categories, and cultural meanings of traditional dishes, and some begin to address issues of cultural preservation and tourism. Yet, most of these studies remain region-specific and descriptive, and they rarely integrate a systematic analysis (Dalal et al., 2022) of linguistic features with an explicit discussion of how culinary terms index ethnic identity (Barrett, 2003) in contexts of social change. In the case of Banyuwangi, existing research tends to highlight cultural festivals, tourism development, and general culinary heritage, while the detailed linguistic structure of *Osing* culinary terms and their role in identity construction remain largely unexamined.

This gap is evident when we consider that there is little fine-grained linguistic description, and no studies which explicitly bring together this kind of description with the sociolinguistic interpretation of identity (Rampton, 2024). Studies of regional food till now have tended to catalogue types of names or cultural connotations but not how specific sound patterns, word-formation processes and choices of meaning enable the ongoing identification of such terms with various groups (Shepherd et al., 2018; Arps, 2009 & Taufiq et al., 2024). Thus terminology's ability to reveal ways in which ethnic people are defining themselves in the face of modernization shifts and tourism is generally unrealized. In this study authors uses phonological, morphological, semantic and pragmatic analysis

of Banyuwangi's traditional culinary terms to demonstrate how those features serve as symbolic resources of *Osing* identity in daily ritual and tourist domains.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive ethno-linguistic design to examine the linguistic features of Banyuwangi traditional culinary terms and their relationship to *Osing* cultural identity. The research focused on naturally occurring language data, treating culinary terms as the primary units of analysis. For both the everyday, ritual and the tourism contexts phonology, morpho-syntax, meaning, and pragmatics will receive detailed scrutiny inasmuch as possible (Patten, 2018 & Mirvahedi, 2024).

The research was conducted in Banyuwangi, East Java, particularly in areas with strong *Osing* community presence and active traditional culinary practices during March to June 2025. The investigation focuses on the food preparation and processing by women from the *Osing* ethnic group, in particular the utilization and practices of traditional utensils which called bengahan and cooking practices executed through electric kitchen tool especially pressure frying-cookers. In total, there were 12 people who were participants in this research study consisting of five traditional food vendors, four home-based cooks, and three elder/ or high respected community figure recognized by other *Osing* for knowing *Osing* cuisine. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling strategy (Habiburrahim et al., 2022), which specifically targeted individuals of *Osing* descent, who had been directly involved in traditional culinary activities and able to recall the names and cultural meanings of some local dishes.

The data was gathered from a triad of principal sources; oral, observational and documentary. Oral data was collected through unstructured interviews and casual conversations, observational data was garnered through participant-observation of traditional marketplaces, food stalls, household cooking settings and local cultural festivals; and documentary data came from local recipe books, menus of traditional eateries, festival pamphlets, and culinary signage. The primary method of research was semi-structured interviews, for which a guide was created aimed at extracting information related to the terminologies used in the culinary discourse, their meanings and perceived origins as well as the context in which they are used (Al Khateeb, 2019; Vromans et al., 2023; & Aryasih et al., 2024). A total code-switching with the interviewees from Indonesian into *Osing* and Javanese was conducted during the interviews; audio recordings were made with their permission and supported with field-notes and photographic document.

Data collection proceeded in three stages. After that initial list was created, each participant was interviewed for 30–60 minutes in a semi-structured manner

regarding Banyuwangi's traditional food terms and what those words invoked cultural linguistically. Next, participant observation was carried out in order to observe the actual usage of culinary terms, ranging from food orders to menu displays, bargaining practices, ritual announcements, and tourism-oriented promotion. Across these sets of processes, a total of 28 distinct traditional and hybrid culinary terms were documented and analyzed (Mackiewicz, 2018 & Douglas et al., 2023). Data analysis followed an iterative multi-level procedure. Cooking terms were gathered from the recorded audio transcripts, forming a basis linguistic corpus that included spelling variants, pronunciations and the contexts they were used in. Each term was then investigated across four levels: phonological features (syllable structure and sound patterning), morphological structures (word-formation processes like compounding), semantic aspects (literal, descriptive, and metaphorical meanings), and pragmatic functions (identity indexing, solidarity, and regional branding) (Proctor & Cormier, 2023; Fata et al., 2024 & Clews, 2025).

