

## THE FORM, MEANING AND FUNCTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE VARIATION: A SOCIOLINGUISTICS STUDY ON INDONESIAN REGISTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the linguistics form, meaning, and functions under the phenomenon of English language variation used by Indonesian photography enthusiasts. The influence of the English register in lexical categories mostly has undergone a shift in meaning. So, the analysis of English register in the photography context is fascinating to be examined. The method of this research is qualitative descriptive with a sociolinguistics approach. The data are restricted to words and phrases taken from the daily posting of the Facebook community group. The procedure of data collection was conducted by observing and noting the English register among photography enthusiasts. The data were analyzed based on the formation process, the contextual meaning, and identifying the functions and sociolinguistics aspects. This research revealed that the use of English as a foreign language in the conversation of Indonesian photography enthusiasts was largely formed in a 'word' that represent an intended meaning without explain it in a long way. Those terms are functioned to tell the information, experiences, facts, techniques in photography. The involvement of English in the photography register was assumed because several terms do not have equivalent sense in Indonesian language, so it better to use them in English. This research has also showed that the intention of using English in photography community as the characteristics to labeling their social identity, also increasing the speaker's social value, particularly in creating feelings of pride and prestige.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In every place with social communication, language has been destined to as the main role. It provides several functions for the users with different purposes. With language, people can learn and transmit knowledge, information, cultures, especially when it is used in a community. This thought leading to Wardaugh (1998:215) who defines language in community aimed at having deeper understanding about their interest and how its functions in their communication. The functions of language in community might be for persuasion, introduction, negotiation, information, and much more for socialization.



In this case, a community referred to someone's involvement by the same interest and intention. This kind of community or group used the variety of language as the characterization to their identity. As does the community of photography enthusiast, they used several specialized words as the language to express their intention. Knowing that the role of language in social community has never turned away in our lives, Wijana (2006:5) stated that linguistic or language phenomena would not detach from heterogeneity, so it necessarily tends to bring up the issues of language variations. As in sociolinguistics, language varieties used in social community named as register.

Register can be defined as a language of a certain group with the same interest. Hudson (1980:48) said that register refers to what people are doing and are interested in. To simplify, a register is generally described as the variety of languages used in certain social groups with the same interest. As Holmes (2001:246) contends, register is a language describing the activity of a group with common interests, jobs, or any other similarity. The emergence of register is based on cultural differences, which significantly impacts how far language is taking its role as a medium for communication.

To go with language variation, we can observe how language in photography is used to explain things related to photography's activity, which most frequently appears in the English language instead of the Indonesian language. English, in this case, was an informal form that appeared in spoken language. It has commonly happened because register as language variation can appear in an informal context. Nevertheless, English has always taken a special position with the growth of trends and technological sophistication. As Apriana (2017) claimed, English has internationally been agreed as a language used worldwide, especially along with the development of technology, education, economics, law, culture, and many others. Furthermore, some opinions say that people with English are considered more impressive and valuable.

The influence of English register of photography is considered the quirk that points out the characteristics of language variation among photography enthusiasts compared to other fields. Other points claimed by Apriana (2017) in his writing was that the involvement of English in the photography register related to societal aspect in which language superiority builds a sense of 'pride'. It reflects how Indonesians tend to feel 'more' or 'higher' when using English better than the local language. Moreover, it leads to borrowing the English language, which is way more popular when no appropriate word is equivalent to the domain language.

Consequently, the English in the register may experience a shift in meaning from the dictionary to contextual meaning. For example, the term *golden hour* consists of a word *golden* (made of gold) and *hour* (time). The word-by-word meaning of the dictionary needs to be clarified because *golden hour* was not interpreted as the color of time, which is gold or golden. In photography context, the term *golden hour* means 'a perfect moment to produce beautiful photos'. *Golden hour* is a short period after sunrise or before sunset when the sunlight is warm, a perfect time for taking a picture.



