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Register to Buy and Sell Korean Pop Merchandise in The Line Application Group

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Abstract

This study examines the form, meaning, and function of registers used in Korean Pop (K-Pop) merchandise buying and selling interactions on the LINE app group. This study is motivated by the language dynamics within the digital fandom community, which combines elements of Indonesian, English, and Korean, and develops into a unique language variety understood only by its members. The study uses a sociolinguistic approach with a qualitative descriptive method. Data in the form of written speech by members of the group "Baebae" during the period June–August 2025 were collected through the listening method with the SBLC technique and note-taking. Data analysis used the distribution method with the BUL, insert, and expand techniques to examine lingual forms, and the referential matching method with the PUP technique to determine the meaning and function of registers. The results show that the registers that emerge consist of basic words, complex words, abbreviations, and phrases originating from three languages, then experience shifts in meaning according to the context of online transactions. The registers function to convey instructions (instrumental function), provide information (information function), explore explanations (heuristic function), build interactions (interaction function), and express personal attitudes (personality function). These findings suggest that language variation within the K-Pop merchandise buying and selling community ONLINE not only plays a role in communication efficiency but also shapes social cohesion and group identity in the digital space.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a means of conveying ideas but also serves as a tool for building social relationships, negotiating identity, and fostering mutual understanding between individuals. Halliday (1997) states that language functions across ideational, interpersonal, and textual dimensions, enabling complex communication processes. In the digital era, communication has expanded through various social media platforms, giving rise to new language variations that reflect cultural diversity, age, occupation, and community membership (Holmes, 2013).

One community that exhibits distinctive linguistic dynamics is South Korean music fans (Kpopers). The popularity of K-pop in Indonesia has not only impacted entertainment consumption patterns but also shaped communication practices that combine elements of Korean, English, and Indonesian in the digital space. Azzahrah (2022) notes that the use of mixed languages serves as a means of negotiating identity while demonstrating affiliation with the global K-pop community.

One activity that involves intense linguistic interaction is the buying and selling of K-pop merchandise. Many fans join dedicated groups on the LINE app to purchase and exchange official goods. In this communication space, various distinctive terms emerge, such est, ship, war. These terms constitute registers, language variations influenced by social context, transactional objectives, and relationships between participants. Registers not only serve to simplify and expedite communication but also serve as markers of community membership (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Someone who understands and uses registers appropriately is considered part of the group, while those who don't understand them are excluded.

The linguistic efficiency of registers also aligns with the concise, real-time characteristics of digital communication. Temporosa (2024) points out that registers in K-Pop discourse tend to be representational, conveying information directly, concisely, and functionally. Although the use of registers in digital communities has been widely researched, studies specifically examining the registers for buying and selling K-Pop merchandise on the LINE app in Indonesia are still limited. Most previous research has focused on open platforms like X (Twitter), leaving little research on the linguistic dynamics within closed spaces like LINE groups. This type of transactional space is characterized by more intense, technical, and internal interactions, thus increasing the potential for language variation.

This situation highlights the need to identify the forms, meanings, and functions of registers used in K-Pop merchandise buying and selling communities on the LINE app. This study aimed to describe the emerging linguistic units, understand the meanings behind these terms, and analyze their communicative functions in interactions between users. In addition to providing theoretical contributions to the development of register studies in sociolinguistics, this research also has practical benefits, particularly for new members of K-Pop buying and selling communities, helping them understand the terms used, enabling more effective communication and avoiding misunderstandings.

Thus, this study seeks to fill the gap in research on the linguistic practices of K-Pop fan communities in Indonesia and to provide a broader understanding of how language adapts to social needs in community-based digital spaces.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a sociolinguistic approach and a qualitative descriptive method to examine the form, meaning, and function of registers in K-Pop merchandise buying and selling interactions on the LINE application. The sociolinguistic approach is used to understand the relationship between language and society, while the qualitative descriptive method allows for a detailed description of linguistic phenomena according to field conditions. The data are in the form of written speech excerpts from members of the "Baebae" buying and selling group on LINE collected during the period June–August 2025. The group has 432 users and was selected because

