



## Language Register in Digital Mobility Services: A Study of Online Transportation Platforms in Medan

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### Abstract

This research discusses the use of language registers in online transportation platforms in Medan, especially Grab and Gojek. This research aims to identify the types of registers used and describe their use. Based on data analysis, three types of register were found: formal, consultative, and casual. Casual registers are the most dominant with 50%, followed by formal registers (37.5%) and consultative registers (12.5%). The use of these registers depends on the communication context, ranging from professional to informal, to create effective interactions between users and the platform. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution in understanding the dynamics of language registers in digital services as well as providing practical insights for the development of communication on bold platform.

## INTRODUCTION

The advent and rapid proliferation of online transportation platforms have revolutionized urban mobility worldwide, including in cities like Medan, Indonesia. These platforms, exemplified by services such as Grab has reshaped how individuals navigate urban spaces, offering convenient, on-demand transportation solutions through digital interfaces. This technological evolution not only facilitates efficient travel arrangements but also introduces a new dimension of communication dynamics shaped by language register—how language adapts to effectively meet the needs of diverse users and contexts within digital mobility services. Language register refers to the varying styles and forms of language that individuals employ depending on situational factors such as the social setting, the relationship between speakers, and the purpose of communication. In the context of online transportation platforms, the application of appropriate

language registers becomes pivotal. It influences how drivers and passengers interact, how customer service is provided, and how user interfaces are designed to ensure clarity and ease of use. These platforms facilitate communication primarily through digital channels, including app interfaces for booking rides, in-app messaging for coordination between drivers and passengers, and customer support services. Each of these communication channels demands a different approach to language use. For instance, the language used in customer support interactions may need to be formal, polite, and accommodating to address queries and resolve issues effectively.

In contrast, in-app messaging between drivers and passengers might require a more casual and conversational register to facilitate smooth communication during the ride. Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic diversity characteristic of cities like Medan adds another layer of complexity to language register within digital mobility services. Medan, being a melting pot of cultures and languages, necessitates sensitivity to local linguistic nuances and preferences. Drivers and users alike may navigate multiple registers, switching between formal and informal language as they interact with individuals from different backgrounds. Understanding how language register operates within Medan's online transportation platforms is not only crucial for enhancing user experience and operational efficiency but also for fostering inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. By examining these dynamics, this study aims to provide insights into effective communication strategies that can optimize service delivery and improve user satisfaction in diverse urban environments where digital mobility services play a pivotal role in everyday life.

One of the language variations is register proposed by Martin (1976). Register is fundamental to understand the choice of words that are appropriate to use for a particular situation. It is important to use a certain register that suits the situation. Based on Martin Joss' theory of language styles, registers are divided into five categories of language styles. They are frozen or oratorical, formal or deliberative, consultative, casual, and intimate styles. For instance, in delivering a speech, the speaker has to use a technical vocabulary or proper definition. This research focus on discussing the register which comes from online transportation platform in Medan namely Grab and Gojek Indonesia. This study investigates the ways the register that occurs when customers booking an online transportation in Medan. The objective shows in this study to identify the types of register are used in the online transportation platforms in Medan and to describe the use register in online transportation platforms in Medan. The study seeks to answer

the following research questions; What types of register are used in the online transportation platforms in Medan? And how is the register used in the online transportation platforms in Medan?

Wardhaugh (2006), explains registers as “sets of language items associated with discrete occupational or social groups. Surgeons, airline pilots, bank managers, sales clerks, jazz fans, and pimps employ different registers”. It can be noted that register is a linguistic item and particular vocabulary choices created by an individual or a social group to fulfill the various functions in communication. Based on Wardhaugh (2006) the writer can conclude the definition of the register is the vocabulary used by occupational or social groups created by individuals. Register is a dominant feature of sociolinguistics. According to Chaer (2004), sociolinguistics is the study of the characteristics of language variations, the characteristics of their function, and the characteristics of their speakers as these constantly interact and change one another within a speech community. So, register in sociolinguistic studies is about the connection between language variation and social context. We use all these connections when we analyze language from a social perspective. Traditionally, sociolinguistics has subscribed to the belief that one of the branches of sociolinguistics is the register. Register is a conventional way of using language that is appropriate in a specific context, which may be identified as situational (e.g. in church), occupational (e.g. among lawyers) or topical (e.g. talking about language) (Yule: 2020). We can recognize which register the speaker uses based on the speaker’s choice of words, situation, place, and audience. According to Wardhaugh (2011), Sociolinguistics problems with investigating relationships between language and society with the aim of a better understanding of language structure and how language functions in communication and language sociology.

