
ANALYZING SOCIOLINGUISTIC FEATURES: THE USE OF REGISTER IN ONLINE COMMERCIAL DISCOURSE AND ITS APPLICATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The language used in digital marketing, particularly on social media platforms like Instagram, reflects unique patterns that differ significantly from everyday spoken interaction. This study aims to explore how linguistic registers are used in commercial communication on Instagram, focusing on the account @dailyluxury_id. It also examines how these registers can be utilized in English language teaching. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzed 50 Instagram captions posted between January and March 2024. Content analysis was employed to identify and classify the registers based on word types (such as nouns and verbs) and their meanings, which were grouped into two categories: lexical (dictionary-based) and contextual (influenced by marketing purposes). The results show that 11 frequently used words appeared, with nouns (36.36%) and verbs (18.18%) being the most common, reflecting a focus on promotion and transaction. About 54.54% of the meanings followed standard dictionary definitions, while 45.45% had contextual meanings that conveyed urgency, exclusivity, or community engagement. For example, the word ready implies immediate availability, while local lovers create a sense of belonging. These language strategies contribute to a conversational yet persuasive tone that supports digital marketing goals. The study concludes that the use of registers on Instagram is purposeful and adapted to the target audience. It also suggests that such linguistic features can be integrated into English language teaching to expose learners to authentic, socially relevant materials—particularly in courses related to sociolinguistics, digital communication, or business English.

Keyword : *Instagram, language, online shop, register, sociolinguistics*

INTRODUCTION

Language and society have a dynamic and interrelated relationship, influencing and shaping each other to facilitate effective communication (Riadil, 2021). As Holmes & Wilson (2022) explain, the study of language and society is concerned with understanding why individuals speak differently in different social contexts and identifying the social functions of

language and how language conveys social meaning. Language is the major channel via which people interact, and this mechanism allows them to establish society groupings based on criteria that encompass spirituality, location, occupation, and so forth.

Sociolinguistics, a subject that analyzes language diversity in society, investigates how language evolves in various social circumstances. Traditionally, scholars have categorized language variation into terms like style, slang, colloquialism, jargon, argot, and register (Alwasilah, 1986). Sociolinguistics explores the intricate relationship between language and society, focusing on how language varies according to social contexts and functions (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). One of its key concepts is register, which refers to the variety of language used by members of a particular profession or social group in specific contexts (Wardhaugh, 2021). Registers differ based on factors like field, tenor, and mode of communication, and they reflect both functional and social aspects of language use. Understanding register is essential in capturing how linguistic choices are shaped by the communicative needs and social identity of speakers.

With the rise of social media, the landscape of commercial communication has evolved. Platforms like Instagram are not only visual-based but also rich in linguistic creativity. Sellers blend formal marketing language with casual expressions, emojis, abbreviations, and hashtags to reach wider audiences and create engagement (Bahammam, 2018). This hybrid language form—termed digital commerce language—often transcends traditional classifications of register, blurring the lines between formal and informal, standard and nonstandard, textual and visual. As a result, the conventional framework of register faces challenges in explaining these emerging linguistic patterns in digital environments.

While previous studies have explored language variation in sociolinguistics, few have addressed how registers evolve in online commercial discourse, especially in Instagram-based commerce. The dynamic and fast-paced nature of digital marketing introduces new expressions, tones, and multimodal elements that are not adequately captured by existing sociolinguistic theories. Moreover, there is limited exploration of how these language features can be utilized as relevant, contemporary teaching materials in English language learning. This study addresses the gap by analyzing Instagram discourse through the lens of register and considering its pedagogical application. This research aims to identify and categorize the registers used in Instagram-based commercial discourse, specifically from the account @dailyluxury_id; analyze the linguistic forms and meanings of the registers, including how they function within the commercial context; assess the implications of these findings for

English language teaching, especially in relation to real-world, digital communication practices.

