



Adjectives as Representation of SEVENTEEN's Mingyu in Koreaboo Articles

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Abstract:

This study examines how adjectives are used to shape the public image of Mingyu from the group SEVENTEEN in online entertainment news. Using a corpus-based approach and mixed methods, this study combines quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative semantic interpretation. A total of 70 articles from Koreaboo published between 2022 and early 2025 were collected and analyzed using Juxtext and LancsBox. The ten adjectives with the highest frequency were identified using Leech's (1981) Semantic Theory, with positive, negative, and neutral classifications. The results show that adjectives such as viral, handsome, new, first, and recent play an important role in building Mingyu's image as a popular, attractive, and relevant figure, while adjectives such as live, particular, and Seventeen function in relational and structural contexts. Overall, this study confirms that the choice of language in Koreaboo articles is not only descriptive but also actively shapes the idol's persona through evaluative language, which can enrich our understanding of how digital media discourse depicts idol culture globally.

Keywords: corpus linguistics; adjectives; connotative meaning; media discourse; K- Pop

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini meneliti bagaimana adjektiva digunakan untuk membentuk citra publik Mingyu dari grup SEVENTEEN dalam berita hiburan daring. Dengan pendekatan berbasis korpus dan metode campuran, penelitian ini menggabungkan analisis frekuensi kuantitatif dan interpretasi semantik kualitatif. Sebanyak 70 artikel dari Koreaboo yang terbit antara tahun 2022 hingga awal 2025 dikumpulkan dan dianalisis menggunakan Juxtext dan LancsBox. Sepuluh adjektiva dengan frekuensi tertinggi diidentifikasi berdasarkan teori Semantik Leech (1981) dengan klasifikasi positif, negatif, dan netral. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa adjektiva seperti viral, handsome, new, first, dan recent berperan penting dalam membangun citra Mingyu sebagai figur yang populer, menarik, dan relevan, sementara adjektiva seperti live, particular, dan Seventeen berfungsi dalam konteks relasional dan struktural. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pilihan bahasa dalam artikel koreaboo tidak hanya bersifat deskriptif, tetapi juga secara aktif membentuk persona idola melalui bahasa evaluatif, yang mana dapat memperkaya pemahaman tentang bagaimana wacana media digital menggambarkan budaya idola secara global.

Kata kunci: linguistik korpus; adjektiva; makna konotatif; wacana media; K-Pop



INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, Korea has emerged as a major global cultural influence, particularly in the entertainment industry, since the spread of the so-called ‘Korean Wave’ or *Hallyu* (Bok-rae, 2015). This cultural phenomenon, which began in the 1990s, was initially marked by the rapid popularity of Korean dramas and movies across various countries (Parc & Hwy-Chang, 2013). With the development of digital technology and the rise of global streaming platforms, the Korean Wave has continued to expand beyond Asia, thereby reaching a global audience. In addition, the global popularity of K-pop has significantly increased, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, as international audiences consumed more online entertainment while staying at home (Drianda et al., 2021)

Within this context, K-Pop groups have played an important role in promoting Korean popular culture worldwide (Kim et al., 2023), and one of the groups that has received significant attention is *SEVENTEEN*. Since its debut, the group has successfully established itself as one of the leading boy groups in the global K-Pop industry (Koivukoski, 2023). With its consistent achievements, SEVENTEEN has been frequently highlighted by the media, and its members have often been the subject of discussion among fans. One member in particular, Mingyu, has become especially prominent, since his visuals are often described as embodying the so-called “boyfriend material” image (Shofa et al., 2024). As a result, Mingyu has consistently attracted the attention of the media, blogs, and news platforms that compete to deliver the latest exclusive updates about him, so that fans can continuously engage with news related to his activities.

Since the increasing demand for fast and engaging news content has reshaped the digital journalism landscape, online media platforms have adopted strategies that emphasize reader engagement. Koreaboo, for example, is one of the most well-known online media outlets that provides global audiences with up-to-date news and information about Korean popular culture. Because of its style of reporting, which often features catchy and sometimes aggressive titles, Koreaboo is widely recognized for using headlines that may be considered clickbait. Even though such headlines are designed to attract readers’ attention, they also reveal how language can be strategically employed in media discourse so that it constructs a particular image of K-Pop idols.

