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Tea-Related Figurative and Non-Figurative Expressions in the World's Top Fifteen Tea-Producing Countries

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***Abstract*---**Agricultural life, as a key component of culture, is thought to have a relation with language. Because of this reason, products that hold significance in communities' lives can leave a mark on their language. Tea, a widely consumed crop, exemplifies one of these agricultural products due to its social significance in many cultures. Nevertheless, studies about tea-related words across different countries remain scarce in the literature. For this reason, this study aims to identify tea-related lexical items in the top tea-producing countries, using a qualitative research method that involved conducting email interviews with 200 homogenously selected participants. Manual analysis of the responses revealed 102 expressions from 14 countries. While some of them are general terms, such as "drinking with or without sugar", there are some culture-based words or phrases mentioned by the participants from nearly all countries. In several contexts, there are also specific items used for rituals in some ceremonies. The findings demonstrate both diversity and cultural basis of tea-related language, underlining how an agricultural product can be used differently across languages.

***Keywords*---**Tea, culture, language, lexicon, agriculture.

Introduction and Literature Review

The existence of the relationship of culture - common knowledge of value, custom, and world view of a group (Ortiz et al., 2020)- and language -combination of sounds and systems used for individuals' communication (Lazear, 1999)- has been under study by scholars across disciplines for centuries. Contrary to the view of Malinowski and other British anthropologists, who regarded culture and language as independent aspects of society, most scholars' embrace of the intricate relationship between these concepts was emphasized by Levi-Strauss and other French critics (Mazari & Derraz, 2015). The presence of this

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relationship has been examined for centuries and cannot be abnegated. To clarify this idea, Dueck (2012) presents the research carried out throughout history and discusses the effects of people's construing of events on their language use.

One side of this reflexive relation runs from culture to language. Culture affects the use of language and the meanings of the words. Languages are not only related to sounds or structures but also to values, beliefs, and histories that constitute the cultural identities of a specific group or individuals (Ortiz et al., 2020). Wong (2019) extends the idea of the effects of culture on language by introducing the concept of "cultural linguistics," which relates cultural values to word meanings and grammatical patterns within a language. Building on this idea, Wong emphasizes the importance of culture in language learning, as pragmatic competence requires an understanding of cultural norms.

In addition to the general idea of using language in the transmission of culture from generation to generation, Mazari & Derraz (2015) also underscore the' role of language in the elaboration and development of the culture. Human-created linguistic conventions are used to make individuals connected, work together, and create a community that shares common goals and values (Loewenstein, 2019). Situated in the center of human life, language is in relation to every human activity included in this cultural context, one part of which is dominated by the daily activities or income-providing work that have accompanied humanity throughout history.

As one of the earliest and most enduring human occupations, farming has not only helped societies develop economically but also played a major role in the development of linguistic expressions and culture. According to Bellwood (2001), there are two significant expansions in the world, one of which is the expansion of the agricultural system. It is believed to be the reason for the creation of various cultures and languages in Anatolia and Europe (Parisi, 2008). Migration driven by the distractions of drought and the desire to discover fertile lands for farming caused the dissemination and differentiation of languages and cultures. The products cultivated in a certain area are in interface with the culture and sociality of that region and community (Wondimu & Kebede, 2022; Ang, 2025). Wondimu & Kebede (2022), who study the effects of the Enset plant on Ethiopian society, revealed the social life and farm crops relation by illustrating the process of a female character's ability to give birth. The enset plant, whose eye is destroyed or filled with soil, is unable to sprout tender plants and is called a male plant because it requires the exact necessities as a woman who gives birth. Ang (2025) relates the general characteristics of societies with the crops they grow, suggesting that labor-desiring crops foster an interdependent lifestyle, contrary to the less labor-desiring plants that encourage more individualistic lifestyles.

Certain crops have specific historical importance and cultural values for particular societies. With its 700 kinds of components and 27 mineral elements, tea, which was first consumed in China 3,000 years ago (Pan et al., 2022), is a type of drink that possesses an authentic characteristic by combining Chinese culture and Japanese art (Wang, 2020). Today, it is not only one of the most widely consumed drinks but also a crop that is associated with cultural ceremonies and values in various countries. Beyond its role as a beverage, tea is

also a cultural item that has special explanations or examinations (Mediadact et al., 2018).

Despite being used just as a medicine in history and starting to be used in daily life recently (Reimertz, 1998), tea constructs and preserves the long history of China, which is labelled as its hometown (Wang, 2020; Jian et al., 2015). In China, tea is consumed by all the social groups from the lowest to the highest classes (Lopez, 2013), though consumption styles vary. In accordance with Tian (2024), these style distinctions are related to artistic and philosophical ideas. In some parts of the country, such as those with Hani culture, tea holds a greater significance than in other areas and deserves serious respect. As mentioned by Wang & Lang (2017), Hani tea culture is in relation to their life philosophy. For example, a young woman in that culture needs to prepare handmade tea by collecting, firing, and applying other processes to it to be thought of as ready to get married. In addition to being so critical and having such rituals in China, this product spread to the other parts of the world, starting from the Turks, Eastern Islamdom, Persia, and Arabs (Öğüt, 2009).