The significance of this study lies in two areas: first, it contributes to sociolinguistic theory by examining the fluidity of register in digital commerce; second, it offers practical insights for language educators to integrate authentic digital texts into classroom instruction, fostering students' awareness of language use in contemporary communication.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative design, which aims to explore and interpret the use of registers in Instagram-based commercial communication. A qualitative approach is suitable for uncovering subtle language patterns and contextual meanings that are often overlooked by quantitative methods (Clark & Mitchell, 2019). Descriptive qualitative research focuses on providing a detailed and contextualized understanding of language phenomena as they naturally occur.

Data Source and Data Collection

The primary data source for this study is the Instagram account @dailyluxury_id, selected purposively due to its consistent and distinctive use of language in promoting luxury products. This account offers rich content that blends marketing discourse with social media linguistic features.

Data were collected from 50 Instagram posts and stories published between January and March 2024. The researcher documented linguistic elements such as captions, hashtags, comments, and keywords embedded in images and stories. The selected posts contained evident commercial intent and frequent interaction with followers. The documentation technique involved capturing screenshots and transcribing textual content for analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis employed content analysis to identify, classify, and interpret registers. Each word or phrase was examined to determine:

- a. Linguistic form (e.g., noun, verb, phrase)
- b. Lexical meaning: the dictionary or literal meaning

- c. Contextual meaning: the implied or functional meaning within the commercial discourse

Registers were categorized following sociolinguistic frameworks as outlined by Wardhaugh (2021) and Holmes (2013). Themes were developed based on frequency, function, and semantic implication of language use in the context of online sales and audience interaction. A theoretical lens from sociolinguistics guided the interpretation of how the identified registers shape consumer perception and brand identity.

Limitations

The study is limited by its focus on a single Instagram account, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings. Register use varies across platforms and is influenced by brand identity, target demographics, and marketing strategies. Therefore, the registers observed here reflect the specific communication style of @dailyluxury_id and may not represent the broader e-commerce landscape on Instagram.

To address this limitation, the research explicitly acknowledges that its findings are context-specific, aimed at in-depth exploration rather than generalization. However, the focused case study still offers valuable insights into the nuanced interplay between language and branding in digital commerce.

Ethical Considerations

All data used in this research are publicly available on Instagram. No private information was accessed, and the analysis was limited to observable content. The study maintains ethical standards by preserving anonymity of commenters and avoiding any form of manipulation or misrepresentation of the original content. Furthermore, the study encourages critical reflection on the ethical implications of language use in digital marketing, especially in terms of persuasive techniques that may affect consumer decisions under the guise of authenticity and intimacy. This study extends earlier research, including (Farikah, 2006) thesis on registers in Facebook store communications, but shifts the focus to Instagram, specifically analyzing the account @dailyluxury_id. Data were collected from the linguistic forms and phrases used in Instagram stories and posts, examining their meanings and functions within the e-commerce discourse. Content from the account was documented as the primary method of data collection. While the qualitative descriptive approach facilitates a detailed analysis of register use in e-commerce, focusing on a single Instagram account presents some limitations.

Instagram shops vary in their language strategies based on audience demographics, product types, branding, and marketing goals. Furthermore, the use of certain language methods raises severe ethical problems about authenticity and customer manipulation. E-commerce networks, such as Instagram, frequently blur the line between genuine user interaction and commercial persuasion, use language to create the illusion of a personal connection or to influence client decisions. The moral implications of these strategies require further investigation, particularly how they can deceive consumers' views and purchasing patterns under the pretext of authenticity. The research given here intends to contribute to the ongoing discussion about ethical issues in digital marketing and consumer protection.

As a result, how registers are used varies greatly among platforms. The study's concentration on a single account may restrict the breadth of its conclusions, as the linguistic aspects of one account may not represent the many ways English is used throughout multiple Instagram-based stores. The registers found here may represent the communication style of @dailyluxury_id's target demographic and brand identification, but they may not completely capture the larger language techniques employed by other Instagram e-commerce companies.