Several researchers have explored how language is employed in online news to convey both factual information and evaluative meaning. (Karunakaran & Ang, 2023;



Metang & Narathakoon, 2025; Moon, 2023; Nor et al., 2021; Nor & Zulcafli, 2020; Sukman et al., 2022) have all examined different linguistic aspects within online news corpora— ranging from lexico-grammatical patterns and lexical collocations to adjective usage and semantic groupings. Collectively, their studies reveal how corpus-based approaches can uncover underlying linguistic tendencies in media texts, particularly in shaping readers' perceptions and framing social or public issues. Although these studies illustrate the diversity of corpus-based approaches in analyzing online media, it remains uncommon to examine adjectives specifically in entertainment-oriented platforms that focus on public figures

This is particularly relevant as online media outlets such as *Koreaboo* hold substantial influence in shaping global perceptions of idols. The adjectives they use not only serve descriptive purposes but also carry evaluative meanings that construct particular images of public figures. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the adjectives most frequently used by *Koreaboo* in its online coverage of Mingyu from SEVENTEEN, so that it may shed light on how online media contributes to the linguistic construction of idol personas within the global K-Pop industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employs Leech, (1981) Semantic Theory to offer a comprehensive description of how words convey both explicit information and implicit significance, distinguishing seven distinct facets of meaning. At its foundation is Conceptual meaning, which denotes the word's objective, literal, or dictionary meaning; however, this core is immediately extended by Connotative meaning, which captures the associative and cultural values that enrich the word beyond its literal definition. Moving into the pragmatics of language use, Social meaning reflects the context of interaction, giving aspects like formality or register, while Affective meaning expresses the speaker's personal feelings or attitudes toward the subject. This framework also explains the complexity of connection: Reflected meaning occurs when one meaning of an ambiguous word influences the interpretation of another meaning, and collocative meaning comes from the predictable co-occurrence and habit of a word with certain lexical pairs. Finally, thematic meaning is entirely structural, determined by the arrangement and emphasis of information in a sentence to control the focus or perspective desired by the speaker, overall demonstrating how Leech's framework provides an appropriate perspective for analyzing



the diverse nature of linguistic communication.

This study focuses on connotative meaning to classify adjectives. One of the earliest systematic models for analyzing connotation is Osgood et al., (1957) Semantic Differential Theory, which explains that word meaning is not only conceptual but also evaluative, measurable along bipolar dimensions such as positive–negative.

Later research emphasized the need for a neutral category in sentiment analysis. Koppel & Schler, (2006), in *The Importance of Neutral Examples for Learning Sentiment*, highlight that including neutral data improves classification accuracy and prevents misinterpretation. This framework supports the present study's use of positive, negative, and neutral categories to achieve a more comprehensive interpretation of adjectives. The inclusion of neutral adjectives is important because not all language carries strong emotional tones. Some words fall between positive and negative meanings, depending on the context. Recognizing this middle ground helps avoid overly extreme interpretations and provides a fairer picture of how adjectives function in describing Mingyu within media discourse.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a corpus-based design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative aspect involved identifying and counting adjectives in a corpus of Koreaboo articles, while the qualitative aspect focused on interpreting their connotative meanings based on Leech's (1981) Semantic Theory. This design allowed the researcher to capture both the distributional patterns of adjectives and their evaluative meanings that contribute to the portrayal of public figures.

The main instruments used in this study were LancsBox and Justext. LancsBox, a corpus analysis software developed by Lancaster University, was used to generate concordance lines, identify adjectives through lemma-based queries, and examine their frequency across the corpus. Meanwhile, Justext was employed to extract textual content from Koreaboo articles, removing non-relevant elements such as advertisements, links, and formatting. These tools ensured that the data were both clean and analyzable for linguistic investigation.

The research procedures consisted of several stages. First, a total of 70 entertainment news articles were collected from Koreaboo, covering the period from 2022 to early 2025. The textual content of each article was extracted using Justext, leaving only the main body

of text. Second, all texts were compiled into LanCSBox to create the corpus. Using the KWIC (Key Word in Context) and Lemma features, adjectives were identified and examined in their sentence contexts to verify their grammatical function. Third, the identified adjectives were counted and manually sorted based on frequency, and the ten most frequent adjectives were selected for further analysis. Finally, these adjectives were analyzed within their concordance lines to determine whether they expressed positive, negative, or neutral connotations, following Leech's (1981) classification of connotative meaning. The results were then interpreted to reveal evaluative patterns used in portraying public figures in online entertainment news.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified ten adjectives that appear most frequently in Koreaboo's online articles about SEVENTEEN's Mingyu. These adjectives reveal both descriptive and evaluative tendencies within entertainment media discourse, showing how language choices contribute to constructing the idol's public image.

