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Register features in TikTok shop's posts and comments

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linguistic register used in TikTok Shop, focusing on how language varies in online commerce compared to everyday communication. This study aims to identify both the linguistic forms and meanings of registers commonly used in this context. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected from TikTok Shop interactions, including product listings, status updates, and comments. The analysis revealed various linguistic forms, such as nouns (eight items), verbs (five items), adjectives (two items), compound words (five items), abbreviations (five items), and phrases (five items). In terms of semantics, this study identified 11 examples of lexical meaning and 19 examples of contextual meaning. The findings highlight how specific linguistic features of online shop discourse reflect the dynamic and adaptive nature of language on digital marketing platforms.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is shaped by social interaction, institutional practices, and technological change. One of the key sociolinguistic concepts used to explain such variation is the register, which refers to systematic differences in language use associated with particular communicative situations, activities, and social relationships. In systemic functional linguistics, Halliday explains that register is structured by three contextual variables: field, tenor, and mode, which influence how language is selected in specific contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Sociolinguistic research has further shown that language varieties develop within communities of practice and reflect shared goals, roles, and social identities (Holmes, 2013; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Studies on register and discourse also highlight that specialized vocabulary and patterns of communication often emerge within particular professional or social domains (Biber & Conrad, 2009; Hyland, 2009). As communication increasingly occurs through digital technologies, linguistic practices have rapidly evolved in response to new forms of interaction and participation (Crystal, 2011; Androutsopoulos, 2014).

The development of digital media has significantly transformed the way people communicate, share information, and engage in economic activities. Social networking platforms now function not only as spaces for social interaction but also as marketing and commerce environments. Among these platforms, TikTok has become one of the most influential globally, particularly through its e-commerce feature, TikTok Shop, which integrates entertainment, live interaction, and online shopping. Scholars describe this integration as social commerce, a form of electronic commerce that relies heavily on social interaction, user-generated content, and online communities (Liang & Turban, 2011; Hajli, 2015). Research shows that communication between sellers and consumers in such environments plays a crucial role in shaping consumer engagement and purchase intention (Leong et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2016).

In Southeast Asia, and particularly in Indonesia, social commerce has grown rapidly owing to widespread smartphone adoption and the increasing participation of small businesses in digital markets. Platforms that combine social networking with commercial transactions enable sellers to promote their products through short videos, live streams, and interactive comment sections. Within these spaces, communication occurs quickly and often informally, creating conditions for the emergence of new linguistic patterns. Research on computer-mediated communication indicates that online platforms frequently generate innovative linguistic forms, including abbreviations, hybrid expressions, and code-mixing practices (Herring, 2013; Tagg, 2015). These patterns reflect the communicative needs of users and the technological affordances of digital platforms.

One particularly visible linguistic phenomenon in social commerce is the emergence of specialized marketplace registers. Sellers and buyers commonly use abbreviated expressions, product-promotion formulas, and platform-specific terminology to facilitate fast transactions and audience engagement. Expressions such as *COD* (Cash on Delivery), *PO* (Pre-order), or *PM* (Private Message) function as efficient communicative tools within online marketplaces. From a sociolinguistic perspective, these linguistic forms illustrate how communities develop shared vocabularies that enable efficient interaction and signal familiarity with particular practices (Biber & Conrad, 2009; Gee, 2014). Digital discourse studies further suggest that such linguistic innovations are closely tied to identity construction, group membership, and communicative efficiency in online environments (Darics, 2013; Androutsopoulos, 2014).

Despite increasing academic interest in digital communication, the study of register within social commerce interactions remains limited. Previous sociolinguistic research has examined registers in professional and institutional contexts such as education, academic writing, and workplace communication (Hyland, 2009; Holmes, 2013). Other studies have focused on internet language, online identity, and digital discourse practices (Crystal, 2011; Herring, 2013). However, relatively few studies investigate how specialized registers function in real-time commercial interactions on social media platforms. Existing research on social commerce tends to emphasize consumer behavior, trust formation, or marketing strategies rather than the linguistic structures that organize communication between buyers and sellers (Hajli, 2015; Leong et al., 2018). Consequently, there remains a contextual and empirical gap in understanding how language operates within emerging digital marketplace environments.

592

This gap is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where social media platforms have become central to everyday economic activity. As more individuals rely on social commerce for entrepreneurship and consumption, communication within these platforms increasingly shapes how transactions occur and how trust is negotiated between participants. Yet systematic linguistic analysis of these interactions remains limited. Understanding the registers that develop in these environments is therefore important not only for sociolinguistic theory but also for broader discussions about digital communication and economic participation.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the registers used by sellers and buyers within TikTok Shop interactions. Specifically, it aims to (1) identify the linguistic forms of register used in social commerce communication, (2) analyze their lexical and contextual meanings, and (3) examine their communicative functions in facilitating online commercial exchanges. By focusing on authentic interactions within a rapidly growing digital marketplace, this research contributes to the expanding body of scholarship on language variation in digital contexts. It extends register analysis to the domain of social commerce and provides empirical evidence from Indonesia, a setting that remains relatively underrepresented in sociolinguistic research.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in sociolinguistic analysis. The unit of analysis consists of register expressions occurring in interactions between sellers and buyers within TikTok Shop content, including live-stream sessions, promotional speech, and comment-based exchanges. Data are collected from publicly accessible TikTok Shop interactions involving Indonesian users during a specified observation period. A purposive sampling strategy is employed to select interactions that contain identifiable commercial registers. The data are then categorized according to linguistic form such as nouns, verbs, abbreviations, and phrases and analyzed to determine their meanings and communicative functions within transactional discourse. Drawing data from multiple accounts and interaction contexts helps enhance reliability and reduce potential bias.

