

EXPLORING CASUAL AND INTIMATE REGISTER USED IN A.C.E FANDOM COMMUNICATION ON X

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ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini mengkaji jenis-jenis register bahasa yang digunakan oleh penggemar A.C.E (Choice) di platform X (sebelumnya Twitter), dengan fokus khusus pada register kasual dan intim. Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana penggemar menggunakan gaya bahasa tertentu untuk berkomunikasi dalam ruang digital komunitas penggemar, serta memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang variasi bahasa dalam komunitas daring. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dan dianalisis dari komentar yang dihasilkan penggemar pada unggahan halaman penggemar A.C.E yang tersedia secara publik. Analisis didasarkan pada kerangka klasifikasi register dari Joos (1976), dengan perhatian khusus pada bagaimana register kasual dan intim muncul melalui bahasa informal, slang, ekspresi emosional, dan istilah khas fandom. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kedua jenis register ini paling dominan dalam diskursus penggemar, mencerminkan sifat komunitas penggemar A.C.E yang ekspresif, kreatif, dan erat. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya register dalam membentuk komunikasi daring dan memberikan wawasan berharga tentang praktik kebahasaan yang terus berkembang dalam budaya digital komunitas penggemar.

Kata kunci: fandom; penggemar A.C.E; percakapan X; register; variasi bahasa

ABSTRACT. This study investigates the types of language registers used by A.C.E fans (Choice) on the X platform (formerly Twitter), with particular focus on the casual and intimate registers. It aims to explore how fans use specific linguistic styles to communicate within the digital fandom space, contributing to the broader understanding of language variation in online communities. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the study collected and analyzed fan-generated content from publicly available comments on A.C.E's fan page. The analysis draws upon Joos's (1976) framework of register classification, particularly examining how casual and intimate registers manifest through informal expressions, slang, emotional language, and fandom-specific terminology. The findings reveal that these registers dominate fan discourse, reflecting the expressive, creative, and tightly connected nature of the A.C.E fan community. This research highlights the importance of register in shaping online communication and offer insights into the evolving linguistic patterns within digital culture.

Keywords: A.C.E fans; fandom; language variation; register; X conversation

INTRODUCTION

Social interactions can take place anytime and anywhere, whether through face-to-face conversations or brief exchanges on social media platforms. In digital spaces, language variation emerges through user engagement, especially within online communities that continually develop and adopt new forms of expression. A key aspect of this variation involves register, which refers to how language use shifts depending on the specific social group and context. These groups adopt particular registers suited to their shared interests and communicative situations, often creating language patterns that may be difficult for outsiders to interpret. Since every act of communication is shaped by its surrounding context, the language used must be understood in relation to the social factors at play. As

Brown and Attardo (2014) note, register is not about who is speaking but rather about how the language changes according to situational factors. It functions as a semantic framework that reflects culturally and contextually appropriate language use, incorporating linguistic elements that serve specific communicative purposes.

Register may emerge across different languages depending on their communicative functions, often replicating established linguistic patterns. These registers are dynamic, continuously evolving in response to social and cultural shifts, with certain terms being added or falling out of use over time. Within fandom communities, for example, numerous neologisms are created, though their meanings and origins are not always transparent to outsiders. Investigating these register forms offers valuable insight for linguistic research,

particularly in understanding how specific lexical choices reflect the communicative norms and identity markers of a social group.

According to Oh and Lee (2014), K-pop fandoms are an integral component of the broader K-pop phenomenon, which has had a profound cultural and societal impact. This evolution has transformed public perceptions of the popular music industry, elevating its status and influence in contemporary society. For example, Oh and Lee (2014) highlight that an increasing number of children now aspire to become K-pop idols, often prioritizing this goal over more traditional professions such as government service, medicine, or academia. Within this dynamic, each K-pop fan belongs to a distinct fandom that actively engages in supporting and promoting belongs to a distinct fandom that actively engages in supporting and promoting their chosen idols. These fandoms often develop their own language practices, forming unique communicative styles to interact both with the celebrities they admire and with fellow fans. As Booth (2018) observes, fandoms are composed of individuals who engage with shared cultural objects while cultivating long-standing customs and behaviors. These shared linguistic norms contribute to a fandom's identity but also create barriers for outsiders unfamiliar with the group's specific language. In this context, registers become essential for facilitating communication and strengthening social bonds within the fan community.

