

Register Analysis of Language use by K-Pop Fans on Social Media

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Abstract:

There has been limited academic research on the online language use of K-Pop fans, particularly ARMY - the global fanbase for BTS, which is considered one of the largest in the world. This exploratory study aims to address the register and special language employed by fans in online forums and social media platforms, with the goal of generating insights into how linguistic devices establish connections and identities within virtual communities. Using a non-positivistic qualitative approach, the study will utilize AntConc, an online corpus analysis tool, to retrieve and analyze data from official BTS online posts. By revealing distinctive linguistic features of K-Pop fan discourse, including specific abbreviations and acronyms unique to the community, this analysis will shed light on the importance of shared language and cultural knowledge in fan bonding. The special vocabulary serves as a tool for fans to indicate their membership and consolidate their ARMY identity, functioning as a form of social capital. Ultimately, this research provides new avenues for exploring how language use shapes fan identity and culture, emphasizing the significance of both register and special language repertoires in fostering online communities.

Keywords: Special language; Register; K-Pop fan; Army; Online community

Abstrak:

Penelitian akademis mengenai penggunaan bahasa online oleh penggemar K-Pop, khususnya ARMY - basis penggemar global BTS yang dianggap sebagai salah satu yang terbesar di dunia, masih sangat terbatas. Studi eksplorasi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji register dan bahasa khusus yang digunakan oleh penggemar di forum online dan platform media sosial, dengan tujuan menghasilkan wawasan tentang bagaimana perangkat linguistik membangun koneksi dan identitas dalam komunitas virtual. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif non-positivistik, penelitian ini akan memanfaatkan AntConc, sebuah alat analisis korpus online, untuk mengambil dan menganalisis data dari postingan online resmi BTS. Dengan mengungkapkan fitur linguistik khas dari wacana penggemar K-Pop, termasuk singkatan dan akronim spesifik yang unik bagi komunitas tersebut, analisis ini akan menyoroti pentingnya bahasa bersama dan pengetahuan budaya dalam mempererat ikatan antar penggemar. Kosakata khusus berfungsi sebagai alat bagi penggemar untuk menunjukkan keanggotaan mereka dan memperkuat identitas ARMY mereka, yang berperan sebagai bentuk modal sosial. Pada akhirnya, penelitian ini membuka jalan baru untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana penggunaan bahasa membentuk identitas dan budaya penggemar, dengan menekankan pentingnya register dan kumpulan bahasa khusus dalam membina komunitas online.

Kata kunci: Bahasa khusus; Register; Fans K-Pop; Army; Komunitas online

INTRODUCTION

Social media has revolutionized internet usage worldwide, shaping societies and individual identities on a global scale (Parvez, 2019). It has also emerged as a powerful platform for fostering connection and promoting good relations between countries, while forming communities (Ayu Adelia et al., 2023). The development of social media gave rise to virtual social, cultural, religious, and special interest groups. Each of these communities is not only a forum for interactions and information exchange, but also develops into a unique entire with its own characteristics. One of the most prominent aspects of this uniqueness is the use of language and unique ways of communicating within each group, creating a kind of “digital dialect” that distinguishes one community from another.

According to SoburAlex, (2018) K-Pop evolved from a subculture in South Korea to a global phenomenon that influenced the music industry, fashion, and popular culture at large. The genre first emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s with the emergence of groups such as H.O.T and Seo Taiji and Boys the fused elements of Western Pop music with Korean music culture. BTS, TXT, ENHYPEN, SEVENTEEN, and many other groups introduced K-Pop to the world with tremendous success, making K-Pop one of the most influential music genres in the world. Another unique feature of the K-Pop world is the highly structured training system for idols, who often undergo years of training before debuting. This allows them to perform professionally in various aspects, including singing, dancing, acting, and foreign language skills. Behind the success of idols, there are fans who strongly support their careers Lacasa et al., (2017) said fandom is a group of people who follow certain custom. They interact with each other and also build communications with the media. Fandom in K-Pop is not only a passive listener, but am active part in supporting their artists, voting for music awards, purchasing song on apple music, and donating donations on behalf of their favourite group. They often use special names, such as ARMY for BTS, MOA for TXT, ENGNE for ENHYPEN, and CARAT for SEVENTEEN. Online fandom has made fandom as a whole more visible, and while this may have ‘mainstreamed’ fan identity, it has also increased fan awareness of their own online representations(Booth & Kelly, 2013). They not only love the music of the groups they support, but also engage in various projects that in love social activism, spreading positive messages, and supporting artists in various creative ways. In the age social media, K-Pop



fandom are particularly adept at using platforms such as X, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to promote their groups.

The special language or register used in this virtual community has an important function in shaping group identity and facilitating community between members. Special language has not yet been recognized as a legitimate language, either by linguistics or terminologists, and studies on special language have primarily focused on lexicographic studies, standardization, and research in the field of terminology (Thellefsen, 2003).

