

Register Analysis on High School Students' Language in Japanese *Manga* and *Anime*

Andriani Anjasuma Putri^{*}, Nuria Haristiani

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

^{*}Corresponding author. Email: andrianianjasumaputri@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the use of registers in the language of high school students in Japan based on three elements of situation, namely: *field*; *tenor*; and *mode*. This descriptive qualitative study used daily conversations of high school students taken from the first 10 episodes of *anime* and *manga* titled *Haikyuu season 1* as the research data. This study used Halliday's (1989) theory about register as a framework. The results showed that there were 35 data indicating registers. The use of registers which were influenced by the *field* factor showed the speaker's feelings and indicated the place while the use of registers against the interlocutors were found in *tenor*, such as in situations of apologizing, thanking, or calling the other person. Later, registers that depended on the way of which the speakers speak were found in *mode*. These findings demonstrated that the use of registers in the community of high school students in Japan were strongly influenced by who they were talking to. However, the use of registers was not limited to members of the community.

Keywords: *Highschool students' language, language variety, manga, register.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language essentially has a function as a tool to express the content of ideas. As a means to convey messages in society, language certainly continues to evolve following the development of the complex society or what it is usually called as language dynamics (Mansyur, 2018). Another factor that causes the language change is because language is arbitrary so that this change causes a lot of languages variations or variety in this world (Aditya, 2012). The existence of language variation occurs due to heterogenous society of the speakers and also because of the social interaction among the speakers. Language variety is one of the sociolinguistic studies that explains the characteristics of language variations and correlates the characteristics of the language variations with the social characteristics (Chaer & Agustina, 2010).

In addition, Halliday and Hasan (1989) state that language variations are generally divided into two types, namely based on language users or dialects and based on language use or registers. Hudson (1996) adds that the difference classification between dialects and registers is really necessary, it is because the existence of registers enable each individual to use different languages depending on the place and situation even though they

have the same meaning. According to Holmes (2013), in contrast to style of language which examines the use of language in each individual, registers are more often used as a study of language use in a group of people or in specific situations. Based on the various theoretical studies above, it can be concluded that register is a study of language variations based on groups of language users and their fields of use, this regards to the use of language in certain fields such as journalism, sports, education, baby language or language to a group of students.

In fact, register is a sociolinguistic study that is interesting to study as the language used in a particular community which is different from the standard language used by the general society. The differences can be both in terms of meaning and structure so that they often cause confusion. For examples, in terms of meaning, the register of the word 'Diamond' in the context of baseball sport refers to baseball field which is shaped like a diamond and no the literal diamond. It is certainly not a problem if the communication occurs among members in one community, but it will be a problem if outsiders are not familiar with the use of this language (Inderasari & Oktavia, 2018). Thus, it is important to conduct a register study to characterize the use of language in certain communities, so that it can enrich the linguistic repertoire and facilitate communication among communities and

avoid misunderstandings due to the use of different languages. Moreover, registers have become a trend of sociolinguistic research in recent years.

Along with the development of society with changing activities, the study of language variations is an interesting thing to study. The register study approach can be conducted through a broad perspective, including combining language style, variational linguistics and discourse analysis (Schubert, 2016). Schutz's study (2013) examined the registers on the use of verbs related to business, linguistics and medical research. Then, Hilbert and Krug's (2012) research also presented the data related to registers in spoken and written conversations in Maltese English compared to British and American English. Contrastive analysis studies of registers aimed at studying translation studies are quite often found. Meanwhile, the study of register to understand more about culture can be found in Cahyani's (2020) research that examined registers in marriage cultural customs which aimed to preserve the language of that culture. Also, register studies in a particular community, can be found in Japan, such as register studies on children's language (Murase, 2012) or register studies on students, salarymen, and parents towards the use of language that shows gender identity (Sreetharan, 2004). Schubert (2016) in his research mentioned that the study of applied registers in the last few years is more commonly found in the study of English academic texts with less attention toward language comics and online commentary texts. He further adds that in fact, these studies of register are important and should be studied deeper as a cultural study so that it can be useful for the intercultural communication.