In some research concerning about register have proved this variety of language appeared in many situations of communication. This is in line with Joss (1967:153) who divided register into five categories; frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. So that can be conclude that difference situation impacted on language variations, making it possible that registers in certain situations are differ from other situations. The variety of situation when register is used have been identified by several researchers, Engel, A., & Szmrecsanyi, B. (2022) and Grieve, J. (2023) focus on register in formal situations, while Noguera-Diaz, Y. (2022) and Larsson, T., & Kaatari, H. (2020) focus on register in casual or informal situation.

Moreover, to go further with this research, there are several kinds of research on the photography register that has been carried out by Ariyanto (2021), Lafif Ahmad Rofid Al Azmi (2019), and Haryani & Ainur Rosyidah Azmie Putry (2021). Each research must have advantages and disadvantages in presenting the analysis. They differ in providing the research object but are similar in analyzing the photography register in both Indonesian and English. Knowing that the entire previous research does not limit their research data to a particular language, there might be a gap in extending the register analysis on this research. In comparison, the previous research generally described the photography register in several languages like Indonesia and English, in which the finding needed to meet the patterns of photography register in a specific language. Meanwhile, this research tried to focus only on the English register so it is possible to find patterns in how the English language influenced Indonesian speakers.

According to the abovementioned phenomena, this research intends explicitly to analyze the English register more than other languages. As English has influenced the terms of photography register, it is possible to find the diversity of lexical categories. So, further analysis in this research sheds light on word formation, meaning shift, and function according to sociolinguistic aspects. Theoretically, analyzing the English register in photography contributed to the language issue in specific communities. At the same time, this research will help society to understand the English terms used in photography field.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Register as Language Variation

Holmes (2001:246) stated that register is a language in specific situations where several specialized words may only be used in one field. To simplify, it is possible to have the same word in several fields but different meanings depending on their activity. For example, the word *drawn* in sports means a series or balanced score between competing players or teams, while *drawn* in art refers to painting. Based on Halliday's opinion, someone can live with only one dialect but cannot live with only one register because it is correlated to speaker's community involvement. A group deliberately creates a new language referring to the group activity, and it functions as a medium to communicate and as a marker of their identity.



The register variation can differ from linguistic features or lexicon; every lexicon has its meaning concept related to its necessity. According to Halliday (1994:25), register correlated to semantic concepts in which the meaning interpretation is associated with certain situations of field, environment, etc. Halliday and Hasan (1989:89) included register as narrowly in correlation with situation, in which the parameters of situation context are field of discourse, tenor of discourse, and mode of discourse. Halliday also highlighted that the characteristics of the register appeared in terms of semantics, grammar, and vocabulary. Furthermore, Biber & Conrad (2009:6) emphasized that the actual register of language variations depends on certain situations, including the purpose of speakers when using a language, the relationship between speakers and listeners, and the specific circumstances when the language is used.

## **2.2. Contextual Meaning in Register**

In register analysis, meaning refers to semantics issues. Chaer (2002:82) claimed that semantics is related to linguistic signs and what they signify. The meaning of a word can be changed and extended because of the extralinguistic aspect. Register as the language variations in specific fields have their codes or language to differ from others, so the meaning of each word in connection to activities carried out in a particular field. The meaning changes on the register deal with semantic change, in which a new sense is added to the existing definition. The semantic change generally occurs depending on societal values, in which different social or communities may experience semantic differences in a language used. The change in meaning was considered from lexical definition or dictionary with contextual meaning related to specific fields. Several experts have discovered theories related to semantic changes, but those all related to shifting meanings from literal. That is in line with O'Grady et. al., (2009:157), who stated that meaning shift or semantic shift is the process of a word that changes its old meaning to a new one, and sometimes, they are related.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

To conduct this research, the method used was qualitative with a sociolinguistics approach. Rahardjo (2020) stated that qualitative research methods aim to understand the social phenomena being studied rather than breaking them down into interrelated variations, describe relationships, describe the individual experience, and describe group norms. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) who is giving short explanation about qualitative research, in which qualitative specifically focuses on meaning and understanding. Based on the research problem, this research aims to describe the contextual meaning of the English register in photography among Indonesian community. The data are words and phrases categorized as English register variations taken from the daily posting of the Facebook community group Kobito (Komunitas Hobi Fotografi). This group has approximately 197,3 thousand members, so it was assumed that the post owner and the comment



writers are part of photography enthusiasts. The data was collected from several samples of utterances among group members who posted on the 1st of September.