Table 1. The most frequent adjectives in Koreaboo's articles about SEVENTEEN Mingyu

| No | Adjective | Frequency | Connotation | Function in Context |
|----|------------|-----------|--------------------|--|
| 1 | Many | 53 | Neutral → Positive | Emphasizes large-scale reactions and fan involvement |
| 2 | Viral | 35 | Positive | Highlights popularity and public visibility |
| 3 | Handsome | 25 | Positive | Expresses visual admiration and idolization |
| 4 | Recent | 24 | Neutral → Positive | Indicates relevance and ongoing activity |
| 5 | Other | 22 | Neutral | Establishes contrastive or relational context |
| 6 | Live | 20 | Positive | Suggests authenticity and immediacy in interaction |
| 7 | Particular | 19 | Neutral | Marks emphasis or focus within text |
| 8 | New | 18 | Positive | Conveys novelty, progress, and anticipation |
| 9 | First | 16 | Positive | Suggests achievement and exclusivity |
| 10 | Seventeen | 15 | Neutral | Denotes group affiliation and identity |

Essential Adjectives

The corpus analysis revealed five adjectives that appeared most frequently in *Koreaboo* articles about SEVENTEEN's Mingyu, *viral*, *handsome*, *new*, *first*, and *recent*. These adjectives not only describe Mingyu but also reflect how the media represents him as admired, active, and relevant. The following analysis discusses how each adjective functions in context, based on selected concordance lines from the corpus. In accordance with Leech's Semantic Theory (1981), these words are interpreted through their connotative meanings, which refer to associative values or meanings beyond their literal meanings.

Viral — Popularity as Validation

The adjective *viral* functions as a marker of success and social approval. Expressions such as “the video went viral” or “his interaction soon went viral” portray visibility as a sign of influence. While *viral* is technically descriptive, its pragmatic use aligns fame with worthiness, reinforcing the idol's social legitimacy and mass appeal.

Handsome — Physical Appeal and Idolization

Handsome represents overt admiration and aesthetic judgment. It appears in phrases like “the idol looked extremely handsome” or “Mingyu looked undeniably handsome,” reflecting how attractiveness becomes symbolic of talent and value. The repetition of *handsome* helps construct an image of perfection, where physical beauty equates to charisma and success in idol culture.

New — Novelty and Sustained Relevance

New emphasizes Mingyu's continuous self-renewal through updated content, visuals, or appearances. Examples such as “Mingyu posted new visuals” and “fans get excited whenever he posts something new” associate novelty with creativity and consistency. The adjective thus carries positive connotations of progress and modernity, essential traits in sustaining fan engagement in digital media.

First — Prestige and Distinction

The adjective *first* often appears in references to achievements or milestones, e.g., “the first SEVENTEEN idol to catch attention” or “the first time Mingyu's live broadcast was interrupted.” Its use highlights uniqueness and precedence, framing Mingyu as a distinguished and pioneering figure. This reflects how entertainment media elevate individuality and exclusivity as markers of prestige.



Recent — *Continuity and Presence*

Although semantically neutral, *recent* situates Mingyu within an active timeline— “in a recent photoshoot,” “during a recent live broadcast.” By emphasizing temporal closeness, *recent* conveys relevance and consistency, ensuring that readers perceive Mingyu as a current and continuously visible celebrity. This supports the media’s broader function of maintaining an idol’s public momentum.

Supporting Adjectives

Out of the five main adjectives discussed earlier, other words such as *many*, *other*, *live*, *particular*, and *Seventeen* also play an important contextual role in the corpus. Although these adjectives are less expressive in tone, they serve as supporting elements in shaping the overall representation of Mingyu. The word *other* emphasizes Mingyu's relationship with fellow idols and within group dynamics. *Live* highlights spontaneity and closeness in fan interactions, subtly explaining his ease in interacting. *Particular* serves as a marker of focus that directs the reader's attention to key points, while *Seventeen* acts as an identity adjective that explains where he comes from. Together, these adjectives describe Mingyu as a personally unique and socially connected figure.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how *Koreaboo* used adjectives to shape the public image of Mingyu from SEVENTEEN within the global K-pop industry. Based on a collected corpus of *Koreaboo* articles, the research found that evaluative adjectives such *viral*, *handsome*, *new*, *first*, and *recent* played a central role in portraying Mingyu as an admired, relevant, and successful figure, while neutral or descriptive adjectives such as *many*, *other*, *live*, *special*, and *Seventeen* helped situate him within social and group contexts. These linguistic patterns showed that entertainment journalism not only described idols but also actively participated in building their appeal and significance through subtle evaluative narratives. By combining corpus-based and semantic approaches, this study provided insights into how seemingly simple language choices contributed to shaping cultural narratives and maintaining the global visibility of idols in digital media.

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