



Register Analysis of Indonesian Advertisements



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Abstract

The spread of globalization and marketing during the last century triggered the proliferation of advertising genres. The language of advertisement is unique and very persuasive. The goal of advertisements is to persuade consumers to act and think in a textually determined way in order to boost sales of particular commodities and services. In order to capture attention, convey the message and persuade the consumer, advertising texts use a range of manipulative language devices. This study aims at investigating the register of Indonesian advertisements. A register is a variety associated with a particular situation of use. The description of a register covers three major components: the situational context, the linguistic features, and the functional relationships between the first two components. The linguistic features cover the word choice such as the use of noun, pronoun, active, and passive voice, the use of prefix and suffix as well. Register analysis of Indonesian advertising text is still limited and very interesting to analyze. The data were taken from some advertisements, which were published on different mass media such as newspaper, radio, and television. The data were collected through observation and note-taking method. The theory of register from [Biber and Conrad \(2009\)](#) was used to analyze the register of the advertisements. In addition, the theory of corpus linguistics by [O'Keeffe \(2010\)](#) was also used to support the analysis. Results are presented through formal and informal methods. The results show that those advertisements have high register since most of them used formal linguistic features.

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1. Introduction

The immense growth of technology and the quick spread of worldwide communication and marketing during the last century triggered the proliferation of promotional genres, advertising among them. Advertising, in its

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simplest form, is the way in which the vendor or manufacturer of a product communicates with consumers via a medium or many different media. A copywriter uses unusual linguistic features to attract attention and persuade the target audience. The language of advertising, according to [Crystal \(1987\)](#), is generally laudatory, positive, unreserved, and emphasizing the uniqueness of a product. Typically, it emphasizes why one product stands out in comparison with another. The language of advertising has shown the development of an extraordinary language phenomenon. Commonly, a copywriter exploits the language to be used as the media of communicative ads, which is very interesting and persuading. This exploitation of language makes the analysis of register in advertisement an interesting subject to analyze.

The term 'register' refers to specific lexical and grammatical choices made by speakers depending on situational context, the participants of a conversation, and the function of the language in the discourse. Every kind of text has its own characteristic, linguistic features. The register viewpoint combines an analysis of linguistic characteristics that are frequent in a text variety with analysis of the situation of use of the variety. The primary assumption of the register viewpoint is that core linguistic features like pronouns and verbs are functional, and, as a result, particular features are commonly used in association with the communicative purposes and situational context of texts. It is challenging to explore why a copywriter uses particular words in such a situation. The goals of this study are: first, to identify the situational context; second, to find out the linguistic features; third, to discover why these linguistic features are especially common in this situational context. The theory of register proposed by [Biber \(2009: 6\)](#) was used to analyze this phenomenon.

The register is a variety of a language used for a particular social setting. For example, when speaking in a formal setting an address or tends to use more formal words (e.g. father vs. dad, child vs. kid, etc.) than when speaking in an informal setting. More generally, the register is used to indicate degrees of formality in language use. According to [Biber \(2009: 6\)](#), registers are described for their typical lexical and grammatical characteristics: their linguistic features. However, registers are also described for their situational contexts, for instance, whether they are produced in written or spoken mode, whether they are interactive or less interactive, and what their main communicative purposes are. Linguistic features have a tendency to occur in a register because they are particularly well-matched to the purposes and situational context of the register. The third component of any register description is the functional analysis.

Moreover, [Biber \(2009: 31\)](#) stated that situational characteristics not only cover the physical context, for example, the actual time and place, but also many other considerations. For instance, the situational characteristics of face-to-face conversation include the fact that there are two or more participants producing language in the spoken mode and interacting directly with one another in a shared place and time. The situational characteristics of newspaper articles are extremely different, with a single writer creating language in the written mode for a large number of readers spread over different places and times.