Fandom communities are active across a range of social media platforms, with X (formerly Twitter) remaining one of the most popular. According to Haugh and Watkins (2016), X serves as a primary destination for fans seeking to obtain information, engage with entertainment content, express opinions, support their idols, and remain informed about idol-related updates. Other platforms are often used as secondary spaces for these same purposes. X functions as a public microblogging platform where users post short messages, or "tweets", which can be liked, shared, and replied to by other registered users. Its real-time, fast-paced structure makes it especially effective for the rapid dissemination

of information. Fans frequently use X to track updates from brands, friends, celebrities, and public figures, including K-pop idols. The platform's interactive features not only promote real-time communication but also strengthen the perceived closeness between idols and their followers. As such, X plays a vital role in facilitating fan engagement and sustaining fandom culture in digital environment.

Analyzing register use on the X platform offers valuable insights into language functions, the dynamics of social relationships within communities, and the ways individuals construct and express their social identities through language (Holmes, 2013). Fan communities on X serve as rich examples for exploring these phenomena. One such group is Choice, the fandom of the K-pop group A.C.E. This community is highly active on X and consists of fans from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, making it an ideal case for examining language variation in digital fandom discourse. This study aims to investigate the casual and intimate registers used by A.C.E fans on X, with a focus on how these registers reflect identity, community, and social interactions. This study focuses on posts and interactions by A.C.E fans on the X platform, specifically analyzing how casual and intimate register emerge in fan-to-fan discourse.

Previous studies on digital fandom language have shown how communities create unique linguistic norms to establish identity and in-group cohesion. A related study by Farid et al. (2023) examined the language styles employed by teenage Instagram users in Pakistan, focusing primarily on their categorization and frequency. Unlike their focus on Pakistani teenagers as Instagram users, this study centers on A.C.E fans active on the X platform. Consequently, the registers explored in this research reflect distinct linguistic patterns shaped by different social and digital contexts.

In sociolinguistics, register refers to variation in language use shaped by situational contexts rather than the identity of the speaker (Brown & Attardo, 2014). This theoretical lens enables researchers to examine not only linguistic forms but also the social dynamics

that inform language choice within specific contexts. Holmes (2013) expands on this by defining register as a linguistic variety influenced by factors such as the interlocutor, topic, and setting. For example, a speaker may shift registers when interacting with a friend compared to addressing a public audience, or when discussing casual subjects like favorite songs versus formal topics such as an official tour announcement. Register use can also serve as a marker of group membership. For instance, the journalistic community employs registers associated with specific text types such as news reports, features, and tutorials. Likewise, fandom communities utilize distinctive registers that are often only understood by members of the same cultural or interest group.

Joos's (1976) framework, as cited in Brown and Attardo (2014), identifies five types of language registers: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate, categorized based on the level of formality and the situational context in which they occur. This study applies Joos's (1976), as cited in Brown and Attardo (2014), classification to analyze the registers used by A.C.E fans on the X platform, as it offers a structured and comprehensive lens for understanding how language shifts according to social context and communicative purpose. Among the five, particular attention is given to casual and intimate registers, which are most commonly found in fan interactions on social media. These two types are especially relevant to the informal, relational, and often emotionally expressive nature of fan discourse. The following section outlines each of the casual and intimate register types as defined by Joos (1976), as cited in Brown and Attardo (2014), providing the theoretical foundation for the analysis.

Casual Register

The casual register is the most frequently used in informal interactions. It is characterized by relaxed, spontaneous language and often includes slang and colloquial expressions. The effectiveness of communication in this register depends heavily on the closeness between speakers, as mutual familiarity ensures that the intended meaning is

understood. Because the casual register reflects the shared knowledge and social bonds of a specific group, its meanings and intentions can vary widely and may be difficult for outsiders to interpret.

"OMG, did you see Kang Yuchan's new hairstyle?"

