The LanguaL thesaurus can serve as an international master-code for linking food databases. LanguaL stands for Langua aLimentaria or language of food. It is a multilingual faceted thesaurus for describing foods, specifically for classifying food products for information retrieval.

It allows each food to be described by a set of standard, controlled terms chosen from facets characteristic of the nutritional and/or hygienic quality of a food, as for example the biological origin, the methods of cooking and conservation, and technological treatments. The thesaurus information is used to link together LanguaL indexed food composition data sets.

A new website for the LanguaL thesaurus has been developed with the support of the Danish Veterinary Food Administration at http://www.langual.org. This new website includes an updated presentation of the LanguaL tree structure (the systematic display) with all information included concerning the single descriptors, allowing searches online. The prototype online search facility can be used to search food information in LanguaL indexed food composition databases, with links to Internet-based food composition.

Food composition data have over the most recent years been introduced by national authorities and private enterprises on the Internet. The presentations cover a wide range of technical solutions and the layouts are of very diverse appearance. For the user, there is a need for more standardised presentation of data. This LanguaL based search system demonstrates the benefits of using standardised systems for linking food composition data from all over the world.