[Biber \(2009: 53\)](#) said that the linguistic analysis of a register is based on register features. They are words or grammatical characteristics that are pervasive and frequent. Pervasive means the register features which distributed throughout a text from the register. Frequent means the register features which occur more frequently in the target register than in most comparison registers. Register features can be structures at any linguistic level: words, vocabulary distributions, grammatical classes, syntactic constructions, etc. The last step in a register analysis is the functional interpretation which moves from description to an account of why these patterns exist ([Biber, 2009: 64](#)).

In addition, the theory of corpus linguistics by [O'Keeffe \(2010\)](#) was also used in this research to support the analysis of the data. In discovering questions related to language use, a corpus is crucial. The important first step in corpus construction is having a clearly articulated question because this will lead the design of the corpus. The corpus must be typical of the language being examined ([O'Keeffe, 2010: 31](#)). This research used small corpus. A smaller corpus is acceptable for some purposes. Limited and specific corpora have a distinct advantage: they grant a much closer relationship between the corpus and the contexts in which the texts in the corpus were created. Where huge corpora, over their de-contextualization, give understanding into lexico-grammatical patterns in the language as a whole, smaller specialized corpora give understanding into patterns of language use in specific settings ([O'Keeffe, 2010: 66](#)).

In addition, usually, limited corpora are also deliberately designed and constructed to reflect contextual features, such as information about the setting, the participants and the objective of communication. Therefore, analysis of such corpora can acknowledge relations between linguistic patterning and contexts of use ([O'Keeffe, 2010: 67](#)). As with any corpus, representativeness is the most significant concern in designing a small, specialized corpus. [Biber \(1993: 243\)](#) defines representativeness as 'the extent to which a sample includes the full

range of variability in a population'. Besides, the corpus should be constructed in a way that is relevant to the objective of the research. While many larger corpora were organized for research into the general linguistic phenomenon, specialized corpora are often constructed to answer specific research questions (O'Keeffe, 2010: 71).

The registered point of view focuses on the prevalent linguistic characteristics of representative text excerpts from the variety. The registered point of view characterizes the typical linguistic features of text varieties and connects those features functionally to the situational context of the variety. Because the focus is on words and grammatical features that are frequent and pervasive, the analysis can be based on a sample of text excerpts rather than complete texts. For instance, from a register point of view, it can be explored that business letters have a higher use of first and second person pronouns than expository registers, like newspaper reportage or scientific research articles. Correspondingly, there are various linguistic features that exist more frequently in scientific research articles than in most other text varieties, such as nominalizations, attributive adjectives, prepositional phrases, etc. These features exist frequently in the target text variety because they are well-suited functionally to the communicative purposes and situational context of the variety (O'Keeffe, 2010: 242).

2. Research Method

The data of this study were Indonesian advertisements taken from several media such as newspaper, radio, and television. There are 12 advertisements used in this research. They are the advertisement of Sydney Realty Group, Citibank, Ford All-New Focus, Fruitea, Teh Botol Sosro, Indie Plus, Garuda Indonesia Airline, Mie Sedaap Cup, Boldliner, Surya Truss, Bio HSA, and Vitamin Water. The data of this study were collected through a method of observation and note-taking. The collected data were then systematically classified accordingly for purpose of analysis. Firstly, the data were analyzed based on its situational context. Secondly, the analysis was focused on their linguistic features, such as a pronoun, noun, active and passive voice, and the use of prefix and suffix. The last is the functional interpretation which explained why these linguistic features are especially common in this situational context.