of its high level of activity, thus representing the language practices of the fandom community. Data collection was carried out using the listening method using the Free Listening and Speaking (SBLC) technique, where the researcher observed the conversation without participating in the interaction, and the note-taking technique, namely recording and documenting (screenshots) utterances suspected of containing registers. Data analysis was carried out using two methods. First, the distribution method using the Direct Element Sharing (BUL) Technique to break down the data into lingual units (basic and complex forms), accompanied by the advanced technique of insertion and expansion to examine the structure and meaning of the units. Second, the referential method is used to determine the meaning and function of registers using the Determining Elements Selection (PUP) technique, which links linguistic elements with external referents or social contexts. The results are presented descriptively (an informal method) explaining the form, meaning, and function of registers based on field findings. The research instrument used is a data card, used to record, sort, and process relevant speech fragments during the collection and analysis process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results were obtained from the analysis of register data used in the interaction of buying and selling K-pop merchandise in the LINE application group. From the collected data, data was found with variations in form and meaning that reflect the communication character of the typical fandom community. The results of the research on the register of buying and selling Korean Pop merchandise in the LINE application group will be presented in a discussion description that includes: the form of the register of buying and selling Korean Pop merchandise based on lingual units and language origins, as well as register functions that include instrumental functions, information functions, heuristic functions, interaction functions, and personality functions.

Number	Register	Form	From	Contextual Meaning	Functions
1	rbuy	abbreviation	english	rest buy	instrumental
2	nyelem	complex words	indonesian	search for items in depth	instrumental
3	*war*	base word	english	scramble for purchases	instrumental
4	ongklok	complex words	indonesian	*ongkos kirim lokal* (local shipping costs)	information
5	*ship*	base word	english	matchmaking idols	interaction
6	*req share*	phrase	english	requesting to share a post	interaction
7	*est*	abbreviation	english	estimate	heuristic
8	*sasaeng*	base word	korean	extreme idol stalker	personality
9	*maknae*	base word	korean	youngest member	information
10	jajan	base word	indonesian	buy merchandise	personality
11	*carpool*	base word	english	collective purchasing	instrumental

The following is an analysis of the register forms for buying and selling Korean pop merchandise based on lingual units and language origins, as well as their functions:

1. Rbuy /aːr.baɪ/

Context: An account named Fe uploaded a photo of merchandise for sale, and the account Sachiee replied by telling people to finish what they were selling.

Speech: “Abisin sisanya kak, apa itu rbuy?”

The word "rbuy" is a complex word because it is an abbreviation of "rest buy" in English, which in the context of the K-pop fandom community means to stop buying or discontinue purchasing an item. This word was combined into a concise form for more efficient use in online conversations. Conceptually, "rbuy" refers to the act of stopping the purchase of a particular item; its meaning differs from the literal meaning of "rest" and "buy" when translated directly. This phrase undergoes a specific shift in meaning in the context of K-pop merchandise buying and selling. Contextually, in the utterance *"Abisin sisanya kak, apa itu rbuy?"*, the word is used to ask whether the seller or group member intends to stop buying or discontinue the transaction for a particular item. The use of this term indicates a shortened English adaptation to the fandom community register, with a specific meaning understood only by group members. The language function in this data is instrumental. The rbuy register is used by a member named Sachiee to persuade Fe members to buy all the items for sale.

2. Nyelem /ɲəˈləm/

Context: Adel is entrusting an item to Valency, who is known for frequently searching for or purchasing items directly from foreign sellers, including Chinese sellers. The items Adel wants, a strawberry pink cardi and a carport version of Karina's photocard, are rare or difficult to find from local sellers. Therefore, she uses the term "nyelem" to refer to Valency's in-depth search, including through Chinese sellers and extensive platforms such as international marketplaces.

Speech: Adel: "Kak Val, kalo nyelem titip Karin strawberry cardi pink sama karpot yaa, thank uu."