To mitigate this limitation, the study acknowledges that its findings should be viewed within the context of the chosen account and not generalized to all Instagram-based shops. Nevertheless, the focused analysis of @dailyluxury_id offers valuable insights into how specific registers are employed to enhance product appeal, create brand identity, and drive consumer engagement in a particular e-commerce setting. The study commences by addressing essential ideas such as the link between language and society, sociolinguistic definitions, and the concept of register, specifically in the context of digital commerce on Instagram. A theoretical framework was developed by reviewing sociolinguistic literature and definitions of register from various scholars. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the linguistic forms and meanings of registers using recognized linguistic theories, ultimately drawing conclusions about their use in Instagram-based shop communications.

Register use can differ significantly across platforms, and even within different accounts on the same platform. The study's focus on a single Instagram account may limit the generalizability of its findings, as the linguistic features observed in this account may not fully represent the diverse ways language is employed across the wide variety of Instagram-based shops. The registers identified in this research reflect the specific communication style tailored to the audience and brand identity of @dailyluxury_id, but they may not capture the broader linguistic strategies employed by other e-commerce accounts on Instagram, which

may vary according to factors such as target demographics, product types, and marketing goals.

To address this limitation, the study emphasizes that its findings should be considered in the context of the chosen account and not generalized to all Instagram-based shops. On the other hand, a thorough examination of @dailyluxury_id reveals important insights into how certain language registers are employed to improve product attractiveness, develop brand identity, and drive customer involvement in a specific e-commerce setting. While the findings may not be generalizable, they contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how language operates in Instagram digital commerce. The study begins by digging into fundamental concepts such as the relationship between language and society, sociolinguistic definitions, and the concept of register, particularly in the context of online retail. A theoretical framework was constructed through a review of sociolinguistic literature and various definitions of register, followed by an analysis of the linguistic forms and meanings identified in the Instagram data using established linguistic theories. The findings are then used to draw conclusions about the role of language in Instagram-based commercial communications.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section discusses the results of the study organized into two main parts: (1) Examination of the linguistic forms of registers used in online commerce language, and (2) exploration of the meanings conveyed by these registers. Each section provides a detailed description of how language functions in the context of an Instagram-based online store, specifically @dailyluxury_id.

When evaluating linguistic forms, the researcher divided the data into two categories: words and phrases. From the data, 11 examples of register use were identified—10 of which were individual words and 1 was a phrase. These words were further classified according to their content and word formation process. In terms of content, the words included nouns (such as stock, local lovers, review, and bestseller), verbs (such as transfer and order), and adjectives (such as ready). In terms of word formation, the researcher identified compound words (e.g., restock and sold out) and abbreviations (e.g., COD, which stands for "cash on delivery"). The phrases identified were noun phrases, especially ready stock, which are commonly used in online store communications to indicate product availability.

When investigating register meaning, the investigator differentiates among two types: lexical meaning and contextual meaning. Lexical meaning refers to the literal or dictionary definition of words, whereas contextual meaning is established by the circumstances in which they are employed. The study indicated that contextual meaning was more common, with 6 examples of lexical meaning and 5 of contextual meaning found in the data. In addition, the study investigated register meaning in the context of communication, concentrating on three aspects: field, tenor, and mode.

The area represents the societal setting and desire of the interaction, in which the customer frequently inquires concerning the accessibility of the good, the method of purchase system, and the whole trading process, while the seller provides comprehensive details on these facets, which include the details of the item. Tone distinguishes those who have a relationship, namely the buyer and seller. Lastly, technique relates to the communication medium, in this case Instagram.

After extensively examining all of the data acquired, the researcher identified and organized many key discoveries. This data was classified according to the linguistic form of the register used in the online store, highlighting the way in which words and phrases function in this particular e-commerce communication context.

Linguistic Forms of Register: The registers used in the online store, particularly in the English-language posts of @dailyluxury_id, consist of specific words and phrases that reflect the distinct characteristics of Instagram's commercial communication. These registers are fundamentally different from those used in traditional e-commerce, which often uses more formal, organized, and commercial language. Traditional e-commerce frequently stresses extensive descriptions of goods, explicit costs, and direct calls for participation, but Instagram's registers are more constantly casual, and visually integrated.