3. Results and Analysis

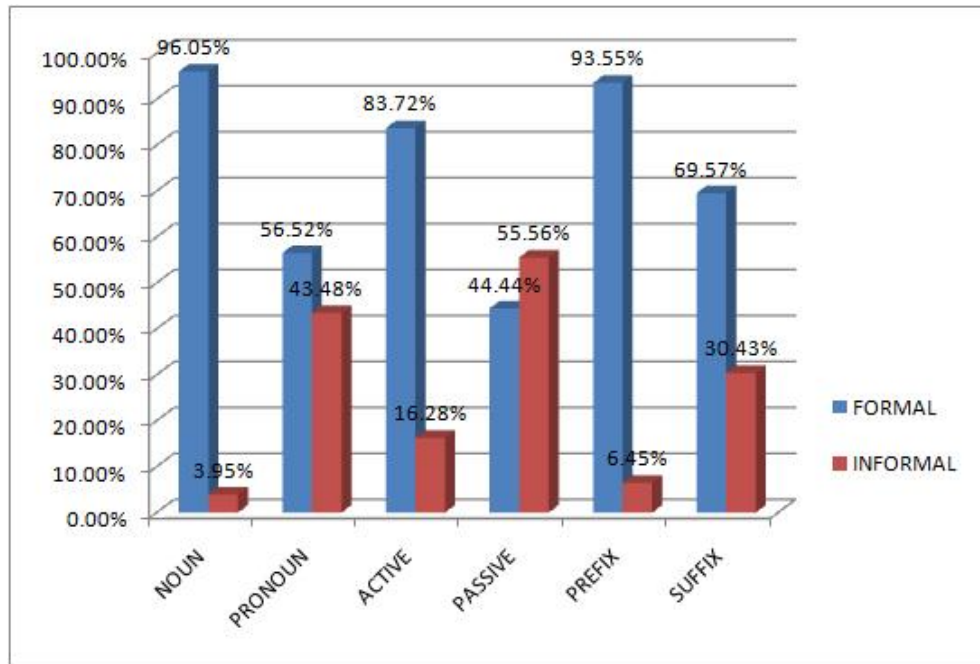
The findings can be formulated into tables and a chart to show the data more clearly. They can be seen as follows:

Table 1. The distribution of formal and informal words Linguistic Features, see table 1 (Appendix)

Table 2
The summary of the occurrence of formal and informal linguistic features

Register	Noun	Pronoun	Active	Passive	Prefix	Suffix
Formal	170	24	36	4	29	16
Informal	77	22	7	5	2	7
Total	177	46	43	9	31	23

Diagram 1.
Comparison of formal and informal



3.1 Situational Context

Generally, all of the advertisements used in this research have similar situational contexts. Those advertisements carry different topic depending on the product. The addressor is the advertiser and the addressees are the readers, listeners, and the audiences. Most of the registers are produced by individuals who are readily identifiable. However, the addressor in the advertisement is less apparent. In many cases, the addressee can be an individual, as in a face-to-face conversation with a friend. Personal letters and e-mail messages are also often addressed to an individual. However, the advertisements have an un-enumerated set of addressees because it is impossible to specify the set of individuals who read a newspaper or listen to a radio broadcast or watch a television show.

In terms of interactivensness, the communication between the addressor and the addressees are less interactive because they did not do a face-to-face communication. In other words, the addressor and the addressees share a different place. The addressor is an institutional speaker whereas the addressees are public audiences. No personal relationship among them. The participants cannot respond to one another. The participants also have different degrees of shared background knowledge.

Those advertisements are in written and spoken modes. Obviously, producing an advertisement needs much money so it must be well prepared before it is widely published. Those registers have been carefully planned, revised, and edited. Generally, the communicative purpose of those advertisements is to promote the company's product. Specifically, they aim at persuading the addressees to buy their product. Another parameter relating to purpose is factuality. The addressors tried to show some facts about the product by showing the details and describing them one by one in a very persuasive way. Therefore, the addressees will be attracted and interested in that product.

3.2 Linguistic Features

Based on data presented above, it can be generally seen that formal words occurred more frequently than informal words. The occurrence of formal noun shows a significant difference in comparison with the informal one. There are some nouns which are very formal like *kesempurnaan* (*ke-sempurna-an*) 'the perfection', *keistimewaan* (*ke-istimewa-an*) 'the specialty', *kenyamanan* (*ke-nyaman-an*) 'the comfort', *kesaksian* (*ke-saksi-an*) 'the testimony', etc. They are constructed by adding prefix and suffix. The addition of prefix and suffix on a

word shows the formality in Indonesian. There are also other nouns which are a particular term of a particular field, such as: *investasi* 'investment', *properti* 'property', *ultrasonik* 'ultrasonic', *armada* 'fleet', *awak kabin* 'cabin crew', *metabolisme* 'metabolism', *syaraf* 'nerve', etc. Those words show formality since they are rarely used in daily conversation and only used by a particular group of people. Some specific terms occurred in the advertisement because of the specific topic carried. On the other hand, the informal nouns are very rarely used in the data.

