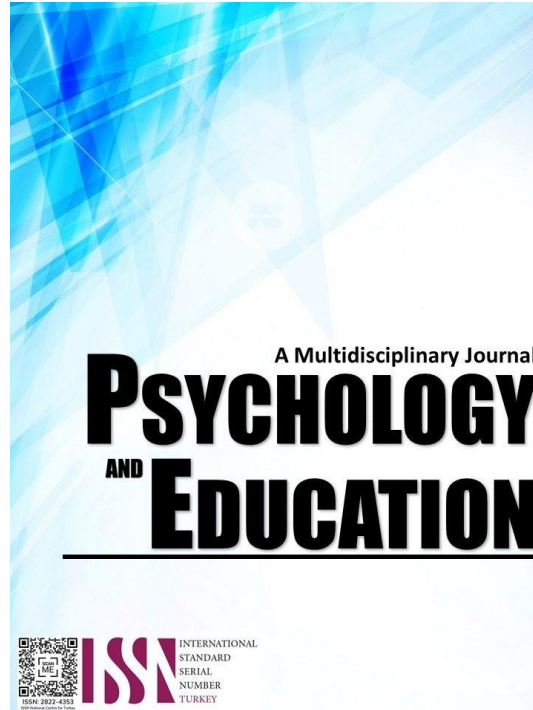


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Sociolinguistic Analysis of English Registers in K-Pop News Articles

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Abstract

The K-POP phenomenon created a new variation of language called registers. English registers are found in K-POP news articles including the latest news about K-POP idols and groups. This sociolinguistic study reveals the registers found in K-POP news articles, their word-formation processes, functions, and cultural implications. This research utilized qualitative research employing a descriptive method, specifically, Content Analysis. The source of data is the K-POP news articles purposively taken in September 2021. Results show that Borrowing is the most dominant word-formation process of registers. Registers function as Representational to convey facts and information. The most numbered register is idol. Since K-POP idols and groups are admired by a lot of people worldwide, it cannot be helped but be influenced by the Korean beauty standard. This implies that the visuals of idols played a big part in influencing K-POP fans physically and mentally especially on perceptions of beauty and body image.

Keywords: *sociolinguistics, english registers, kpop, content analysis, philippines*

Introduction

Sociolinguistics is one of the exciting branches of linguistics for it discusses language and society. A register is one of the examples of language varieties in sociolinguistics (Aniuranti, 2019). According to Holmes (2013), a register is the language of a particular group of people that share common interests or jobs. It is the language used by a group in certain situations. A register may develop lexically, syntactically, and even phonologically. In addition, register is also connected to the language of a particular field or occupational group like literature, agriculture, economics, education, etc. (Agustina & Chaer, 2004; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021).

A sociolinguistic phenomenon in the form of register emerges along with the Korean wave (Hallyu). Estavillo (2012) highlighted that Korean entertainment is popular in the Philippines and is a worldwide phenomenon. A critical aspect of the Korean wave phenomenon is K-Pop. K-Pop or Korean Pop is Korean pop music, which originated in Korea, specifically from South Korea. K-Pop includes dance, electronic music, electro-pop, hip-hop, and R&B. The term of K-POP has started to get widely used overseas (Irhana et al., 2017).

Batoul Touhami et al., (2017) conducted a study on the influence of the Korean wave on the language of international fans, specifically Algerians. According to the participants, Hallyu fans in Algeria use Korean words in their speech. Then they start using English words specific to K-pop and K-drama and naming their phone contacts with Korean terms of endearment and kinship. They also translate some Korean sayings and proverbs into their mother tongue.

Furthermore, Otmazgin & Lyan (2013) examines the role that fan communities in Israel and Palestine play in the transcultural dissemination of Korean popular music, or “K-POP”. They found out that many K-POP fans tend to tap into other Hallyu-associated products and fields, especially TV dramas. About two-thirds of the fans they interviewed (eleven out of eighteen), both Israeli and Palestinian, told them that they started to listen to K-pop after becoming fascinated with Korean TV dramas and listening to the drama’s background songs

According to TRISH (2014), international fans' acceptance of K-Pop as a music genre encourages them to adopt the culture by learning Korean. Most fans, especially those new to the K-Pop world, are usually excited even if they don't understand the songs. Once they look up the English (or Arabic) translation of it, it makes them fonder of the music, the reason why along the way of being a K-POP fan, it is inevitable for them not to pick up Korean words.