One of these countries where tea started to be consumed is Türkiye, in which it replaced coffee and became the symbol of hospitality (Güneş, 2012), following the time it started to be drunk once it was produced after the 1930s (Öğüt, 2009). Turkish tea drinking customs and styles show dissimilarities compared to Chinese culture. Tea drinking customs in different regions of this country can also show dissimilarities. Güneş (2012) expresses that in Tokat, a preferred behavior, leaving a blank at the top of a tea glass is named as “Dudak Payı”. The amount of blank can vary according to the individual. In Erzurum, a specific kind of sugar is used while drinking light tea, and if the guest is not explicitly asked not to do so, the tea glass is always refilled without asking. Many such examples, which can be used as proof of the relation between tea and culture, are seen in the country.

There are distinct habits and customs related to tea or tea drinking all over the world. One notable example is the British tea culture, influenced mainly by Victorian aristocrats, and includes related aesthetic characteristics (Tian, 2024). Tian concedes that British tea serving ceremonies, which originated in the Victorian era, reflect the age in the manners of table setting, flower arrangements, and the use of silver teaspoons at that time. Wang (2011) details tea drinking in Britain by dividing the tea drinking ceremonies into three; afternoon tea which was started in 1840 by Anna, the 7th Duchess; high tea that is a name used by working class instead of afternoon tea and later took the place of dinner; and tea breaks adopted by workers when they start work early in the morning.

Along with those three countries, Japanese, Indian, and Korean cultures are also related to tea. Japanese tea culture, for instance, is considered more than just a drinking practice, but a historically significant practice that contributed to the formation of Japanese culture (Wang, 2020). Indian culture, which is well known for its spices, also assigns a special meaning to tea as a national drink (Lutgendorf, 2012). All those countries mentioned here created a tea culture and included this product in their lifestyles. As can be examined in Hewlett & Wadsworth’s (2010) study, people from every age group drink caffeinated or

decaffeinated tea every day. Drinking tea has turned out to be a lifestyle with generational dissimilarities, as older people choose to drink decaffeinated tea without sugar, in contrast to the young who use different kinds of sweeteners such as milk, fruit, or syrup.

It is clear that tea is in relation with culture, and high power of this relationship is unescapable in specifically top tea producing countries such as Argentina, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, India, Iran, Japan, Kenia, Malavi, Myanmar, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, Uganda and Vietnam (Top 10 Tea Producing Countries In The World, 2023; Top Tea Producing Countries in 2025 (Global Rankings), 2025; Top 10 Tea Producing Countries In The World, 2024; & World Tea Production by Country, n.d). A close relationship between culture and tea has also embedded culturally related words and expressions into everyday language.
Tea, as a product, drink, or lifestyle, has an effect on the development of specific cultures. Because of this, words related to tea have cultural importance. Öğüt (2009), in a study on material culture in Türkiye, reveals unique terms used in the country, such as 'çaydanlık' and 'samovar' (which is originally 'semaver' in the Turkish language). These words reflect Turkish tea culture because the tea brewing style is different in Türkiye when compared with most of other tea-consuming countries. Another research carried out by Khorechkoa et al. (2015) reveals the differences between Chinese and Russian tea-related word capacity by grounding it in the richness of Chinese tea-related culture, as Chinese use various kinds of tea.

The literature suggests that tea, culture, and language are three related terms. Especially in countries where tea was started to be cultivated at first and where it is consumed a lot, there are tea-related or tea-based cultural forms. However, despite many studies related to the relation of tea, culture, and language or relationships of tea and other branches such as economy, medicine, or landscape, comprehensive research on the language and culture of tea-producing countries is missing (Tseng, 2014). Addressing this gap, the main goal of this study is to analyze tea-related words or word combinations used by leading tea-producing countries. This paper is restricted to the top tea-producing countries, with the belief that farming and culture are also in direct relation with each other. To realize this main purpose, sub-goals of the research are developed as;
1) Finding tea-related words or phrases related to these countries.
2) Explaining the meanings of these words or phrases.
3) Comparing the similarities or differences of identified words or phrases.

Method

A qualitative research design, which was started to be used in the late 1800s for detailed understanding and exploration (Creswell, 2005), is adopted to realize the aim of this paper by finding out some tea-related words or phrases in the top tea-producing countries. As the researcher did not have predetermined categories (Patton, 1990), a qualitative approach was deemed to be the most appropriate one for the study.

This study focused on the 15 top tea-producing countries, as determined by searching up-to-date websites related to tea or farming. These countries, mostly

situated in Asia and South America, include Argentina, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, India, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Malawi, Myanmar, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, Uganda, and Vietnam (WorldAtlas.com; atlasbig.com; & timesofindia.indiatimes.com). Although some of them are from different continents, each country has its own specific historical and cultural connection to tea and tea drinking. Having culturally different styles of tea drinking creates linguistic richness of tea-related words or phrases.

Data was collected using an unstructured email interview form, in which participants were directly asked to provide figurative or non-figurative tea-related words or phrases along with their meanings. This form was developed by the researcher using open-ended questions which were included in survey platforms (Google Forms and SurveyMonkey), and a consent form was settled at the start of the interview to get the permission of the participants. Before starting this process, ethical approval was obtained from a formal institution in Türkiye.

Homogeneous sampling, a method used to purposefully select participants based on their membership in a specific group (Creswell, 2005), was employed in this study to recruit volunteers. The aim was to find at least ten participants from each country, and Educational Institutions were used for this aim. Totally 200 answers were gathered by sending the email questions to the participants. The number of participants according to countries and the number of emails sent to people from each country can be seen in the table below.

