

Unveiling The Implied Meaning of Registers in Football Commentaries on X

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Abstract

This study aims to unveil the implied meanings in football fans' comments on the X platform by analyzing the use of register and conversational implicatures. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, this research collected data from the comment sections of football-related posts on X between 2024 and 2025. The analysis involved identifying the register words and identifying the types of conversational implicature used in the comment. The findings revealed that football fans utilize a specialized register (e.g., "gaffer", "GOAT", "REDS") in communicating. The key finding of this research is the significance of particularized conversational implicature over the generalized ones, indicating that communication in the football community is context-dependent. Fans convey indirect meaning of praise, criticism, and hope by relying on shared knowledge. This creates a distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" of the community. This study concludes that the specialized language is crucial for social bonding and identity presentation.

INTRODUCTION

The existence of an online platform supports football fans in communicating globally. The online platform creates a space where fans can interact not only with other fans but also with the clubs and the players themselves. One of the online platforms that is widely used by the fans is X (formerly Twitter). This platform provides its users with various features, such as a comment section, repost, quote, like, and direct message. Each of those features is beneficial to the football community, as it allows the members to share their predictions, reactions towards a topic presented. During online communication, the football community presents its identity to the global world, thus can be viewed from the language used by the community. The use of language is associated with community, and they tend to use the same language repetitively. This repetitive use of language will be the background of building identity in a community, which distinguishes one and another. The football community can be labeled as a particular society that has its own language, creating a border that distinguishes insiders and outsiders. Therefore, the outsider has to know the language used by the insider.

On that account, sociolinguistics, as a branch of linguistics, focuses on the use of language in society, referring to the distinct language used by the football community as a Register. Rohman (2024) identifies register as a selection of words created because of specific work to be done. The concept of register is associated with an inclusive language, serving communicative needs of a particular community (Agha, 2005). The outsider, however, is obliged to understand the meaning of the register to fully comprehend the context.

Understanding the meaning of someone's utterances is a key part that leads to successful communication. Utterances can be easily comprehended when the addressor deliberately states their intention through the words presented. However, there is a particular situation where the addressor could not provide enough information for the addressee to comprehend. In this condition, the process of the addressee on grasping the implied meaning by using context as its supporting aspects is called implicature.

Linguistics placed implicature in the branch of pragmatics as it involves someone to extract a meaning in the process. Santoso & Apriyanto (2020) define implicature as an expression that is not well explained in the literal vocabulary. Implicature is a result of implication, in which the addressee fully relies on the production of the utterances, which involve the context and interpretation as the tool to understand Finch (2000).

Implicature has two different types, conventional and conversational. Conventional implicature is the process of extracting implied meaning, focusing on the linguistic expression presented in the text or utterance. On the other hand, conversational implicature deals with extracting implied meaning which rely more on the speaker's context.

Several previous studies were conducted employing Register as the main theory. Winasis & Hakim (2020), analyzed the register in the documentary text of the FIFA World Cup, which later on categorized into the word classes as the result is that they found in total of 137 registers, 77 of the data categorized as nouns, 30 of the data categorized as verbs, 5 of the data categorized as adjectives, and 3 of the data categorized as adverbs. Similar research conducted by Ningsih et al. (2021) focuses on analyzing the grammatical features and contextual meaning of the register, as 46 total registers were found in the BOLA magazine, 22 of the data were categorized as lexemes, and 24 of the data were categorized as phrases.

The use of Implicature theory in searching implied meaning has been familiarly recognized by several researchers. Santoso & Apriyanto (2020) researched police interrogation using Conversational implicature, it reveals that the use of conversational implicature avoids violation by creating more humanistic communications. (Saniatang et al., 2020) used the theory of conversational implicature in analyzing the Jumanji movie, categorizing the utterances from the movie based on the types of conversational implicature. The research revealed that the main character of the movie frequently used the particularized conversational implicature rather than the generalized conversational implicature.

This analysis will conduct research differently from the previous studies by combining Register and Implicature theory to benefit the Insider and Outsider of the Football community to derive the meaning of what is being talked or discussed. This research will work on answering this research question: What is the meaning of the register word used in the football fans' comments on X, and what types of implicature does the explicit information commentator want to convey by using the comment. Theoretically, this research is expected to be a reference or input for future studies in using the same theory. Practically, this research will give information that a comment can contain an implied meaning that the audience has to further understand it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Register

Register refers to a specialized language known and used by particular people who belong to a specified group or community. Register is a part of social identity presented in a specific speech style, the use of it depends on the particular context, categorized as situational, occupational, or topical (Yule, 2006). Context carries the background of a communication, the topic, setting, intention, audience, and the way of conveying the message (formal or informal). This affects the creation of the border resulting from the use of register, the border distinguishes the outsiders and insiders of the community or the group, strengthens the group identity, and differentiates it from others.