The data collection procedures were initially conducted by noting the English register in the conversation among group members. Afterward, the process of data classification was presented on a percentage scale to determine which form mostly appeared. The data analysis was conducted by considering the theory used to help break up the research problems. Firstly, the English register was identified based on how they were formed. The following process describes the meaning of the register based on contextual meaning, which is compared with dictionary meaning. The last process was identifying the function of the photography register using sociolinguistics approach.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research initially elaborates on the linguistic forms of English terms in interaction within photography enthusiasts. Based on several utterances, the linguistic form of English register of photography was dominantly discovered in 'word'. The percentage is described in Chart 1.

Chart 1. The Percentage of Linguistic Form on Photography Register

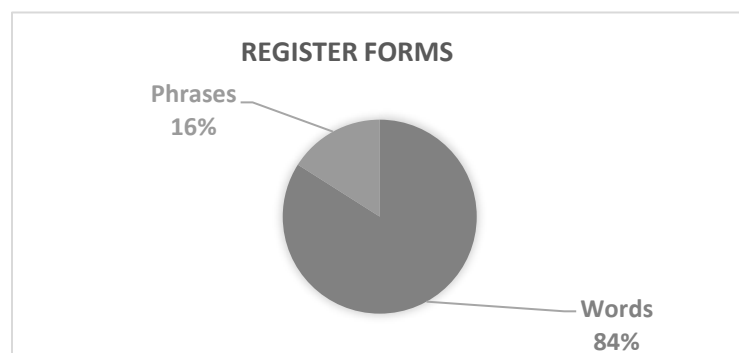


Chart 1. shows the percentage of English terms used within photography enthusiasts, with 84% equal to 16 data for words and 16% equal to 3 data for phrases. Those numbers reflected how 'word' mainly dominated the linguistic features of the photography register instead of phrase forms. It happens due to the effectivity

of using English as one simple code. They mixed the code in the Indonesia context, so they pick the 'word' of English as a point to a long explanation. A single English word seems to be simpler and more accessible for non-native English.

Furthermore, several terms in English do not have equivalent meanings in Indonesia, so terms taken from English will experience a shift in meaning, especially when it happens in register context. Hence, photography enthusiasts in their conversations use single English word representing an intended meaning related to photography activity. These findings supported the research by Amanah & Savitri (2019), who stated that Indonesian speakers use many English terms due to borrowing factors and the lack of equivalent words. So English, in this case, was an informal form that the meaning might be slightly different from dictionary meanings.

##### 4.1. English Register in the Form of Words and its Contextual Meanings.





According to Morley (2000:48), a word is a free form, is used to designate the smaller structure yet generally larger than a single sound segment. English register on photography, as obtained from the daily posting of the Facebook community group, appeared in several different word formation processes. However, the most popular form discovered in this source was the basic word without experiencing any formation.

Other than form, the essential point of understanding the register is by identifying the contextual meanings. The reference of the register could be in the matter of the situation, the purpose of use, and the users. As several words have been utilized in some contexts and have different meanings related to an activity in a specific field. Just like the term 'drawn' has a different meaning when it is used in sports and the painting field. To simplify, a word will be hard to interpret if it only relies on a literal or denotative explanation. As obtained in this research, nine basic words such as *filter*, *candid*, *tone*, *pose*, *angle*, *over*, *under*, *raw*, and *spot* might have different meanings in the dictionary and photography context because they experienced a shift in meaning. The basic word form of English register in this research are representatively analyzed in data (1) and (2).

