



A CORPUS-ASSISTED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TOBA CULINARY AUTHENTICITY ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstrak

Autentisitas kuliner telah menjadi topik yang banyak dibahas dalam kuliner, namun penelitian yang mengkaji bagaimana autentisitas tersebut dikonstruksi secara linguistik dalam wacana digital, khususnya melalui representasi kuliner Batak Toba berbahasa Inggris di media sosial masih relatif terbatas. Berangkat dari kesenjangan tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji representasi autentisitas kuliner Batak Toba dalam caption Instagram berbahasa Inggris dengan menggunakan perspektif analisis wacana berbantuan korpus. Penelitian ini mengintegrasikan kerangka multidimensi autentisitas dari Johnston dan Baumann (2010) serta Freedman dan Jurafsky (2011) dengan analisis kolokasi dan konkordansi yang mengacu pada Hunston (2002) dan Baker (2006) untuk mengidentifikasi sekaligus menganalisis pola-pola leksikal yang membentuk berbagai dimensi autentisitas meliputi aspek sensorik, prosedural, material, historis, lokalitas, dan fungsi sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif berbantuan korpus dengan memanfaatkan Sketch Engine untuk mengumpulkan dan menganalisis korpus khusus yang terdiri atas 53 caption Instagram (2.527 token) dari dua akun kuliner Batak Toba. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pola-pola kolokasi yang dominan secara konsisten membangun enam dimensi autentisitas tersebut sehingga merepresentasikan kuliner Batak Toba sebagai warisan budaya yang berakar kuat pada tradisi, terus dipelihara, dan memiliki makna sosial bagi masyarakatnya. Analisis menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis Fairclough selanjutnya memperlihatkan bahwa konstruksi leksikal tersebut mengalami proses rekontekstualisasi yang mengubah unsur-unsur kuliner sehari-hari menjadi penanda simbolik identitas dan warisan budaya. Meskipun ukuran korpus yang relatif terbatas membatasi generalisasi temuan, penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai bagaimana pilihan bahasa dalam wacana kuliner digital berperan dalam membangun sekaligus mempertahankan nilai-nilai budaya Batak Toba di ruang digital kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Makanan Batak Toba; Otentisitas; Kolokasi; Korpus

Abstract

Although culinary authenticity has been widely discussed in food studies, limited attention has been paid to how it is linguistically constructed in digital discourse, particularly in English-language social media representations of Batak Toba cuisine. This study examines how the culinary authenticity of Batak Toba cuisine is represented in English-language Instagram captions from a corpus-assisted discourse perspective. Drawing on the multidimensional authenticity frameworks of Johnston and Baumann (2010) and Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), together with collocation and concordance analysis informed by Hunston (2002) and Baker (2006), the study investigates how lexical patterns construct sensory, procedural, historical, material, locality, and social dimensions of authenticity. Employing a descriptive qualitative design with corpus-assisted methods, the study analyses a specialised corpus comprising 53 Instagram captions (2,527 tokens) collected from two Batak Toba culinary Instagram accounts using *Sketch Engine*. The findings indicate that recurrent collocational patterns consistently construct six interrelated dimensions of culinary authenticity, framing Batak Toba cuisine as culturally rooted, traditionally preserved, and socially meaningful. Further analysis using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis demonstrates that these lexical patterns are recontextualized to transform everyday culinary practices into symbolic representations of cultural heritage and identity. While the relatively small specialised corpus limits the generalisability of the findings, it provides an in-depth account of how linguistic choices in digital food discourse contribute to the construction and maintenance of Batak Toba cultural values in contemporary online spaces.

Keywords: Batak Toba Cuisine; Authenticity; Collocation; Corpus

1. Introduction

Toba cuisine represents one of Indonesia's distinctive culinary traditions, reflecting indigenous knowledge, cultural identity, and local heritage that have been transmitted across generations. Traditional dishes such as *arsik*, *naniura*, *saksang*, and *dali ni horbo* are not merely consumed as food but also embody historical narratives, social values, ritual practices, and communal identity within *Toba* society (Sitinjak et al., 2025). In recent years, however, the promotion of these traditional foods has increasingly shifted from face-to-face interaction to digital platforms, particularly Instagram, where culinary experiences are communicated through photographs accompanied by short promotional captions. This transformation has expanded the role of language beyond describing food to constructing cultural meanings and persuading potential consumers. Consequently, culinary authenticity has become a central issue in digital food communication, as traditional cuisines are continuously represented, interpreted, and negotiated through online discourse.