Then discover how social can be better understood through learning language. Suwito (1983) states that language variation is forms of parts or variants in a language, each of which has certain patterns resembles the general pattern of its parent language. Language variation is an aspect of linguistics. Principle the basis of this language variation is that the speaker does not always speak in the same way the same for all events. This means the speakers have an alternative or choice to speak in different ways in different situations. Different ways of speaking can carry different social meanings (Coupland and Adam, 1997).

While Crystal (1991) defines register as defined language variations according to its use in social language. Registers are a form of language variation. In sociolinguistics, the term register refers to lexical and grammatical choices. The specifics made by the speaker depend on the

situational context (Halliday, 1989). The term register here describes the language of a group of people with a common interest or occupation, or language used in situations associated with such a group. Registers focus on items of vocabulary used by an individual or group or society in certain cases and for certain purposes. Every language has its function or purpose depends on the use of the language. Sometimes one language is used in one group has differences in pronunciation, writing, intonation and vocabulary with other languages (Holmes, 1992).

### Types of Language Register

According to Martin (1976), he categorizes language into distinct registers that illustrate how language adapts to different social contexts, relationships between speakers, and communicative purposes. These registers provide a framework for understanding the nuances of language use in various settings.

1. Frozen Register. Exemplifies highly standardized and formal language used in contexts where adherence to specific conventions is crucial. Legal documents, such as contracts and statutes, employ precise and formal language to ensure clarity and legal validity. Similarly, religious ceremonies maintain a sense of tradition and reverence through scripted language that aligns with religious doctrine. Formal speeches by public figures adhere to structured language to convey authority and maintain audience engagement.
2. Formal Register. Formal register is characterized by its structured syntax, specialized vocabulary, and complex sentence constructions. Academic writing, including research papers and dissertations, utilizes formal language to communicate complex ideas with precision and credibility. In business correspondence, such as official letters and reports, the formal register ensures professionalism and clarity in conveying business decisions and policies. Official reports from governmental or organizational entities employ formal language to provide accurate information and maintain credibility.
3. Consultative Register. Consultative register strikes a balance between formality and interpersonal interaction in professional or expert-client settings. In doctor-patient consultations, healthcare professionals use consultative language to explain medical conditions and treatment options clearly while demonstrating empathy and expertise. Similarly, educators adopt a consultative register in teacher-student interactions to facilitate learning and maintain respect for students' understanding and engagement.

Consultants and advisors use this register in client meetings to provide expert advice and guide decision-making processes effectively.

4. **Casual Register.** This register features relaxed syntax, colloquialisms, and informal expressions suitable for everyday conversations among friends, family, or peers. Informal emails between acquaintances often use casual language to convey familiarity and ease in communication. Social media interactions employ casual register to engage users in informal discussions and interactions. Face-to-face conversations in informal settings, such as social gatherings, utilize casual language to create a relaxed atmosphere and encourage open communication.
5. **Intimate Register.** Intimate register is reserved for close relationships where language becomes highly personal, reflecting deep emotional bonds and shared experiences. Romantic partners use intimate language to express affection, share private thoughts, and strengthen their emotional connection. Within families, intimate register facilitates discussions about personal matters, memories, and emotional support. Close friends employ intimate language to communicate inside jokes, heartfelt confessions, and unwavering support that solidify their bond.

### ***Online Transportation Platforms***

Grab is an online service application platform based in Singapore and was founded in 2012 but became famous in Indonesia in mid-2016, while Gojek is a technology company from Indonesia that was founded in 2010 in Jakarta by Nadiem Makarim. These two applications are the most popular used in Indonesia. Each of the two applications above is divided into 2 parts, the first is an application intended for customers as users or online service orderers and the second is an application used by service workers, for example an online taxi driver. This online application provides various kinds of service facilities, Thus, creating several new words based on the application and various kinds of words whose definitions are quite different in general. Almost all of these words are very well known by their users as customers and service providers, and even terms appear which was created by drivers to facilitate communication between fellow drivers which is not well understood by the wider community. In the context of the present study, the researcher conducted a comprehensive examination of prior studies pertaining to analogous subjects in order to ascertain the commonalities and disparities. In the preceding investigation, the researcher has identified several theses that exhibit both similarities and disparities in relation to

the researcher's own study. The researcher utilized a total of five prior investigations. This section elucidates the researcher's strengths, weaknesses, and contributions to the conducted research.