These recognized linguistic patterns were then read in regards to the *Osing* cultural identity by attached to the recurring cultural theme which is located around locality, communal values, ritual efficacy, and tourist discourse. To improve reliability, the investigators employed source triangulation through combining data from interviews, observations, and documents, then presented initial interpretations to some respondents during member checking. These recognized linguistics patterns and were subsequently interpreted with respect to *Osing* people as attached to the recurring cultural theme, ranging from locality, communal value, ritual efficacy, and tourist discourse. To enhance reliability, the researchers applied source triangulation by merging data from interviews, observations, and documents, combined preliminary interpretations, and then presented initial findings to some respondents for member checking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Lexical and Cultural Stability

The data reveal the following Banyuwangi traditional culinary terms comprise a stable and recurrent lexical set in the *Osing* speech community. Central dish names, including *Sego Tempong*, *Rujak Soto*, *Pecel Rawon*, *Iwak Pe*, and *Kue Bagiak*, were present throughout interviews, participant observations, and documentary evidence. Moreover, these names repeatedly recurred in daily conversations, market exchanges, family gatherings, or social functions with food. The very fact of the continued employment of the same vocabulary items indicates

that culinary terms are persistent linguistic markers of shared cultural knowledge. The stability of such a lexical set seems to reflect the cultural mission of food language which is the preservation of a particular culture. The same set of words are passed down generations and are maintained for the same purpose of encoding knowledge of *Osing* culinary traditions and maintaining ties to the territory and the ancestral tradition.

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Table 1. Characteristics of Banyuwangi traditional culinary

Aspect	Description	Examples	Implications
Lexical Stability	Banyuwangi traditional culinary terms are relatively stable within the <i>Osing</i> community.	a. Sego Tempong b. Rujak Soto c. Pecel Rawon d. Iwak Pe e. Kue Bagiak	Indicates preservation of linguistic and cultural identity.
Cultural Recurrence	These terms appear repeatedly in interviews, observations, and documents.	a. Sego Tempong b. Rujak Soto c. Pecel Rawon d. Iwak Pe e. Kue Bagiak	Shows their integral role in daily life, family rituals, and local commerce.
Dynamic Adaptation	New, hybrid culinary names have emerged, especially in tourism contexts.	a. Sego tempong b. Rujak Soto Banyuwangi Corner	Reflects language adaptation to <i>Kemiren Village</i> attract tourists without erasing tradition.
Sociolinguistic Function	Culinary terms serve beyond naming dishes they are social and economic symbols.	a. Pecel Rawon <i>Osing Taste</i> b. Kue Bagiak <i>Osing Delight</i> c. Iwak Pe Traditional Grill Banyuwangi	Demonstrates how food lexicon operates as a flexible linguistic resource.

The table highlights that *Osing* speakers' naming practices for Banyuwangi culinary items bring together several interconnected linguistic dimensions. At the level of lexical stability, long-established dish names such as *Sego Tempong*, *Rujak Soto*, *Pecel Rawon*, *Iwak Pe*, and *Kue Bagiak* form a relatively fixed set that is widely circulated in everyday communication. Because these terms continue to be used over time, they constitute a stable lexical core through which speakers perpetuate shared culinary knowledge and sustain *Osing* linguistic identity.

The same items also exhibit strong cultural recurrence, since they appear time and again in ethnographic materials, including interview transcripts, field observations, and written or visual sources. Within these contexts, *Sego Tempong*, *Rujak Soto*, *Pecel Rawon*, *Iwak Pe*, and *Kue Bagiak* function as central reference points in talk about daily meals, family celebrations, and market transactions. Their repeated presence suggests that these dishes operate not only as everyday

foods but also as cultural landmarks embedded in household routines, ritual occasions, and local economic practices.

Furthermore, the lexicon shows clear evidence of dynamic adaptation, particularly in tourism-oriented environments where hybrid culinary labels are created. Names such as *Sego Tempong Kemiren* Village, and *Rujak Soto Banyuwangi* Corner combine traditional *Osing* dish bases with Indonesian or English descriptors that highlight locality, authenticity, and modern appeal. These hybrid forms indicate that speakers strategically adjust naming practices to meet the expectations of visitors and the tourism market, while still preserving the original *Osing* components and thereby preventing the disappearance of local terms.