Linguists and researchers continuously publish studies and academic writings about various discourses and daily talk based on ethnicity, identity, gender, and other research domains. However, only a few of them examined the everyday language use of fandom communities, especially foreign fandoms oriented towards entertainment. There is a dearth of studies on English registers related to the Korean wave. With the undeniable influence of K-Pop worldwide, there are numerous English registers that are created. Examples of English registers are uncle fan, eye smile, bias, ship, bromance, all-kill, idol, visuals, OST, and many others that may be unfamiliar to non- K-pop fans.

People who are not fond of K-POP may view K-POP fans as bizarre, delusional, and overly obsessive over their K-POP groups and idols. Thus, this study was conducted to shed light on the new language variation that emerges from the K-POP phenomenon and to raise awareness of the cultural implications of these English registers.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the English registers found in K-POP news articles?

2. What are the word formation processes of the English registers found in K-POP news articles?
3. What are the functions of the English registers found in K-POP news articles?

Literature Review

The Role of English in Shaping K-Pop's Global Appeal

English in K-pop is often used as a marker of modernity and globalization. Like many other countries, Korea sees English as a language associated with international business, cultural sophistication, and global connectivity (Kachru, 1990; Pennycook, 2007).

The use of the English language in K-pop (Korean popular music) has significantly increased over the past twenty years. As K-pop has gained global popularity, English has become essential for connecting with audiences outside of South Korea. Research on English usage in K-pop mainly examines how English is integrated into the linguistic environment of Korean popular culture, often mixing with Korean to produce distinctive forms of language that embody local and global influences (Jin & Ryoo, 2014).

The concept of cultural flows is a process of hybridization where the English language is used in pop culture globally. For instance, in K-pop, English is integrated with Korean to form new linguistic phenomena, such as English phrases with Hangeul or Korean pronunciations in English words. This practice allows K-pop to maintain its identity while appealing to a global audience (Pennycook, 2012). Moreover, K-pop songs with English words or phrases are often associated with global youth culture. This idea aligns with K-pop branding, targeting younger audiences exposed to social media, where English expressions or slang may resonate with them (Lee, 2018). Additionally, using English in K-pop is an aesthetic choice and a marketing strategy. The English registers enhance the "cool" factor, reflecting global youth culture while making the music more exportable to international markets (Jin and Ryoo, 2014).

On the contrary, in the study by Lauren (2018), *The Commodification of English in K-Pop: Globalisation and Multiple Markets*, the assimilation of English into K-pop might appear to be an attempt by a Korean genre to market itself to an international audience. However, BTS' (Bangtan Boys) early use of English in their song *We Are Bulletproof Pt.2*, released in 2013 before they had attained international fame, has proven otherwise. In other words, the global market cannot be a primary consideration in BTS's early use of English. The use of English can be traced to the early days of K-pop in the 1990s. Thus, the use of English can be attributed to more than just the desire to cater to an international audience. The study examined patterns of English used in K-pop about two crucial factors: firstly, globalization as a driving force behind the global expansion of K-pop over time, and secondly, the multiple markets that K-pop engages with. The results revealed three emergent ways English is commodified in K-pop: hybridization, the combination of English and Korean elements; moderation, the balancing of relative amounts of English and Korean; and reformulation, the creation of a non-native-like 'brand' of English. The results show how changes in economic circumstances and beliefs about language over time affect the perceived value of English within this category, emphasizing the significance of the connection between language and the worldwide economic system in examinations of commodification.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, specifically Sociolinguistic Approach. This research employed the descriptive-qualitative method, because it emphasized on describing the phenomenon of the use of language in its context by interpreting the data. As stated by VanderStoep & Johnson (2008), a qualitative research is a research that is based on people's interpretation of their own experience. Related to its purpose, the qualitative research is more about how to make description than prediction of the data. That is why a depth understanding of researcher's point of view is the goal of this type of research.