Virtual communities, especially those centered on a particular interest or topic, often develop a unique vocabulary and way of speaking. This can include abbreviations, acronyms, technical terms, or even entirely new words. The level of use of this specialized language can vary depending on the type of community, but is generally quite significant. The purpose of communication, the purpose of communication in a virtual community greatly influences the register used for example, a professional community might use formal language, whereas a fandom or hobby community could be more relaxed and informal. Social and cultural context means that the social and cultural background of community members will shape the language and register they use. Some communities may use certain vocabulary or expressions that are influenced by pop culture or certain subcultures (Putri et al., 2024). The intensity of interaction with these communities that interact frequently has more specialized language, platforms used, some platforms encourage the use of shorter language. The unique language that develops in each of these virtual community's functions as more than a communication tool, it becomes a reflection of identity and a marker of group membership. The use of specialized terms, acronyms, memes, or even specific sentence structures not only facilitates internal communication, but also strengthens bonds between members and builds a sense of community. These linguistic idiosyncrasies often reflect the shared values, interest and experiences shared by community members, thus becoming a kind of cultural code that distinguishes "insiders" from "outsiders". As such, language becomes not only the medium but also the message itself, affirming the collective identity and unique characteristics of each group in an increasingly diverse digital landscape. Play an important role in how Army's communicate and build community online. Hashtags like #BTSARMY, #BTSO7 are not only used to organize content, but also convey a sense of collective and unity within the fandom. Meme and edits made by fan also contribute to the shared culture, as they provide humorous



content that can enjoy, these digital tools, rooted in the fans form different geographical locations still deep connected despite being physically separated. Each fandom has its own distinctive language patterns for communication. The language patterns of different fandom are influenced by unique neologisms that help represent the identity of each fandom (Zayyan et al., 2023). Army on social media is characterized by a unique blend of creativity and shared cultural references. Neologisms in the K-Pop fandom community as a whole are really noticeable even when we only see their virtual interactions on a whim (Zayyan et al., 2023). fans often invent new words, abbreviations and phrases that are distinctive in their fandom. For example, terms such as “bias” which refers to a fan’s favourite group member, or “OT7” which signifies support for all seven members, are often used within the fandom. These terms, along with others, seven as a form of group language that distinguishes Army from other fandoms and rosters a sense of community among its members. The specialized language allows fans to express that they are part of BTS fans.

ARMY (Adorable Representative M.C.for Youth) is the official fan designation of K-Pop groups BTS. Based on the meaning of ARMY is an army or military, while BTS itself means men wearing bulletproof vests. The bulletproof nest itself is closely associated with the army. Which was legalized on July 09, 2013. The community is known for its dedication and loyalty, and has a strong presence on various social media platforms.

This research aims to analyse the registers used by ARMY on social media, focusing on how this particular language contributes to the formation and strengthening of the community. The selection of ARMY as a research subject is based on the size of this community and its significant influence in the global social media landscape. As per the most hashtags and the comments of ARMYs on X.

This article examines the specialized language used by fans on social media platforms, analysing how these linguistic practices contribute to identity formatting and community building. Through an analysis of posts on platforms like X and other communication form, this study aims to uncover how language serves as a tool for both self-expression and community bonding among fans. The findings of this study are expected to offer valuable insights into the broader phenomenon of fan culture on social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Register Among Young People

According to Putri et al. (2024), language registers in the online game player communities reflect a unique communication culture, with three main form: lingual, restricted, and open. The research reveals that the registers have the functions of inviting, describing circumstances, and providing information, allowing players to communicate effectively and build community identity. While some terms may be more appropriate for adult users, the use of these registers shows how online gaming communities develop their own specialized language, providing valuable insights into sociolinguistic studies.

Register in Digital Community Analysis of the Language Used by K-Pop Fandom in Social Media

The use of register is strongly influenced by the level of formality and the purpose of communication, where in formal context, the register is more official, while in informal contexts, the language used is more relaxed and familiar. In addition, register also reflects an individual's social identity and the norms within a particular community. For example, in virtual communities such as the BTS fandom on Twitter, user develop specialized language and symbols that form a collective identity and are only understood by community members. Technology and social media have also encouraged the bird of new, more concise and often informal registers, such as the use of emojis and abbreviations. Register dynamics continue to evolve with technological and cultural changes, especially in online communities, where trends and communication needs influence the variety of language used (Sa'diyah, 2015)

Register Function

According to (Rohmah & Laksono, 2024). Register is a variety of language that appears in certain social and situational contexts. Research shows that register is used to adept language to the field of work, community, or social activities. Sociolinguistic research, such as that conducted in the television station community, shows that register can take the form of root words, abbreviations, special terns, and foreign terms. The meaning of register of register consists of lexical meaning and social meaning. Overall, register helps communities simplify and speed up communication, while strengthening their social identity within the community.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a content analysis design to explore and understand language use in digital communication on the X app platform. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on its ability to capture the nuances, context, and deep meaning of the communication phenomenon under study. In the data collection process, the researcher conducted non-participant observation of the content published on the X app, which included purposive sampling of tweets with specific hashtags or keywords, systematic documentation of user interactions in discussion threads, and archiving of multimedia content such as emojis, GIFs and memes accompanying the text. Data analysis was carried out iteratively using a thematic analysis approach, starting with an in-depth reading of the collected data, followed by initial coding to identify patterns of language use, development of categories and themes, and interpretation of the meaning and context of the communication patterns found.