The research by Farihka Nur Alfi (2013), identified the linguistic form of the word register used in online shop language and explained the meaning of the word register used in online shops on social media. In analyzing the data, the author classifies the data, analyzes linguistic form and meaning, analyzes the context of the situation, identifies the differences between lexical and contextual meaning and draws conclusions. Based on the analysis, the researcher analyzed the data based on linguistic form (7 data from verbs, 3 data from nouns, 1 data from adjectives, 8 data from mixed words, 5 data from abbreviations, and 2 data from noun phrases). Based on meaning, the author found 16 data in contextual meaning and 10 data in lexical meaning. The research by Alis Rahmawati (2014) identified the linguistic form of words and phrases, analyzed the context of the data situation, identified the difference between lexical and contextual meaning based on the theories of Larson (1999: 18) and Halliday (1966: 150-61). As a result of this research, it was found that in linguistic form there are 13 data from nouns, 1 datum from verbs, 1 datum from adjectives, 15 data from mixed words, 1 data from abbreviations, and 6 data from noun phrases and there are two types of meaning: data 9 lexical meanings and 28 contextual meaning data. This means that mixed linguistic forms of words appear more frequently (40.5%) and meanings in contextual meaning (75.6%). The research by Yugo Winanto (2014) aims to classify register forms into lingual word units in the form of single words and complex words. Phrasal lingual units were also found in the form of nominal phrases, verb phrases and adverbial phrases. There are three factors behind the formation of the football register in the Sports Lens program on ANTV. Covers social factors, function and language development. 3) Three functions are used for registers in the Sports Lens program on ANTV. a) Use of registers so that communication is created more effectively. b) The use of registers functions to attract language users' interest in communicating. c) The existence of a register can differentiated one language from another. The research by Astrid Yulinda Putri (2017) to describe online shop seller registers on Instagram social media based on the form of register, language function, meaning and use of language in the seller's speech when describing or offering goods in the caption or comments column. The results of this research are as follows; First, the form of online shop seller registration on Instagram social media can be categorized based on the process of forming words and phrases. Based on the formation of the word online shop seller register, it consists of 1) singular form, 2) complex form: affixed,

abbreviated, reduplicated and compound forms. Based on phrase formation, the online shop seller register consists of 1) nominal phrases, 2) adjectival phrases, 3) numeric phrases and 4) verbal phrases. Second, the language function in the text containing the register of online shop sellers on Instagram social media consists of 1) instrumental function, 2) representational function, 3) regulatory function, and 4) heuristic function. Third, the meaning of registering online shop sellers on Instagram social media is categorized based on the type of meaning consisting of 1) primary meaning and (2) secondary meaning. Fourth, the use of online shop seller language on Instagram social media consists of 1) code mixing and 2) code switching.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research employed descriptive qualitative research to describe the language register related to notifications and messages from online transportation platforms. According to Creswell, this approach aims to gather information on the studied phenomenon. The data was sourced from platforms such as Grab and Gojek Indonesia. This method does not involve field research, focusing instead on systematic and accurate descriptions of the language used in the selected data. The data consists of language converted into sentences that involve language registers found in notifications and messages from the online transportation platforms, specifically Grab and Gojek Indonesia. For data collection, two primary instruments were used: the researcher herself and field notes. The researcher, as stated by Sugiyono, is the main instrument in qualitative research, overseeing all aspects of the study. Field notes, according to Bogdan and Biklen, are written records that provide insights based on the researcher's observations and reflections during data collection. Data collection was performed through observation, where the researcher made field notes about the behaviors and activities relevant to the research. This involved analyzing notifications and messages that contained language registers, linking them to Martin Joss's theory of language. The researcher documented all observations, including screenshots, and organized the data for analysis. Data analysis followed the steps outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which include data collection, condensation, display, and drawing conclusions. The researcher transformed raw data into transcripts, condensed it for simplicity, displayed it for easy understanding, and finally drew conclusions based on the analysis outcomes.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In analyzing the data, this research followed the step of data analysis. They were transcribing into written forms, categorizing, finding out the percentage of types of language register, describing, reasoning and drawing conclusion. Those steps were to describe two problems of this research including the language register.

1. Types of Mock Impoliteness

**Data from Gojek:**

Data 1: *The pick-up point is appropriate, right.*

Type of Register: Formal Register

This phrase uses formal language with precise wording ("appropriate") and a structured sentence. It aims to convey information clearly and professionally, suitable for formal interactions between the platform and its users.

Data 2: *Please wait.*

Type of Register: Consultative Register

This phrase is polite and acknowledges the user's request, maintaining a professional tone while indicating an ongoing process ("please wait"). It reflects a consultative approach where the platform interacts with users respectfully and provides updates on the ongoing service.

Data 3: *OK, I'll go there.*

Type of Register: Casual Register

This response is informal and friendly, using colloquial language ("OK" and "I'll") that suggests a relaxed communication style between the driver and the passenger. It is suitable for informal interactions where a casual tone is appropriate.