Table I
Number of participants according to countries

	Argentina	Vietnam	Myanmar	Türkiye	Uganda	Malawi	Sri-Lanka	Iran	Indonesia	Kenya	Bangladesh	India	Japan	Rwanda	China	Total
Number of mails	2800	1151	955	503	851	431	642	1225	933	817	1364	1240	1842	349	6998 (+3085)	22101 (+3085)
Number of participants	10	11	16	20	24	14	17	13	12	12	12	11	10	7	11	200

The table clearly shows that there are at least ten participants from each country except for Rwanda. The reason for not being able to have 10 participants from this country is the limited number of schools, which made email collection

difficult. Also, 7 participants from Rwanda did not express any specific words except for the generic word for "tea." As a result, this country was excluded from the results section. The reason for China having two numbers is that, at first, Google Form links were sent to 3085 participants from China, but after the notification of one of the participants about not being able to use any Google products in the country, 6998 new emails with "Survey Monkey" links were sent to them. The number of participants is sufficient according to the explanations of both Creswell (2005) and Patton (1990), as they reveal the unimportance of the number of participants in qualitative studies. Participants' original names were not collected to avoid restricting their answers and preserving anonymity. Instead, pseudonyms were created by combining the first two letters of the country name and the order of the participants according to the time of their answers. Manual analysis was employed in the study, as the researcher did not aim to find a theme-based classification, but rather to reveal tea-related words and phrases, along with their meanings, accompanied by a brief explanation when necessary.

Findings and Discussion

This part of the study presents the acquired words or phrases that belong to the cultures of these countries and discusses the similarities and differences among them in the light of related literature.

Malawi is one of the first countries whose tea-related language will be examined. According to the answers of 14 participants aged between 33 and 62, three different phrases or words were provided. The first word, expressed by the oldest member of the participants, was 'imwani tea wambiri,' which means 'always drinking a lot of tea.' This phrase was also mentioned by another participant, by only changing the middle word to 'tiyi' instead of 'tea', one of the common words used to reflect tea in Malawi. A 42-year-old participant from Zomba also mentioned the name 'tiyi' by adding that it is used for most hot drinks, even for hot water. At this point, it will be beneficial also to give other words used to name tea: Tchai and Chai.

Participants from Malawi mentioned two figurative terms used informally in their culture. 'Mtenthandevu' is a word mentioned by two participants, both of whom defined it as 'a thing that burns beards'. This definition specifies its meaning as a word used to express something that is very hot or strong, but its real meaning cannot be found in the dictionary. Another word mentioned by Malawian participants is 'ntchemo', used to express afternoon tea and to take a break figuratively. Probably, this figurative meaning was given to it to state social gatherings and chatting during breaks. It is challenging to support the use of these figurative words, except for those expressed by the study's participants, as they have not been documented in any academic study.

The responses from Uganda broadened this picture considerably. According to the perspectives of 24 participants, 14 different words or phrases that are related specifically to tea can be included in the list of culturally tea-related vocabulary. It will be beneficial to express that tea is spelled in different ways in Uganda, and although it is unclear whether these uses are misspellings due to the absence of a

comprehensive academic source on local languages or dialects, their diversity suggests a strong localization and cultural basis for tea in language.

'Mukalu' is the most frequently mentioned word by the participants, though in different ways with varying meanings. According to Participant Ug6, 'Chayi Mukalu' is a kind of tea without milk. In the dictionary, 'Chai' means tea, and 'Mukalu' gives the meaning of plain without any additions. In an article on the internet named 'Facts about Uganda', this explanation is supported. Also, its preparation process can be found in the YouTube video 'How to make Ugandan chai mukalu', in which it is described as spiced black tea. Participant Ug21 employed a similar concept to 'Kyayi omukalu', which translates to black tea. Black tea can be understood as tea without any additional ingredients such as milk. Although the meaning is the same, word phrases are different in two different regions, such as Mbale and Entebbe. Participant Ug18 from Nebbi used the word simple as 'Mukalu' with a meaning of 'tea without sugar'. As it is understood here, even the meaning is different from the previous two uses. In the Concise Dictionary of Luganda, accessible from learnluganda.com, the meaning of this word is provided in a way that encompasses both meanings: 'tea without sugar or milk'.

Another word mentioned more than once by participants is 'chayi wamata' or 'kyayi owamata', which is explained as 'tea with milk.' Participant Ug6 expressed that this is also used as a question to learn whether the person desires milk or not. In 'The Elements of Luganda Grammar', 'Kyayi' means tea and 'amata' means milk (Crabtree, 1923). Other mentioned concepts that are related to tea, including or not including sugar or milk, are 'Cia Labotbot', 'chai mugum', 'ebede', and 'mangoju'. 'Ebede'. Other words, 'cia labotbot', 'chai mugum', and 'mangoju' are all used to give the meaning of 'tea without sugar'. Although no previous academic data about them can be found, Participant Ug16 mentioned that 'chai mugum' is a term generally used in low-income households.

'Acholi cai', 'chai pii', and 'olukambwe' are the terms that have related but not totally similar meanings. According to Participant Ug4, 'olukambwe' means 'the hot one, especially taken during cold weather.' This word can be found in Luganda Contemporary Bible Job 5:21, but the meaning is different. Participant Ug14 explains the word 'acholi cai' as hot tea served to adults. This word is used clearly for tea, not just any liquid. The participant also details it by mentioning that this is only for adults. Although it does not express the word 'tea', Participant Ug24 describes the 'chai pii' as meaning hot water mixed with black, ground leaves to give it a black color.