- (1) *salah satu keuntungan pake **raw** adalah, tidak perlu terlalu pusing sama settingan. (tidak dalam semua kondisi)*  
(One benefit of using **raw** is we never get so confused with the settings. (not in any situations))
- (2) *Gak sengaja bawa kamera ke penganten keluarga. gak bisa ngarahin jadi motret random aja. warna nya gmna bang udah pas apa **over** ya, atau malah **under**.*  
(Unintentionally brought a camera to family wedding. I cannot direct them well so I chose to take random pictures. How about the photo's colours bro, is it good, **over**, or **under**.)

The term 'raw' in data (1) does not explain uncooked food or something related to foods. In photography, 'raw' is an adjective to clarify that the photo was originally unprocessed and uncompressed, in which the 'raw' photo format will help the photographer do editing as desired. So, the contextual meaning of the term 'raw' can be compared with the literal meaning taken from the dictionary because they have different interpretations of the same word.

As does the word 'over' and 'under' in data (2) above. They are English terms used in register of photography. If we try to look at the dictionary meaning, both are referred to as a preposition explaining a thing's position. However, in photography context, they became an adjective to describe whether the photo has too much light (over) or low light tends to be dark (under). In this matter, the English language in photography is experiencing meaning shifting from the old meaning to the newest one.



The language used in a particular community could be marked in play on words that experience different word formations. The varieties of register could be determined through morphological processes. In accordance with Strand (2020) research, the analysis of register from a linguistics perspective is mainly carried out within morphological analysis, which can assist in describing the changes both in physical form and contextual meanings. According to Yule (2010:10), the word formation process in English consists of borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, back-formation, conversion, coinage, acronym, derivation, and multiple processes. However, the data of this research merely discovered the derivation, clipping, and compounding formation process. Yule (2010:12) defined derivation as a word-formation process by adding affixes (suffixes and prefixes) to an existing word. Based on the data, there are four terms formed in derivation such as *hunting*, *recover*, *lighting*, and *freezing*. The terms *hunting*, *lighting*, and *freezing* are in the form of a gerund with additional *-ing*, so they turn into a noun. While, the term *recover* is a derivation form that experience prefix *re-* before verb. The further explanation described in samples (3) and (4).

(3) *Saran nya mas* 🙏

*Edisi nyoba **hunting** malem* 🙏

(Ask for the suggestion, brother.  
Trial for night **hunting** edition.)

(4) *Sempet baca ada yang share terkait file raw yang bisa **recover** photo under dan over, saya juga mau share pengalaman take foto under dan over.*

(I just read someone sharing about raw files that can **recover** under and over photos. I also want to share my experience of taking under and over photos.)

Looking at dictionary references, the word ‘hunting’ is defined as an act of going to a place to kill wild animals for sport or food. However, referring to the photography context, the word ‘hunting’ means going to a place to take many photos and collect them as the best photo. From that comparison meaning, it can be observed that dictionary meanings and contextual meanings might have different in defining the word ‘hunting’. They are shifting the meanings following the situation where the word is used.

As well as the term ‘recover’ in data (4) that is formed by adding the prefix *re-* and verb *cover*. The prefix *re-* has meaning as ‘again’ or it indicates the repetition acts. According to dictionary meaning, the term ‘recover’ is defined as ‘to get well again after being ill, hurt, etc.’. However, in the photography context, the term ‘recover’ experienced a shift in meaning from dictionary but it is slightly associated. People use the term ‘recover’ while talking about



photography to describe that the photo needs to be edited or get some filters in order to make the photo look better from the previous one. So, it clearly clarifies when we need an intended meaning, we cannot refer to only dictionary meaning, but it should be referred to its situation.