Instagram's vocabulary is often conversational, with short, pithy words, a lighthearted tone, and personalized pleas that reflect the platform's social and interactive nature. This form of register makes extensive use of hashtags, emoticons, and acronyms, which help to make the material more accessible and engaging. Unlike traditional e-commerce, where communication is largely one-way (business to consumer), Instagram encourages two-way interaction through comments, direct messages, and story replies, which also influences the casual tone of language used. Sociolinguistic factors attributing to these differences consist of the platform's dedication to community development and influence from peers, in addition to Instagram's fast-paced, mobile-first surroundings, whereby consumers skim quickly

throughout posts. The requirement for urgency and capturing attention in a matter of seconds motivates firms to utilize brief, effective language. Furthermore, the platform's immensely visual nature means that the textual register coexists with photographs, videos, and aesthetic appearance, frequently resulting in minimalistic, suggestive, or emotionally charged language rather than detailed explanations.

Furthermore, Instagram's casual and intimate manner of communication is impacted by the centered around communities culture, which values authenticity and relatability. Businesses frequently utilize a conversational tone to blend into customers' social feeds, rather than looking unduly professional or business, as is more common in traditional e-commerce environments. The table below highlights these findings by displaying the sorts of register language that are widely used in Instagram-based stores and how they differ from traditional e-commerce communication.

Table 1: Linguistics Form of Register Used in Online Shop

No	Linguistics Form	Register	Σ Data	%
1.	Word	Data 4	Data 7	
	a. Noun	Stock	4	36,36 %
		Local lovers		
		Review		
		Bestseller		
	b. Verb	Transfer	2	18,18 %
		Order		
	c. Adjective	Ready	1	9,09 %
	d. Compound	Restock	2	18,18 %
		Sold Out		
	e. Abbreviation	COD	1	9,09 %
2.	Phrase			
	a. Noun Phrase	Ready Stock	1	9,09 %
	Σ Data		11	100 %

Based on the preceding figure, the investigator determined that nouns are the most prevalent language form. The researcher found four nouns, two verbs, two compound words, one adjective, one abbreviation, and one noun phrase. Nouns appear more frequently in online store conversations because they attract buyers' interest in the item. The table below provides a full classification of the linguistic forms of registers typically employed in circumstances of online buying. The table splits these language elements into distinct grammatical forms, such as words and phrases, and then into more precise categories like nouns, verbs, adjectives, compounds, and abbreviations.

In the "Words" category, nouns account for 36.36% of all occurrences. These nouns include regularly used expressions such as "Stock", "Local lover", "Review", and "Best seller", indicating their frequent use in e-commerce terminology. Verbs, which make up 18.18% of the data, include transactional activities like "Transfer" and "Order," both of which are required for the online buying procedure. Adjectives, while less common, continue to add to the linguistic register, with "Ready" accounting for 9.09% of the data, denoting the availability or readiness of a product. Compound words, which combine many keywords into one notion, include "restock" and "sold out," which account for an additional 18.18% of the total, emphasizing inventory management language commonly used in internet stores. acronyms, notably "COD" (Cash on Delivery), account for 9.09%, demonstrating the use of acronyms to describe payment methods.

The table also contains a section on phrases, in which "Ready in Stock" is used as a noun phrase, accounting for 9.09% of the data. This term usually refers to a product that is available for immediate purchase, highlighting the significance of stock status in online purchasing communications. In conclusion, this linguistic analysis indicates a diversity of forms, with nouns being the most common, followed by verbs, compound words, abbreviations, and phrases, all of which contribute to the unique terminology and jargon of the e-commerce industry. The analysis of eleven data points identifies key and commonly used phrases that allow efficient communication in the online retail context, emphasizing the necessity of clarity and correctness in transaction processing.