To ensure the credibility of the research, several validity and reliability strategies were applied, including data triangulation, peer debriefing, thick description, as well as member checking through confirmation with active users of the X app. Despite the public nature of the data used, this study kept ethical aspects in mind by maintaining user anonymity in reporting results, using only publicly published data, and considering the sensitivity of the content before inclusion in the analysis. The researcher is also aware of several limitations of this methodology, including limited access to only public content, possible bias in sample selection, and challenges in interpreting context that may be lost in digital communication. Through this comprehensive methodological approach, the research aims to provide a deep understanding of language use and communication dynamics on the X app platform.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

NO	Word	Freq
1.	Apobangpo	285
2.	Festa	279
3.	Hobi	164
4.	J-Hope	155
5.	I Purple You	80
6.	OT7	200



Apobangpo

Apobangpo is a word that Jungkook first mentioned to fans in 2019. Apobangpo means Army Forever Bangtan Forever (AFBF), the letter "A" in Apobangpo is the first syllable of army in Hangul, while "po" is the first syllable of forever. The second word "Bang or Bangtan" in Apobangpo is Korean for BTS Bangtan Seonyeondan. The word Apobangpo is shouted by soldiers and members of BTS to encourage each other. The word is used when BTS celebrates birthdays and the army's anniversary.

happy anniversary bts we love you so much btsarmy apobangpo eleven years and counting see you next year
happy anniversary our lovely seven apobangpo
eleven years of bangtan and many more to come love you forever and always bts 11th anniversary of apobangpo
happy 11th anniversary bts may you have decades more of music adventures laughter and joy apobangpo
thanks right back to you bts has made me a happier human and I appreciate everything you have given us all these years here is to many many more in the future apobangpo
the world is not black and white anymore starting off with seokjin the world will be slowly filled with beautiful colors again happy festa bts my beautiful spring bts apobangpo borahe

Festa

Festa is the day of BTS's debut celebration, they debuted on June 13th and usually they hold a joint live broadcast on the Weverse app. They also uploaded a video about their journey and released a song for the army.

festa lets goooo
festa season is back
its festa tiiiiiiiiimmmeeeeee
i was afraid we are not getting a festa this year
mi primer festa

Hobi and J-hope

The word is the stage name of one of the BTS members named Jung-Hoseok. J-hope is his stage name which came from his desire to represent hope to the fans and be "BTS Hope", and the word Hobi comes from the members calling him "Hobie" which is short for his stage name.

we miss you hobiii
hobi our sunshine
hobi you are such sweetheart I love you so much
we love you jhope
jhope te amo

I Purple You

This phrase was first spoken by Kim Taehyung (V BTS) at the November 2016 fan meeting, which means "purple," meaning that purple is the last color in the rainbow. This

phrase is BTS's expression of love and trust to the army, to show that they will love and support their fans until the end. This phrase is often used during BTS concerts.

i purple you my looooooveeeeeeeeeee
purple youuu, boraheee
myloveeeee purple you forever

OT7

OT7 stands for One Team 7. The term is used by fans to show balanced support for all BTS members, believing that all seven members are equally important. This is to support the members without discriminating or having a particular bias towards a particular member, and to encourage fans when BTS releases a new album. This word is often used on X's social media platforms.

my ot7
slayyyyyyyyyy ot7
omg my lomlllllllllll ot7
finally my loveee ot7

Discussion

Jucker, (1989) Register in linguistics refers to the variety of language used in a given context, including word choice, style, and structure appropriate to the communication situation. Register can be influenced by factors such as the purpose of communication, the audience, and the social context. For example, the formal language used in official documents differs from the colloquial language used in casual conversation.

There are several types of register, including formal register, used in official situations, such as speeches, academic presentations, or legal documents; informal register, used in casual situations, such as conversations with friends or family; and professional register, used in specialized fields, such as science, engineering, or other professional fields.

CONCLUSION(S)

This study analyzed the use of specific language or registers by K-pop fan communities, specifically ARMY, the global fans of BTS. It was found that ARMY uses a variety of unique words, abbreviations, and phrases that reflect the identity and culture of their community. Terms such as "Apobangpo," "Festa," "Hobi," "J-Hope," "I Purple You," and "OT7" serve as cultural codes that distinguish "insiders" (community members) from "outsiders. The use of this specialized language not only facilitates internal

communication, but also strengthens bonds between members and builds a sense of community.

The results of this study highlight the importance of registers and specialized language in the formation and maintenance of collective identity in virtual communities. This study provides new insights into how language use contributes to the culture and communication practices within fan communities, with broader implications for understanding online community dynamics in the current social media era. Further research could explore how similar linguistic practices form and function in other online communities.

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