Some expressions highlighted tea's social role, such as 'Ebedde', a word that does not appear in dictionaries but was explained by a 56-year-old participant from Moyo as: 'tea is plenty, and anybody can just get and drink as they wish.' It can be understood that this word is used informally in a specific language community, just the same as 'cayi taliko saawa', which means 'anytime is tea time' according to Participant Ug19 from Gulu. Last phrase, 'mato cai', is related to the beliefs of a community in Gulu. According to a 60-year-old participant, this phrase means 'drinking a substance that prevents evil eye and bad luck.' Tea, with its diverse types, is an integral part of these people's lives. These examples,

despite not being documented in academic sources, show the ways tea permeates daily lives, rituals, and beliefs in Ugandan society.

Türkiye is another tea-producing country from which 20 participants answered the email interview. Alongside the example 'paşa çayı', several descriptive terms emerged. Participants mentioned 13 metaphorical or formal tea-related phrases starting with 'açık çay', its opposites, such as 'koyu çay', and 'demli çay'. Here, 'açık çay' means light tea, contrary to the 'koyu çay' or 'demli çay', which can be described as dark and strong tea. Metaphorical synonyms of these concepts, 'tavşan kanı' and 'abdest suyu (or imamın abdest suyu)', are the two most cited phrases by the participants. In word-to-word translation, 'tavşan kanı' gives the meaning of 'rabbit blood', but this phrase is used to describe strong tea which has a reddish color. Anatharaman (2024) confirmed this by revealing the explanation: "A desirable cup color resembling rabbit's blood in Turkey (line. 20)." Contrary to 'tavşan kanı', 'imamın abdest suyu' was explained as 'a very light, blurred and warm (not hot) tea' by Participant Tü10. However, bringing the dictionary meanings of the words together creates the phrase 'imam's ablution water'.

'Keyif çayı', 'yorgunluk çayı', and 'dinlenme çayı' are unmetaphorical but culturally highly used phrases mentioned by Participants Tü16 and Tü18. The tea, which is drunk when someone is happy as a result of having something good, is named 'keyif çayı'. 'Yorgunluk çayı' and 'dinlenme çayı' have close but not totally the same meanings. If someone drinks tea during working breaks before completing the job, this is called 'dinlenme çayı'. On the other hand, when the tea is drunk after completing a work successfully by working hard on it, this is generally called 'yorgunluk çayı'.

Colloquial or regional terms also featured prominently. 'Zift gibi' was clarified by Participant Tü10 as 'a kind of too dark and strong tea'. In the online dictionary of the Turkish Language Institution, it means very bitter and too dark. 'Zor çayı', which is also named as 'cırıldım çayı' in Erzurum (Participant Tü20), is the last glass of tea that the guests are gently pressured to drink. Refusing this 'cırıldım çayı' is a significant insult for the host in Erzurum (Güneş, 2012). Another phrase, 'dudak payı', expressed by Participant Tü18 but not explained, is included in the Online Dictionary of Turkish Proverbs and Idioms of the Turkish Language Institution in a verb form as 'dudak payı bırakmak'. This verb form is defined as "not filling the glasses or cups, leaving a blank at the top of them to let the lips be able to touch the glasses". Namely, the act of not filling the glasses but leaving a blank at the top of it is called 'dudak payı' (Demircioğlu & Altuntaş Gürsoy, 2022). Participant Tü20 named 'çaycuma' and 'çaylamak', with their short explanations. 'Çaycuma', is a term used for 'people who drink a lot of tea', but it cannot be found in dictionaries. 'Çaylamak', not also being in the dictionary, was clarified by the same participant as 'the desire to be given tea'. The phrase is used in the same meaning as the sentence 'let's give us tea'. Collectively, the examples here clear how tea is included in Turkish everyday speech, varying from formal expressions to playful colloquialisms.

16 participants from 9 different cities in Myanmar provided further insight into the cultural embedding of tea in language. Participant My1 expressed general terms (light tea, heavily sweet tea), which can be found in all languages. Except

for this participant's expressions, four phrases and two idiomatic sentences were mentioned by four different participants. Among those, participant My3's expression was the most striking one as it mentions that tea is not only drunk but also eaten in Myanmar, and 'Laphat Thoke' is one of the most well-known recipes of a dish prepared with tea. As described by Hla et al. (2006), the dish combines tea with ground nuts, fried beans, sesame, garlic, ginger, green chili, and tomatoes. 'A-kyan yay' and 'a-phan yay' are the phrases mentioned by a 31-year-old participant from Magway. 'A kyan yay' is a kind of strong tea, and 'a-phan yay' is stronger than this. Last phrase is 'yay nway gyan' which can be explained as badly made tea or coffee. When the meanings of the words are examined one by one as 'yay' means water, 'nway' is warm, and 'gyan' is rough and dirty. However, Myint (2020) talks about this phrase just in the meaning of 'drinking tea' (Myint, 2020).

Instead of talking about phrases, participant My13 added further richness to the study by expressing two idiom like sentences, one of which is 'I want to have a good tea, so I can climb the mountain slowly'. In the 5th page of their study, Lin & Molnar (2024) mention a similar sentence: 'If you want to eat good quality tea, slowly climb up the Palaung's hill'. When both sentences are taken into account, it is clear that tea is such an important figure in their culture that it is used idiomatically to give messages, which is 'if you want to reach your aim, be patient'. 'I do not know people, but I know how to make tea' is another statement mentioned by the same participant. This sentence reveals that it is enough for a person to be able to do some practical work, even if without going to university or knowing someone important.