Furthermore, the clipping word formation process often be discovered in spoken language, as did several data as found in photography register. Generally, clipping is forming a new word by dropping one or more syllables from a polysyllabic word. In this data, there are two clipping words categorized as photography register, just like in data (5) and (6).

(5) *Ini motretnya pake **tele** kan ya?*

(This photo was taken using a **tele**, right?)

(6) *Pake **auto** bukan hal memalukan, pake manual bukan juga hal hebat.*

(Using **auto** setting is not something to be ashamed of; using a manual is not great either.)

The terms 'auto' and 'tele' were the shortened form of 'automatic' and 'telephoto' by way of dropping the last two syllables. Although it experiences the clipping process, the words 'auto' and 'tele' in a photography context are interpreted in the same way as dictionary or literal meaning. The word 'auto' or automatic refers to the camera's capability to take controls and determine all aspects, including the settings. As well as 'tele' or 'telephoto' refers to the lens used to bring distant subjects closer. That two clipping words are exception, because they specifically do not change much in meaning. The previous terms might aim to make a new meaning contextually, while the clipping words like 'auto' and 'tele' were commonly used in daily that aim to help in pronouncing way easier and simpler.

Other than experiencing shifting meanings from the old to the newest one, several terms have been specifically created only to refer to photography. For example, the word 'backlight' in data (7) that is formed by compounding word formation.

(7) *Foto **backlight** biar keliatan bagus di apain ya om?*

(What do you do with **backlight** photos to make them look good?)

Compounding is defined as a process of combining two words to create one new word. Just like the term 'backlight' consist of the word 'back' and 'light' that build a new single word become 'backlight'. They did not denote two things separately, but they became one unit and defined as one thing. The meaning of 'backlight', whether in the dictionary or photography context, is defined as light from behind something in a photograph or painting. So, the term 'backlight' has always belonged to the photography context and do not experience any changes in meaning.





#### 4.2. English Register in the Form of Phrases and its Contextual Meanings.

Crystal (2003:74) defines a phrase as a grammatical unit, a group of words but functions as a single. It combines two or more words to form a new word with meaning. Based on the analysis, there are three phrases of English register in photography, they are 'golden hour', 'frog eye', and 'bird eye', which are all categorized as noun phrases. The register in the form of phrases can be identified in data (8) and (9).

(8) *Motret di musim seperti sekarang dan dapet cahaya kuning pas **golden hour** itu serasa dapet jackpot.*

(Taking photos in this current season, and getting yellow light at the **golden hour** feels like you have hit the jackpot)

The term 'golden hour' was not simply interpreted as the color of an hour. If we could break the word-to-word meaning lying in the dictionary, so 'golden' means 'a shiny yellow object like gold', while 'hour' means 'time'. When these two words are combined in one phrase without referring to any context, the result will cause difficulties in interpreting the intended meaning, and the meaning in the dictionary has the potential for confusion. It indicates that the literal meaning does not has a sense unless pointing to a context. In photography context, 'golden hour' is interpreted as the perfect moment to capture stunning photos. It is called 'golden hour' because it relates to a short, beautiful moment for taking pictures. This moment is precious, just like gold, because it refers to the last hour before sunset and the first hour after sunset, in which the light of the sun covers the object being captured. Other samples of phrases could also be identified from data (9).

(9) *Apa yang membuat foto jadi wow? Salah satunya foto **frog eye** atau **bird eye**.*

(What makes a photo even look gorgeous? One is a photo with a frog eye or **bird eye** technique.)

The phrase forms of English register like 'bird eye' and 'frog eye' as obtained in this research, potentially contain metaphorical meanings. According to the dictionary, 'frog' is defined as a small animal that lives on land and in water, while 'bird' is an animal with two wings to fly. In short explanation, these two phrases can be determined as the eye of animals. However, when it appears in the photography context, they refer to a technique in taking a picture. The sight of a frog is figuratively similar with the lower position where the camera shot the object from under. So did the sight of the bird, which is figuratively equal to the high position of the camera when shooting the object.