The table draws attention to the broader sociolinguistic roles played by these culinary expressions, which extend far beyond the straightforward labeling of food. Terms like *Pecel Rawon Osing* Taste, *Kue Bagiak Osing* Delight, and *Iwak Pe* Traditional Grill Banyuwangi exemplify how dish names operate as semiotic resources for signaling ethnic belonging, claims to authenticity, and regional branding. In this perspective, the Banyuwangi culinary lexicon becomes a flexible linguistic repertoire that helps structure social relations, index place-based pride, and contributes to the symbolic economy of tourism and local promotion.

Tourism-Driven Adaptation

The same part of the data that indexes the stability of the core terms also displays a development within hybrid culinary labels, mostly in the area of tourism and other public-promotion domains. The names of traditional *Osing* dishes were often associated with Indonesian or English additional elements like in *Sego Tempong Kemiren* Village and *Rujak Soto Banyuwangi* Corner. That way, as shown on menus, signboards, and festival-oriented materials for the visitors, the hybrid forms were created, not instead of but along with the traditional appellations. The coexistence of the traditional and hybrid forms serves as evidence of the adaptive chaining not overthrow. When still having the *Osing* 1 leash, but getting its description or location visibly complemented, the speakers and small entrepreneurs sought to preserve the balance between the eco of authenticity and the practical utilization. In other words, both as his escape and as his effect of pro-action, the culinary lexicon that of *Osings* evolved to embrace and empower alternative uses of itself as well.

Linguistic Features of Culinary Terms

Analysis of the culinary lexicon revealed four interconnected linguistic phenomena: phonological, morphological, semantic, and pragmatic. From the phonological perspective, the lexicon is dominated by simple CV and CVC syllabic patterns: for instance, in the transcendental phenomena such as *ru-jak* and *pe-cel*. This facilitates pronunciation and memorability and ensures that the name is easily transmitted in an oral setting during everyday interaction. In terms of morphology, the most productive word formation process is compounding. The names *sego tempong* and *rujak soto* are concrete examples of this process of combining two coherent bases into a holistic lexical unit. This allows the locutor to create a semantically dense name congruent to the culinary facts they have observed.

Both semantically and pragmatically, the words used in *Osing* culinary jargon are often heavily loaded. In the semantic respect, many EATs are descriptive and metaphorical in that they encode information about the ingredients, preparation process, and the experience received. For instance, the *tempong* in *_Sego Tempong_* implies being “slapped” by the dish, with the judgement being lent the taste, linking the language to the embodied experience. In the pertainingness respect, the words can also be divided into two types. In unexpanded forms, they index the shared knowledge and property of the local group and create a strong boundary against outgroups. In the expanded forms, the words function as brand names and contribute to the public visibility and potential profitability of the names. Thus, within the interview data, the food word was found relevant to two conflicting axes of pertainingness and boundary creation versus public visibility and potential profitability.

Table 2. Linguistic features of *Osing* culinary terms

Level	Focus	Examples	Highlight
Phonological	Syllable structure and sound patterning	a. Rujak Soto b. Pecel Rawon	Simple CV and CVC syllable structures making pronunciation easy, aiding memorability and oral transmission.
Morphological	Compounding of existing dish bases	a. Sego Tempong b. Rujak Soto	The productivity of compounding that amalgamates constituents of an established culinary base into a single compound lexeme processing information on both ingredients and their combinatory sensory effects.
Semantic	Descriptive and metaphorical meaning	Sego Tempong	Referential meaning being densely packed with metaphorical representation of the embodied taste experience.
Pragmatic	Identity, pride, and branding functions	a. Rujak Soto	Individual terms serving both as identity flags within the local community and as resources for

Level	Focus	Examples	Highlight
		b. Rujak Soto Banyuwangi Corner c. Kue Bagiak d. Kue Bagiak <i>Osing</i> Delight	branding in the context of tourism-oriented marketing.