Attempt to fill the gap from previous researches, this research was carried out to add to the scientific repertoire in the field of sociolinguistics. In this study, the researchers were interested in studying the use of registers in the language of high school students in Japan under the framework of Halliday and Hasan's (1989) register grand theory. The reason is because currently there are many studies examining *wakamono kotoba* (youth language) whose data sources are high school students in Japan but it is still difficult to find its research on registers. Moreover, there are a lot of Japanese *anime*, *manga*, movies and dramas nowadays that show high school life in Japan and there are various special language terms that are different from the standard Japanese people usually learn and use. Furthermore, *wakamono kotoba* has never been a material taught in Japanese formally, but when Japanese language learners communicate with Japanese people directly, it is possible to talk to young people in Japan and use different terms. This research was aim to increase understanding of intercultural studies.

Based on those phenomena above, the researchers are interested in studying the register of the language of high

school students in Japan by taking the object of language registers that are often used by them in Japan through *anime* and *manga*. The title of the research carried out this time is "Register Analysis on High School Students' Language in Japanese *Manga* and *Anime*".

1.1. Register

The language variation is not only based on the differences among individuals such as origin, social level, gender or age but also based on language use situations. Language variations based on language use situations are called registers (Tanaka & Tanaka, 1996). Holmes (2013) adds the definition of register as the use of language in a particular group of people. It can be concluded that the register is a variation of language based on the situation and use of language in certain communities. The most used perspective as references in register studies is Halliday and Hasan (1989) who states that the register is determined by three elements of the situation, namely *field*, *tenor* and *mode*. Later, many experts began to develop a theoretical definition from Halliday and Hasan (1989), such as Hudson (1996) who defines the three elements of Halliday and Hasan's (1989) situation as follows:

1. **Field:** refers to the purpose and subject matter in communication. Field is said to be able to answer the question of why and about what communication is established. Tanaka and Tanaka (1996) refer to field in Japanese as "*mokuteki, kadai*" (Subject, topic).
2. **Tenor:** depends on the relationship between the participants of the communication. It can also be said as the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Tenor can answer the question to whom the communication takes place (an example is how the speaker perceives the interlocutor). Tanaka and Tanaka (1996) refer to tenors in Japanese as "*chi'i, Yakuwari kankei*" (Role Relationship, Status).
3. **Mode:** refers to the means used in communication, especially spoken or written means. Mode is said to be able to answer the question of how communication is established. Tanaka and Tanaka (1996) refer to mode in Japanese as "*dentatsu houhou, Shudan*" (Means, Mode).

Meanwhile, the characteristics of registers vary depending on the context of the situation. Furthermore, Holmes (2013) mentions that there are several characteristics when examining registers in sporting events, including exaggerating the perpetrator, syntax element omission, syntax Inversion, modification focuses on an object, and routines and formulas

On the other hand, Lestari (2010) who studied the language of buskers found that there are several characteristics of the language. Internal language is the

language which is used to communicate within the community while external language is as the language which is used by the community to communicate with outsiders, and mixed internal is as external language. Subsequently, Inderasari and Oktavia (2018) propose that there are several characteristics of registers in the language used by bus crews: syllables omission, phoneme omission, creation of new words with different meanings, affixation, reduplication, and a special word in the community.

1.2. Language of High School Students

The language used by high school students in Japan is often also known as *wakamono kotoba*. It is a language variation that is often used by young people in Japan. According to Matsumoto and Ren (2011) *Wakamono kotoba* is a language variation that presents a lot of ambiguity or confusion in its linguistic semantics. *Wakamono kotoba* tends to look free or random but actually it has certain characteristics in its formation (Andriani, Adnyani, & Antartika, 2017)

Meisa (2017) in her research found that there are several characteristics of *wakamono kotoba*, including spoken language, more often used among friends in informal situations, made freely without paying attention to the linguistic rules, mixing Japanese with foreign languages, consisting of word abbreviations, use of prefixes and suffixes, and use of certain regional dialogues.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach where the data were in the form of sentences or recordings instead of numbers. The result of this study was in written form specifically in the form of data excerpts containing the language registers of high school students and it was obtained from video transcripts and *manga* texts (Japanese comics).