In terms of pronoun figure, 4.2 shows that those advertisements used formal pronoun more often than the informal one. The most frequent first-person pronoun occurred in those advertisements is *kami* 'we'. The addressor to denote him/herself uses it. Generally, the addressor tends to use *kami* 'we' than *saya* 'I' because s/he spoke on behalf of the company which produces the product. The words *kami* 'we' sounds more exclusive because it excludes the persons being spoken to. In addition, it also indicates the polite form of *saya* 'I'. As Biber (2009: 41) stated that every text is written by someone, the addressor. Most of the registers are created by individuals who are readily identifiable. On the other hand, the addressor in advertisements is less apparent since the addressor does not make a face-to-face conversation with the addressees.

Anda 'you' is the most frequent second person pronoun occurred in those advertisements. It is used to address the addressees. Whoever the addressees, the advertisers tend to use the formal pronoun *anda* 'you' since it is more polite than another pronoun of 'you', *kamu*. It does not occur in any data of this research because *kamu* 'you' is often used among friends. That is why formal pronoun is used more frequently to show politeness and to attract the target consumer's attention. Based on Biber's point of view, in some registers, the addressee can be an individual, like in a face-to-face conversation with a friend. However, some of them can be addressed to multiple individuals, for instance: a dinner table conversation. On the other hand, advertisements have an un-enumerated set of addressees since it cannot be predicted the number of people who listen to a radio broadcast or watch a television show or read a newspaper and magazine in which the advertisements are published. So formal pronoun is used to address the un-enumerated set of addressees to generalize the audience and treat them equal. In addition, all the target audiences must be respected since they are the prospective buyer of the product.

The chart also shows the use of informal pronoun but in lower percentage in comparison with the formal one. The most frequent first-person informal pronoun which occurs in those advertisements is *gue* 'I'. Meanwhile, the second person pronoun which always goes with *gue* is *lu* 'you'. Those pronouns are very popular among Jakartans (the people who live in the capital city of Indonesia). They are typically associated with youth and commonly used in informal situations.

In terms of active and passive voice, active voice occurs more frequently than the passive one. In Indonesian, if the agent or the action is the main concern of the sentence, the 'active' form of the verb is used. On the other hand, if the recipient of the action is the main concern of the sentence, the 'passive' form of the verb is used. The advertisers tend to use the active form since most of the advertisements more concern on the agent of the sentence. Obviously, the agent in the sentence found in advertisements is the product itself. In addition, the sentence also focuses on the action. The action means what the product can do or give to the users. The recipient is not the main concern of the sentences in advertisements since it could be anyone. For example *Mobil yang memiliki sensor ultrasonik* 'A car which has an ultrasonic sensor'. This sentence focuses on the agent 'the car' and the action 'has ultrasonic sensor'.

The chart shows a significant difference in the frequency of the use of a formal and informal form of active voice. The addressor tends to use the formal form since it also relates to the use of noun and pronoun. The use of formal noun and pronoun will always be followed by the use of a formal pattern of the sentence. The active voice in Indonesian is indicated by the use of prefix and suffix on a verb. In term or formality, the formal active sentence is usually constructed by adding the suffix *-kan* into the verb. The data shows that most of the verbs are added by suffix *-kan*, for instance: *men-dapat-kan* 'to get'; *me-mulih-kan* 'to heal'; *mem-beri-kan* 'to give'; *meng-guna-kan* 'to use'; *me-laku-kan* 'to do', etc. On the other hand, the suffix *-in* indicates the informality. When a verb is added by the suffix *-in*, it shows that it is used in the informal situation. The informal form of active voice only occurs in three advertisements, for example: *utama-in* 'give priority to'; *ngerja-in* 'to do something'; *bawa-in* 'to bring something, etc. The formal form should be *meng-utama-kan* for *utamain*; *meng-kerja-kan* for *ngerjain*; and *mem-bawa-kan* for *bawain*. The addition of siffix *-in* is strongly influenced by Jakartan dialect which is very informal. The data shows its occurrence in a very low percentage.