From a linguistic perspective, food is not merely a biological necessity but also a semiotic resource through which cultural meanings are produced and communicated. Saussure's theory of signs explains that linguistic expressions derive meaning through the relationship between the signifier and the signified (Joseph, 2022). Applied to food discourse, names, descriptions, and evaluative expressions signify not only physical dishes but also broader concepts such as locality, tradition, identity, and belonging. Similarly, Barthes (1961) conceptualized food as a communicative system that conveys cultural codes, while Bourdieu (1984) argued that culinary practices function as markers of social distinction and cultural

capital. These perspectives suggest that language constructs symbolic meanings around food that extend beyond its nutritional function, allowing culinary products to communicate cultural values, collective identity, and social positioning (Reddy & Van Dam, 2020; Patra, 2024; Kartheeswari, 2025).

The role of language has become increasingly significant with the rapid expansion of digital media and online culinary promotion. In Indonesia, digitalization has transformed the culinary industry by enabling businesses to reach broader audiences through social media and electronic commerce (Maulana, 2024; Suryani et al., 2025). According to Kompas.id (2024), citing data from Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), approximately 71.74% of food and beverage enterprises had adopted online media for promotional purposes in 2020. This development indicates that culinary marketing is increasingly mediated by language, where captions, hashtags, and promotional narratives function not only to advertise products but also to communicate cultural authenticity and establish emotional connections with consumers. Rather than presenting food solely as a commodity, digital discourse frames culinary products as representations of heritage, locality, and cultural experience.

Within this digital environment, authenticity has evolved from being regarded as a fixed characteristic derived from geographical origin or inherited recipes into a discursively negotiated phenomenon. Previous studies have demonstrated that authenticity is continually constructed through linguistic choices, evaluative expressions, and narrative strategies that respond to market expectations and audience engagement (Widjanarko et al., 2024; Pini, 2025; Ramirez, 2025). Promotional captions on Instagram, for example, frequently employ lexical choices associated with tradition, freshness, locality, craftsmanship, and family heritage to create impressions of genuine cultural experience. Consequently, authenticity is not simply an inherent property of food itself but a communicative achievement that emerges through discourse. Understanding how these linguistic resources operate is therefore essential for explaining how traditional cuisines are represented and valued within contemporary digital environments.

Although relationships among food, language, and culture have received increasing scholarly attention, existing studies have not adequately explained how culinary authenticity is linguistically constructed in digital discourse. Roy (2020) examined authenticity and glocalization in Tripura's digital food culture but focused primarily on cultural hybridity rather than the linguistic realization of authenticity. Ulfiana et al. (2025) investigated Banyuwangi culinary lexicons, while Sitinjak et al. (2025) explored Batak Toba culinary vocabulary from a cultural semantic perspective. Both studies successfully documented cultural meanings

embedded in culinary terminology but treated language primarily as a repository of cultural knowledge rather than as a dynamic resource for constructing authenticity in digital communication. Meanwhile, Kheovichai (2025) employed corpus linguistic techniques to investigate metaphors of consumption in English but did not extend the analysis to authenticity or regional culinary promotion. Collectively, these studies demonstrate growing scholarly interest in food discourse while also revealing several important limitations.

Four interconnected research gaps can be identified from the existing literature. First, empirical research examining naturally occurring linguistic data from digital culinary promotion remains limited, particularly studies based on English-language promotional texts published on social media. Second, authenticity continues to be predominantly conceptualized as a stable sociocultural attribute rather than as a discursively constructed phenomenon emerging through language use. Third, corpus-assisted approaches remain underutilized in food discourse research, limiting systematic identification of recurring lexical and collocational patterns through which authenticity is constructed. Finally, Indonesian regional cuisines, particularly Batak Toba cuisine, remain substantially underrepresented within corpus-assisted investigations of digital food discourse despite their increasing visibility on social media platforms. These gaps highlight the need for an integrated linguistic approach capable of examining both recurring lexical patterns and their broader discursive functions.