The data sources were *anime* and *manga* that tells the lives of high school students in Japan. The anime and manga which were used in this study were the first 10 episodes of *Haikyuu season 1*. They were chosen because the characters in the story were related to the subjects in the study, namely high school students. Then, the data object in this study was the language register of all the high school student character. The form of data in this study was a quote from a language system that was not in accordance with Japanese language standards in general. As well as special words or terms that can only be found and often used by high school students in Japan.

The data collection technique used a note-taking technique During the data collection, the researcher watched to the video, then selected the data which indicated the language register of high school students

with the verbatim technique, namely changing the words spoken by the speaker into the writing one. The researcher also did the transcription technique, namely collecting data from written works, namely *manga*. After collecting the data, then the data were sorted and grouped using the 3 elements of situation from Halliday and Hasan (1989).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Findings

After conducting the research, the data found in this study were 35 data that showed the language registers used by Japanese high school student. The data were then classified based on the use factor of Halliday and Hasan's Register factor classification's theory (1989). Table 1 shows the amount of data based on the usage factor classification.

After being classified, the researcher analyzed the frequent words that were used in the *anime* and *manga*. The frequency of occurrence of data can be seen in the following frequency Table 2. It can be seen that the most widely used word is "*kuso*" which expresses feelings of irritation. From other data in the table, it can also be seen that the form of registers that are widely used by high school students in the form of short vocabularies that express the feelings of the speaker, as well as registers used for the interlocutor such as the '*kora-kora*' register which aims to call the other person.

Table 1. Data based on factor classification

No	Registration Data	Amount of Data
1	Field	15
2	Tenor	18
3	Mode	2

Table 2. Frequency of Register use

No	Registration Data	Frequency of Use
1	<i>Kuso</i>	29
2	<i>Yabai</i>	3
3	<i>Benjo</i>	2
4	<i>Kyougoukou</i>	9
5	<i>Chiwassu</i>	7
6	<i>Ossu</i>	6
7	<i>Suimasen</i>	1
8	<i>Suman</i>	3
9	<i>Warui</i>	9
10	<i>Kora Kora</i>	7
11	<i>Azassu</i>	7
12	<i>Mukatsuku</i>	6
13	<i>Aitsu</i>	29

3.2. Register Classified to Field

3.2.1. Register that expresses feelings

- (1) “Kono heta kuso, nani ga [kyonen to chigau] da.”
“Damn, this stupid. What’s (different with last year.)”

“Kuso” is an expression in the form of swearing and often said by male high school students in Japan. Chen, Luo, and Ezaki (2019) define *kuso* as a word used to demean, condemn, or reinforce another word for example “*kuso omoshirokunai*” (damn! it’s really unattractive). In the data found by the researcher, *kuso* is often said by the perpetrator who was feeling annoyed. Chen, Luo, and Ezaki (2019) add that *kuso* is more often used as a prefix in a sentence, but the researcher found other data that showed the use of *kuso* at the end of another word, namely “*heta kuso*” (so stupid). The expression *heta kuso* is more often used as an expression of insulting to the interlocutor because the person can no longer stand the behavior of the other person. However, the use of the word *heta kuso* is also often used as a joke by high school students depending on who the speaker is and the context of the conversation, especially if seniors say it to juniors. *Kuso* is included in the register which is motivated by the *field*, according to the theory presented by Burns, Joyce, and Gollin (1996) which stipulate that one of the elements of the *field* is the choice of vocabulary that shows feelings.