"Nyelem" is a linguistic unit in the form of a complex word in Indonesian. This form originates from the morphological reduction of the word "diving" and then undergoes phonological changes to become a more concise and informal spoken form, nyelem. In its use as a community register, this word stands as a stable unit of meaning and can be used independently in speech. Conceptually, "nyelem" is derived from the word "diving," which refers to the act of entering water and moving to a certain depth. Its basic meaning relates to the physical activity of going deeper than the surface, often associated with exploration, searching, or searching underwater. In the general lexical realm, this word has no connection to buying and selling activities or the online world. In the K-pop merchandise buying and selling community, this conceptual meaning has undergone a metaphorical expansion and shift. "Nyelem" is no longer interpreted as a literal diving activity, but is used to describe the activity of searching for rare items in depth, even through international platforms or foreign sellers, especially Chinese sellers. Searching for items that are not available locally is analogous to the act of "descending to the depths" to find something difficult to reach. In Adel's speech to Valency, "nyelem" indicates that the item entrusted to him requires a special search process, so the word functions as a situational marker that the request can only be fulfilled while Valency is conducting such an intensive search. With this contextual meaning, "nyelem" becomes part of the community's distinctive vocabulary, implying the difficulty of the search and demonstrating a shared understanding among its members. The word "nyelem" in this speech serves to convey a request directly to Valency. The use of this term indicates that Adel wants to consign certain items while Valency is conducting an in-depth search with overseas sellers. The instrumental function is evident in the main purpose of the utterance: to provide instructions or a request for action, namely to consign two types of rare items. The term "nyelem" clarifies the context of the requested action, making the request more specific and in line with buying and selling practices in the community. Furthermore, the use of familiar terms within the community facilitates communication and ensures that the message is understood correctly by both the seller and other group members.

3. War /wɔː/

Context: An account named Hilaren created a post with a photo attached for sale.

Speech: "Guys, I'm going to war this this afternoon, get ready."

This data contains the word "war," which is registered for buying and selling Korean pop merchandise on the Line app group. It is used specifically by members of the K-pop community for the sale of limited-edition or rare items. This register is a root word because it consists of only one morpheme and does not undergo affixation. Grammatically, "war" is a verb. Conceptually, the word "war" in English means a war or armed struggle between two or more parties. However, contextually, within the K-pop merchandise buying and selling community, the word "war" has shifted in meaning. "War" refers to the act of quickly grabbing rare or limited-edition items (usually official merchandise, albums, or photocards) that are sold quickly online. In this situation, community members scramble to acquire the items before other buyers. Thus, conceptually, the word war means "war" and is categorized as a noun, while contextually it changes into a verb meaning "to fight quickly to buy a certain item." The change in word type from noun to verb occurs because the speaker associates the fighting activity with an active action, namely "going war." The general conceptual meaning is then narrowed down to a specific meaning according to the community context, namely competitive activities in online K-pop merchandise buying and selling transactions. The register of war in this data includes an instrumental function. A member named Hilaren tells other members to get ready to fight over K-pop merchandise.

4. Ongklok /ɔŋ.klɔk/

Context: A conversation took place in a K-pop merchandise buying and selling group on the Line app. Hilraen informed group members that a certain purchase transaction was canceled due to an "ongklok" charge, an additional fee imposed when the purchase amount did not meet the minimum free shipping requirement on a foreign sales site.

Speech: “Guys maaf bgt, yg kemarin beli ini ga jadi ya soalnya kena ongklok 1k yen, pdhl udh belanja 5k yen huhu. Nnti malem aku refund semua yhh.”

The word "ongklok" is a form of register for K-pop merchandise buying and selling that originates from the Indonesian language. This register is a complex word because it is formed from a combination of two Indonesian elements: "ong" (short for "ongkos") and "klok" (short for "lokal"). The combination of these two elements creates a new meaning that is different from its original lexical meaning. Conceptually, *ongklok* means “ongkos lokal” (local shipping) or additional costs for domestic shipping (usually within the seller's country of origin, such as Korea or Japan). Contextually, this term is used by members of K-pop merchandise buying and selling groups to describe additional local shipping costs that increase the final price of an order or cause a transaction to be canceled. The use of this term reflects the linguistic creativity of fandom community members in abbreviating long terms into concise, memorable, and distinctive forms. The language function in this data is informational. The speaker uses the *ongklok* register to inform group members that an order is canceled due to additional costs that cannot be covered, and that a refund will be issued.