In contrast, the passive voice used the informal form more frequently than the formal one. However, the chart does not show a very significant number of differences between the use of formal and informal form. The formal form of a passive voice in Indonesian is indicated by the addition of prefix *di-* and *ter-*. In addition, it is also

indicated by the addition of prefix *ke-* and the suffix *-an*. The data shows the use of formal forms, such as *terletak* ‘located on’; *di-bangun* ‘to be built’; *di-pakai* ‘to be used’, etc. The informal form of passive voice is indicated by the occurrence of the suffix *-in*. It can be seen in some examples, such as *di-marah-in* ‘scolded by’; *di-jalan-in* ‘to be run’; *laden-in* ‘to be served’, etc. The formal form should be *dimarahi* instead of *dimarahin*; *dijalani* instead of *dijalanin*; and *diladeni* instead of *diladenin*. In similar to the active form, the use of the suffix *-in* constructing the passive voice is caused by the influence of Jakartan dialect.

3.3 Functional Interpretation

The final step in a register analysis is explaining why these linguistic features are especially common in this situational context. In summary, it can be seen in the table below:

Participants	The advertiser addressing an un-enumerated number of audiences.
Relations among participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No interaction. 2. All participants have different degrees of shared background knowledge. 3. No personal relations.
Channel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spoken. 2. Written. 3. Newspapers, radio, TV.
Production circumstances	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The text has been carefully planned, revised, and edited.
Setting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The time is shared. 2. The place is not shared.
Communicative purposes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving information. 2. Describing goods. 3. Selling products.
Topic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on the product: food and drinks product, property, bank car, telephone provider, airline, medicine, pen, and building materials.

The use of particular linguistic features in advertisements is influenced by the situational context, such as participants and relationship among them, channel, production circumstances, setting, communicative purposes, and the topic. In the advertisements, the addressor and the addressees do not have direct interaction and both do not know each other. That is why the addressors tend to use a formal pronoun to denote themselves and to address the addressees. Besides, communicative purposes are also considered in constructing those registers. Generally, advertisements aimed at persuading people to buy their product. Therefore, the addressees tend to use formal nouns to describe the detail of the product. In order to give a clear description, they have to use formal nouns which can be easily understood by the hearer and will not lead to miss understanding. In addition, the addressor frequently use particular terms to explain the product’s specifications. The addressees have no chance to ask questions since the setting does not allow the interactive communication. That is why everything must be delivered very clearly. In addition, the nouns are also used to create persuasive statements. Most of the advertisements used persuasive sentences to promote their product and to convince the target audiences to buy their product. Formal nouns are typically used in careful, edited writing — when the writer has a lot of time to polish the text. Formal words also occur in speech, usually when the speaker is saying something that was prepared beforehand (for example, reading the news or delivering an official speech). In this case, advertisements are also a kind of well-prepared register. So that formal words are used more often than the informal one.

4. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above it can be concluded that those advertisements have a high register since the chart shows that five of six categories use formal linguistic features more frequently than the informal one. The chart displays that the formality not only can be seen in the use of noun and pronoun but also the use of prefix and suffix. The use of suffix particularly indicates the formality and informality. In Indonesian, the use of suffix *-kan* shows formality. On the other hand, the suffix *-in* shows the informality. It is discovered that the distribution of suffix *-kan* is more frequently than suffix *-in*. The use of prefix and suffix also relates to the construction of active and passive voice. In this case, the chart shows that the active voice is mostly constructed by formal prefix

and suffix. In contrast, the informal suffix is used more frequently than the formal one in constructing the passive voice. However, the difference is not very significant. Those facts prove that those advertisements have a high register.