The researcher used Sociolinguistic Approach to analyze the Sociolinguistic phenomena, English registers, specifically its word formation processes, functions, and cultural underpinnings.

Instrument

The source of data was collected from 57 Koreaboo K-Pop news articles purposively taken in September 2021. Koreaboo is an English entertainment website and media company dedicated to the promotion of Korean pop culture to the world. They publish the most updated content about K-Pop, idols and celebrities, movies, fashion and trends, and Korean culture. They have more than 10 million readers per month. Koreaboo is a pioneer in the K-Pop phenomenon with readers in more than 100+ countries. They are the founders of KCON, the largest K-Pop festival in the world. They have been featured in *The Washington Post*, *Pop Dust*, *Billboard*, *Vice*, *SXSW* and other major international media companies.

Procedure

The data in this research were all taken from K-POP news articles published in Koreaboo last September 2021. The researcher employed note-taking as the data collection technique.

The procedures of the data collection are illustrated as follows.

The researcher saved all published K-POP news articles from Koreaboo last September 2021.

The researcher read and re-read the K-POP news articles comprehensively and culled the English registers.

The researcher encoded the English registers for frequency count and analysis in the data sheet.

Data Analysis

The followings are the steps of data analysis of this research.

First, the researcher identified the different English registers found in the K-POP news articles and searched their meanings online.

Second, the English registers were tallied and assigned codes based on the article number and the datum number. Below is the example of data coding:

a. A: A stands for article

b. 1: the article number where the English article is found

c. (1): the number of datum

Third, the English registers were scrutinized, analyzed, and examined thoroughly to determine how they were formed, guided by Yule's word-formation processes and functions.

Fourth, the results were presented in tables for clarity. Literature reviews were used to support the findings.

Lastly, three intercoder looked into the correctness and accuracy of the data, specifically, English registers' word-formation processes and functions.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Units of English Registers found in K-POP News Articles

No.	Register	Meaning	Word	Phrase	Frequency
1	all-kill	An all-kill is when a K-POP group's song or album simultaneously takes the top spot of all eight Korean music charts.		/	2
2	all-rounder	An all-rounder is a K-POP idol who is good at everything – sing, dance, rap, and visuals.		/	3
3	Army	Army is BTS' fandom name. It was established in July 9, 2013.	/		6
4	Bias	Bias means your favorite member in a K-POP group.	/		1
5	Blackpink	Blackpink is a K-POP girl group formed by YG Entertainment, consisting of members Jisoo, Jennie, Rosé, and Lisa.	/		31
6	Blinks	Blink is the official fandom name of the girl group, Blackpink.	/		6
7	BTS	BTS is the name of a 7-member South Korean boy band, the "Bangtan Boys." BTS stands for "Bang Tan Sonyeondan," which literally translates as the "Bulletproof Boy Scouts.	/		27
8	Certified All-Kill (CAK)	If a song is able to reach no.1 on the real-time and daily charts, it's awarded a Certified All-Kill (CAK).		/	1
9	Comeback cover/s	Comeback means a K-POP group coming back with new music. Cover is a term used to describe the imitation of K-Pop artist's dance choreography or song.	/	/	14 6
10	Debut	It's often used in K-pop to refer to a trainee who has transitioned to an idol by releasing their first official single (either as a soloist or in a group) or performing in public for the first time.	/		15
12	Edits	Edits mean fan-made edited pictures of K-POP idols.	/		1
13	Fancam	Fancams are videos that follow a celebrity around on stage while they're performing. originally, these were fan-taken videos but now include any performance.	/		6
14	Fandom	A fandom is a K-POP group of fans. Every K-pop fandom name has a different meaning. Almost all K-pop fandom names have a special meaning related to the artists. These names aim to make the fans feel connected with the artist.	/		6
15	Fangirl	Fangirl is an obsessive fan who stalks or engages in other behavior constituting an invasion of the privacy of celebrities, specifically Korean idols, drama actors or other public figures.	/		4
16	idol/s	In Korea all idols are celebrities, but not all celebrities are idols. Someone reaches idol status after training for years and successfully debuting either as a soloist or in a group. The word "idol" is probably most interchangeable with "K-pop star."	/		42
17	Itzy	Itzy is a South Korean girl group formed by JYP Entertainment, consisting of	/		15