5. Ship /ʃɪp/

Context: An account named Valency uploaded a photo of merchandise being sold to group members. In the post, Valency uses the term "ship" to refer to the activity of pairing up idols, not the literal meaning of "ship."

Speech: “Yuk gass siapa yang ship jeno karina mending beli md ini hehe.”

In the context of a conversation about buying and selling K-pop merchandise, Valency uses the term "ship" to attract the attention of group members who might like or "match" two idols, Jeno and Karina. The use of "ship" here is not simply referring to a fan's hobby, but rather a communicative strategy to create emotional closeness with potential buyers. By saying "siapa yang ship jeno karina," Valency emphasizes that the merchandise she is offering is relevant to members who like this imaginary couple. The word "ship" was originally an English noun meaning "ship." However, within the fandom community, the word has expanded in meaning

and changed its functional meaning category, becoming used as a verb referring to the act of supporting or imagining a romantic relationship between two idols. This change occurred through the development of global fandom slang, then adopted by the Indonesian K-pop buying and selling community. Her speech also demonstrates the unique dynamics of the fandom community, where relationships between idols are often used as a topic of casual conversation, humor, or to stimulate interest in certain merchandise. The term "ship" is used spontaneously without further explanation because it is assumed that all group members already understand the meaning of their fandom. This suggests that ship is part of an internal register that streamlines communication and reinforces group identity, as well as marking conversations within the K-pop fan community, rather than general interactions. The language function in this data is interactional. The use of the word ship serves to build closeness and shared interests among members of the fan community, as well as foster a friendly atmosphere through a topic they both understand, the relationship between two K-pop idols.

6. Req Share /rɪk ˈʃeər/

Context: An account named Valency is offering photo cards for sale to group members.

Spoken: "@all geng jajan yuu pc aab karina reqshare ni murce murce"

Register req share is a phrase derived from English, a combination of the words "request" and

"share." In the context of buying and selling K-pop merchandise, this phrase is used to ask other members to reshare (spread) someone's product post to other groups or platforms so that more people can see it. This phrase is often used by sellers or admins to increase the reach of promotional items within fandom communities on platforms like Line. The function of req share is also an interaction function. The phrase "@all geng jajan yuu pc aab karina reqshare ni murce murce" is used to foster communication and collaboration among group members. The speaker not only informs about the item for sale but also encourages social participation in community activities, in this case, helping to spread the post. The function of interaction is seen from its aim of strengthening relationships between members through information sharing activities in a relaxed and collegial atmosphere typical of fandom communities.

7. Est (Estimate) /iː.es.tiː/

Context: An account named Valency offered photo cards of K-pop idol Karina to members of a merchandise buying and selling group. After several members responded, Lydia asked for an estimated time of availability in Indonesia, using the term Est.

Speech:

Valency: "@all geng jajan yuu pc aab karina reqshare ni murce murce"

Mika": tuh kak @el km cri karina kemarin, gas tekol wkwk"

El: "WKKWK aku ga in rush kok mau santuy dl"

Lydia: "Est ridi indo kapan Kak?"

Register Est is a complex word derived from English. Conceptually, *est* usually means established, but in the context of the K-pop merchandise buying and selling community, this term has shifted its contextual meaning to become an abbreviation for estimate, which is the estimated time of arrival of goods. The use of this abbreviated term makes it easier for group members to quickly and efficiently inquire about the delivery status of goods purchased through group orders. The function of *est* in the utterance "Est ridi indo kapan Kak?" is included in the problem-solving or heuristic function, namely the language function used to seek information or explanations so that the speaker gains new understanding. In this context, Lydia uses est to ask for the estimated time of arrival of the item "ridi indo" to find out when the photo card will be available in Indonesia. The heuristic function is clear because the speaker is not giving an order or offering goods, but rather seeking information from the interlocutor (the seller) to satisfy curiosity and clarify the transaction situation. Thus, est plays a communication tool that helps buyers gain clarity on time in the online buying and selling process in the fandom community.