Wardaugh & Fuller (2015) describe register as a special term related to a restricted occupation and social groups. Agha (2005) acknowledges that register is culturally related particular person who is engaged with specific groups, for example, in science, medicine, prayer, and many more. Another distinct aspect that registers have is the structure, having its own lexemes, prosody, and sentence collocation. A language will be categorized as a register by looking into several aspects, such as the actor or the one who uses the language, the activity done by the actor, and the relationship between the actor and the future receiver of the language.

Sociolinguistic views register as one of the language styles, however, a distinction lies between the things. Style refers to how people use the language from a characteristic point of view, whether formal or informal. Register, on the other hand, is different from style, it's not just the way people use the language formally or informally, but a whole new set of words, phrases, or ways of speaking that distinguish people from one group to the other group (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). In short, register can be defined as an occupational language style.

Joos (1967) categorized registers based on their use into 5 particular categories, namely (1) formal, (2) consultative, (3) casual, (4) intimate, (5) frozen. Formal register used in a formal situation in a logical, informative way, consultative used in a small group and a stranger conversation, casual used in a more relaxed situation, as in conversing with friends, intimate used in a conversation between two or more close people, frozen used in a restricted, more formal and fixed situation (e.g., religious, literary). On the other hand, Finch (2000) categorized registers into 2 categories, namely professional and technical.

Moreover, three ways of using registers are identified through (1) register-switching, (2) register-borrowing, and (3) register-mixing.

Conversational Implicature

Conversational implicature is the implied meaning a speaker intentionally communicates beyond the literal words. Grice (1975) proposed that conversational implicature occurs when the speaker fails to adhere to the rules of communication, which are to be truthful, informative, relevant, and clear. An implicature will be generated when the listener draws a logical conclusion based on context and background knowledge to make sense of the utterance. This process involves a mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener, as a bridge of understanding is built between what is said and what is meant.

Levinson (1983) labeled conversational implicature as implicature. He mentioned that implicature is the best example of how pragmatics serves as a tool of explanation for how we communicate. Implicature is the hidden meaning behind what someone literally says, which can be revealed through the context of communication. Implied meaning differs from semantic meaning. Implied meaning involves inference based on context, while semantic meaning relies on the meaning of each word presented in the text.

Grice (1975) divided conversational implicature into two types they are particularized conversational implicature and generalized conversational implicature. On this account, the categorization relies on the process of extracting the implied meaning.

Generalized Conversational Implicature

Generalized conversational implicatures is the kind of implicature that do not require any particular context or special scenario to be necessary (Levinson, 1983, p. 126). Grice (1975) proposed that Generalized Conversational Implicature is a condition where a certain phrase carries such an implicature. Relating both of the definitions, it can be assumed that Generalized Conversational Implicature is an Implicature that does not pay attention further to a certain context. In contrast, it relies on the meaning of words or phrases presented in the utterance/text. This type of Implicature can be labeled as Default Implicature, since the listener or the reader can easily grasp the hidden meaning by looking only at the physical appearances of the utterance.

Particularized Conversational Implicature

Grice (1975) labeled Particularized Conversational Implicature as the only case where an utterance's hidden meaning is generated from a context on a particular occasion.

This definition is then supported by Levinson (1983), by defines Particular Conversational Implicature as the kind of implicature that requires specific context. Relating both of the definitions, it can be assumed that Particularized Conversational Implicature is an Implicature where the hidden meaning of the utterances is generated, depending on the specific context of the utterance, rather than the words or phrases physically presented in the text. This way, the meaning can only be understood by considering the unique circumstances of the conversation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study aimed to interpret meanings and shared cultural references in football discussions on the X platform. To achieve this, the research employed a descriptive qualitative method because this method of research facilitated a deeper interpretation of textual data based on contextualized understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The research design adopted a pragmatic approach to analyze language use in a specific online community. The data source was derived from the comment section of the football comment section on the X platform (previously Twitter). The data included comments published between 2024 and 2025 and was limited to English-based comments.