To address these gaps, this study investigates how culinary authenticity is represented in English-language Instagram captions promoting Batak Toba cuisine by integrating Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis with multidimensional authenticity frameworks proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), complemented by Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions (1) How is culinary authenticity linguistically represented in English-language Instagram captions promoting Batak Toba cuisine? (2) How do these linguistic representations construct and recontextualize Batak Toba culinary authenticity in digital food discourse?

By answering these questions, the study contributes empirically by analysing authentic English-language Instagram captions promoting Batak Toba cuisine, methodologically by demonstrating the value of integrating corpus linguistics with critical discourse analysis in food discourse research, and theoretically by conceptualizing culinary authenticity as a dynamic discursive construction rather than a fixed cultural attribute. In doing so, the study extends current discussions of digital food communication while offering new insights into how local

culinary identities are constructed, negotiated, and sustained through language in contemporary online spaces.

2. Literature Review

Food is increasingly understood not only as a source of nourishment but also as a semiotic resource through which cultural meanings, social identities, and collective memories are communicated. Rather than residing in food itself, these meanings are constructed through language, allowing culinary practices to signify values that extend beyond their material functions. Consequently, food discourse becomes an important site where culture is represented, negotiated, and reproduced.

This perspective is grounded in Saussure's theory of signs, which explains that meaning emerges from the relationship between the **signifier** (the linguistic form) and the **signified** (the concept it evokes) (Saussure, 2011). As Joseph (2022) argues, this semiotic relationship enables everyday objects, including food, to communicate broader social and cultural meanings. Extending this view, Barthes (1961) conceptualizes food as a cultural sign system through which ideology and identity are expressed, while Bourdieu (1984) demonstrates that culinary practices also function as markers of cultural capital and social distinction. Together, these perspectives suggest that language does not simply describe food but actively constructs meanings associated with tradition, locality, heritage, and belonging. This argument is further supported by recent studies showing that food-related expressions encode cultural values that shape how cuisines are perceived and experienced across different communicative contexts (Reddy & Van Dam, 2020; Patra, 2024; Kartheeswari, 2025).

Viewing food as a semiotic resource provides the conceptual foundation for the present study. If language constructs the cultural meanings attached to food, then culinary authenticity should likewise be understood as a meaning that is discursively produced rather than an intrinsic characteristic of a dish. This perspective shifts the focus from asking whether food is authentic to examining how authenticity is linguistically represented. Building on this semiotic foundation, the following section conceptualizes culinary authenticity as a multidimensional construct and identifies the linguistic dimensions that guide the analysis of Batak Toba culinary discourse in digital communication. Building on the semiotic perspective discussed above, culinary authenticity is understood in this study as a meaning that is discursively constructed rather than an inherent characteristic of food. In digital culinary communication, authenticity is negotiated through language that associates food with particular cultural values, traditions,

and places. It is therefore viewed as a multidimensional construct emerging from the interaction between language, culture, and social practice.

Among the existing conceptualizations, Johnston and Baumann (2010) offer a comprehensive framework by proposing that authenticity is communicated through dimensions such as cultural heritage, geographic locality, ingredient specificity, traditional preparation methods, sensory qualities, and communal value. Complementing this perspective, Freedman and Jurafsky (2011) demonstrate that these dimensions are linguistically realized through recurring lexical choices related to naturalness, production processes, historicity, and locality. Likewise, Grubor (2021) argues that authenticity encompasses both tangible attributes, including origin and production methods, and intangible values such as sincerity and emotional resonance. Collectively, these studies suggest that authenticity is not an objective property of food but a discursive meaning constructed through language. Drawing on these perspectives, the present study adopts the multidimensional authenticity framework of Johnston and Baumann (2010) as the primary analytical categories, while the linguistic insights of Freedman and Jurafsky (2011) guide the identification of authenticity-related lexical features in the corpus. However, these frameworks do not provide a systematic procedure for identifying how authenticity is realized across naturally occurring texts. This limitation highlights the need for a corpus-assisted approach capable of uncovering recurring lexical and collocational patterns in digital culinary discourse.