Intimate Register

The intimate register is characterized by highly personal and emotionally expressive language that is specific to the relationship between the speaker and listener. This register is commonly used in close relationship between the speaker and the listener. This register is commonly used in close relationships, such as those between partners, close friends, or family members, where shared experiences and emotional bonds allow for unique communicative style. It is the most informal of all register types and often includes affectionate terms, private references, and implicit meanings. Because the language used is deeply contextual and relationship-specific, it is not intended for outsiders and may lead to misinterpretation if overheard or read by those unfamiliar with the relationship dynamics.

"My heart melts whenever you smile, Lee Donghun"

By examining the casual and intimate register within a global K-pop fandom, this study contributes to the broader field of sociolinguistics and cultural studies by highlighting how digital language practices shape and reflect collective identity, cultural participation, and meaning-making in contemporary online communities.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of the registers used by A.C.E fans. The primary data consists of fan comments posted under updates from A.C.E's fan page on the X platform. Data collection as carried through documentation techniques, focusing on comments made

between January 1, 2021 and June 30, 2024. The analysis centers on key linguistic expressions that illustrate register usage. Specifically, the data includes phrases and words used by fans that align with Joos's register categories, serving as the basis for identifying and interpreting language variation within the fandom.

The data were first compiled and organized chronologically. Each comment was then examined and categorized based on Joos's (1976), as cited in Brown and Attardo (2014), five register types: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. Recurrent linguistic patterns were coded and analyzed to identify the frequency and context of register usage among fans.

Joos's register theory (1967) is applied in this study due to its relevance in classifying language based on context and speaker relationship. This framework enables the identification of distinct communicative styles used by fans in different interactional settings, thus addressing the study's aim of exploring the casual and intimate register and identity expression within the A.C.E fandom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explores the specific types of registers identified in conversations among A.C.E fans on the X platform, drawing from Joos's (1976) classification of frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate registers. Particular emphasis is placed on the casual and intimate registers, as these were most prevalent in the observed interactions. The analysis focuses on how these two register types are identified and interpreted within the fan discourse, providing detailed explanations supported by selected linguistic data. The following section presents the classification derived from the selected data taken from A.C.E fans' X conversation.

Table 1. Registers used in A.C.E fans' X conversation

No.	Type of register	Amount of data
1.	Casual register	47
2.	Intimate register	13

Total	60
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Casual Register

The casual register is characterized by informal, everyday language that reflects a relaxed and spontaneous style of communication. It frequently features slang, idiomatic expressions, contractions, elliptical constructions, and non-standard grammar, all of which are typically understood within a particular social group or community.

(1) Choiceland



Figure 1. Source of data of the register *Choiceland*

The term exemplifies this register through its playful and familiar construction. The addition of *-land* creates a metaphorical space or imagined community for fans, similar terms used by other fandoms, such as *Armyland* for BTS fans. This coined term reflects a shared understanding among members of the Choice fandom and highlights the informal, creative way fans communicate. It also illustrates how fandom discourse often involves linguistic innovation rooted in group identity.

(2) Bubble



Figure 2. Source of data of the register *Bubble*

In this context, it refers to a subscription-based messaging service used by K-pop idols to interact with fans. Within the fan community, the term has developed a specialized, informal meaning that is readily understood without further explanation. The use of a common noun in a fandom-specific context underscores the casual register's reliance on shared knowledge, efficiency in communication, and emotional proximity between members.

(3) Favorite boys era



Figure 3. Source of data of the register *Favorite Boys era*

This phrase demonstrates another instance of the casual register in fan discourse. The term era is widely used across fandoms to denote a specific period in an artist's career, often linked

to a musical release, promotional cycle, or visual concept. In this case, it refers to the time surrounding A.C.E's song *Favorite Boys* and its associated performances and fan activities. The casual use of *era* reflects the community's shared historical memory and familiarity with the artist's timeline, allowing for informal but meaningful references within fan conversations.

