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LEXICAL AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF FAN COMMUNICATION ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM X

Summary. The widespread use of social media has changed the ways in which audiences interact with popular culture, leading to the emergence of online fan communities. An online fandom is examined as a community of people united by a common interest in a particular object of popular culture who actively interact on social media. When fans interact online, they exchange information, express their opinions, emotions, attitudes towards actors, events and other fans, creating a sense of community. Although fan culture has been examined in cultural studies, psychology and media studies, the linguistic organisation of fan communication on social media platforms has received limited scholarly attention.

The aim of this article is to study the linguistic characteristics of fandom communication on the X platform (formerly Twitter), with particular attention to its lexical and pragmatic features. The analysis is based on a corpus of posts and comment threads related to popular films, television series and actors. It identifies the main features of fandom communication on social media, including the construction of group identity, the use of linguistic devices to express evaluation and emotion, parasocial relationships between fans and celebrities and the use of intertextual references.

The results demonstrate that fandom discourse on X is characterised by lexical innovation, the use of personal pronouns (we, us, our vs. they, them, their) and fandom-specific community labels to establish in-group identity, the frequent use of online slang and evaluative language. Fans reduce the perceived social distance between themselves and celebrities through the use of diminutive forms of address and nicknames. Communication within fandom spaces is also highly intertextual, it relies on shared vocabulary, memes and inside jokes based on common knowledge of films, television series, celebrities and fan culture. This study contributes to current research on online communication and language use on social media platforms.

Key words: social media, online community, fan communication, intertextuality.

Introduction. Current linguistic research has shown growing interest in the study of digital discourse and online communities that develop their own norms, communicative practices and distinctive patterns of language use [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6]. Online fan communities known as fandoms are formed on social media platforms around a shared interest in books, films, television series, video games, music or any other forms of popular culture. Members of fan communities actively participate in the interpretation, discussion and creative expansion of media texts. The dynamic nature of fan communication is reflected in the emergence of fandom-specific terminology, the use of slang, hashtags, memes and intertextual references. At the same time, fan interactions rely on such pragmatic strategies as stance-taking, humour, irony and expressions of solidarity which contribute to the successful communication within the fandom community. The analysis of online fandoms demonstrates how they constantly adapt linguistic resources to meet their communicative needs. The present study contributes to research on digital discourse by examining the lexical and pragmatic features of fandom communication on the social media platform X.

Literature review. Although fandoms have existed in various forms for decades, today fan communities mainly function on such social media as X/Twitter, Tumblr, Reddit, Instagram and TikTok.

Online fan activity involves posting, commenting, tagging, reposting, quoting, creating and sharing content on social media platforms. Existing research focuses on such aspects of fandoms as interaction, cooperation, community-building and conflict. Fandoms have been analysed as a social and cultural phenomenon from the perspectives of cultural studies, media studies, sociolinguistics and psychology.

The tradition of studying fan communities was established by Henry Jenkins who argued that fans are active participants constructing their own culture rather than passive consumers [7]. According to Jenkins, fandom is characterised by emotional investment in media texts, collaborative meaning-making, production of transformative works (fanfiction fan art, videos, memes), formation of communities with shared norms, knowledge and practices [8].

Scholars have examined the social, cultural and linguistic characteristics of specific fandoms and their sociolects, the construction of collective identity and in-group membership as well as the discursive practices through which fans negotiate participation in online communities [9; 10; 7; 8; 11]. Studies of fan fiction have explored how fans reinterpret and expand original media texts [12; 13; 14]. Another area of research concerns parasocial relationships between fans and media figures. Recent studies have shown that social media platforms foster the perception of intimacy between fans and celebrities, creating a feeling of emotional attachment [7]. Scholars have also analysed conflicts within fan communities, including toxic fandoms, shipping wars, gatekeeping, fan policing and cancel culture [15; 16].

Research on online fan communities demonstrates that language plays a central role in constructing and maintaining collective identity. As fandoms are built around a shared interest in a cultural object, they generate recognisable linguistic patterns that reflect group membership.

The purpose of the article is to identify and analyse the lexical and pragmatic features of fandom discourse on X (formerly Twitter). The study examines a corpus of 1500 comments collected from the X platform between 2023 and 2026. The corpus includes posts and comment threads from update accounts and fan-run accounts dedicated to films, television series and actors. The study focuses on identifying linguistic patterns that are characteristic of online fandom discourse regardless of the specific fan community. This approach makes it possible to distinguish broader tendencies in fan communication on X. The research uses a combination of content analysis, lexical analysis and discourse analysis to examine the linguistic characteristics of the collected corpus.

Results and discussion. Studies of fan communities on social media platforms have shown that fans develop a shared, community-specific lexicon, referred to as 'fan talk' which they use as a resource for identity construction. Although some aspects of 'fan talk' have been examined, the vocabulary and pragmatic features of online fandoms have not been the subject of systematic linguistic analysis. "Fan talk includes 'special codes' and particular communication styles that are shared within the fandom to create the feeling of fellowship among fans and also alienation from non-fans" [17].

