

## Revealing Unique Food Names On Tiktok: Word Formation Analysis

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses pembentukan kata (*Word Formation Process*) dari nama-nama makanan yang unik di *TikTok*, menggunakan teori *The Saussurean Sign* oleh Saussure (1969) sebagai dasar teori. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan menganalisis data dari berbagai unggahan *TikTok* yang tersebar luas di halaman para penggunanya. Temuan menunjukkan tiga puluh nama makanan unik yang menggunakan empat proses utama pembentukan kata: *blending*, *compounding*, *folk-etymology/borrowing*, dan *clipping*. Selain itu, ada beberapa nama makanan yang dihasilkan dari beberapa proses pembentukan kata. Penelitian ini menyoroti faktor-faktor semantik yang mempengaruhi pembentukan kata, menunjukkan kreativitas dan adaptabilitas bahasa dalam menanggapi tren kuliner dan keragaman budaya. Memahami proses-proses ini sangat penting untuk pemasaran dan branding kuliner, menekankan pentingnya nama-nama yang unik dan menarik untuk menarik konsumen pada produk makanan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Proses Pembentukan Kata, Nama Makanan, TikTok*

### Abstract

This study aims to reveal the word formation processes of food names that have gone famous on *TikTok*, utilizing Saussure's sign theory (1969) as a theoretical framework. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the research analyzes data from various *TikTok* posts widely spread and known on *TikTok* users' pages. The findings reveal thirty unique food names using four primary word formation processes: *blending*, *compounding*, *folk-etymology/borrowing*, and *clipping*. Additionally, some food names result from multiple word-formation processes. This research highlights the semantic factors influencing word formation, demonstrating the creativity and adaptability of language in response to culinary trends and cultural diversity. Understanding these processes is crucial for culinary marketing and branding, underscoring the importance of unique and appealing names to attract consumers to food products.

**Keywords:** *Word Formation Process, Food Names, TikTok*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media platforms have significantly influenced various aspects of daily life, including culinary trends. Among these platforms, *TikTok* has emerged as a dominant force, shaping how food is perceived, shared, and discussed globally. The app's unique format, which encourages short, engaging videos, has led to the rapid dissemination and popularization of numerous food trends. Central to this phenomenon is the creation of unique and catchy food names, which play a crucial role in the widespread appeal of these trends.

The power of a name in capturing attention and conveying cultural significance cannot be overstated. Unique food names often encapsulate the essence of the dish, its ingredients, or its cultural roots, making them not just identifiers but also vehicles of storytelling and marketing. These names are crafted through various word formation processes, which reflect the linguistic creativity and cultural influences of their creators.

There are three previous studies related to this topic. Pillai et al. (2014) analyzed word formation in the context of food and drink, aiming to provide updated information on the most productive word formation processes in English within this semantic field. The study identified 186 new terms found on the internet, categorizing them into eight types of word formation processes. However, 95 of these terms were deemed irrelevant and discarded. The researchers offered a descriptive analysis of each selected word formation term. The present study shares similarities with this research in that both examine the English word formation processes used for food names. The key difference is that while the previous study utilized the internet broadly, the present study focuses specifically on the platform *TikTok*.

The second prior study is an article by Karpova (2019), which examines the structural and semantic characteristics of food-related words in modern English. This research focuses on analyzing various word

formation processes, particularly in the context of urban culinary concepts and related fields. The findings highlight that blending is the most frequently used and productive word formation process. Both Karpova's study and the present research investigate semantic opacity through word formation in the culinary domain, where new food and drink terms are created. However, a key difference is that this study employs theories by Enikeyeva (2011), Levytskyi and Sheludko (2009), Plag (2018), and Senkiv (2016), whereas the present study relies solely on Saussure's (1969) theory of word formation.