- (2) “Yabe taiikukan ga dekai”
“It’s dangerous, the gym is so big”

In the *Sanseido Jiten* dictionary, “*yabai*” literally means danger; in bad condition; bad (Ichikawa, 2011). However, in the use of young people’s language *yabai* has another meaning, namely the expression when seeing something impressive which means great or good. Creating a new meaning in vocabulary is often found in several communities, such as the one from the previous research conducted by Inderasari and Oktavia (2018) which examined the register used by the bus crew. In this study, the same phenomenon was also found in the community of high school students in Japan. In the data, the word *yabai* used by high school students had changed its form to “*yabe*”. In this register, it could be seen that the ‘a;’ syllable had been removed and its sound changed to ‘e’, as presented in data 2. These changes are in line with what has been stated by Holmes (2013). In addition, *Yabai* is included in the register which is motivated by the *field* as suggested by Burns, Joyce, and Gollin (1996) which state that one of the elements of the *field* is the choice of vocabulary that shows feelings.

3.2.2. Register Declaring Place

- (3) “Gomen, ore chotto benjo itte kuru”
 “Sorry, I want to go to **toilet** for a moment.”

In line with the definition given in the *Sanseido Jiten* dictionary, “*benjo*” is another word for “*toire / tearai*” (toilet). Okabayashi (2009) states that young people in Japan often use this word with the term “*benjo meshi*” (eating in the toilet), this is based on the phenomenon of high school students who do not want to be seen eating alone because they seem to have no friends so they choose to eat lunch in the toilet. Kuwamoto (2017) described *benjo* as a taboo word. Taboo words are words that are avoided because they violate norms or provisions in certain societies (Affini, 2017). The researcher found that *benjo* was spoken by the perpetrator when in a state of urgency and when there were not many people or only when the interlocutor was a friend of the same age or younger. This word is only used for oneself and is not used for others. *Benjo* is included in the register which is motivated by the *field*, according to the theory presented by Burns, Joyce, and Gollin (1996) which states that one of the elements of the *field* is the choice of vocabulary that shows the state of the place.

- (4) “Kono kennai ichino kyougoukou wa Shiratorizawa darou”
 “The number one **strongest school** in this prefecture is Shiratorizawa, right.”

In *sanseido jiten*, “*Kyogo*” means veteran; champions; feared person. Usually, this word refers to a team. Meanwhile, “*kou*” in “*kyougoukou*” refers to high school. *Kyougoukou* is more familiarly used by high school students who join sports clubs and is often spoken by high school students to refer to schools that often win in a match. This word means that the school is a strong school, and contains winners so that other schools are afraid.

3.3. Register Classified to Tenor

3.3.1. Say greetings

In greeting situations, high school students in Japan also use different expressions depending on who they are talking to. Several registers of greeting were used by high school students in Japan.

- (5) Daichi: Souieba, hajimete dattana. 2 nen no nishinoya da.

Hinata: **Chiwassu**

Nishinoya: o...ssu omae wa ichi nen ka.

Daichi: By the way, you are meeting him for the first time right, this is second year Nishinoya.

Hinata: **Hello**

Nishinoya: Hello, you are the first year?

“*Chiwassu*” is a greeting that comes from the word “*konnichiwa*”. *Konnichiwa* is a greeting which means hello or good afternoon in Japanese. Meanwhile,

chiwassu is a form of approach from *konnichiwa* which is commonly used by young people in Japan. In some sources, it was said that the use of the word *chiwassu* is also often used by the sports community in Japan. The register *chiwassu* found by the researcher was more often spoken by male high school students in Japan to their seniors or to people who were less familiar. While female students were rarely found using the word *chiwassu* but if there was a male friend who said *chiwassu* to female students, then the female student would also answer the greeting with the word *chiwassu*.

The formation of the word *chiwassu* comes from the suffix “*konnichiwa*” and is added with the word *~ssu* at the end of the word. Senuma (2005) mentions that young people in Japan are not used to using the form of respect in their conversation, therefore they usually add *~ssu* at the end of the sentence as a sign of respect in their circle. Hence, the use of the register *chiwassu* is not an act of disrespect towards seniors in the high school student community.

(6) *Daichi: Souieba, hajimete dattana. 2 nen no nishinoya da.*

Hinata: Chiwassu

Nishinoya: o...ssu omae wa ichi nen ka.

Daichi: By the way, you are meeting him for the first time right, this is second year Nishinoya.