The phonological analysis indicates that Banyuwangi culinary names typically rely on straightforward and rhythmically patterned syllable structures, dominated by consonant–vowel (CV) and consonant–vowel–consonant (CVC) sequences that are highly learnable in oral transmission. These simple templates contribute to the articulatory ease, memorability, and musicality of the terms, which facilitates their repetition in everyday interaction, storytelling, and oral tradition. For instance, the disyllabic segments *ru* + *jak* in *Rujak Soto* and *pe* + *cel* in *Pecel Rawon* exemplify this preference for CV and CVC syllables arranged in a regular rhythmic pattern, illustrating how the phonological shape of the lexicon supports both communicative efficiency and aesthetic appeal.

Interview data indicate that speakers perceive these terms as easy to say, which helps maintain their use in daily interaction across generations. Morphologically, compounding emerges as a highly productive word-formation strategy in the *Osing* culinary lexicon, particularly in the creation of named dishes that combine two pre-existing culinary bases into a single, recognizable unit. In this system, established items such as *Sego* ‘rice’ and *Tempong* ‘slapped, intensely spicy’ are merged into *Sego Tempong*, yielding a complex noun that encodes both the staple component and its salient sensory effect. Similarly, *Rujak* and *Soto* are combined into *Rujak Soto*, producing a hybrid label that signals the fusion of two distinct culinary prototypes within one dish. These compounds function as integrated lexical items rather than loose phrases, and they illustrate how speakers draw on existing culinary terminology to generate new, semantically rich names that index local creativity, hybridity, and innovation in the gastronomic repertoire.

Semantically, *Osing* culinary labels are highly evocative and often figurative, conveying dense information about both the concrete properties of dishes and the lived experience of eating them. The expressions frequently highlight key ingredients, typical cooking techniques, and prominent sensory qualities such as pungent heat, smokiness, or distinctive texture, and in some cases also point to place of origin or links to specific ritual contexts. For instance, *Sego Tempong* does not merely denote a rice-based dish; the element *tempong* functions metaphorically to suggest the feeling of being “slapped” by extreme spiciness, so that the name simultaneously encodes the basic component (*seg*o ‘rice’) and the

embodied shock of encountering its powerful chili taste. In this sense, the semantic organization of the culinary lexicon acts as a compressed storyline about what is consumed, how it is prepared, how it is registered in the body, and how it is rooted in local space and tradition, transforming each term into a culturally loaded sign rather than a neutral, purely referential label.

Pragmatically, *Osing* food names operate as key communicative resources through which speakers display group affiliation, articulate local pride, and invoke shared histories, especially in casual interactions in markets, domestic spaces, and village events. In these contexts, everyday designations like *Rujak Soto* and *Kue Bagiak* function as condensed references to a common culinary repertoire, presuming mutual familiarity with flavors, ingredients, and preparation techniques, and thus strengthening a collective sense of *Osing* identity. When such traditional labels are recontextualized into hybrid forms for tourism purposes, for example *Rujak Soto Banyuwangi Corner* and *Kue Bagiak Osing Delight*. They additionally serve as stance markers in outward-oriented discourse, enabling speakers and local entrepreneurs to showcase regional cuisine as an emblem of Banyuwangi while simultaneously making it accessible and appealing to visitors from outside the community. In this way, the same lexical items circulate across intimate and promotional settings, at once enacting solidarity among insiders and contributing to the symbolic branding of place for outsiders.

These linguistic features directly address the research gap by demonstrating that the structure of *Osing* culinary terms is not arbitrary. Phonological simplicity supports memorability; morphological creativity allows continuous innovation while keeping a link to tradition; and semantic richness embeds cultural narratives into everyday lexis. Earlier regional studies often stop at classifying name types or listing cultural meanings, while the present analysis shows how specific phonological, morphological, and semantic choices contribute to the persistence and recognisability of local identity markers.

Culinary Terms and Identity

Overall, Banyuwangi culinary terms have been widely utilized to build and articulate the *Osing* cultural identity in the family, ritual, and public spheres. First and foremost, the names of dishes and their associated stories serve as everyday reminders of shared heritage, anchoring *Osing* identity in routine family meals and neighborhood. The family members and the neighbors would naturally pass the dish names and the stories tied to them across. During the rituals, the presence of the names of the special dishes denoted the community feasts and village events. At last, in the public sphere of tourism and promotion, the display of the *Osing*

culinary terms on the menus and signs contributed to the regional labeling of Banyuwangi.