The Meaning of Register :

The investigator uses lexical and contextual meanings to ascertain the meaning of a register in an online store. The following table describes the discussion and determination of the meaning of the register used in an online shop:

Table 2: Linguistics Form of Register Used in an Online Shop

No	Linguistics Form	Register	Σ Data	%
1.	Stock	The quantity of things available for purchase at a shop.	✓	
2.	Local lovers	Customer's name		✓
3.	Review	A product or service review.	✓	
4.	Bestseller	A product that sells in big quantities	✓	
5.	Transfer	A bank transfers funds to a recipient at another location.	✓	
6.	Order	Request to supply products, or the act	✓	

		of ordering items or merchandise from the supplier.	
7.	Ready	The availability of products for sale from the source or reseller.	✓
8.	Restock	The availability of new products that have been sold out by the provider.	✓
9.	Sold Out	Sell all items, such as tickets, clothing, etc.	✓
10.	COD	Payment is performed when a consumer and vendor meet directly.	✓
11.	Ready Stock	Products that are ready for sale or available from a seller/supplier.	✓
	Σ Data		6 5
	%		54,54 % 45,45 %

Based on the table above, the researcher concludes that the high frequency data of register meaning is in lexical meaning. The researcher found six data in lexical meaning (54.54%) and five data in contextual meaning (45.45%). Lexical meaning appears more often because it is the actual meaning as determined by sensory observation in online business.

Table 2 provides a full examination of the linguistic forms of registers often used in online purchases, distinguishing between lexical and contextual meaning. The table covers 11 distinct registers and provides an exhaustive description for each, emphasizing how the register is utilized either lexically (basic dictionary meaning) or contextually (meaning as employed in a specific e-commerce scenario).

The first item, "Stock," relates to the availability of products in a shop and is largely employed lexically; the "V" sign in the lexical column indicates its use as a standalone phrase expressing inventory. Similarly, "local lovers" refers to customers who prefer locally produced items or establishments, and it is also lexically characterized as a phrase to identify a specific consumer group, highlighting the personal connection customers have with local companies. "Review," as used lexically, refers to consumer feedback or appraisal of a product or service. Online marketplace reviews are especially essential since they impact purchase decisions. Similarly, "bestseller" refers to a product that sells in huge amounts, making it an effective way for marketers to spotlight popular things. In the context of e-commerce, both phrases are used literally.

The following phrase, "Transfer," refers to the process of transmitting money from one party to another, which is commonly assisted by a bank. This term is also lexically marked, emphasizing its transactional importance in the purchase process. "Order," a phrase used to request items, is also tagged for lexical usage, indicating a critical step in the buying process.

The adjective "Ready," which indicates the availability of products for immediate sale, appears in both the lexical and contextual columns. Lexically, this word merely refers to the condition of being ready, but it has an e-commerce connotation since it reassures customers that an item is accessible for speedy delivery. Similarly, "restock" refers to the replenishing of a previously sold-out item, stressing inventory management.

The word "Sold Out" indicates that all units of a specific product have been acquired, which plays an important role in online purchasing by instilling a sense of scarcity and increasing demand for restocks. Similarly, "COD" (Cash on Delivery) refers to a payment method in which clients pay when they receive the items, acting as both a lexical definition and a contextual depiction of this payment option. Meanwhile, the phrase "Ready Stock" refers to things that are immediately accessible for purchase, with both lexical value as an indication of availability and contextual relevance in reassuring clients about speedy delivery. A summary table shows that 54.54% of the terms are utilized for their lexical meaning, whereas 45.45% are contextually relevant. This balancing emphasizes the significance of both precise definitions and complex context in the language of e-commerce. The registers investigated in this investigation demonstrate the digital marketplace's distinct vocabulary, in which clarity and appeal in language are critical for smooth transactions and an improved consumer experience.

Discussion

This study reveals that linguistic registers used in Instagram-based commercial discourse serve multiple communicative functions that reflect both grammatical choices and pragmatic strategies. Among the grammatical forms identified, nouns constituted the highest proportion (36.36%), including terms such as *stock*, *review*, and *bestseller*. These function to label products, describe consumer groups, and convey elements of the shopping process. Drawing on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), these nouns fulfill the ideational function of language, representing entities and experiences central to digital commerce. Verbs such as *transfer*, *order*, and *check out* (18.18%) point to material processes—concrete actions that consumers are expected to perform—which underscores the transactional nature of Instagram-based marketing. Meanwhile, adjectives and compound expressions like *ready stock*, *sold out*, and *limited edition*, although less frequent, play a key role in modulating urgency and emotional tone. These forms align with the interpersonal function of language, as they influence attitudes and shape relationships between sellers and

consumers. Additionally, the use of abbreviations like *COD* (Cash on Delivery) demonstrates how digital communication often favors brevity and clarity, echoing Hymes' concept of communicative competence, where appropriateness to context is essential for effective language use.