		members Yeji, Lia, Ryujin, Chaeryeong, and Yuna.			
18	K-POP	K-pop, short for Korean popular music, is a genre of music originating in South Korea as part of South Korean culture.	/		24
19	member/s	Member means a part of a K-POP group.	/		31
20	Merch	Merch is a short version of the word merchandise. It refers to the products that a K-POP group release.	/		8
21	MOA	MOA (Moment of Alwaysness) is the official fandom name of the group TXT.	/		4
22	NCTzens	NCTzen is the official NCT fandom name.	/		2
23	Once	The official fandom of the girl group, Twice.	/		2
24	OST	Also known as “Original Soundtrack,” an OST refers to songs written specifically for a Korean drama.	/		9
25	Perfect All-Kills (PAKs)	Only songs that are also able to top the Weekly chart too are bestowed Perfect All-Kills (PAKs)—one of the most highly coveted accolades in K-Pop.	/		2
26	Purple Kiss	Purple Kiss is a South Korean girl group formed by RBW in 2020.	/		4
27	Realtime All-Kills (RAKs)	Realtime All-Kills (RAKs) are issued when a song reaches no.1 in real-time across all five charts simultaneously.	/		1
28	Red Velvet	Red Velvet is a South Korean girl group formed and managed by SM Entertainment.	/		6
29	Shawols sub-unit	Fandom of the K-POP group Shinee. Sub-unit means a smaller group within a large group, made up of members of the existing group, releasing songs separate from the original group to possibly appeal to another group of listeners/experiment with different styles.	/		2
30			/		1
31	trainee/s	Before becoming a star, a K-pop idol must first be a trainee. K-pop has a reputation for producing picture-perfect pop stars, and its rigorous trainee program is the reason why. Most stars join a company as a trainee as early as 12 years old, learning how to sing, dance, and speak new languages—especially foreign trainees who must study Korean.	/		11
32	Twice	Twice is a South Korean girl group formed by JYP Entertainment. The group is composed of nine members.	/		8
33	TXT	Tomorrow By Together (TXT) is a five-member South Korean boy band formed by Big Hit Music.	/		12
34	visual/s	Visual means a person who is considered to be the prettiest/most attractive group member, official title of the “pretty face” of a K-POP group	/		21
		Σ	82.35%	20.59%	334

Table 1 shows the English registers found in K-POP news articles. These 334 English registers are found in 57 K-POP news articles posted in September 2021. As shown in Table 1, 82.35% of English registers are words, and 20.59% are phrases. This implies an average of 6 English registers in one K-POP news article. Reading a K-POP news article would be difficult for those not a part of the K-POP fandom because these English registers might cause confusion or misunderstanding.

In a study conducted by Irhana et al. (2017) entitled, English Registers in AllK-Pop News Articles, they found 30 units of English registers found in AllK-Pop news articles posted in April 2016. They drew out eight simple registers: army, bias, concept, debut, idol, rookie, trainee, and visual. They also included 22 complex registers such as all-kill, bromance, CF, chocolate abs, comeback, etc. From the same study, majority of their registers are words with 76.67% and 23.33% for phrases.

Table 2. Word Formation Processes of English Registers found in K-POP news articles

No.	Type of Word Formation Process	English Register	Justification	Σ	%
1	Borrowing	Army bias Blinks cover/s debut edits idol/s member/s Once/s Purple Kiss Red Velvet trainee/s Twice visuals	These registers are borrowed from the English language	14	42.42%