8. Sasaeng /ˈsa.sa.eŋ/

Context: In a fandom group, members are discussing the behavior of extreme fans who are overly obsessive about K-pop idols. One member uses the term "sasaeng" to describe this type of fan.

Speech: “Gila sih sasaeng itu, bisa sampe ngikutin artisnya ke hotel segala.”

The term "sasaeng" is a root word derived from the Korean language (사생). Literally, "sasaeng" means "private life," but in the context of K-pop fandom, the term has shifted in meaning to refer to obsessive or fanatical fans who frequently violate idols' privacy, such as by stalking or seeking their personal information. This form is used directly without translation into Indonesian because it has become a specific and conventional term in K-pop fan communities worldwide. Its use demonstrates the strong influence of Korean culture on the register of fandom communities in Indonesia. The function of "sasaeng" in the utterance "Those sasaengs are crazy, they can even follow the artists to hotels." is a persona or personality function. In this context, the speaker uses sasaeng to express personal judgments and negative emotions, such as shock and disapproval of the behavior of extreme fans. The utterances are not merely intended to provide information, but also to describe the speaker's attitudes, opinions, and feelings toward the phenomenon being discussed. Thus, the personal function of sasaeng is evident in its role as a means of self-expression for the speaker to convey personal views while simultaneously asserting their identity as "normal" fans, distinct from the extreme fans they criticize.

9. Maknae /makˀ.ne/

Context: An account named Redactie commented on a photo or video of an idol group shared in a fandom buying or discussion group. In the sentence, the admin used the term "maknae" to refer to the youngest member of the idol group.

Speech: “Huhu maknae-nya lucu banget di video ini 😭💝 kayak anak bungsu yang dimanja semua hyung-nya!”

This data contains the word "maknae," which is a K-pop fandom register because it is used specifically by members of the K-pop fan community to refer to a specific position or role within an idol group. This register is a root word because it consists of only one morpheme and does not undergo affixation. Based on its function in a sentence, "maknae" is included in the noun class because it is used to refer to someone who holds a specific role or position within a group.

Conceptually, the word "maknae" comes from the Korean word 막내, which means the youngest person or youngest child in a family or group. In Korean culture, *maknae* not only denotes the youngest member but also carries social and emotional connotations, such as being considered cute, innocent, or often spoiled by older members. Contextually, in the utterance, maknae refers to the youngest member of the K-pop idol group featured in the video. The speaker associates this term with the image of the spoiled and adorable youngest child, as seen in the added emotive expression “😭💝” and the comparison “kayak anak bungsu yang dimanja semua hyung-nya”. Speech using the *maknae* register serves to build social interaction and personality expression within the fandom community. Speakers use this term to express affection, admiration, or emotional closeness to the idol in question. The interactional function is evident in how this term strengthens communication between fandom members who understand the term as part of a “shared language.”

10. Jajan /d͡ʒa.d͡ʒan/

Context: Valency posted a message to her friends in the K-Pop community. The phrases "I miss snacking together" and "I'll snack with me again tomorrow" were used to encourage her friends to purchase K-Pop merchandise together, such as photocards, albums, or other merchandise.

Speech: “miss u guyss kangen jajan bareng, besok jajan sm aku lg yaa hehe”

In K-Pop community communication, "jajan" no longer refers to the activity of buying Food bor snacking, but has shifted to merchandise shopping (buying albums,

photocards, lightsticks, and other fandom items). This semantic shift arises from the community's habit of equating buying merch with small, everyday pleasures, similar to buying snacks. The word "jajan" has become a marker of group identity (a special fandom register) understood only by community members. The use of this word strengthens social closeness and a sense of togetherness. Lexically, it means buying snacks. Contextually, the meaning within the K-Pop community is the activity of purchasing K-Pop merchandise, particularly collectibles. The context of the sentence "kangen jajan bareng" indicates the meaning of buying merch together, not buying snacks. The use of "jajan" serves to build social solidarity among community members. This word not only conveys information but also creates an atmosphere of familiarity and nostalgia for shared activities. "Jajan" becomes a symbolic activity that unites fandom members, thus strengthening interpersonal relationships and group identity.