The multidimensional concept of culinary authenticity requires an analytical approach capable of identifying how authenticity is linguistically realized in naturally occurring discourse. Corpus linguistics provides such a methodological foundation by systematically revealing recurring lexical patterns across a collection of texts. Rather than relying solely on intuitive interpretation, corpus-assisted analysis enables authenticity to be examined through observable linguistic evidence. Within corpus linguistics, collocation and concordance constitute two complementary analytical techniques. Hunston (2002) argues that collocations reveal habitual lexical associations that characterize how particular concepts are represented within a discourse community. Recurrent collocational patterns therefore indicate the linguistic preferences through which meanings are consistently constructed. Concordance analysis complements this process by examining the immediate textual contexts in which these lexical items occur, enabling researchers to interpret how meanings are activated, reinforced, and contextualized across the corpus. Together, collocation identifies recurring patterns, while concordance explains how those patterns function within discourse.

Building on Hunston's work, Baker (2006) emphasizes that corpus analysis should not be viewed as an end in itself but as a means of supporting qualitative discourse interpretation. In the present study, collocational patterns and concordance evidence provide empirical indicators of the authenticity dimensions proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and the linguistic realizations identified by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011). Accordingly, corpus analysis serves as the empirical bridge between the conceptual framework of culinary authenticity and its interpretation in discourse. Nevertheless, while corpus techniques reveal recurring linguistic patterns, they do not by themselves explain the broader cultural and ideological meanings associated with those patterns. This limitation necessitates a critical discourse perspective to interpret how authenticity is discursively constructed within digital culinary communication. While corpus linguistics provides empirical evidence of recurring lexical and collocational patterns, it does not by itself explain how these patterns acquire broader cultural and ideological significance. To address this limitation, the present study adopts Fairclough's (2006) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interpret how corpus-derived linguistic patterns construct culinary authenticity in digital discourse.

Fairclough conceptualizes discourse as operating simultaneously at three interconnected levels: the textual level, where linguistic features are identified; the discursive practice level, where texts are produced, circulated, and interpreted; and the social practice level, where discourse reflects and reinforces broader cultural ideologies. In the present study, these three dimensions are not treated as separate stages but as an integrated interpretive framework. Lexical patterns identified through collocation and concordance analysis constitute the textual evidence, which is subsequently interpreted through discursive processes such as recontextualization to explain how ordinary culinary descriptions are transformed into representations of tradition, locality, heritage, and cultural identity. These interpretations are then situated within wider social practices that sustain *Toba* culinary identity in contemporary digital communication. Accordingly, the integration of corpus linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis enables the study to move beyond identifying recurring linguistic patterns toward explaining how those patterns discursively construct and recontextualize culinary authenticity. This integrated framework therefore provides a comprehensive basis for examining how Batak Toba cuisine is represented and culturally legitimized through English-language Instagram captions.

3. Research Method

This study adopts a corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach to investigate how Batak Toba culinary authenticity is discursively constructed in English-language Instagram captions. The approach combines corpus-linguistic techniques with qualitative discourse interpretation, enabling recurring linguistic patterns to be identified and subsequently interpreted within their broader sociocultural context. The corpus was compiled from Instagram captions published between January and December 2025. Data were purposively collected from two Instagram accounts, @lapoporsea and @lapo_hitana, because both represent Batak Toba culinary establishments adopting a contemporary fine-dining concept while consistently promoting traditional Batak cuisine through English-language narratives. All English and bilingual (English-Indonesian) promotional captions published during the period were included in the corpus. Captions written entirely in Indonesian were excluded. Prior to analysis, the corpus underwent a cleaning process in which emojis, hashtags, usernames, hyperlinks, and other non-linguistic elements were removed, leaving only the textual content for analysis. The resulting corpus consists of 53 captions comprising 2,527 running words (tokens), which were subsequently processed using Sketch Engine.

The analysis was conducted in four sequential stages. First, lexical frequency analysis was performed to identify predetermined node words relevant to Batak Toba culinary authenticity, including *Batak*, *heritage*, *traditional*, and other authenticity-related lexical items. These node words were selected because they represent the central concepts investigated in the study. Collocation analysis was then conducted using a ± 4 -word span to identify recurrent lexical associations surrounding each node word. Following Hunston (2002), collocations were interpreted as statistically recurring co-occurrences that reveal how particular concepts are habitually represented within the discourse. For example, recurrent combinations such as *Batak heritage*, *Batak spices*, and *traditional flavours* indicate lexical patterns associated with cultural authenticity. Second, the identified collocations were examined through concordance analysis. Following Baker (2006), concordance analysis enables each node word to be interpreted within its immediate textual environment, allowing recurrent lexical patterns to be examined in context rather than in isolation. This stage facilitates the interpretation of evaluative meanings, rhetorical functions, and discursive roles that cannot be identified through collocation analysis alone.