The data were collected manually using the bookmark feature on X to save the comments. Each comment was then transcribed. The data was subsequently analyzed through several steps: (1) Coding the data to identify and label the register words, (2) Analyzing the meaning of register words based on context, (3) Classifying the comments according to the types of Conversational Implicature (4) Interpreting the findings based on the theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature and Particularized Conversational Implicature.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Datum 1

“He'll score **hatrick** against Man U”

https://x.com/wkambendya91816/status/1837798791170162798?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “hat-trick”. The term itself in football refers to an action where one player scores three times in a row in one match. The comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post, specifically a photo of Dominic Solanke, along

with his Instagram caption, which reads, “We keep moving.” This picture also presents his teammates' comments regarding his first goal for the club. This post and comment were made after the Tottenham vs Brentford Match on 21 September 2024, and at that time, Dominic Solanke was still a new player for Tottenham. He joined Tottenham on 10 August 2024. In the match with Brentford, he successfully scored his first goal for Tottenham, although he was still a new player at that time.

The implicature of this comment is that Dominic Solanke is giving a good performance during the previous match, hence the commenter believes that Dominic Solanke will continue to present a good performance, and he is the player who will be able to perform a hat-trick in the next match, which is inferred from the comment is the match with Manchester United. The commenter is praising Dominic Solanke for his good performance in the previous match, so optimism and high expectations arose towards Dominic Solanke. In understanding the praise, optimism, and expectation, the context will be needed since the post and the comment did not depict how good Dominic's performance is. Therefore, the implicature is categorized into particularized conversational implicature.

Datum 2

“put him in the 10”

https://x.com/erichudson8727/status/1969420899905421384?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “10”, the term itself in football refers to the squad number of an attacking midfielder player's shirt. Many attacking midfield players are assigned the number 10 by their football club, and the fans then refer to the player as “10”. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post, specifically a photo the club posted in the middle of the match with Brighton Hove Albion, presenting the recent score (2-1 to Brighton) and the photo of Kudus as the background, with the caption saying “Work to do in the second half”. In that match, Kudus' position was as a winger, which meant he stayed on the right side of the pitch, whereas the attacking midfielder was supposed to remain on the middle back of the winger to create more chances for the winger to score a goal.

The implicature of this comment indicates that the club was wrong in putting the Kudus in that current position as a winger, because the commenter thinks that Kudus was better as being attacking midfielder than the current player on that match itself, and he could create more chances if he were the attacking midfielder. However, to understand the

comment, readers will need to know the performance and the current position of Kudus in that match. So, the implicature can be categorized as a particularized conversational implicature.

Datum 3

“POTM Again?”

https://x.com/prayiat/status/1968060019792023557?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “POTM”, the term itself in football stands for “Player of The Match”, where this is an award from the football league to one player of one match that serves the best performance during the game. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur video, presenting Lucas Bergvall receiving his POTM award after a match with Villarreal. He was given the POTM because his pass in the match led the rival team to score an own goal. He was giving.

The implicature of this comment shows that Lucas Bergvall is a talented player who has been receiving the POTM awards multiple times. It can be known from the rhetorical question presented in the comment. The implicature can be categorized as particularized conversational implicature. The reader is not obliged to answer the question, since the answer is already presented in the post. Hence, the implicature can be categorized into generalized particular implicature.

Datum 4

“Oooh No VAR at it again”

https://x.com/nedonsir/status/1784574558571319400?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “VAR”, the term itself in football stands for “Video Assistant Referee”. It is a tool in the form of a camera used in football to record close-up detail of the match, helping the referee to determine a point or penalty. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post in the middle of the match with Arsenal, informing that the goal recently scored by Micky Van de Ven is ruled out, because the VAR concludes that it was offside. The post video also contains a caption saying “following a VAR check, the goal is ruled out for offside”.

The implicature of this comment is that VAR ruled out Tottenham goals multiple time in the past, which can be inferred from the use of “again”. Therefore, the implicature can be categorized as generalized conversational implicature, because to understand the

implied meaning of the comment, the reader can simply refer back to the post, which clearly states that the VAR is performing a bad evaluation by ruling out Micy Van De Ven's goal.

Datum 5

“Absolute **baller**”

https://x.com/paraticistan69/status/1967178131330175238?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q




In this data, the register word identified is “Baller”, the term itself in football refers to the player who gives a good performance throughout a game or their entire career. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post, it is a photo stating that Lucas Bergvall is a POTM for a match with West Ham United on 13 September 2025, with a caption "Lucas Bergvall was your Player of the Match at London Stadium".

The implicature of this comment can be categorized as generalized conversational implicature. The word baller itself plays a big role in this comment, since it has a meaning that can provide a context for the reader to understand the implied meaning of the comment. To know the meaning of this comment, the reader has to know the meaning of baller, as presented in the previous paragraph. This comment is a form of praise to Lucas Bergvall for his talent and the way he manages to give a good performance to the club. To understand the background of why Lucas Bergvall is called a baller by the commenter, the reader will not have to be implied to another context, because the reason why is clearly depicted in the comment.