Based on this analysis, the result confirmed Holmes's hypothesis that register as a word used in a specific field could be identified through linguistic features, particularly based on morphological process. Moreover, the overall result of this research supported the research from Yulianti et al., (2022), who claimed that the English language used in specific fields could be varied to differ from one to another. The English language, for specific purposes, can help the enrichment of register that represent several terms that do not exist or have not been matched in the source language.

#### **4.3. The Functions of Photography Register**

In sociolinguistics study, the issue of register arises under several purposes. In this research, the process of identifying the functions of register is drawn by looking at the meaning or the utility of each term. Apart from that, the analysis of functions on a register relies on the theory of Biber (1994:44), who stated that the use of a register could be categorized based on four parameters: persuading, conveying information, entertaining, and self-expression, including behavior and intimacy to get closer to each other. However, Biber (1994: 44) added that these four parameters still require further study, which enables the discovery of various functions. Based on the findings and analysis, register on photography functioned to serve more effective communication among the same interests. Moreover, the plays on the word in register attracted photography enthusiasts, which makes the communication less monotonous.

Moreover, most registers functioned as a representative because various terms might represent the intended meaning, which aims to share the information, facts, knowledge, and experiences related to photography. They even functioned to describe several techniques, tips, and tricks for taking pictures. It could be confirmed through the number of nouns as the indication to describe everything about the object, in this case, photography. In addition, terms in a register functioned to distinguish one language from another field.

The tendency of using the English language in photography has been rapidly growing along with social trends and technological sophistication. Moreover, certain assumptions show that using English would increase the speaker's social value, especially in fostering feelings of prestige. The results of this study support research from Lutfiyah & Susandi (2019), who assert that the existence of English as an international language hegemonizes certain groups to make communication more accessible so that people like to use English rather than the source language.

#### **4.4. Social Identity of Photography Enthusiast Community through Register Used**

Identity is a label represents to an individual's involvement in social or cultural group, so the identity can be either a personal identity or a social identity. Personal identity way more specific than social identity, which social identity brings up the external factors. Social identity reflected an individual attachment in a group with the same intention. Abram & Hogg (1990) define the



concept of social identity as being realized from a sense of having connectedness, care, and feeling pride when a person belongs to social membership.

The involvement of people who enthusiastic to photography in a community become one categorizes of social identity ownership. In this case, the sociolinguistics takes role to social identity characteristics through language used among the members. Register as a study of language used in a community take the speaker as the main actor because this situation triggers the production of new vocabulary. That terms become a code that are understandable among fellow members.

The language used in the interactions within the photography lover aims to create a feeling of comfort which can bring them in truly part of the community. Moreover, this situation makes community members feel like they have quite close relationships with other members. That sense of belonging grows even if among members never met in a personal, but they mean to each other. For photography enthusiast, the use of register is necessary to build good solidarity between photography enthusiasts. Thus, the ownership of social identity also arises from the existence of an entity that is built within a group in which a language can be one feature. The entity is used to describe a particular organization or group as a distinct unit.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and previous discussion, the English registers used by Indonesian photography enthusiasts in terms of lexical use an informal style that experiencing a shift in meaning. Indonesian photography enthusiasts commonly want to be involved with English, so instead of using full English sentences, they mixed several English words in their conversation. The single English code is used to represent an intended meaning rather than explain it in a long way, as they functioned to make communication more effective and less monotonous. The English register of photography, as obtained in this research, functioned to assist in telling the information, experiences, facts, techniques, tips, and tricks related to photography activity.

However, the positive consequence of these findings is that the involvement of English in the photography register is very influential because several terms do not have equivalent sense in Indonesia. Furthermore, in this modern-day, English has increased photography enthusiasts' social value, especially in fostering feelings of pride and prestige because they are able to use English in conversation. Consequently, this condition could be a thing that labeled the photography enthusiast as their social or community identity.

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