Sri Lanka is another top tea-producing country from where 17 participants joined the study. Especially, some participants mentioned amazing words with culturally specific meanings and uses. 'Kahata', identified by 5 participants, is used to describe strong black tea without milk, generally consumed without sugar (participant Sr9), and included in the language of people in rural areas (participant Sr17). 'Plenti' is another term mentioned by a 43-year-old Participant Sr8 with the meaning of a large tea plantation. These areas are used to plant tea by the 'kuda te vathu himiyan', a term used to describe estate owners in Sri Lanka, 48% of whom think that tea is their primary income (Perera, 2014). Closely tied to labor practices, 'Laima', which is the last term used by the same participant, refers to the amount of tea that workers have to pick every day.

Terms with social and sensory connotations were also reported by participants. 'Kiri tea' and 'dun tea/smoke tea' are two concepts with meanings special to Sri-Lankan culture. Although it is used with a general meaning such as 'tea with milk and sweetened with sugar', 'kiri tea', which is also spelled as 'kiri kanda', is a kind of tea that is specifically drunk in the rural areas in the higher parts of the country (Botejue, 2024). 'Dun tea' or with another name 'smoke tea' has a distinctive smoky aroma according to participant Sr13.

Except for these more cultural terms, participants mentioned some general terms such as 'ginger tea', 'te ekak bomu da', 'cinnamon tea', and 'masala tea'. 'Te ekak bomu da', mentioned by the Participant Sr4, is a phrase used to offer tea to other people and express friendship with its meaning, 'let's have tea.' Regional practices

were also underlined: according to Participant Sr7, when you use the word 'tea' in Sri Lanka, you will get tea with cream. In order to express tea without cream, one should use the phrase 'plain tea'. It is understood that though it is impossible to reach all the words related to tea, just the words found here are enough to capture both every day and ritual aspects of Sri Lankan culture.

Thirteen participants from Iran mentioned phrases and words with general or idiomatic meanings. Participant Ir7 just talked about the culture of tea, mentioning that "tea in a narrow-waisted glass with sugar on the side". This sentence reflects the tradition of drinking tea and the style of sugar use. Having tea with sugar its side is also expressed by participants Ir4, Ir5, Ir9, and Ir12 with the phrase 'chay-e qand pahlu'. Seeing this phrase in more than one participants' answers is proof of high use of the phrase. Drinking tea with sugar its side is named differently with a single word, 'dishlame', by the participant Ir3. This process, which is described as 'newly cooked tea with cubic sugar' by the participant, is also known as 'kıtlama' in Erzurum, Türkiye, and discussed by Çalışır et. al. (2019) and Üçok et. al. (1987). This term, 'chay-e qand pahlu', also reveals the necessity of tea being hot, not cold. Participant Ir5 supports this knowledge, mentioning a different phrase, 'chay-e lab-süz', whose meaning is 'tea should not be cold'. Akbari (no date) also touches on the same subject, endorsing the significance of drinking hot tea.

In addition to general phrases such as 'sweet tea' (mentioned by participant Ir1) and 'safran tea' (mentioned by participant Ir2), participants Ir9 and Ir10 conveyed idiomatic and poetic phrases and sentences. According to participant Ir9, there is a special kind of tea named 'cay (chay) dorang', which is a two-colored tea served to the bride and groom at weddings. It has two layers with white color, created with concentrated sugar and water, and black color of dark black tea situated on the top of it. 'Cay (chay) paseban dide' (the tea that has met the police) is a vernacular phrase mentioned by the same person. It is used to describe overly light tea, with its paleness likened to the whitened face of a criminal instantly confronted by the police. Participant Ir10, whose nationality is Azeri, added two frequently used sentences: 'Chaay-e lab riz, lab dooz va lab' and 'chaay nadi, say nadi'. The former one is used to talk about a good quality tea that overflows the cup and is both lip-biting and lip-burning. Another phrase has a meaning of "one should not count the number of teacups that have been drunk" in accordance with the same participant. The words and phrases here stress both aesthetic and cultural sides given to tea in Iranian culture.

Indonesia is the other tea-producing country from which 12 people joined the study. Participants revealed general terms such as 'sweet tea' and 'minum teh', and more specific terms related to their culture. As mentioned in some of the previous findings, the situation of tea and plain tea is the same in this country, especially in some parts of it, such as Java. When you request tea, it is tea with sugar. To get tea without sugar, one should express 'plain tea' in those regions. 'Minum teh' is a general term in the country to express the desire to drink tea.

'Ngeteh' is a word mentioned by two participants and used with the meaning of "drinking tea". Also, the phrase 'teh talua', a kind of traditional tea combined with raw egg, strong black tea, and condensed milk or lime juice, can be given as a

good example of Indonesian tea-related lexicon. This mixture has been the subject of various medical studies, such as those by Yenrina et al. (2016) and Rasdiana (2023). Participant In2 introduced two new words, which are 'Bobba' and 'teh poci'. 'Bobba', which is also known as 'boba' (Fathurrohman, 2023), is "a kind of cold bubble tea served in milk, fruit or ice" according to the participant. Although it is mentioned to be a cultural symbol coming from Taiwan (Pham, 2025) and studied to examine teenagers' bubble tea buying choices (Iswara & Rahadi, 2021), no cultural or linguistic studies can be found about it. Second term 'the poci' is used to describe 'tea served in an earthenware pot'. The last word mentioned by participants is 'cai enteh', and is used to express 'tea' in Sunda language. These words and phrases illustrate the mixture of traditional and regional influences within Indonesian tea culture.