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Appendices

Figure	Formal / Informal	Ad 1	Ad 2	Ad 3	Ad 4	Ad 5	Ad 6	Ad 7	Ad 8	Ad 9	Ad 10	Ad 11	Ad 12	Total
Noun	Formal	Saatnya, <i>property</i> , biaya, sewa, produk, investasi (2), lokasi (2), <i>developer</i> (2), kesempatan, <i>grant</i> , investor, pembeli, rumah, properti (4), informasi, masa depan, <i>time</i> , bidang	<i>Things, the wait</i> (2), individu, momen, kebutuhan, kartu kredit, keistimewaan, dunia, tahun (2), juta, transaksi, kartu, bonus (2), <i>rewards</i> , <i>cash back</i> (3), tiket (2)	Mobil (4), sensor, ultrasonik, teman, keluarga, suara, pengereman, harapan	Serunya, marahny a, badak, Jawa	<i>Company</i> , gedung, <i>English</i> , rambut, sepatu, orang (2), tukang, laptop, kertas, masalah, jam (2), gaji, tanggal, pulsa, layanan, kenyamanan	Pekerjaan, tintanya, pengabdian nya, peran, tenaga, pikiran, teh (2), botol, ahlinya	Kesempurnaan, perjalanan (2), keistimewaan, penerbangan, kebutuhan, armada, awak kabin, fasilitas, <i>experience</i> , kenyamanan	Hidup, kucing, mie, rasa (2), isinya, rasanya (2), sensasi nya, enaknya	<i>Manager</i> (2), bolpennya, tintanya (2), memo (2), pilihan, warna, pekerjaan, bolpen, <i>standard</i> (2)	Baja, genteng (2), bahan, bangunan, spandek, seng, besi, beton, triplek	Keluarga, cuplikan, kesaksian, konsumen, manfaat (2), syaraf, tetes, lidah, diabetes, mag, mata, pemulihan, insulin, botol, gula, badannya, orang, kondisi, tubuh, keluhan, penyakit, giliran, radio, asa, jalan, pasar, kesayangan	Minuman, vitamin, <i>water</i> , rasa, kalori, biotin, mineral, metabolisme, kulit, daya tahan	170
	Informal	Projek (2)				Kerjaan, warteg		Bal-balnya	Kerjaan		Muka			7
Pronoun	Formal	Kami (3), anda	Anda (2)	Anda (3)	Kita, kalian		Saya, mereka (2), kita	Anda (2)		Kita, <i>you</i>	Kami (3)	Anda (2)		24
	Informal				Lu (2), gue (2)	Aku (3), kamu			Gue, lu				Gue (12)	22
Active	Formal	Membeli, membayar, mendapatk	Memiliki, hadir	Memiliki, menghubungi, menggunak		Tidur, kerja	Berpikir, berperan(2), yakin, memberikan	Penuhi	Makan	Menjadi	Melayani	Merasakan, mengalami (5),	Minum, meningkatkan, jaga, menambah	36

		an		an, mendeteksi, berhenti, melakukan, melampaui							menjaga, memulihkan, menghubungi		
	Informal				Utamain	Ngomong, ngerjain, bawain			Kata, pacarin	Jadi			7
Passive	Formal	Terletak, dibangun	Nikmati							Dipakai,			4
	Informal				Dimarahin, ladenin	Dijalanin				Didesign, ditandatangani			5
Prefix	Formal	mem- (2), men-, ter-, di-	me-	me- (3), meng- (2), men-, ber-	di-		ber- (3), mem-		di- (3)	me-	me- (2), meng- (2), men-,	men- (2)	29
	Informal					ng-, di-							2
Suffix	Formal	-kan	-i	-i (3), -kan (2)			-kan	-i		-i	-kan (2), -i (2)	-kan	16