Third, concordance evidence was coded iteratively according to the multidimensional authenticity framework proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and the linguistic realizations identified by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011). Coding was conducted through

repeated comparison between concordance lines and the conceptual definitions of each authenticity dimension until analytical consistency was achieved. This iterative process ensured that authenticity categories were assigned based on contextual linguistic evidence rather than isolated lexical items. Finally, the corpus findings were interpreted using Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework. Collocational patterns and concordance evidence constituted the textual level of analysis, while their broader meanings were interpreted through the discursive process of recontextualization to explain how ordinary culinary descriptions are transformed into representations of tradition, locality, heritage, and Batak Toba cultural identity. These interpretations were subsequently situated within the wider social practices through which digital culinary discourse contributes to the construction and maintenance of Batak Toba culinary authenticity.

4. Results and Discussion

Table of Result Authenticity and Discursive Strategy			
No	Lexicon	Authenticity Dimension	Discursive Strategy
1	Bold Smoky	Sensory	Transformation of sensory experience (descriptor of taste) into cultural value
2	Infused Grilled	Procedural	Transformation of process verbs into cultural markers of Batak culinary heritage
3	Andaliman Coconut	Material	Transformation of ingredients into carriers of cultural memory
4	Heritage Time-Honored	Historical	Transformation of Batak dishes from contemporary foods into cultural artifacts situated within a long-standing temporal lineage
5	Batak Highland	Locality	Transforming landscape and ethnic geography from the territorial domain into the culinary narrative
6	Together	Social	Transforming an expression of general social bonding into a culturally anchored practice associated with Batak locality.

4.1. Sensory Authenticity Dimension: *Smoky*

Among the predetermined node words representing the sensory dimension of culinary authenticity, the node word *smoky* provides recurrent collocational evidence of sensory representation. Using the ± 4 -word collocation span in Sketch Engine, *smoky* co-occurs with sensory nouns such as *aroma*, *flavor*, and *essence*, forming combinations including *smoky aroma*, *smoky flavor*, and *smoky essence* (Captions 1 and 16). These recurrent collocates indicate that *smoky* is primarily associated with sensory perception rather than functioning as an isolated descriptive adjective. Following Hunston (2002), recurrent collocational patterns reveal how lexical meanings become conventionalized through repeated associations. In this analysis, the node word *smoky* indexes sensory qualities that characterize Batak Toba cuisine.

The concordance evidence further clarifies how these collocational patterns operate in context. Expressions such as "*the rising smoky aroma from grilled meat*" and "*a rich smoky flavor*" invite readers to imagine the smell and taste of the dishes rather than merely describing their physical characteristics. As Baker (2006) argues, concordance analysis enables lexical patterns to be interpreted within their immediate textual environments, revealing how meaning is constructed through contextual use. The concordance lines therefore show that *smoky* functions as an experiential cue that evokes vivid sensory impressions of Batak cuisine. These linguistic patterns correspond to the sensory dimension of culinary authenticity proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and supported by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011). Rather than explicitly asserting authenticity, the captions construct it indirectly by foregrounding sensory experiences that appear natural, distinctive, and closely associated with traditional Batak Toba cuisine. Authenticity is therefore represented through experiential language that encourages readers to perceive the dishes as culturally genuine.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the node word *smoky* undergoes a process of recontextualization (Fairclough, 2003). While *smoky* conventionally refers to the aroma or flavour produced by smoke, the Instagram captions reposition it as a linguistic marker of traditional Batak cooking practices. Through its recurrent association with expressions referring to grilling, wood fire, and traditional preparation, *smoky* is transformed from a sensory descriptor into a cultural signifier of indigenous culinary techniques. Consequently, sensory experience is discursively reconstructed as a cultural resource through which the sensory authenticity of Batak Toba cuisine is represented.

4.2. Procedural Authenticity Dimension: *grilled*

The node word *grilled* represents the procedural dimension of culinary authenticity by foregrounding traditional methods of food preparation. Using the ± 4 -word collocation span in Sketch Engine, *grilled* recurrently co-occurs with expressions such as *grilled coconut* (Caption 7), *grilled dishes* (Caption 13), and *grilled over an open wood fire* (Caption 16). Rather than simply describing the finished dishes, these collocational patterns consistently emphasize the process through which Batak cuisine is prepared. Following Hunston (2002), recurrent collocations reveal how procedural meanings are constructed through habitual lexical associations. In this case, *grilled* is repeatedly linked to manual preparation and fire-based cooking techniques that characterize traditional Batak culinary practice.