In sum, these findings reveal that *Osing* culinary terms do not only refer to types of food, but constitute symbolic means that the community uses to uphold, negotiate and advertise their identity. The combination of linguistic characteristics in the use of context and language emphasizes that regular informal speech functions as a support to the general dynamics of cultural conservation and transformation in the modern condition of local ripening and relational tourism.

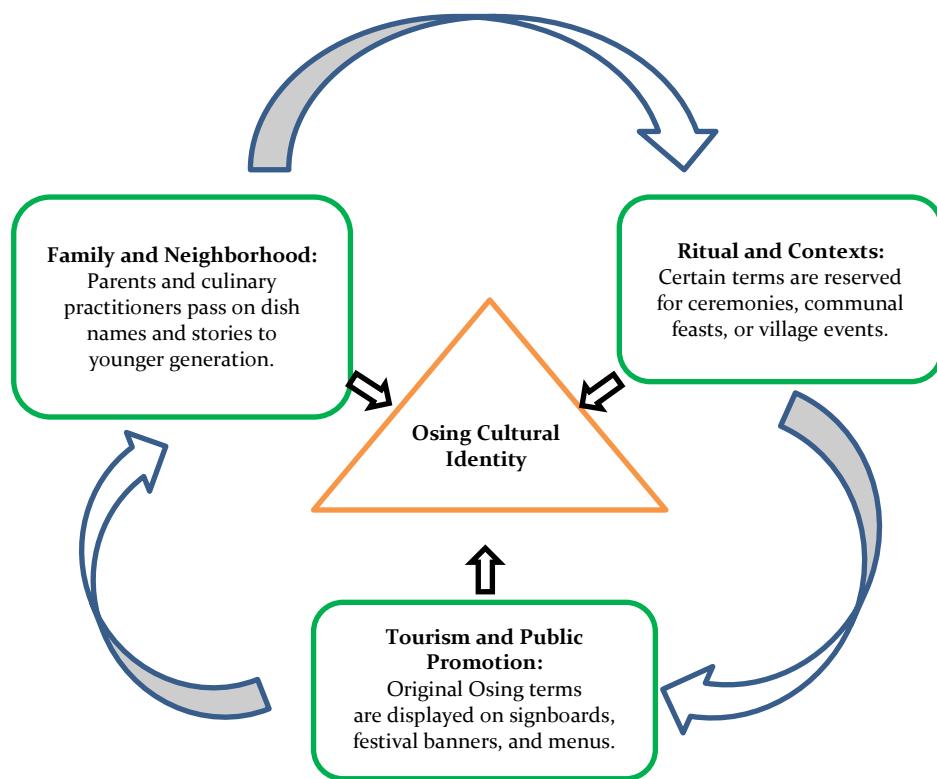


Figure 1. Constructing Osing Cultural Identity Circle

Compared to previous work that mainly describes culinary naming systems in other Indonesian regions, this study goes further by linking the linguistic features of terms to their pragmatic deployment in identity work. The *Osing* data demonstrate that traditional food names are strategically retained even when partially translated or glossed for outsiders, creating a balance between intelligibility and authenticity. This directly answers the stated gap that earlier research rarely integrates fine-grained linguistic analysis with an explicit account of how food terms index ethnic identity under conditions of modernization and tourism pressure. The results underline the practical benefit of viewing culinary lexicon as a concrete entry point for cultural preservation initiatives, local

curriculum design, and culturally grounded tourism strategies that respect and reinforce *Osing* identity.

Discussion

Implications for Heritage and Future Research

The findings of this study have important implications for the preservation of linguistic heritage, particularly in relation to how culinary lexicon functions as an index of ethnic identity. The observed lexical stability of core *Osing* culinary terms such as *Sego Tempong*, *Rujak Soto*, and *Pecel Rawon* demonstrates that food-related language constitutes a resilient domain of cultural transmission. This aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives that view recurring lexical items as symbolic anchors of collective identity, especially in communities facing social and economic change (Barrett, 2003; Rampton, 2024). Similar to Arps' (2009) observations on *Osing* identity expressed through everyday semiotic practices, the persistent use of these culinary terms indicates that language embedded in routine practices—such as cooking, eating, and trading food—plays a crucial role in sustaining ethnic continuity across generations.