The last previous study relevant research on food-related word formation was conducted by Navruzbek (2023), focusing on the lexico-grammatical aspects of newly coined words in the food-related lexicon. This study utilized Cannon's (2009) theory on word formation in linguistic fields. The study identified numerous newly coined and pre-existing language collocations, classifying them into three types: nouns (such as "food"), adjectives, and derivatives. Both Navruzbek's study and the present research discuss English word formation in food-related contexts. However, this study covers a broader culinary sphere, while the present research specifically targets food names. Additionally, this research focuses on the creation of new words and their emergence in modern society, whereas the present study examines how the word formation phenomena of food names influence consumer perceptions of the products.

Despite the apparent importance of these food names in social media, academic research on this topic remains limited. Most studies have focused on broader aspects of social media trends or specific culinary phenomena without delving deeply into the linguistic processes behind the uniqueness of the food names. This gap in research presents an opportunity to explore how these names are formed and what factors contribute to their success.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the word formation processes of unique food names that are found on *TikTok*. By applying Saussure's sign theory (1969), this research seeks to uncover the semantic and cultural factors influencing these processes. Understanding these elements is not only academically interesting but also practically valuable for those in the culinary industry. Effective naming can enhance marketing efforts and brand identity, making this study relevant for chefs, marketers, and social media influencers alike.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Saussure (1969), the signifier and signified concepts form the cornerstone of modern linguistics and semiotics. In his seminal work "Course in General

Linguistics" (1916), Saussure introduced the idea that a linguistic sign is composed of the signifier (the form of the word, whether spoken or written) and the signified (the concept it represents). He proposed that the relationship between these two components is arbitrary and that meaning arises from a system of differences within a language. This foundational theory offers deep insights into how new words are created and how they come to convey meaning.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) explain that word formation involves creating new lexical bases and complex word structures from multiple morphological elements, expanding the lexical inventory beyond mere inflectional changes. There are eight primary word-formation patterns in English: zero-derivation, blending, compounding, affixation, folk etymology, clipping, acronyms, and backformation.

Zero-derivation, or conversion, is where a word changes grammatical category without adding affixes, such as the noun "butter" becoming the verb "to butter" (Saussure, 1969; Yule, 1985). Blending merges parts of two existing words to form a new term like "brunch" from "breakfast" and "lunch" (Saussure, 1969; Leher, 2007; Quirk et al., 1973).

Compounding combines two or more bases into a single word, such as "popcorn" (Saussure, 1969; Yule, 1985). Affixation adds prefixes or suffixes to a base word, altering its class or meaning, as seen in "malnutrition" and "creamy" (Saussure, 1969; Crystal, 2003; Quirk et al., 1973). Folk etymology, or borrowing, adopts terms from other languages, like "asparagus" from Latin "sparrow grass" (Saussure, 1969).

Clipping shortens a multi-syllable word while retaining its meaning, such as "fries" from "French fried potatoes" (Yule, 1985; Saussure, 1969). Acronyms use the first letters of words to create new terms, like "BBQ" for "barbecue" (Saussure, 1969).

Backformation creates new words by removing affixes from existing ones, such as "bottle-feeding" from "bottle" (Saussure, 1969). This literature review explores how Saussure's concepts inform various word formation processes in linguistics, examining their relevance to morphological phenomena like derivation, compounding, and blending through scholarly discussions and empirical research.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The descriptive qualitative research method is ideal for this study as it provides a detailed exploration of the complex processes behind the creation of unique food names on *TikTok*. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of semantic and cultural factors influencing word formation, capturing contemporary trends and new

linguistic phenomena. By analyzing *TikTok* posts, the method enables a rich, descriptive account of various word formation processes, such as blending and compounding, and offers flexibility in interpreting new findings. Additionally, it supports the application of Saussure's theory of word formation to develop theoretical insights and understand how food names affect consumer perceptions. This method is essential for uncovering how these names are crafted and why they become popular, making it a suitable choice for this research.