The concordance lines further demonstrate that the procedural meaning of *grilled* is strengthened by its surrounding textual context. For example, the expression "*grilled over an open wood fire*" foregrounds the preparation process rather than the sensory qualities of the dish, directing readers' attention to the traditional technique itself. As Baker (2006) argues, concordance analysis enables lexical patterns to be interpreted within their immediate textual environments, revealing how contextual usage contributes to meaning construction. The concordance evidence therefore suggests that traditional cooking procedures are presented as an essential feature of the culinary experience.

These linguistic patterns correspond to the procedural dimension of culinary authenticity proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and supported by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), who argue that authenticity is frequently constructed through references to inherited preparation techniques. In the present analysis, *grilled* functions as a linguistic marker of traditional culinary practice by highlighting wood-fire cooking and manual preparation instead of modern industrial methods. Authenticity is therefore represented through culturally recognized procedures rather than through explicit claims of tradition.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the node word *grilled* undergoes a process of recontextualization (Fairclough, 2003). While the term conventionally denotes a cooking technique, the Instagram captions reposition it as a cultural signifier of Batak culinary practice. Through its recurrent association with wood fire, traditional ingredients, and Batak dishes, *grilled* is transformed from a technical cooking verb into a linguistic resource that discursively constructs procedural authenticity and reinforces the continuity of traditional culinary knowledge in contemporary digital food discourse.

4.3. Material Authenticity: *Andaliman*

The material dimension of culinary authenticity is primarily represented by the node word *andaliman*, a distinctive indigenous spice that has long been associated with Batak Toba cuisine (Turnip et al., 2023). As one of the predetermined node words, *andaliman* was examined using the ± 4 -word collocation span in *Sketch Engine* to explore how ingredient-based authenticity is linguistically constructed in the corpus. The collocation analysis indicates that *andaliman* recurrently co-occurs with lexical items such as *Batak spices*, *bold aroma*, and *hint of andaliman* (Captions 8, 16, and 22). These collocational patterns consistently foreground *andaliman* as an essential ingredient rather than a supplementary seasoning. Following Hunston (2002), recurrent collocations reveal how lexical meanings are shaped through habitual patterns of co-occurrence. In this analysis, the repeated association of *andaliman* with flavour descriptions and references to Batak spices reinforces its role as a defining ingredient of Batak culinary practice.

The concordance evidence further illustrates how *andaliman* functions within its immediate textual contexts. Expressions such as "*Andaliman, the prized Batak pepper, is at the heart of our cuisine*" (Caption 2), "*the rare warmth of andaliman pepper*" (Caption 33), and "*andaliman pepper... creates a bright, bold flavour*" (Caption 55) consistently present *andaliman* as the defining element of the dishes being promoted. Rather than merely identifying an ingredient, these concordance lines position *andaliman* as the culinary feature through which Batak dishes are distinguished. As Baker (2006) suggests, concordance analysis enables recurring lexical patterns to be interpreted within their immediate textual environments, revealing how contextual use contributes to broader discourse meanings. These findings align with the material dimension of culinary authenticity proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and supported by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), which emphasizes the role of distinctive ingredients in communicating authenticity. Instead of explicitly asserting that the dishes are authentic, the captions repeatedly foreground *andaliman* as the ingredient that differentiates Batak cuisine from other culinary traditions and reinforces its distinctive culinary identity.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the node word *andaliman* undergoes a process of recontextualization (Fairclough, 2003). Although it ordinarily denotes a culinary spice, the Instagram captions reposition *andaliman* as a cultural signifier of Batak cuisine. Through its recurrent association with traditional dishes and positive

evaluative expressions, *andaliman* is transformed from a cooking ingredient into a linguistic resource that discursively constructs the material authenticity of Batak Toba culinary culture.