Lexical innovation is one of the defining features of digital communication. Social media provide an environment in which new lexical items are constantly coined and adapted through interaction among users. To differentiate themselves from other groups, members of the film fan community on X create fandom-specific labels. They frequently combine the name of the film, television series, film franchise, film genre or fictional character with the clipped form *twt* ('Twitter') to make compounds, for example *filmtwt* as a general name for this film-related segment of X and more specialized community names, including *dunetwt, marveltwt, bridgertontwt, lokitwt, horrortwt*. These labels help users identify themselves with particular fandoms, signal shared interests and facilitate interaction with fellow fans. The importance of fandom-specific community labels is reflected in the following post, which refers to the television series 'The Pitt' (2025): "*some people on pittwt have never been in other fandoms before apparently*" *(1).*

Portmanteau words are used to create relationship names, known as ships, or labels for memorable celebrity events and public appearances. The blends are made by combining the names of fictional characters or celebrities, or by merging a celebrity's name with the name of the event location into a single lexical item. Examples include *Tomdaya (Tom+Zendaya), Lesmand (Lestat +Armand), Timochella (Timothée + Coachella):* In the following post the coined word refers to the actor's appearance at the Coachella music festival in a concise way: "*timochella alive and well with a lot of hair on his head for jb's performance i could cry rn" (2).*

Another important aspect of community building is the metaphorical conceptualisation of fandoms as nations, families or households. This is reflected in the use of the nouns 'nation', 'family', 'house' in the names of fan-related accounts and in group discussions as the following post illustrates: "*DUNE NATION WAKE UP. DUNE PROPHECY TRAILER JUST DROPPED" (3).* Fans refer to other community members as *besties, family, mutuals,* this way they frame interpersonal relationships in terms of intimacy and solidarity.

Studies of fan discourse demonstrate that fandom communities construct a shared collective identity through the use of first- and third-person pronouns in such expressions as *our fandom, we won, we survived, not in our house; they started it, they know what they are doing.* In these examples the pronoun 'we' indicates membership within the fan community, while 'they' denotes outsiders such as critics or rival fandoms. The opposition 'we-they' is related to the principles of Social Identity Theory developed by Tajfel and Turner [18], which explains how people categorize themselves and others as members of particular groups. According to this approach, individuals define their identities through distinctions between the in-group and the out-group [18]. The formation of collective identity is based on shared characteristics, values and interests. In fandom discourse on X the pronouns 'we', 'us', 'our' refer to an imagined group of individual fans and contribute to the perception of the fandom as a unified community: *BIG DAY FOR US #SPNFamily Our Jared's day! (4).* The pronouns 'they', 'them', 'their' are used to identify rival fandoms, or other groups and to create boundaries between community members and outsiders.

Parasocial relationships in online fandoms are reflected in the ways users refer to their favourite actors and fictional characters as if they were members of their immediate social circle. One of the most distinctive markers of this phenomenon is the use of first names, affectionate nicknames, diminutives, pet names and kinship terms (e.g. *my baby boy, our girl, my husband/wife, princess, our king/queen, pookie, bunny, snookums*). Such forms of address reduce the social distance between fans and celebrities and function as markers of in-group belonging.

The analysis of the vocabulary of film fandoms on X demonstrates the influence of K-pop communities. Due to the popularity and visibility of K-pop fandom there has been a considerable growth in the use of Korean words on social media, where they function as markers of admiration, affection, emotional support. Frequently occurring borrowings include *aegyo (cuteness, charm), oppa (older brother or close older male friend), unnie (older sister or older female friend), jinja (really, for real)*. They keep their original meaning, but become recontextualized within English-language fan communities dedicated to the film industry. One example is the use of the phrase 'If you do X, they (will) jinja kill you' as demonstrated in the post: *on bridgertontwt if you twt about colin and his relationship with his siblings, they jinja kill you (5)*. In this context the borrowed word serves as an intensifier and a marker of common fandom knowledge.

Fans also use a range of internet slang shared across different online communities on social media platforms. Words such as *oomf* (one of my followers), its plural form *oomfs*, the feminine derivative *oomfette*, *moot* (mutual follower) refer to other users without mentioning them directly. In addition to the community-oriented terms, fans use evaluative vocabulary. Common examples include *cringe*, which describes something as awkward or embarrassing, *mid*, which evaluates something as mediocre, *flop*, which refers to a commercial or artistic failure and *khia* which is used as a derogatory term for someone unimportant, a nobody, or someone whose career has been unsuccessful. Positive evaluations are frequently conveyed through Gen Z slang such as *GOAT (greatest of all time)/ate (did very well)/served (presented a great look, attitude or performance)*, which express approval of a person's performance or achievements. As examples 6 and 7 illustrate, these expressions are used to praise actors and creative work: "*Shabana and Gerran are my GOAT actors from The Pitt. They're aces at both comedic and emotional scenes. I really need them to do a comedic project together because their comedic facial expressions and physical comedy are top notch" (6). the pitt writers really ate with their siblingsenemies dynamic mmmmm incredible food (7)*.