The casual register, characterized by its informal and spontaneous nature, reflects the collective enthusiasm and creativity of the A.C.E fandom. Fans frequently use slang, idioms, and colloquial language, features that align with Joos's (1976), as cited in Brown and Attardo (2014), description of the casual register as relaxed and community-oriented. However, this study offers further insight by illustrating how the digital environment intensifies the use of casual language, encouraging brevity, immediacy, and interactive engagement. These findings suggest that while Joos's (1976), as cited in Brown and Attardo (2014), framework remains applicable, the affordances of social media platforms introduce new dimensions to register use within digital fan communities.

Intimate Register

This section illustrates the intimate register, a linguistic form grounded in emotional closeness, familiarity, and privately shared meaning between interlocutors. This register typically emerges in relationships characterized by strong social bonds, such as close friendships, romantic partnerships, or tightly knit communities like fandoms. Communication within the intimate register assumes a high degree of mutual understanding, where expressions often rely on shared experiences or insider knowledge. As a result, meaning is conveyed implicitly, without the need for detailed explanation, due to the relational intimacy that underpins the interaction.

(4) *Cutest bean*

Figure 4. Source of data of the register *Cutest bean*

The phrase exemplifies the intimate register, expressing deep fondness in a highly informal and emotionally resonant manner. This playful and personalized expression signifies the speaker's affection and is easily recognized within a close-knit community, such as a fandom, without requiring formal explanation.

(5) *Sunflower*

Figure 5. Source of data of the register *Sunflower and Jeju Prince*

This term functions as a term of endearment, symbolizing warmth, positivity, and emotional closeness. Drawing on the symbolic traits of sunflowers, resilience, loyalty, and brightness, its use conveys

admiration and love in an intimate, metaphorical way.

(6) *Jeju Prince*

This phrase is contextually understood within the A.C.E fandom as a reference to a member associated with Jeju Island. Although widely recognizable among fans, this term often appears in emotionally charged or affectionate comments, indicating a personal connection and a sense of pride or endearment. These examples demonstrate how the intimate register within fan discourse enables creative and emotionally meaningful language, understood primarily by those who share the same cultural and relational context.

The intimate register, in contrast to other styles, emphasizes the use of personal and emotionally expressive language. Terms such as *cutest bean* and *sunflower* are employed to convey affection and emotional closeness, often directed toward idols or fellow fans with whom the speaker feels a strong connection. This finding supports Joos's (1976) framework, as cited in Brown and Attardo (2014), which defines the intimate register as consisting of highly personalized and affectionate expressions. However, the current study extends this understanding by demonstrating how intimate registers are adapted within digital fan communities to foster emotional closeness despite the absence of physical interaction. This use of language to simulate intimacy in virtual space highlights a dimension of register use that remains underexplored in existing sociolinguistic research.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of each register centers on its classification to address the research objective concerning the types of registers used by A.C.E fans. Although Joos's (1976), as cited in Brown and Attardo (2014), identifies five distinct register types, this study focuses specifically on casual and intimate registers, as these were the most frequently observed in the dataset. The casual register appears in forty-seven instances, characterized by informal, spontaneous language that includes slang, idiomatic phrases, and colloquial expressions.

In contrast, the intimate register was identified in thirteen instances, reflecting its relatively limited use. This lower frequency is likely due to the public nature of the X platform, where fans may be less inclined to express deeply personal or emotionally vulnerable language. Overall, this analysis offers insight into the communicative styles A.C.E fans employ, revealing how language functions to foster connection, identity, and shared meaning within the fandom community.

The findings of this study aim to provide greater understanding for individuals who may be unfamiliar with the registers used by A.C.E fans, particularly in the context of online fan discourse. While the research focused on casual and intimate registers on the X platform, further exploration is encouraged in areas not covered here, such as register use across other social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok and the variations in register types. The current study can serve as supplementary material for future research that adopts a similar theoretical framework.

Moreover, the study of fandom registers should be expanded to include the development of a linguistic corpus that captures the evolving language used within fan communities. This could support the creation of fan-based glossaries or dictionaries, which would be particularly useful for new or prospective fans seeking to understand the unique terminology used in specific fandoms. Continued research on register variation in fandom contexts can also enrich broader fields such as digital linguistics, cultural studies, and identity construction in online communities.

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