4.4. Historical Authenticity: *Heritage and Time-honored*

Historical continuity in Batak Toba culinary discourse is linguistically represented through the predetermined node words *heritage* and *time-honored*. Both lexical items were examined using the ± 4 -word collocation span in Sketch Engine to investigate how references to the past contribute to the construction of culinary authenticity. Rather than functioning as simple historical descriptors, these node words position Batak dishes within a tradition of inherited culinary knowledge that extends across generations. The collocation analysis identifies recurring combinations of *heritage*, including *rich heritage*, *a taste of heritage*, and *the richness of our heritage* (Captions 4, 48, and 56), while *time-honored* appears in expressions such as *time-honored traditions* (Caption 28). These collocational patterns consistently associate Batak cuisine with cultural continuity, ancestral knowledge, and enduring culinary practices. Following Hunston (2002), habitual lexical associations reveal how historical meanings become conventionalized within discourse through repeated contextual use.

The concordance evidence strengthens this interpretation. Expressions such as "*a taste of heritage*", "*a Batak Toba heritage dish*", and "*capturing the essence of Batak heritage*" portray food as a medium through which cultural inheritance is preserved and experienced. Likewise, the expression "*honor time-honored traditions while offering a dining experience*" frames traditional culinary practices as enduring values that continue to shape contemporary food preparation. As Baker (2006) explains, concordance analysis enables these lexical patterns to be interpreted within their immediate textual environments, revealing how both *heritage* and *time-honored* function as linguistic resources that connect present culinary experiences with the cultural past. These linguistic patterns correspond to the historical dimension of culinary authenticity proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and supported by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), which conceptualizes authenticity as being grounded in inherited knowledge, cultural continuity, and intergenerational transmission. Instead of explicitly claiming historical legitimacy, the captions construct authenticity by repeatedly representing Batak dishes as products of traditions that have been maintained and transmitted over time.

Viewed through the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, both node words undergo a process of recontextualization (Fairclough, 2003). While *heritage* and *time-honored* conventionally refer to cultural inheritance and temporal continuity, the Instagram captions reposition them as symbolic resources that legitimize Batak cuisine by linking contemporary dishes to ancestral culinary traditions. Through their recurrent association with recipes, flavours, and traditional practices, these lexical items transform historical continuity into a discursive resource that constructs the historical authenticity of Batak Toba cuisine.

4.5. Locality Authenticity: *Batak*

The predetermined node word *Batak* serves as the primary linguistic resource for representing locality authenticity in the corpus. Examined using the ± 4 -word collocation span in Sketch Engine, the node word reveals how references to place are systematically embedded in the linguistic representation of Batak Toba cuisine. Rather than functioning solely as an ethnonym, *Batak* repeatedly anchors culinary descriptions to a recognizable geographical and cultural setting. The collocation analysis shows that *Batak* frequently co-occurs with expressions such as *Batak cuisine* (Captions 2, 10, 12, 34, and 55), *Batak culture* (Captions 5, 6, 7, 12, and 16), *Batak flavors* (Captions 4, 26, 41, 42, 48, and 53), and *Batak culinary tradition* (Captions 3, 4, 7, 25, and 28). These collocational patterns consistently associate food with a specific geographical and cultural origin. Following Hunston (2002), habitual lexical co-occurrences reveal how meanings become conventionalized through repeated discourse practices. In this analysis, *Batak* functions as a place-indexing modifier that locates dishes, flavours, and culinary traditions within the cultural landscape of North Sumatra.

The concordance evidence further clarifies this locality function. Expressions such as "*Batak culinary tradition is renowned for its bold and adventurous flavors*" and "*In Batak culture, every meal begins with a comforting bowl of Sop Babi*" consistently portray food as inseparable from its place of origin. Rather than merely identifying an ethnic community, these concordance lines position Batak cuisine within a culturally recognizable geographical context. As Baker (2006) notes, concordance analysis enables lexical patterns to be interpreted within their immediate textual environments, revealing how locality is constructed through contextual linguistic evidence. These findings align with the locality dimension of culinary authenticity proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and supported by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), in which authenticity is established by

explicitly linking food to its geographical origin. Instead of directly asserting authenticity, the captions repeatedly associate dishes, ingredients, and culinary practices with *Batak*, allowing locality itself to function as evidence of authenticity.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the node word *Batak* undergoes a process of recontextualization (Fairclough, 2003). Although the term conventionally refers to an ethnic community, the Instagram captions reposition it as a culinary signifier that authenticates food through locality. Through its repeated association with dishes, flavours, culinary traditions, and cultural practices, *Batak* is transformed from an ethnocultural label into a linguistic resource that discursively constructs the locality authenticity of Batak Toba cuisine.