Data 4: *Encourage drivers with tips, shall we?*

Type of Register: Casual Register

This sentence uses a friendly and inviting tone ("shall we?") and informal language ("Encourage drivers with tips"), indicating a casual register. It encourages user engagement and suggests a supportive interaction between the platform and its users.

**Data from Grab:**

Data 5: *Looking for a ride.*

Type of Register: Casual Register



This phrase uses casual language ("looking for") and a direct, informal tone that is typical in everyday conversations or interactions. It is straightforward and aims to engage the user informally.

Data 6: *Wherever you're going, let's get you there!*

Type of Register: Casual Register

This statement uses casual language ("let's get you there") and a friendly, encouraging tone that is characteristic of casual register. It aims to reassure and motivate the user, reflecting a customer-centric approach.

Data 7: *Hire a driver by the hour.*

Type of Register: Formal Register

This sentence uses formal language ("hire a driver by the hour") and structured wording suitable for professional communication. It conveys a clear service offering in a formal manner, addressing users professionally.

Data 8: *Your arrival time.*

Type of Register: Formal Register

This phrase uses formal language ("your arrival time") and specific terminology ("arrival time") that is precise and suitable for formal interactions. It focuses on delivering information clearly and professionally.

## 2. The Use of Language Register

Formal register is characterized by its emphasis on professionalism, clarity, and precision in communication. This type of language is typically used in contexts where seriousness and adherence to specific norms are paramount. In formal register, language is structured with correct grammar and syntax, often incorporating technical or specialized vocabulary relevant to the field or situation. This ensures that information is communicated accurately and effectively to convey authority and reliability. For example, in digital mobility services like Gojek or Grab, formal register might be employed in notifications or service announcements. Messages such as "Your appointment has been confirmed for 10:00 AM tomorrow" or "We regret to inform you that your application did not meet the eligibility criteria" use formal language to convey important information clearly and professionally.

These statements are designed to maintain a level of seriousness and respect in communication, reflecting the platform's commitment to reliability and professionalism. Casual register contrasts with formal register by adopting a more relaxed and informal tone. This type of language aims to create a friendly and approachable atmosphere, fostering engagement and ease of communication. Casual register often includes colloquialisms, everyday language, and conversational expressions that are commonly used in informal settings among friends, family, or in social interactions. In the context of digital mobility services, casual register may be utilized in customer interactions or social media communications. Phrases like "Hey, are you free this weekend? Let's catch up!" or "Just checking in to see if you received the package" use casual language to engage users informally. These interactions help to build rapport and create a welcoming environment where users feel comfortable and valued, enhancing their overall experience with the platform.

Consultative register strikes a balance between formality and approachability, emphasizing politeness, respect, and consideration for the user's needs. This type of language is often used in polite interactions where empathy and understanding play a crucial role. Consultative register maintains a professional tone while acknowledging and responding to user inquiries, requests, or concerns with attentiveness and courtesy. In digital mobility services, consultative register is prevalent in customer service interactions or client-facing communications. Statements such as "Thank you for contacting customer support. How may I assist you today?" or "I understand your concern. Let me look into this matter for you" demonstrate a polite and helpful demeanor. These responses aim to reassure users that their concerns are acknowledged and being addressed professionally, fostering trust and satisfaction with the platform's customer service.

After analyzing the data, there are some points which considered as the important things to be showed as the findings:

- a. In regard with the first problem of the study based on the observation, there three types of language register showed on the online transportation platforms related to the Martin (1976). The data showed that there is one (1) data classified as consultative register (12.5%), three (3) data classified into formal register (37.5%)

and four (4) data classified as casual register (50%). The most dominant types of language register on the online transportation platform is casual register (50%).

- b. In regard with the second problem of the study based on observation, there were the reason on the use register on online transportation platforms are; used in contexts requiring professionalism, clarity, and precision, used in informal interactions to create a friendly, approachable atmosphere. It includes casual language and a relaxed tone suitable for engaging users informally and seen in polite interactions where respect and consideration for the user's needs are emphasized. It maintains a professional tone while acknowledging and responding to user inquiries or requests.

## CONCLUSION

The research found three types of language registers used: formal register, consultative register, and casual register. From the analysis results, casual registers are the most dominant (50%), followed by formal registers (37.5%), and consultative registers (12.5%). Casual registers are used to create a friendly and accessible atmosphere, formal registers are used in contexts that require professionalism and clarity, while consultative registers are used in interactions that emphasize politeness and attention to user needs. This study shows that the choice of language register on the platform is influenced by communication goals, such as providing information clearly, building friendly relationships, or handling user complaints politely. The results of this research are important for improving user experience and operational efficiency of online transportation platforms.

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