Hinata: Hello

Nishinoya: Yes, you are the first year?

Another form of greeting register is the word “*ossu*”. The word *ossu* is a greeting used in informal situations. *Ossu* is also used to express readiness for orders given by seniors. As the same as the explanation above, adding the word *~ssu* to the word *ossu* also shows a form of respect for the interlocutor.

3.3.2. *Saying sorry*

After analyzing the data, various expressions of apology were found in the language of high school students. The expression of this apology differed depending on who the apology was addressed to. Here are some registers of apologies found in the language of high school students.

(7) “*Muri itte suimassen*”

“Sorry for saying it is impossible.”

This word was often said by juniors to seniors at their school. In the *Sanseido Jiten* dictionary, “*suimassen*” is included in the *zokugo* (slang) word from the formal word “*sumimassen*”. Slang is the language that is commonly used in everyday conversation. Sulaeman (2019) adds that slang sounds harsher and is often found in the language of certain communities, so it is difficult to find its meaning because it is rarely used outside the

community. If it was viewed in a social context, seniors are certainly that people who are older than the speakers and the speakers should use polite language. However, in this case, one of the *tenor* factors conveyed by Burns, Joyce, and Gollin (1996) is how much contact there was between the speaker and the addressee, so *suimassen* in the community is not something that sounds harsh, especially the origin of the word *suimassen* is a slang form of the word *sumimassen* which means apology and is used in formal situation. Therefore, the use of *suimassen* sounds more casual but still formal so that the use of the register *suimassen* is common and still considered polite when it is used to address seniors in the high school student community in Japan.

(8) “*Suman to omotta*”

“I think I should apologize”

Another informal form of *sumimassen* can be found in the register “*sumanai/suman*”. “*Sumanai*” is an expression of everyday Japanese apology. The use of this word is usually spoken when the speaker feels she/he has caused a lot of trouble for the interlocutor (Nagayama, 1994). *Sumanai* also refers to gratitude accompanied by feelings of guilt (Washizu & Naito, 2015). The researcher found that the use of the word *sumanai* was more often shortened to the word “*suman*” by high school students in Japan, especially male students. They used it between peers or seniors to their juniors. The use of the word ‘*suman*’ implies that the speaker feels guilty for accidentally hurting the interlocutor. As presented in data 7, use of the word *suman* was found in the scene where Hinata (a character in the *Haikyuu* anime) accidentally bumped into Kageyama (Hinata’s teammate) then Hinata said the word *Suman to omotta* (I think I should apologize). Based on those reasons, it can be concluded that the word *suman* is considered more disrespectful among high school students because it is never used to apologize to seniors.

(9) “*Warui, ore no seide maketa*”

“Sorry because of me we lost.”

In *Sanseido Jiten* dictionary, “*warui*” belongs to the i-adjective class (*i-keiyoushi*) which means bad or not good. The word *warui* which was found in the data is more often used in informal conversations between peers which means “sorry”. The word *warui* in English is “*I am bad*” (Burdelski, 2013) and it can be used as an apology because it implies that the speaker has admitted that he did something wrong or bad so he must apologize to the other person. Because the word *warui* is often spoken by high school students and only spoken between peers, it can be said that the use of the *warui* register is influenced by the *tenor* factor.

3.3.3. *Calling other people*

(10) “*kora-kora kimitachi kattena kotowa yamenasaine*”

“Hev, you guys don’t do anything you like.”

“*Kora-kora*” is usually used by someone to call someone else and means to warn that person not to do something. In the *weeblio.jp* dictionary *kora-kora* has the meaning as a word to address people with feelings of criticism and aim to invite attention. The researcher found that the use of the word *kora-kora* was often spoken by seniors to juniors. As presented in data 10, *kora-kora* in that sentence was uttered by the team leader of a school club whose aim was to break up his juniors who were fighting. Burns, Joyce, and Gollin (1996) suggest that the selection of registers can also be influenced by the power factor of a speaker, this is in line with the example sentence above that the use of the word *kora-kora* here is influenced by the speaker's power factor as a team leader. Therefore, the use of *kora-kora* is more often heard used by people of higher position.