4.6. Social Authenticity Dimension: *together*

Community-based authenticity is linguistically represented through the predetermined node word *together*, which was analysed using the ± 4 -word collocation span in Sketch Engine. The analysis indicates that *together* extends beyond its ordinary interpersonal meaning to construct food as a shared cultural experience embedded in Batak Toba social life. The collocation analysis identifies recurrent combinations such as *bring people together* (Caption 1) and *a feast worth sharing together* (Caption 41). Rather than simply expressing collective presence, these collocational patterns associate food with communal participation, social interaction, and shared celebration. Following Hunston (2002), habitual lexical co-occurrences reveal how meanings become conventionalized through repeated discourse practices. In this context, the node word *together* functions as a linguistic resource that foregrounds communal dining as an integral component of Batak culinary culture.

The concordance evidence further illustrates this social function. The expression "*...it's a ritual that brings people together*" (Caption 1) presents communal dining as a cultural practice that strengthens interpersonal relationships rather than merely fulfilling nutritional needs. Similarly, the phrase "*a feast brings together the bold essence of Batak flavors*" (Caption 41) represents food as a medium through which people, traditions, and cultural values are collectively experienced. As Baker (2006) explains, concordance analysis enables lexical patterns to be interpreted within their immediate textual environments, revealing how *together* consistently frames Batak cuisine as a communal rather than individual experience. These linguistic patterns correspond to the social dimension of culinary authenticity proposed by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and

supported by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), both of whom emphasize the importance of shared cultural practices and community participation in constructing authenticity. Rather than portraying food solely as a culinary product, the captions repeatedly frame authenticity through narratives of gathering, sharing, and collective dining, demonstrating that Batak cuisine derives its authenticity not only from ingredients and preparation techniques but also from the social relationships enacted around food.

Viewed through the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the node word *together* undergoes a process of recontextualization (Fairclough, 2003). While the term conventionally denotes collective presence, the Instagram captions reposition it as a cultural signifier of Batak communal values. Through its association with rituals, feasts, and shared dining experiences, *together* is transformed from an ordinary interpersonal expression into a linguistic resource that discursively constructs the social authenticity of Batak Toba cuisine.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analyses conducted, this research shows that the English language Instagram captions featuring Batak Toba cuisine construct a complex representation of culinary authenticity through patterned lexical choices that reflect cultural values and identity. Through the application of authenticity frameworks by Johnston and Baumann (2010) and Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), supported by collocation and concordance analysis informed by Hunston (2002) and Baker (2006), the dimension of food authenticity can be systematically interpreted. The analysis identifies a network of recurrent lexical patterns which were mapped into six dimensions of authenticity namely sensory, procedural, material, historical, locality, and social. These linguistic patterns are not merely descriptive; rather, they function as discursive tools shaping how Batak Toba cuisine is valued, legitimized, and culturally positioned in digital spaces. In addition, the captions function as culturally rooted discourse that presents traditional culinary knowledge in a modern online setting, allowing this knowledge to be shared as heritage and strengthening a sense of collective Batak identity among digital audiences.

Therefore, by situating the Instagram captions within a corpus assisted discourse framework, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how digital platforms participate in constructing local cultural paradigms. Moreover, it addresses a gap in previous literature by offering a detailed lexical and discursive mapping of authenticity in Batak Toba culinary representation. Ultimately, this research affirms that linguistic choices in digital food

discourse play a crucial role in constructing, preserving, and communicating Batak cultural identity in contemporary online environments.

However, this study remains limited in terms of corpus size and contextual scope. The dataset is restricted to selected Instagram accounts, potentially excluding other linguistic variations found across broader digital platforms or offline culinary narratives. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to expand this study by incorporating multimodal analysis of images, layout, and hashtags, comparing culinary authenticity constructions across other Batak subgroups such as *Karo*, *Mandailing*, and *Simalungun*, integrating ethnographic or interview based methods, and examining how audiences interpret these representations. Such approaches would deepen the understanding of how authenticity functions not only as a linguistic construction but also as a lived cultural practice embedded in everyday culinary experience, community identity, and heritage transmission.

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