The research is conducted on the *TikTok* app, focusing on words and phrases from posts about unique food names. Data is collected from various *TikTok* accounts that highlight popular food names. The documentation method, as proposed by Litoseliti (2010), is used for data collection. The data analysis process comprises three stages: data condensation to select and summarize relevant content, data display to organize the data for examination, and conclusion drawing to interpret the findings through the theoretical framework.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research collected data from *TikTok* content featuring unique food names. The research focused on the formation of new words, analyzing these terms to identify the specific types of word formation processes used. To accurately determine the word-formation methods for these new terms, a detailed examination of word-formation processes was employed. Based on the data, four of the word formation process.

### Result

This study was carried out by collecting data from *TikTok* material that included unique food names that became famous on *TikTok*. The process involves the development of new words. The new words or data were classified according to the sorts of word production processes. A word-formation technique determined the nature of word development of those new terms.

Ferdinand de Saussure established the Saussurean sign theory (quoted in Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011), which emphasizes the link between signs and their meanings. The Saussurean sign theory is especially useful in examining *TikTok* food names since it helps us comprehend the word formation processes that lead to these names.

### 1. Blending

The primary word formation process that are found for unique food names on *TikTok* is blending, resulting in eight unique food names. The process is as follows.

Table 1. Blending process of the food names

Data No.	Blending	Process	
		Base 1	Base 2
1.	Boucake	Bouquet	Cake
2.	Cakesicle	Cake	Popsicle
3.	Croipat	Croissant	Ketupat
4.	Cromboloni	Croissant	Bomboloni
5.	Cronut	Croissant	Donut
6.	Tacoshi	Taco	Sushi
7.	Tunacado	Tuna	Avocado
8.	Watertok	Water	<i>TikTok</i>

In examining the blending process in *TikTok* food names, it is evident that this word-formation technique involves merging two distinct base words into a single term by partially omitting elements of each word. This approach aligns with Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign, as outlined by Aronoff and Fudeman (2011), which posits that a sign consists of a *signifier* (the word's form) and a *signified* (the concept it represents). According to Saussurean theory, blending creates new meanings by fusing parts of existing words. For example, "Boucake" is a blend of "bouquet" (with the end portion "quet" omitted) and "cake", signifying a cake designed to resemble a bouquet of flowers. Similarly, "Cakesicle" combines "cake" and "popsicle" (with the beginning "pop" omitted), representing a cake shaped like a popsicle.

"Croipat" merges "croissant" (with the end part "issant" omitted) and "pat", indicating a croissant served like a *ketupat*. "Cromboloni" blends "croissant" (with the end part "issant" omitted) and "boloni", referring to a hybrid pastry that combines elements of croissant and bomboloni. "Cronut" signifies a pastry that combines the features of a croissant and a doughnut, created from "croissant" (with "issant" omitted) and "doughnut (with "dough" omitted).

"Tacoshi" blends "taco" and "sushi" (with "su" omitted), representing a fusion dish that merges the concepts of taco and sushi. "Tunacado" signifies a dish made from "tuna" and "avocado"(with "avo" omitted), combining the two ingredients. Lastly, "Watertok" combines "water" and "*TikTok*" (with "Tik" omitted), signifying a popular water-based drink trend on *TikTok*. These examples demonstrate Saussure's idea that linguistic signs are formed through the relationships and differences between the signifier and the signified, showing how new, meaningful terms are generated through the blending of existing words.

### 2. Compounding

The second most common word formation process for food names on *TikTok* is compounding, which involves merging two or more base words to

create a new term. This method is quite popular, accounting for the majority of instances. According to Saussure (1969, as referenced in Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011), compounding combines two distinct words to form a new word with a unified meaning. Unlike blending, where at least one part of the word is shortened, compounding keeps both elements intact. This method is frequently used, as evidenced by the creation of 20 names through this process.