Further insights emerged with the contributions of 12 participants from 8 parts of Kenya. 'Eturungi', spelled as 'turungi' or 'chai turunki' by some participants, is the most commonly referred word. This word was explained as "pure black tea served without anything added to it" by Participant Ke6 while two other participants specifically emphasized the phrase "without milk" in the definition instead of using a general term like 'anything'. 'Turungi' is seen on the website of Kenya Tea Development Agency with a meaning of true tea, coming from Arabs and used to express dark real tea without any additions like milk. For Participant Ke9, tea becomes 'chai' only when milk is added to it. According to this information, using the word 'chai' in Kenya means 'tea with milk', and this reveals the idea that tea is mainly consumed with milk. Other expressions revealed by the participants from Kenya are 'omote' and 'chai nduffya'. 'Omote' was identified by Participant Ke3 as tree, which is probably used to refer to tea trees or plantations. Ingonga (1991) also used the word 'omote' with the same meaning. Although it cannot be found in academic sources, 'chai nduffya' was described as "tea without sugar" by Participant Ke12. It is apparent that tea vocabulary in Kenya is primarily used to express the ingredients of tea in that culture, instead of having any specific metaphorical meaning.

According to Jothi et al. (2021), tea (with or without milk) is the most commonly consumed type of drink among university students in Bangladesh, which is one of the top tea-producing countries. Tea's importance in the country is reflected in its language with both functional and figurative uses provided by 12 participants. Two general terms whose examples were also seen in some other countries, 'dudh cha' and 'lal cha', were mentioned and explained by Participant Ba4. The first one is tea with milk, and the second one is tea without milk. The second one is labeled by Participant Ba5 as 'rong cha' due to its reddish color. And 'groom cha', mentioned by Participant Ba7, is used to express hot tea.

More figurative and cultural tea-related terms in the languages spoken in Bangladesh figured out as 'shat rong-er cha', 'Bela biscuit di ek cup chubai cha', and 'bristi cha'. According to Christopher Shay from the Wall Street Journal, 'shat rong-er cha', which was explained as seven colored tea, was created by Romesh Ram Gour in 2001. Vicy Baker from The Guardian likened it to the creation of a rainbow. Because of their density differences, tea types in the same cup do not mix with each other, and every sip gives a different taste. This makes it a specific kind of tea that belongs to Bangladeshi culture. Participant Ba7 revealed a

sentence that reflects the social dimension of their tea-consuming culture. This phrase, 'Bela biscuit di ek cup chubai cha', can be translated as "one cup of tea with bela biscuits" and shows the way they eat biscuits while drinking tea. 'Bristi cha', a phrase mentioned by Participant Ba11, was explained as "rainy tea". The word 'rainy' is used here figuratively to describe the tea that is drunk on rainy days. It is a kind of romantic remark to express drinking hot tea while watching the rain. These terms mirror how tea takes part in daily traditions and creates a metaphorical richness in Bangladesh.

India, a country renowned for its spices, is also one of the top tea-producing countries, and 11 individuals from that country participated in this research. First of all, tea is named as 'chai' in India, and Participant Ind10 mentioned different types of teas consumed in India. One of them is 'masala tea', which is known from the countries examined before and is thought to be helpful for digestion. The second one is 'adrak tea', prepared by including ginger, and mostly drunk in winters. Other tea types are 'saunf wali chai' and 'gud chai'. These were just words used to express particular tea names. Participants Ind2 and Ind8 also expressed general terms related especially to coffee, but also to tea. 'Teneer' is a general term used for drinks such as tea or coffee. If this coffee or tea is strong, 'kadunkaapi' or 'karuppatti kaapi' are the words used for them according to Participant Ind2. Participant Ind8 used the word 'dikashan' to give the same meaning. This participant did not make any explanation, but in a text in script.com by Sohail, 'dikashan' is explained as a kind of filter coffee. Participant Ind4 mentioned a different word with a similar meaning: 'laal cha'. According to this participant, it is black tea and is known as red tea because, under the sun, it appears red in color. It is also called 'liquor cha' because of being both very identical to the looks of 'liquor' and being habit-forming or addictive. It does not include milk, and 80% of the people drink tea without milk in India (Suganthi, 2023). The last phrase, which is similar to the previous ones because of not having any figurative or specific meaning, is 'vara tea'; mentioned by participant Ind11 without making any explanation. Collectively, these findings emphasize tea varieties and cultural associations of tea with specific examples.

Another top tea-producing country, from which 10 participants joined the study, is Japan. Participants from this country provided some of the richest and diverse examples, underlining the cultural and historical significance of tea. Participant Ja3 revealed 10 different words or phrases, such as 'Chabashira', which is a "tea stem, referring to a tea stalk that stands upright in a cup, which is often considered a sign of good luck". This concept was also touched by Participants Ja7 and Ja8 by changing it into a full phrase like 'chabashira ga tatsu'. It is important because the probability of seeing it standing up like that is rare, 18,4% for 30 minutes (Takada, no date). Another word or phrase mentioned by Ja3 is 'asa-cha wa fuku wo masu', which is in relation to 'asa-cha wa sonohino nannogare' mentioned by Ja2. Ja3 explained the phrase as "morning tea increases good fortune", and Ja2 clarified it by using the word hardship because the participant thinks that "morning tea is a great escape from the hardships of the day."