2	Multiple Processes	All-rounder	Compounding: joining of two words: all – around Clipping: 'a' was removed from around Derivation: Adding of suffix -er on the word rounder	7	21.21%
		Certified All-Kill	Borrowing: Certified borrowed from English Compounding: joining of all and kill		
		fancam	Compounding Joining of two words: fan and camera Clipping: camera was clipped into cam		
		K-POP	Acronym: K stands for Korean Compounding: Joining of K and Pop		
		NCTzens	Acronym: NCT (Neo Culture Technology; a KPOP group) Clipping: zen is a clipped of citizen Compounding: joining of NCT and zen/s		
		Perfect All-Kills	Borrowing: Perfect borrowed from English Compounding: joining of all and kill		
		Realtime All-Kills	Compounding and Borrowing: joining of all and kill; real and time		
3	Compounding	all-kill Blackpink	Joining of two words: all and kill Joining of two words: black and pink	4	12.12%
		comeback fangirl	Joining of two words: come and back Joining of two words: fan and girl		
4	Acronym	BTS	BTS stands for "Bang Tan Sonyeondan," which literally translates as the "Bulletproof Boy Scouts.	4	12.12%
		MOA	MOA (Moment of Alwaysness) is the official fandom name of the group TXT.		
		OST	Also known as "Original Soundtrack," an OST refers to songs written specifically for a Korean drama.		
		TXT	Tomorrow By Together (TXT) is a five-member South Korean boy band formed by Big Hit Music.		
5	Coinage	Itzy	"ITZY" means "have it" or "got it". Basically, ITZY "has it" or they "got it", whatever fans want or need.	2	6.07%
		Shawols	The fandom of the K-POP group Shinee.		
6	Derivation	Sub-unit	Prefix 'sub' was added to unit	1	3.03%
7	Clipping	merch	Merchandise was clipped into merch	1	3.03%
		Total		33	100%

Table 2 shows that Borrowing is the most dominant word-formation process of the English registers found in 57 K-POP news articles with 42.42%. These registers are Army, bias, Blinks, cover/s, debut, edits, idol/s, member/s, Once/s, Purple Kiss, Red Velvet, trainee/s, Twice, and visuals. These registers are borrowed from the English language. Although these registers are borrowed in the English language, their meaning differs from their lexical meaning in the dictionary. The second most dominant word-formation process in Multiple Process with 21.21%. Examples of registers under Multiple Process are All-rounder, Certified All-Kill, fancam, K-POP, NCTzens, Perfect All-Kills, and Realtime All-Kills. These registers are formed by Compounding and Acronym or Compounding and Clipping. The least dominant word-formation processes are Derivation and Clipping, with 2.94%.

In contrast, the study results of Irhana et al. (2017) on English Registers in AllK-Pop News Articles revealed that Compounding is the most dominant type of word-formation process of English registers with 50%. Many English registers are made of compounding process because the English registers found in AllK-Pop news articles were written in various ways, such as the using of hyphens between elements or joining of two root words together. Furthermore, in the study, Exploring Register Variation in Korean Popular Music (K-Pop) by Aniranti (2019). The most dominant process which emerges is compounding like the term, chocolate abs. The shape of a chocolate bar is used to describe the abdominals of male singers in K-Pop. Other terms that are formed with compounding are bagel girl, bagel boy, milky skin, porcelain skin, eye-smile, gummy smile, honey thighs, monster rookie, idol group, girl group, boy group, etc.

As shown in Table 3, 83.53% or 279 English registers function as Representational to convey facts and information. These English registers give information about the particular K-POP group's updates and projects.

The study of Irhana et al. (2017) affirmed that the English registers in K-POP news articles function as Representational since the websites where these articles are published as a source of data in the research contain the latest news and updates on the hottest K-POP groups and stars.

Table 3. *Functions served by the English Registers found in K-POP News Articles*

No.	Functions		Σ	%
1	Representational	To convey facts and information	279	83.53%
2	Interactional	To relate to others, to interact.	23	6.89%
3	Personal	To express self	22	6.59%
4	Regulatory	To influence the behavior of others.	10	2.99%
Total			334	100%

Cultural Implications of English Registers found in K-POP News Articles

The 'Borrowing' of English. The results from Tables 2 and 3 show that Borrowing is the most dominant word-formation process of the English registers found in 57 K-POP news articles with 44.12%. In a study conducted by Bruce Lawrence (2010) on *The Verbal Art of Borrowing: Analysis of English borrowing in Korean pop songs*, out of 24 Korean pop songs analyzed, 21/24(88%) had English in the title; 10/24 (42%) had a spoken intro section, and of those 9/10 (90%) had only English in the intro; 23/24 (96%) had English in the chorus, and of those, 6/23 (26%) had only English, 6/23 (26%) had over 50% English, and 11/23 (48%) had a little English; finally, 17/24 (71%) had English in the verses, but only in small amounts (a few words). Therefore, English shows up mostly in choruses, then intros if they occur in the song, then titles, and lastly, verses.