Table 2. Compounding process of the food names

No.	Compounding	Process	
		Base 1	Base 2
1.	<i>Bento Cake</i>	Bento	Cake
2.	Bubble Potatoes	Bubble	Potatoes
3.	Cloud Bread	Cloud	Bread
4.	Cookie Bomb	Cookie	Bomb
5.	Cowboy Candy	Cowboy	Candy
6.	Crab Rangoon	Crab	Rangoon
7.	Daifuku Mochi	Daifuku	Mochi
8.	Dalgona Coffee	Dalgona	Coffee
9.	Dessert Box	Dessert	Box
10.	Fruit Sando	Fruit	Sando
11.	Girl Dinner	Girl	Dinner
12.	Lemon Possets	Lemon	Possets
13.	Mochi Bites	Mochi	Bites
14.	Pancake Cereal	Pancake	Cereal
15.	Strawberry Bites	Strawberry	Bites
16.	Tea Bomb	Tea	Bomb
17.	Towel Cake	Towel	Cake

Table 3. Compounding process of food names that have more than two base words

no.	Food name	Process			
		Base 1	Base 2	Base 3	
18.	Marry Me Chicken	Marry	Me	Chicken	
19.	Cotton Candy Burrito	Cotton	candy	Burrito	
20.	Pickle In A Blanket	Base 1	Base 2	Base 3	Base 4
		Pickle	In	A	Blanket

The food names that have gained popularity on *TikTok* through the compounding process are *Bento Cake*, *Bubble Potatoes*, *Cloud Bread*, *Cookie Bomb*, *Cotton Candy Burrito*, *Cowboy Candy*, *Crab Rangoon*, *Daifuku Mochi*, *Dalgona Coffee*, *Dessert Box*, *Fruit Sando*, *Girl Dinner*, *Lemon Possets*, *Marry Me Chicken*, *Mochi Bites*, *Pancake Cereal*, *Pickle in a Blanket*, *Strawberry Bites*, *Tea Bomb*, and *Towel Cake*. Each of these names is a linguistic sign consisting of a signifier (the form of the word) and a signified (the concept it represents). For instance, "Bento Cake" signifies a small decorative cake in a bento box, while "Bubble Potatoes" represents potatoes that puff up like bubbles. Similarly, "Cloud Bread"

denotes a light, fluffy type of bread, and "Cookie Bomb" is a dessert that explodes with flavor or filling.

"Cotton Candy Burrito" signifies ice cream wrapped in cotton candy, and "Cowboy Candy" refers to candied jalapeños. "Crab Rangoon" is a fried wonton filled with crab meat and cream cheese, while "Daifuku Mochi" is a type of Japanese sweet consisting of mochi filled with sweet red bean paste. "Dalgona Coffee" denotes a whipped coffee drink served over milk, and "Dessert Box" is a box filled with assorted desserts. "Fruit Sando" signifies a Japanese fruit sandwich, and "Girl Dinner" refers to a casual, simple meal. "Lemon Possets" are creamy lemon desserts, "Mochi Bites" are bite-sized pieces of mochi, and "Pancake Cereal" consists of miniature pancakes served like cereal. "Pickle in a Blanket" denotes a pickle wrapped in meat or dough, "Strawberry Bites" are bite-sized strawberry snacks, "Tea Bomb" is a ball of tea ingredients, and "Towel Cake" is a cake designed to look like stacked towels. "Marry Me Chicken," a unique verb-noun compound, signifies a delicious chicken dish suggested to be so good it could lead to a marriage proposal. These compounded food names illustrate how new, meaningful terms are created by combining existing words, reflecting Saussure's idea that linguistic signs are defined by the relationships between signifiers and their corresponding signifieds.

### 3. Folk-Etymology/Borrowing

The next word formation process is folk-etymology, also known as borrowing. Seven food names on *TikTok* are created using this process. According to Katamba (1994), borrowing can be divided into two types: Direct Borrowing and Indirect Borrowing. Direct borrowing involves taking a word directly from another language without any modifications, while indirect borrowing involves morphological and phonological changes to the words. The data indicates that direct borrowing is more common, with six instances, compared to one instance of indirect borrowing. The process is as follows.