One more phrase from Ja3; 'cha-nomi-tomodachi' refers to a friend, generally a companion with whom you regularly drink tea. There is even an informal group

with this name, which is known as 'friends group' (Ashitaka, 1992). 'Chanomi' and 'ochauke' are two other words from Ja3. The first one refers to "the main room of the house, often the living room, where family members gather to drink tea". This explanation also creates the idea that people come together in specific ceremonies to drink tea, which is not just a general activity. The second word is used to describe the sweets, pickles, or snacks that accompany tea (Murata, 2016). 'Nichijou sahanji', which can be translated into English as 'An everyday occurrence', comes from the "daily customs of drinking tea and eating meals." Additional lexical items from Ja3's were 'chagoroko', used to describe tea which is prepared with sincerity and heart, 'chatsumi', the act of picking tea, 'chakabuki', and 'honcha'. It is mentioned in the Encyclopedia Nipponicada that there are seven tea ceremonies in Japan, and 'chakabuki', which is expressed as a traditional tea tasting game in which participants would engage in a blind testing to identify different types of tea is one of them. There are two kinds of teas: 'Honcha' and 'hicha'. According to Ja3, 'honcha' is 'true tea', tea cultivated at the Kozanji Temple in Toganoo, Kyoto, which was historically regarded as the only authentic tea in the 1100s. In contrast, 'hicha' is used to refer to the other tea kinds produced in other regions.

Humar and metaphor play a role in the Japanese tea lexicon. 'Heso ga cha wo wakasu', mentioned by participant Ja2, can be translated as "navel boils tea", an expression used to describe something so funny that you cannot stop laughing. Participants Ja4 and Ja6 also expressed similar phrases. Ja4 mentioned that 'he sora cha o wakasu' is used for ridiculous situations, and 'heso de tya wo wakasu' is "boiling tea in the navel" according to Ja6. Ja2 stated another term, 'niban-senji', which is literally the second brew of tea but used to express the copy of something that came before. This meaning can be related to Kazuki's (2016) statements, in which the researcher uses it to mean following someone's path. As the next term, Ja2 gave the phrase, 'ocho wo nigosu', which means making the cloudy, namely evading the issue. People use it to express getting out of an uncomfortable situation (Frentiu, 2019). 'Cha-bara mo ittoki' and 'mucha-kucha' are the last expressions mentioned by the same participant. 'Cha-bara mo ittoki' is used to express that even having some tea can decrease hunger momentarily. This implies that even a small thing can be a temporary solution for an undesired situation. 'Mucha-Kucha' is a widespread word used by people of all ages and genders to talk about an unpleasant situation because 'mucha' means not serving tea to guests, while 'kucha' means serving bitter tea.

Although most of the terms mentioned by the Ja2 and Ja3, some of the other participants also made valuable additions to the study. Participant Ja8 expressed 'ippuku', which is originally a cup of tea but more broadly means "a short break or moment", because people say 'let's have a cup of tea' when they are tired and want refreshment. This phrase can be found in Kazuki (2016). 'Chakai', which is revealed by Ja10, is the last word to write about. Ja10 described it as a tea gathering in which everyone comes together and drinks tea. In addition to Japanese lexicology, there are other countries that have words related to tea in their languages.

Turning to Vietnam, another Asian country famous for its tea production, 11 participants provided responses that were generally about the cultural value of

tea rather than specific lexical items. Only two participants talked about tea-related words or phrases. Participants Vi3 just gave 'tra', the standard Vietnamese version of the word tea, and its variant 'che', which also refers to the sweets in the northern part of the country. In addition to these general words, Participant Vi11 provided us with an idiom: 'tra tam ru'ou tu', which literally means 'tea for three and wine for four'. This idiom suggests that people need to have enough company to share their happiness and sadness by drinking tea or wine. This amount is for three people for tea and four people for wine. A detailed explanation of this meaning is provided by Zhongxiao (2024) as 'number three is important in Vietnamese culture, and drinking tea with fewer people is thought to be more valuable. On the other hand, drinking wine is a lively contrast to tea drinking. To mitigate the chaos in this lively atmosphere, four people are enough because four symbolizes 'balance'.

Argentina, from which 10 participants took part in the study by returning to emails, is another significant tea-producing country. In spite of 10 participants joining the study, it was not possible to reach tea-related phrases except for two sentences. First of all, 'te' is the word used to express tea, which is drunk with or without milk (Participant Ar5). 'Me tomo cinco minutos, me to mo un te' was mentioned by Participants Ar6 and Ar7. Its English translation is "I take five minutes, I take a cup of tea". This sentence comes from a local tea brand's advertisement from the 1980s and is used to signal a person's desire for a short break (Ar6 and Ar7). Another general common term mentioned by Ar9 and used to reflect the eagerness of coming together for a snack and to chat is 'Juntarse a tomar el te' (get together to have a tea). This sentence is used a lot in Argentinian culture to express that some people will meet to eat something or talk.

Participants from China, a country that is identified with tea and tea history, generally preferred to give information about the cultural value of the tea in the country, and in their answers, they mentioned words or phrases that are totally different from each other. Participant Ch1 talked about one of the oldest works written about tea by Lu Yu between 760-780 CE, also revealing Lu Yu's passion for tea and his journey.