From a heritage perspective, the results suggest that documenting and institutionalizing *Osing* culinary terminology can serve as an effective strategy for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The semantic richness and metaphorical creativity found in the names of dishes, particularly those encoding embodied sensory experiences (e.g., *tempong* 'slapped' to describe extreme spiciness), reflect what Heslinga et al. (2017) describe as localized knowledge embedded in cultural practices. This reinforces arguments made in culinary linguistics that food names do not merely label objects but encapsulate ecological awareness, social memory, and cultural values (Yeoman et al., 2015; Cao et al., 2024). Integrating these terms into local-content curricula or community-based learning initiatives could therefore enhance cultural awareness among younger *Osing* generations, echoing calls for culturally grounded education in multilingual and multicultural contexts (Vromans et al., 2023; Barkhoda et al., 2025).

The emergence of hybrid culinary labels in tourism-oriented contexts further highlights the dynamic relationship between heritage preservation and economic adaptation. Rather than indicating linguistic erosion, the combination of *Osing* terms with Indonesian or English descriptors reflects a pragmatic strategy of cultural negotiation. This finding supports previous studies showing that traditional culinary identities can be recontextualized for broader audiences without losing their symbolic core (Pinandoyo et al., 2023; Aryasih et al., 2024). In this sense, Banyuwangi culinary language exemplifies what Nyarota et al. (2022) describe as a balance between safeguarding cultural claims and engaging with

market-driven realities. Maintaining the Osing lexical base in tourism branding thus enhances authenticity while allowing local actors to participate actively in regional and global tourism economies.

Theoretically, this study contributes to sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic research by demonstrating how fine-grained linguistic features—phonological simplicity, morphological compounding, and semantic metaphor—enable culinary terms to function as effective identity markers. Unlike earlier regional studies that focus primarily on naming inventories or cultural symbolism (Turgarini & Abdillah, 2016; Rahmawati & Mulyadi, 2021), this research integrates formal linguistic analysis with pragmatic interpretation, showing how specific linguistic choices facilitate memorability, transmission, and identity indexing. This supports calls for more systematic approaches that connect linguistic structure with social meaning in studies of cultural discourse (Dalal et al., 2022; Proctor & Cormier, 2023).

For future research, several directions emerge. Comparative studies across different Indonesian ethno-linguistic communities could examine whether similar phonological and morphological patterns occur in other regional culinary lexicons and how these patterns relate to identity construction under varying degrees of tourism pressure. Additionally, further research could extend this framework to digital and media discourse, exploring how Osing culinary terms circulate on social media, online menus, or digital storytelling platforms, as suggested by Al Khateeb (2019) and Sui et al. (2025). Such studies would deepen understanding of how traditional culinary language adapts to new communicative spaces while continuing to function as a resource for heritage preservation and cultural visibility.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this article combines linguistic and sociocultural insights to illustrate how Banyuwangi traditional culinary terminology operates as a constantly developed linguistic repertoire, serving to uphold and redefine *Osing* cultural identity. Through phonology, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics, the study reveals a multi-layered relationship that underpins the synchronic and diachronic principles of culinary naming. Cuisine labels, rather than static genealogical symbols, take a stance between tradition and invention, thus allowing speakers to avoid cultural depletion and to correspond with evolutionary societal and economic conditions while upkeeping the initial bond.

Beyond the empirical setting of Banyuwangi, this study makes a broader contribution to the field of culinary linguistics and ethnolinguistics by demonstrating the efficacy of combining descriptive linguistic analysis with

identity-centered interpretation. Methodologically, it represents a replicable way of studying how mundane lexical choices contribute to the making of heritage and the negotiation of public visibility. Substantively, in its emphasis on the ways culinary language intervenes in the relationship between tradition, modernization, and tourism, the study has implications for culturally intrinsic pedagogy and considerations for designing instruction and heritage-conscious marketing. Thus, the framework created can be used in comparative studies of other regions or will be applied to digital discourse about food to shed more light on how the vocabulary of cooking contributes to the building of identity in the modern context.

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