Table 4. Borrowing process of the food names

No.	Folk-etymology/ Borrowing	Process	
		Source language	Original word
1.	<i>Bento Cake</i>	Japanese	Bento
2.	Cowboy Candy	Texas	Cowboy
3.	Crab Rangoon	Burmese	Yangon
4.	Daifuku Mochi	Japanese	Daifuku Mochi
5.	Dalgona Coffee	Korean	Dalgona
6.	Fruit Sando	Japanese	Sando
7.	Mochi Bites	Japanese	Mochi

Other unique names found on *TikTok* use a process of borrowing from various languages, including Japanese, Korean, and Burmese. These names illustrate the dynamic relationship between signifiers (the forms of the words) and signifieds (the concepts they represent) as described by Saussure's theory. For instance, "Bento Cake" is a direct borrowing from Japanese, combining the concept of a packed meal ("bento") with the idea of a small dessert ("cake"). Similarly, "Daifuku Mochi" and "Mochi Bites" are direct borrowings from Japanese, using "daifuku" to signify a sweet treat and "mochi" to refer to glutinous rice cakes. "Fruit Sando" represents a Japanese fruit sandwich, using the term "sando" as a direct borrowing for "sandwich." "Dalgona Coffee" is a direct borrowing from Korean, using "dalgona" to signify a whipped coffee drink. "Cowboy Candy" reflects a unique cultural concept from Texas, using candied jalapeños, which is a direct cultural borrowing within the English language.

On the other hand, "Crab Rangoon" exemplifies indirect borrowing, adapting the Burmese term "Yangon" into "Rangoon" for a fried wonton dish, transforming the original term to fit English-speaking cultural and phonetic expectations. These names demonstrate how borrowed terms maintain or adapt cultural meanings to create new, resonant concepts within the context of food trends on *TikTok*.

#### 4. Clipping

The final and least common word formation process for food names on *TikTok* is clipping. Yule (1985) defines clipping as the shortening of a term with more than one syllable. Saussure (1969, as cited in Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011) further explains that a word can be shortened by omitting the first part, the last part, or both parts. Only two food names were found using this clipping process. The process is as follows.

Table 5. Clipping process of the food names

No.	Clipping	Process		
		Base 1	Base 2	Clipped word
1.	Date Bark	Date	Chocolate Bark	Chocolate
2.	Pizza Fries	Pizza	French Fries	French

The names of dishes that have gained popularity on *TikTok* through the clipping process are Date Bark and Pizza Fries. This process illustrates how linguistic signs, consisting of a signifier (the form of the word) and a signified (the concept it represents), can be transformed through word-formation processes. For instance, "Date Bark" employs clipping by shortening the term "chocolate

bark," where "chocolate" is clipped to just "date," leaving behind a name that signifies a dessert made of dates and a chocolate-like bark. Here, the signifier "Date Bark" directly refers to the signified concept of a confectionery treat that features dates as a key ingredient in a bark-style dessert, emphasizing the ingredient "date" over the chocolate component.

Similarly, "Pizza Fries" utilizes clipping by shortening "pizza fries" from "French fries" and combining it with "pizza." The signifier "Pizza Fries" signifies the concept of a dish that merges the idea of pizza with fries, where "pizza" and "fries" are clipped from "pizza fries" to create a new culinary experience combining the two foods. In both examples, clipping is a process where parts of the original compound words are omitted to form new, simpler names. This process demonstrates Saussure's idea that linguistic signs are defined by the relationship between signifiers and signifieds. For "Date Bark," the clipped term emphasizes the primary ingredient, "date," while the full signified concept of a chocolate bark dessert is still present. For "Pizza Fries," the clipped term "pizza" highlights the fusion of pizza flavors with the concept of fries, simplifying the original compound phrase to create a fresh food trend. Thus, clipping allows for the creation of new signs where the signifiers are stripped of parts of the original terms to produce names with specific, engaging meanings that resonate with audiences on *TikTok*, embodying Saussure's principles of linguistic economy and creativity.