Datum 6

“**Gaffer** is cooking”

https://x.com/your_favxparte/status/1968247528597672374?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “Gaffer”, the term itself in football refers to the British English term for the head coach or the manager of the club. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post, it is a photo of Thomas Frank, the current head coach of Tottenham Hotspur 2025, with the caption “Five games  Four wins  Four clean sheets ”. Thomas Frank is the new head coach of Tottenham after the previous head coach, Ange Postecoglou, and replaced by him on 12 June 2025. There were 5 Premier League matches Tottenham had under Thomas’

coaching, and Tottenham won 4 matches (including the latest match), where in those four matches, none of the opposing teams managed to score a goal against Tottenham.

The implicature of this comment shows that Thomas Frank managed the team's tactical strategy so well, as proven by his achievement depicted in the caption of the post. However, to fully understand the meaning of the comment reader has to know the meaning of the slang word used in the comment. The comment here used the word “cooking” to describe skillful and effective work. Therefore, the implicature can be categorized as particularized conversational implicature.

Datum 7

“What a night, Sonny! **Brace** well deserved!”

https://x.com/itseshonx/status/1882541674972471402?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “Brace”, the term itself in football refers to an action where one player scores twice in a row in one game. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post, it is a video of Son Heung Min sharing his thoughts post-match with Hoffenheim, with the caption “Two goals on a special night, Sonny speaks after making a landmark appearance with a brace in Hoffenheim.”

The implicature of this comment can be categorized as generalized conversational implicature, because the implicatures are already depicted in the comment, and the reader will easily infer them. However, the reader does not have to pay close attention to the context of this comment. The implicature is a form of huge praise of Son Heungmin's overall performance, that he deserved to score two times in the match, which can be inferred from the phrase “well deserved”.

Datum 8

“I really do not care how we played, a win is a win! Angeball loses that game, Frankball wins it **Clean sheet** FC!”

https://x.com/protottenham/status/1968055611402358972?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “Clean Sheet”, the term itself in football refers to a condition where a club in a match keeps its own net safe from the opponent team to concede a goal. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post, it is a photo of the match score (1-0 to Tottenham) after a match with Villareal, with the caption “Starting our Champions League campaign with a win! 🏆”.

Tottenham recently appointed Thomas Frank as the new head coach after the team suffered several game losses under Ange Postecoglou's coaching.

The implicature of this comment can be categorized as particularized conversational implicature, because to fully comprehend the implied meaning, the reader needs to understand the context of the comment, what “angebball” and “frankball” are. The implied meaning of this comment indicates that Thomas Frank's strategy is better than Ange Postecoglou one, and it is already proven from the club's win in the match versus Villarreal with no goal in the Tottenham goal. However, the comment also implies that the player did not give a good performance amid the win. The overall implied meaning of this comment can be inferred as the commenter is happy the club won, but the team's performance is still bad, and the team needs to evaluate and give a better performance for the next match.

Datum 9

“**BALLON D'OR HIM!!!**”

https://x.com/mannyblfc/status/1969396923787338082?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “Ballon d’Or”, the term itself refers to an award made by France Football to the best footballer of any league throughout a season. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Liverpool post, it is a photo of Ryan Jiro Gravenberch alongside the information of his goal (10 goals) and assist (10 assists) , with the caption “What a player.”

The implicature of this comment can be categorized as particularized conversational implicature because the commenter used a massive exaggeration in the comment. However, the reader has to understand the context of the prestige of the award and also the player’s achievements throughout his career. The implicature of this comment shows the commenter's evaluation of the player’s excellent performance so far, as proven from his achievement in making 10 goals and 10 assists. Through this comment, it can also be implied that the commenter is praising Ryan Jiro, because the Ballon d’Or is a very prestigious award given only to the best player through the judgment of journalists from each of the top 100 FIFA-ranked nations.

Datum 10

“Salah and Gakpo should never Smell the first **xi** again”

https://x.com/olatak1/status/1969396437269045672?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “XI”, the term itself refers to an award made by France Football to the best footballer of any league throughout a season. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Liverpool post, it is a photo of the match score (2-1 to Liverpool) after a match with Everton, with the caption “Three points on derby day!!!”