Intertextuality constitutes one of the defining features of fandom communication, posts contain references to the films, television series, interviews or public events. Fans use memorable dialogues, quotations, allusions to scenes from films or television series in everyday interactions with each other to recall the original source, evaluate something, express emotions, create a humorous effect or comment on current events. They may also reproduce viral jokes, elements of fanfiction or previous posts. One of the manifestations of intertextuality is the use of recurring phrasal templates or text memes that are easily copied and adapted by fans [19]. They may be fandom-specific and originate from exchanges between fans or refer to a popular film, television series, meme or viral online event. These repeated texts acquire new meanings through constant use and adaptation while preserving their connections to the original text. One example from the research corpus is the phrase *'Blah, blah, blah. Proper name. Place name. Backstory stuff'* that comes from "The LEGO Movie" (2014) where it is used to shorten a detailed explanation. The quotation has become a viral trend on Instagram, TikTok and X. In online communication it is used as a widely recognised meme to summarize long explanations implying that only the essential information is important. Its communicative effect relies on shared cultural knowledge and it serves both as a humorous device and a marker of in-group identity.

In the analysed dataset phrasal templates include expressions of evaluation (*this is cinema*), affective reactions (*giggling and kicking my feet*) and hyperbolic constructions (*I will never recover from this*). They provide efficient, recognizable ways of expressing emotions and stance.

Conclusions. The findings demonstrate that fandom discourse on X is characterised by lexical innovation, fandom-specific vocabulary, evaluative vocabulary and intertextual references that play an important role in constructing in-group identity.

Fandoms are participatory communities in which users actively engage in discussions and produce content which requires new vocabulary. Unlike general internet slang, these words are coined within particular fandoms to satisfy their communicative needs. They become part of the community's shared vocabulary through the frequent use in posts and hashtags. Similarly, the repeated use of first-person plural pronouns, third-person plural pronouns and fandom-specific labels serves as a marker of group belonging. The main types of intertextual references in fan communication include direct quotations, allusions, fandom-specific memes, and references to previous events or discussions.

Further research could explore the similarities and differences in fandom communication on different social media platforms and compare the communicative strategies used by specific fandoms.

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Борисович О., Білас Л., Павліченко Л. Лексичні та прагматичні особливості комунікації фанатів у соціальній мережі X

Анотація. Соціальні медіа істотно змінили характер взаємодії аудиторії з популярною культурою, що сприяло формуванню фанатських онлайн-спільнот. Онлайн-фандом розглядають як групу людей, об'єднаних спільним інтересом до певного предмету масової культури, які активно взаємодіють між собою в соціальних мережах. У межах таких груп відбувається обмін інформацією, висловлення оцінок, емоцій, ставлення до подій, акторів та інших учасників фандому, що забезпечує формування спільної ідентичності. Попри значну увагу до аналізу субкультури фанатів у культурології, психології та медіазнавстві, мовні особливості спілкування фанатів у соціальних мережах залишаються недостатньо вивченими.

Метою статті є дослідження лексичних та прагматичних особливостей спілкування фанатів у соціальній мережі X (яка раніше мала назву Twitter). Матеріалом дослідження слугував корпус дописів та коментарів, присвячених популярним кінофільмам, телевізійним серіалам та акторам. У роботі визначено особливості комунікації фанатів у соціальних мережах, зокрема способи конструювання групової ідентичності, використання мовних засобів для вираження оцінки та емоцій, парасоціальні взаємини між шанувальниками й знаменитостями, а також інтертекстуальні посилання.

Як засвідчують результати дослідження, фанатський дискурс на платформі X відзначається створенням нових лексичних одиниць, використанням особових займенників (we, us, our vs. they, them, their) для виокремлення і протиставлення фанатських спільнот, частотним вживанням онлайн сленгу та оцінної лексики. Щоб зменшити соціальну дистанцію з відомими людьми фанати використовують зменшувально-пестливі форми звертання та прізвиська. Комунікація у фанатському середовищі вирізняється високим рівнем інтертекстуальності, оскільки спирається на меми, жарти та цитати, зрозумілі завдяки колективним знанням про фільми, телевізійні серіали, знаменитостей та субкультуру фандому. Аналіз виконано у межах сучасних досліджень про онлайн-комунікацію та функціонування мови у соцмережах.

Ключові слова: соціальні медіа, онлайн-спільнота, фанатський дискурс, інтертекстуальність.

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