3.3.4. Saying gratitude

(11) *Tanaka: oi, omaera mo kue yo.*

Yamaguchi: Azassu.

Tanaka: oi, you guys eat this too.

Yamaguchi: Thank you.

“*Azassu*” is an expression of gratitude that is most often used by high school students, especially high school students in sports clubs. *Azassu* is an approximation of the word “*arigatou gozaimasu*”. *Arigatou gozaimasu* is usually spoken by speakers in a happy state with the intention of being grateful for what others have done, this expression is also included in polite expressions and is used in formal situations (Saifudin, 2010). Therefore, the use of the word *azassu* in the data found by the researcher also showed gratitude commonly used by juniors towards their seniors. The word *azassu* is an informal expression but among high school students this word is not impolite but a form of respect for seniors that is understood and agreed upon by high school students. Another word that also indicated saying gratitude could be found in “*Sankyu*” this word is mixing Japanese with foreign language “thank you” (Meisa, 2017) so it could be concluded as register in youth language used by high school student in Japan.

3.4. Register Classified to Mode

The register that is affected by *mode* is simply how the language is used. Burns, Joyce, and Gollin (1996) explain that mode is related to the channel of communication, namely by whether the interaction occurs face-to-face, by telephone or writing. Here are some registers that are affected by the factor of *mode*

(12) “*Mukatsuku yatsu dashi, haratatsu kedo.*”

“He is really annoying and make me angry”

“*Mukatsuku*” is an expression of irritation (Matsumoto, 2011). This word is an expression

aimed at anyone who is older, peers or younger. However, the researcher found that this expression was not spoken directly face to face. According to Burns, Joyce, and Gollin (1996), one of the elements in the mode, namely how to speak face-to-face or not, this register is included in the *mode* factor.

(13) “*Aitsu ni mo kore kara kuru darouna*”

“He will also get it from now on.”

“*Aitsu*” is a person's designation in spoken language. In *Sanseido Jiten*, *Aitsu* is a slang form of “*ano hito*” which means “that person”. In addition to *aitsu* there are other words that can be said to designate people, namely “*koitsu*” or “*kono hito*”, and “*soitsu*” or “*sono hito*”. In the data found by the researcher, *aitsu* is spoken to refer to people who are younger or the same age indirectly as a name change. Although as a spoken language, this word is also often used in written language to send messages electronically via cellphones. An example of the use of the word *aitsu* the researcher found in the *manga* is presented in data 13. The sentence was said by Miyuki to his friend Furuya, while *Aitsu* in the context of the sentence above refers to a character named Sawamura, the situation of the conversation is that Miyuki is talking about Sawamura who will also get an invitation from the national sports team. By seeing how this language is not directly used, it can be said that the use of this word is based on the medium. Even in the *manga*, the word *aitsu* is written with the kanji for Sawamura's name but the *furigana* reads *aitsu*.

Overall, after conducting the research, it could be seen that the use of registers in the community of high school students in Japan is strongly influenced by who they are talking to. The used of registers were also not limited to members of the community. However, it allows the register to appear and be used when talking to people outside the high school student community, such as to teachers. The characteristics of registers for high school students in Japan also have similarities with registers in other communities that have been studied previously (Inderasari & Oktavia, 2018; Lestari, 2010; Meisa, 2017).

4. CONCLUSION

The register can be said as an identification of a community. Register refers to the use of language based on its function. There are three factors that affect the use of registers, namely: *field*; *mode*; and *tenor*. These three factors also influence the use of language in high school students in Japan which make some particular terms appear whose systematic language and meaning are only understood by the high school student's community. Registers on the language of high school students can be found when high school students as speakers of the language express their feelings, show the descriptions of places, say thank you and apologize to the

interlocutor, call the other person and see the method or tool they use in communicating. All these different situations use different language depending on the situation of the conversation. Further research is needed to determine the use of registers based on the mode factor such as identifying data through social media. Because, the data found on the secondary data is still limited, especially on the mode factor.

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