'Kun jin gan lai', a phrase which is not directly related to the tea, can be the starting point of participants' utterances. Participant Ch2 expressed that the meaning of the phrase, 'bitter first, then sweet', is used when tasting tea. Without sugar, the first taste of tea is bitter, but then you start to like it. In life, people reach happiness and comfort after struggling and having pain sometimes. Tea is in Chinese people's culture, and Participant Ch4 supported this by expressing that " 'cha' (tea in Chinese) is used for water in Northern Anhui. When they ask you, 'Would you like to drink tea', they mean to give you hot water since tea refers to boiled water in this region." The word 'cha' culturally started to be used for other beverages, especially hot ones. Wang & Dong (2025) clarify this in their papers. According to them, in old times, water would be used immediately after boiling tea in order not to spend any extra material to boil water for other purposes such as washing dishes or clothes. So that 'cha' started to be used for hot water. Social conditions and language are in combination, and they reflect each other. The relationship of these concepts can be seen in the phrases mentioned by the participants. For Participant Ch3, 'ao cha' (boiling tea) is a

different process from ordinary boiling. This participant thinks that good tea requires good water, which should be pure, powerful, and ideal as described in the story 'Three Gorges' written by Wang Anshi.

'Lei cha (or Ground tea soup)' is a kind of beverage translated in English as 'Eight Treasures Tea' and originates from Hakka culture. It is more than a beverage because of incorporates nuts, herbs, grains, etc. It is given as a Malaysian Hakka Lei Cha soup whose sources come from China (Harmayana et al., 2019). Participant Ch10 mentions 'Huacha' and Shuiguo cha', different kinds of tea according to their flavors. 'Huacha' is a kind of tea flavored with different flowers. It is named scented tea because jasmine, magnolia, rose, calendula, etc. are used to aromatize green tea (Pan et al., 2022). On the other hand, fruits are used to aromatize the 'shuiguo' instead of flowers. Yang (2024) calls it 'nascent tea,' which is a combination of black tea and fruits.

Participant Chi8 talks about 'ren zou cha liang (when people leave, tea gets cold)' and 'Cha yu fan hou (after tea and after meals)'. The first one was explained by the participant as a metaphor used to describe the fading of interest once someone loses importance. The second one is used to describe relaxing time after meals or drinking tea. 'Tie guanyin, gen guanjin wuguan (Tieguanyin has nothing to do with Guanjin)' is not a phrase used in language but mentioned by Participant Ch7 with an explanation that "tea does not directly belong to Buddhist Guanjin". According to the story in Tranquil Tuesdays and the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Guanjin was a Bodhisattva who reached nirvana but chose to stay on Earth to guide people. Guanjin showed the first tea branch to a poor farmer in his dream because he was serving the Guanjin Temple. So, this tea is known as 'tieguanyin'. Last phrase by Chinese participants is 'san cha liv li (three teas and six rites)', a kind of ceremony in traditional wedding customs, including serving tea, setting tea, and combining tea. It is clear from the findings above; there are many culture-related words in these nations' languages that not only serve as descriptors of beverages but also as metaphors, idioms, and cultural reflections. Their revealing of social practices, values, and historical traditions shows how language and lifestyle reinforce one another. Language mirrors culture better by using ordinary words in different ways, and tea is one of those.

Conclusion

Language and culture are closely intertwined. As one of the essential components of culture, the living and eating styles of the communities also affect the words or phrases in a language. A community living under snowy weather conditions often possesses a greater number of snow-related words, phrases, and even idioms. In the same way, agricultural products constitute one side of living conditions. Tea, which is one of these products, is cultivated more in some countries. By taking these mentions above into consideration, this paper tried to find out as many tea-related words or phrases as possible from the top tea-producing countries by using a qualitative email interview method. Totally, 102 figurative or non-figurative words and phrases were gathered by examining the answers of 200 participants from 15 countries. Participants from Japan, followed by participants from Türkiye and Uganda, were the group that cited the most linguistic elements. However, this does not necessarily mean that these communities have a greater

number of tea-related lexical units overall. The Chinese people, whose culture has a deep connection with tea, did not express as many words as the Japanese or Turkish people.

It is clear in the findings that, in addition to having words that stand for the same meaning, there are also some culture-related words that belong to a specific community. Ebedde and cayi taliko saawa from Uganda; abdest suyu and çaycuma from Türkiye; laphat thoke from Myanmar; cay dorang and cay paseban dide from Iran; the talua from Indonesia; shat rong-er cha from Bangladesh; chabashira and heso ga cha wo wakasu from Japan are the most interesting and culture-related words or phrases. Having culture-related words makes it apparent that language and words are culture-specific, which can be meaningless in different communities. Despite all those countries producing tea, they consume it in various ways according to their culture. Some use it to make soup, some consume it with milk, and still, some prefer the aromatized version of it. These culture-related consumption differences also made the communities use different words in their languages. Also, communities that signify the value of tea in their culture have tea-related idioms in their language.

This paper attempted to identify tea-related words in the top tea-producing countries; however, it cannot be stated that all tea-related words of each country are included in it. Because it is restricted to participants' answers, it is likely to have unmentioned additional terms. Perhaps some countries have more words than the study covered, so they are not included here. In spite of having such restrictions, this paper is the first one to combine tea-related lexical items gathered from the people of the top 15 tea-producing countries.

The findings also have significant implications. The diversity of tea-related items proves the link between linguistics and agricultural products, social life, etc. This reveals how meaning is shaped by local values, rituals, and drinking habits. Despite having general categories or meanings, there are also words with local use or meanings. This signifies the necessity of a region-based lexicon.

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