In addition to the various word formation processes, multiple processes are also observed in the creation of certain food names. According to Yule (2017), multiple processes involve the combination of more than one process to form a term. One common combination is borrowing-compounding, where a word is borrowed from another language and then combined with another word to create a new term.

Examples of food names that utilize multiple processes include *Bento Cake*, *Cowboy Candy*, *Crab Rangoon*, *Daifuku Mochi*, *Dalgona Coffee*, *Fruit Sando*, and *Mochi Bites*. These names all employ the same combination of borrowing and compounding to create unique and engaging culinary terms. This highlights the dynamic nature of language, where multiple processes can be combined to produce new and creative expressions that resonate with audiences on *TikTok*.

#### Discussion

This study examined the formation of new food-names on *TikTok*, revealing the significant impact of word-formation processes such as blending, compounding, borrowing, and clipping on the culinary lexicon. The

findings align with the theory of Saussurean signs and support previous research by Pillai, et. al. (2011) suggesting that other productive word formation processes can be observed and investigated to broaden the neologism in the culinary sphere.

Blending combines parts of words to create novel terms like "Cronut," enhancing marketability through catchy names. Compounding merges whole words, resulting in descriptive terms like "Bubble Potatoes" that evoke vivid imagery. Borrowing introduces international influences, as seen with "Dalgona Coffee," enriching culinary vocabulary and fostering cross-cultural appreciation. Clipping simplifies terms, making them concise and memorable, like "Date Bark." These processes contribute to culinary innovation, cultural exchange, and the creation of engaging, marketable food names that resonate on social media platforms like *TikTok*.

The research also aligns with Karpova's (2019) observation that blending like *Boucake* and *Cakesicle* is the most frequently occurring word formation type in modern English, especially in the culinary sphere. Additionally, the study supports Yule's (2017) assertion that multiple-word formation processes, such as borrowing-compounding, are often involved in creating terms. However, the study highlights challenges in categorizing and analyzing word formation processes within the semantic field of food names, particularly due to the influence of cultural factors and regional variations. Culinary terms often carry cultural connotations and historical significances that may not be immediately apparent through linguistic analysis alone.

## CONCLUSION

The study on word formation processes in unique *TikTok* food names provides significant insights into the linguistic and cultural factors that contribute to the creation and popularity of these terms. By applying Saussure's sign theory, the research demonstrates how various word formation processes, such as blending, compounding, borrowing, and clipping, create new and engaging food names that resonate with audiences on *TikTok*.

The findings highlight the importance of word formation process to identify the signifiers and their signified. There are four types of word formation including blending, compounding, clipping, and borrowing. The study also notes that multiple-word formation processes are often combined to create unique food names. Examples include "Bento Cake," which combines Japanese and English words, and "Crab Rangoon," which adapts a Burmese term. These combinations highlight the dynamic nature of language, where multiple processes can be

combined to produce new and creative expressions that resonate with audiences on *TikTok*.

In conclusion, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the word formation processes used in unique *TikTok* food names, demonstrating the significance of linguistic creativity and cultural influences in shaping these terms. The findings support Saussure's sign theory and offer insights into how these names are crafted and why they become popular. The research highlights the importance of understanding these processes for culinary marketing and branding, as unique and appealing names can enhance marketing efforts and brand identity, making it a valuable contribution to the field of linguistics and culinary studies.

## SUGGESTION

After conducting this study, this research is recommended for readers who want to understand the process of creating names to seek better insights for culinary marketing and branding. Future research on food names could investigate how these names are created on different social media platforms and how cultural and regional differences influence their creation. Additionally, studies could examine how food creators and influencers use marketing strategies to engage consumers on platforms like *TikTok* and how these strategies impact consumer loyalty. Furthermore, exploring the creation of new food names and their role in culinary innovation, as well as how sensory experiences influence consumer choices, would be valuable. Comparing food names across social media platforms and investigating the long-term effects of unique food names on consumer preferences would provide a more comprehensive understanding of their impact.

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