The implicature of this comment can be categorized as particularized conversational implicature, because the comment basically contains a very upset expression, resulting in a critique of the players, Salah and Gakpo. However, in order to understand the critique, the reader needs to understand the context between the comment and the post. The implied meaning of this comment is that, although the team is winning, Salah and Gakpo give a bad performance during the game with Everton, it also depicts the anger of the commenter, suggesting that Salah and Gakpo should not be played again in the next match, begging for an evaluation from the coach.

Datum 11

“MY GOATTTT”

https://x.com/yannusd/status/1968076791446376784?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “GOAT”, the term itself refers to *Greatest Of All Time*. It is a term bestowed upon a player with outstanding performance throughout their career, and who makes a lot of brilliant contributions to the club. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post, it is a photo of Lucas Bergvall receiving the player of the match trophy, with the caption “As far as Champions League debuts go.”

The implicature of this comment can be categorized as particularized conversational implicature, because the reader has to understand a specific context that lies behind the comment. “GOAT” itself refers to the player with outstanding performance throughout their career, and to understand why the commenter called Lucas Bergvall by the title “GOAT”, the reader has to know how Lucas Bergvall has been performing throughout the match. However, the implicature that can be generated from this comment is that Lucas Bergvall is currently the top player of Tottenham because of his excellent performance so far.

Datum 12

“**Reds** keep on climbing”

https://x.com/fjwalfurt/status/1969391651551359201?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “REDS”, the term itself specifically refers to the club that employs red color as its starter kit or as its logo color. There are currently 2 clubs using the term “REDS”, which are Liverpool and Manchester United. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Liverpool post, it is a photo of the match score (2-1 to Liverpool) after a match with Everton, with the caption “Three points on derby day!!!”

The implicature of this comment can be categorized as generalized conversational analysis, because the commenter used a default word that stated the literal statement. ‘Red’s itself here refers to the Liverpool team, and the phrase “keep on climbing” here can be inferred as keep on winning. By saying that the Liverpool team keeps on winning, it shows the default reaction to the post, because the post deliberately states the score of Liverpool, and they win the match. So, to understand the comment, the reader does not have to dive deeply into the context, it is already presented and related from the comment and the post.

Datum 13

“**Golden boot** run is on”

https://x.com/zanji190/status/1837496536663544238?s=46&t=ieNTtw_QY6I4Kc11AE9k1Q

In this data, the register word identified is “Golden Boot”, the term itself refers to the award given to the player with the highest goals in each league match from several divisions of European leagues. The register itself refers to the form of the trophy, which is gold and in the form of a boot. The context behind this comment is reacting to a Tottenham Hotspur post, it is a photo of Son Heung Min and Dominic Solanke celebrating Dom’s First goal for the club, with the caption “That first Spurs goal feeling.”

The implicature of these comments can be categorized as particularized conversational implicature. It is not a default-generated implicature based on the context and the comment, it is more of an exaggeration by stating the commenter's prediction towards the player. It can best be implied as an expression of optimism and high hopes towards the player (Dominic) for keeping his good performance, and in the future, he can win the Golden Boot. In the same way, it can also be a way of praising the player in the

highest possible way, since the Golden Boot will be given if the player has the most goals, and to win that, the player must compete with other incredible players.

Discussion

Based on the data findings, the researcher found that football fans use registers to communicate with other football fans. This is used to convey something without having to explain it in detail, which is based on shared knowledge between them. Thus, they assume that everyone who will read their comments already has the same background knowledge. This is also reinforced by the discovery of nine examples of particularized conversational analysis from these comments. In this case, the implied meaning often shows that commenters want to praise players by using exaggerated language. In addition, they also want to express their criticism using more subtle language that does not directly show their frustration or disappointment.

In other cases, commenters also often convey their optimism and hopes for players through praise using the register word. Some comments indicate that in order to understand what the commenter means, readers must first understand the context behind the comments that have been written. However, four comments are categorized as generalized conversational implicature, which only contain the commenter's reaction to the post that has been made. This certainly makes it easier for readers to understand what the commenter actually wants to convey.

CONCLUSION(S)

This study revealed that football fan communities on X utilize a specialized language to engage in context-based communication. The analysis also revealed a significant use of Particularized Conversational Implicature, which shows that in communication, fans rely on the shared knowledge regarding the terms of football itself to convey indirect praise, criticism, and hope. This linguistic behavior served as proof that the football fan identity creates a distinction between “insiders” and “outsiders” of the community.

While this study already provides analysis on certain linguistic practices, this research was limited by the manual data collection and its focus on only one platform. Future studies may focus on other features of X, such as quotation, or focus on other platforms such as Instagram. Moreover, future analysis can employ computational methods to analyze larger and diverse data. By expanding the data source, future research would provide a more comprehensive analysis of fan communication.

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