Overall, examining register in social commerce environments provides valuable insight into how language adapts to technological innovation and economic transformation. As digital marketplaces continue to expand globally, understanding their linguistic dynamics becomes increasingly important for sociolinguistic research, digital communication studies, and practical fields such as language education and online entrepreneurship.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the linguistic forms and meanings of registers used in TikTok Shop. Qualitative research focuses on understanding processes, meanings, and experiences through words or visuals. The method was chosen to explore how specific registers are formed and interpreted in online commercial interactions on TikTok Shop. The data were drawn from thirty video postings by TikTok Shop sellers that appeared on the researcher's TikTok homepage. These samples were collected over a two-week period following the issuance of a research permit from the UMSU Library. The focus was on both spoken and written language that emerged during promotional or transactional content.

The data collection process involved several systematic steps. First, the researcher gathered relevant literature to support the theoretical foundation of the study, particularly focusing on the concepts of register and sociolinguistics. Next, the researcher accessed and created a TikTok Shop account to explore the platform from a user's perspective. Through this account, the researcher observed various seller-generated content, especially those involving product descriptions and interactions with potential buyers. Finally, during these observations, the researcher identified and marked specific linguistic items that could be categorized as registers, particularly those used in the context of sales-related communication.

Data analysis in this study followed the qualitative analysis model consists of three major steps. The first step, data reduction, involved simplifying and organizing the raw data by summarizing, coding, and identifying key themes. Expressions related to register were categorized based on their linguistic forms and meanings in alignment with the research objectives. The second step, data display, focused on

presenting the organized information through descriptive matrices or tables, enabling clear distinctions between lexical and contextual meanings of the identified registers. Finally, the step of conclusion drawing and verification entailed interpreting the analyzed data and validating the findings through repeated examination of emerging patterns and themes. This process ensured the accuracy, consistency, and credibility of the interpretations regarding the use of register in TikTok Shop interactions.

3. RESULT

3.1. Linguistic Form of The Words Register

3.1.1. Nouns

The noun forms are: (1) *Sist*: Shortened form of "sister," commonly used to address female buyers or sellers. This is a clipping word; (2) *Supplier*: Derived from the verb "supply" with the suffix "-ier" indicating a person who provides goods; (3) *Owner*: Formed from the adjective "own" with the suffix "-er," indicating possession; (4) *Item, Sale, Customer, Testimony, Cashback*: These are all nouns, with some formed through affixation or compounding.

3.1.2. Verbs

Keep, Order, Cancel, Booking, Transfer: All are action words related to transactions in online shopping.

3.1.3. Adjectives

Ready, Random: Used to describe product availability or order types.

3.1.4. Compound Words

The compound words are: (1) *Restock*: Prefix *re-* + *stock* (noun) = replenishing stock; (2) *Allsize*: *All* (determiner) + *size* (noun), indicating a universal size; (3) *Sold out*: *Sold* (verb) + *out* (adverb), meaning no stock available; (4) *Reseller*: Prefix *re-* + *seller*, a person who sells again; (5) *Dropship*: *Drop* (verb) + *ship* (noun), indicating a specific sales method.

3.1.5. Abbreviations

The abbreviations are *OL (Online), PO (Pre-Order), COD (Cash on Delivery), PCS (Pieces), ORI (Original)*: All shortened forms widely used in online shop contexts.

3.1.6. Phrases

The phrases are *Slow Response, Free Shipping (Free Ongkir), Ready Stock, Full Payment, Real Picture*: Common expressions used in online store communication involving adjectives and nouns.

3.2. Based on the understanding of the register

Various types of register meanings were identified, with contextual meanings being more prevalent. A total of 26 contextual data and 19 lexical data were found. The higher frequency of contextual meanings is attributed to the emergence of new vocabulary commonly used in online shop interactions. Understanding these meanings also demands a deeper interpretation based on context.

4. DISCUSSION

This study examined the linguistic features of registers commonly used in TikTok Shop transactions. The data reveal that the registers fall into several linguistic categories: nouns (8), verbs (5), adjectives (2), compound words (5), abbreviations (5), and phrases (5), totaling 30 items. The analysis also identified two types of meaning: lexical (dictionary) and contextual (usage-based). Contextual meanings were more dominant, with 19 items, compared to 11 lexical meanings. This prevalence indicates the rise of new vocabulary developed through social interaction and commerce on digital platforms.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn: (1) TikTok Shop utilizes a variety of registers to establish and maintain relationships among users; (2) The data showed a range of linguistic forms including nouns, verbs, adjectives, compound words, abbreviations, and phrases, totaling 30 registers. These were categorized into 11 lexical meanings and 19 contextual meanings; (3) Many users are still unsure about the correct usage of these registers. They often hesitate to use them, fearing miscommunication. However, actively experimenting and engaging with such registers in context can improve users' familiarity and confidence in using them appropriately.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Authors' Contributions

PAZ conceptualized the study, conducted data analysis, and drafted the manuscript. N, MZ, and KW contributed to data collection, interpretation of findings, and manuscript revision. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Disclosure Statement

The Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author for privacy.

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