Beyond grammatical form, the study distinguishes between lexical meaning—based on dictionary definitions—and contextual meaning, which is shaped by marketing intent. For instance, the word *stock*, while lexically referring to available inventory, acquires urgency when used in promotional phrases like *only 2 left in stock*. This reflects Leech's notion of pragmatic meaning, where language is shaped by implied intent and expected response. Similarly, expressions such as *ready*, *restock*, and *sold out* construct a sense of scarcity, aligning with Grice's maxim of relevance and Cialdini's principle of persuasion, where limited availability enhances perceived value. Registers like *local lovers* not only promote localism but also establish an emotional connection with the audience. While lexically suggesting preference for local goods, contextually it fosters in-group identity—an example of what Eckert and McConnell-Ginet term "communities of practice," where shared language reinforces group belonging.

Moreover, several registers identified in the data convey emotional and social meaning. Terms like *bestseller* and *reviewed by many* draw on the concept of social proof—another principle from Cialdini's framework—where popularity and peer endorsement validate consumer decisions. This interactional dynamic also resonates with Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, emphasizing that language is always shaped by and directed toward a responsive audience. Registers such as *pre-order* and *COD* further reflect the transactional and interactional dimensions of language (Brown & Yule, 1983), promoting ease and trust while simultaneously building rapport between seller and buyer.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings demonstrate that Instagram registers offer rich, authentic resources for English language teaching. Their multifunctional nature—encompassing descriptive, persuasive, and relational elements—makes them valuable for exploring pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis. By integrating such real-world texts into the classroom, teachers can help students recognize how meaning changes across contexts and how multimodal elements (such as emojis or hashtags) affect interpretation. This approach aligns with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), where engaging with genuine communicative tasks fosters pragmatic awareness and digital literacy (Ellis, 2003). Instagram

captions, for example, can serve as texts for students to analyze tone, register, and persuasion strategies, bridging the gap between academic learning and contemporary language use.

In short, language use in Instagram commerce is far from neutral; it is a strategic semiotic resource designed to construct meaning, express identity, and provoke emotional responses. Through deliberate use of registers, sellers cultivate urgency, foster a sense of community, and promote exclusivity, thereby enhancing both customer engagement and brand loyalty. The theoretical lens provided by SFL, pragmatics, and sociolinguistic theories such as communities of practice deepens our understanding of how language functions in digital commerce and offers meaningful insights for English language instruction in the digital age.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that linguistic register plays a significant role in shaping communication within Instagram-based online stores, reflecting a blend of transactional, persuasive, and community-building language. The most dominant linguistic forms identified were nouns and verbs, which support the platform's goal of informing and attracting consumers through product-related terminology. While many words retain their literal, lexical meanings, their contextual use in digital commerce creates added layers of urgency, exclusivity, and social connection. These findings highlight how online sellers strategically use language not only to convey information but also to engage customers emotionally and culturally. However, given the study's focus on a single Instagram account, the results should be interpreted with caution and not generalized across all e-commerce platforms. Based on these findings, it is recommended that future research expand the data sources to include multiple accounts and platforms to strengthen generalizability. For practical application, English language educators can integrate authentic content from Instagram commerce into classroom materials to teach register, pragmatics, and digital communication strategies. This approach would enhance learners' ability to understand and analyze real-world language use in contemporary contexts. Additionally, marketers and content creators should remain mindful of the ethical implications of language use in digital commerce, ensuring that strategies aimed at creating urgency or exclusivity do not mislead consumers but instead foster transparent and trust-based engagement.

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