11. Carpool /ˈkɑːrˌpuːl/

Context: In K-pop merchandise buying and selling groups, various item distribution systems exist, including the "carpool" system. In this conversation, Aruna asked Yuefa if she wanted to "deposit" an order while participating in the carpool system. Yuefa initially misunderstood and thought carpooling meant an additional fee. Rico then explained that carpooling is a take-all system for a set of items, where specific photocards are then distributed through open sharing according to the letter distribution, and distributed through sellchin to buyers.

Aruna: "@yuefa mau setor? carpool ya tapi"

Yuefa: "Apa itu carpool? Nambah duit kah?"

Rico: "Bukan kak, sistem carpool tu take all, tapi akan ada open sharing untuk photocard yang dijual carpool."

Yuefa: "Jadi yg dibayar lebih dari 20 yuan? Gak kan ya?"

Rico: "Enggak kak, jadi nanti ada update coretannya, akan dikasih hurup."

Yuefa: "Oh oke"

Rico: "Misal kalau udah ditake semuanya nanti akan dibagi bagi untuk sellchin agar diberikan ke buyer sesuai urutan huruf."

Conceptually, the English word *carpool* means "sharing a vehicle" or "shared ride system."

However, within the K-pop fandom community, the word's meaning has shifted and become a term for a collective merchandise distribution system. Here, *carpool* is no longer about vehicles, but rather refers to the procedure for purchasing and sharing a set of goods: one member buys all the units, then the goods are distributed to other members according to an agreement (e.g., letter order). This form is called a complex word because the term is adopted from English but is given a new function in the context of online trading communities. In conversation, carpool is used as a community register that facilitates brief communication about the distribution system of goods.

For example: "@yuefa mau setor? carpool ya tapi", Here, the word carpool informs group members that the goods will be collected entirely by one person, then distributed according to predetermined rules, without incurring additional costs. The use of this term is efficient and only understood by community members who are familiar with group ordering practices in K-pop fandom. Thus, carpool functions as a marker for transaction procedures and a quick communication strategy, while also demonstrating the community's identity and internal agreements. The use of "carpool" in this conversation serves as information or to clarify the applicable transaction mechanism. Aruna explained that Yuefa's orders would follow a carpool system, while Rico provided additional information to ensure members understood the take-all process, letter allocation, and distribution flow through Sellchin. This register allows for efficient communication because a single term can represent the entire set of procedures that are already understood by the community.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that interactions in the buying and selling of K-Pop merchandise in LINE app groups give rise to a unique variety of registers, shaped by the need for rapid communication, linguistic efficiency, and the identity of the fandom community. The registers identified include root words, complex words, abbreviations, and phrases derived from three languages: Indonesian, English, and Korean, which are then combined to produce new linguistic units with meanings distinct from their original lexical meanings. These meanings are contextual, highly dependent on online transaction practices, and understood only by community members. The emerging registers not only serve to simplify the buying and selling process (instrumental function), convey transaction information (information function), and elicit explanations (heuristic function), but also strengthen social interactions among members (interaction function) and serve as a means of expressing personal identity and attitudes (personality function). Thus, the use of registers in the K-Pop merchandise buying and selling community on LINE reflects adaptive and efficient language dynamics, playing a crucial role in building cohesion and understanding within fandombased digital communities.

However, this study has several limitations. The data collected focused solely on one platform and one specific community, thus underrepresenting register variations from other fandom communities or other digital platforms. Furthermore, the dynamics of language within online communities are rapidly changing, potentially leading to shifts in meaning or usage over time. The scope of the analysis was also limited to form and function, thus failing to address deeper pragmatic aspects, such as politeness strategies or the negotiation of meaning in interactions. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of study to other platforms, such as Twitter or Instagram, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of register variations within the digital fandom ecosystem. Further research could also incorporate online ethnographic approaches to gain a deeper understanding of communication practices, including interaction patterns, power dynamics, and changes in meaning that occur in real time. Thus, further study is expected to enrich our understanding of language evolution in increasingly complex digital spaces.

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