Lee (2004) examined the discourse of 'self-assertion and resistance' through English in Korean popular music, or 'K-pop.' Lee stated that the amount of English appearing in K-pop varied from a single word to an entire song, the type of English ranged from 'Koreanized English only intelligible to the Korean public' to 'American English with African American Vernacular English (AAVE).'

The functions of English ranged from a simple 'attention getter' to the assertion of a 'liberated self' and 'freedom of speech.' Lee concluded that K-pop provides discursive space for Korean youths to assert their self-identity, create new meanings, challenge authority, resist mainstream norms and values, and reject the older generation's conservatism by using the English language.

With the usage of English as a trend in K-POP lyrics and as they strive for more international fans, registers found in K-POP news articles are mostly borrowed from the English language but have a different meaning. Another factor why there are a lot of borrowed words from English is the rise of international fans of K-POP worldwide. Online forums and articles use English to publish the latest news of K-POP groups and idols to cater to international fans.

Of "Idols" and "Visuals". The study's results that the English register "idol" has the most frequency with 42 counts. This means that K-POP news articles mostly talk about idols. Idols are known for their visuals; their breath-taking appearances captured the hearts of fans worldwide. In a K-POP group, a visual means the member who has an appearance that fits the Korean beauty standards. In this study, the register visual appeared 21 times, which means that the news articles mostly talked about an idol's appearance.

Greene & Adams-Price (1990) suggested that adolescents chose a celebrity such as a pop singer to be their idol or role model. The appearance was one of the reasons adolescents admired their idols which caused modeling in everyday behaviors, including clothing styles (Faujiah, 2018). A study on South Korean female college students found that women made social comparisons by analyzing the appearances in the media and making judgments about themselves (Choi, 2018).

In a study conducted by Tresna et al. (2021), they examined how celebrity worship affected female adolescents' body image who idolized K-POP girl groups. The study results showed that the entertainment-social aspect of celebrity worship proved a significant positive correlation with the appearance orientation dimension of body image. Thus, adolescent girls who adored K-pop girl groups for their ability to entertain and attract attention would focus more on their appearance and strive to improve the way they dress and groom.

These findings were in line with Maltby et al. (2005), where they showed that adolescent girls aged 14-16 years who had intense personal celebrity worship were more likely to have negative body image, but the correlation between celebrity worship and body image would fade in adolescents aged 17-20 years. However, a later study by Maltby & Day (2011) on young adults aged 18-23 found a different result. The study showed that participants' intense personal worship toward celebrities whose bodies were admired would predict elective cosmetic surgery over eight months, which is one of the body image problems.

Conclusions

The K-POP phenomenon created a new variation of language called registers. These registers are associated to fans of K-POP or the Hallyu wave in general. English registers are evidently found in K-POP news articles online for they include the latest news about K-POP idols and groups.

In this study, the English registers are analyzed on their word-formation process, functions, and cultural implications. Borrowing is the most dominant word-formation process of the English registers found in 57 K-POP news articles with 42.42%. With the global spread of K-POP, international fans use English registers to share their passion and support to their favorite idols or K-POP groups. Moreover, English registers function as Representational to convey facts and information. Koreaboo and other English websites are source of the latest news for fans of K-POP.

Furthermore, the study's results revealed that K-POP news articles talked about idols and their visuals or appearances. Since K-POP

idols and groups are admired by a lot of people worldwide, it cannot be helped but be influenced by the Korean beauty standard. This implies that the physical appearance of idols played a big part in influencing K-Pop fans physically and mentally like on perceptions of beauty and body image.

Lastly, the researcher recommends more studies on English registers found in K-POP songs, drama, or variety shows be conducted to contribute to the field of Sociolinguistics.

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