

Register Dynamics in the EFL Classroom: Investigating Teachers' Language Styles in Indonesian Vocational School

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Abstract

Background:

Style plays an important role in fostering productive interactions between teachers and students when learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Using the right style can improve information delivery and allow for the creation of a positive classroom environment. Three of Martin Joos' Five Clocks Theory: formal, consultative, and informal, are considered the most relevant in the context of Education. The findings are significant in helping teachers in vocational schools adjust their language style to enhance student communication and comprehension.

Methodology:

This study applied a descriptive qualitative approach with a purposive sampling technique. Seven English teachers from one of the vocational schools in Yogyakarta became respondents for the questionnaire, and two other teachers were interviewed for in-depth data. The data were analyzed using the Miles & Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

Findings:

The questionnaire results showed that the consultative register, the formal, and the casual were the most to least used, respectively. In-depth interviews revealed that teachers adjusted their language style based on the context of delivering the material and the relational closeness with students. The formal register functions to deliver structurally complex material, while the casual register is used to build closer relationships with students.

Conclusion:

The use of registers helps improve learning outcomes by enabling teachers to deliver material accurately while building rapport with students, resulting in a more interactive learning environment, increased motivation, and a deeper understanding of the learning material. Combining formality and closeness through consultative and casual registers is an important strategy for teachers in adjusting their teaching approaches.

Originality:

This study contributes to the theory of communicative language teaching in which registers used by EFL teachers emphasize the meaningfulness of language. This study also contributes to classroom communicative theory by highlighting how teachers and students communicate to enhance students' engagement, social dynamics, and learning outcomes.

Keywords : Language style; teacher; vocational school; education.

DOI	: 10.24903/sj.v11i1.2053
Received	: July 2025
Accepted	: October 2025
Published	: April 2026
How to cite this article (APA)	: Akbar, A.S., Darjito, H., & Ikrarini, E.O. (2026). Register Dynamics in the EFL Classroom: Investigating Teachers' Language Styles in Indonesian Vocational School. <i>Script Journal: Journal of Linguistics and English Teaching</i> , 11(1), 1-20. https://doi.org/10.24903/sj.v11i1.2053
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1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning process is mediated by language as a tool to communicate between teachers and students. The interaction involves negotiating meaning to achieve understanding and effective communication between two parties (Batmang et al., 2018). In terms of the occupational world, one job involving significant interaction and communication is a teacher or educational staff member. Teachers' communication strategies are the key to successful learning, as the use of appropriate language by teachers can help the teaching and learning process run well (Puspasari et al., 2021). While disseminating learning content, it is important for teachers to use appropriate language that will help them convey the messages efficiently. For this reason, employing varied language varieties becomes indispensable, more so in vocational institutions, since variation in register enables teachers to accommodate the vocational learning environment (Ikuenomore, 2024). As a part of verbal communication, language has certain rules in considering the aspects of status and social situations (Khoimah, 2019). Muziatun et al. (2020) explains that language is the strongest form of behavior, as someone expresses themselves in certain situations or contexts, which refers to their style.

One needs to be aware of some factors before determining language style as part of a tool for expressing their ideas (Simamora & Sherina, 2022). Language style is defined by Holmes and Wilson (2022) as a form of variation in which elements such as semantics chosen by the speaker are compared with other semantic elements with the same information. The differences in situations and contexts by speakers can make someone's language style different (Meyerhoff, 2018). When people choose a language style, this can be influenced by certain factors such as; (1) speaker factor (who is speaking, and to whom they are speaking), (2) setting factor (the context of social interaction such as when and where), (3) topic factor (the type of topic being discussed), and (4) function (the purpose of interaction by the speaker and listener in communicating) (Holmes & Wilson, 2022).

People have their own style when communicating. For example, the language style used by an office employee and someone who is shopping may be visible, or a married couple interacting may use a different style when they talk to their best friend. It shows that places and relationships between individuals can influence aspects of these differences. Choosing the form of language to be used will help people achieve a spectrum of communication goals, such as drawing through words, or the tone used simultaneously expressed through written or spoken language (Sinaga & Husein, 2018). Through language style, it will make it easier for someone to understand the meaning of the chosen words used in the process of interaction or communication (Metz, 2021; Puspasari et al., 2021), both orally and in writing.

There are five distinct language styles: Formal, Consultative, Casual, Intimate, and Frozen. Each style represents a different level of formality and social context, and speakers shift between them depending on goals, environment, and audience (Joos, 1967). However, not all registers are equally relevant in classroom communication.

The frozen register, which is typically used in ceremonial or scripted situations, and the intimate register, which occurs in private or personal contexts, are rarely found in classroom discourse. In contrast, the formal, consultative, and casual registers are more frequently employed by teachers and students, as they reflect the balance between structured instruction, guided interaction, and social engagement in the learning process (Ningsi et al., 2022; Puspasari et al., 2021). Therefore, this study focuses on these three registers because they best represent the communicative realities and pedagogical practices of English teaching in vocational school settings

A teacher's language style choice is crucial for effective application in classroom learning sessions. Students have different information backgrounds. Using a language style suitable for the learning process, there will be a more effective interaction process between teachers and students. In the research by Puspasari et al. (2021), It was explained that the three teachers used the right language style, which would help them understand the teacher's explanations in the learning process. The results of this research also show that variations in formal language style are among those observed in teachers' classroom instruction. This aligns with Ikuenomore's (2024) view, which emphasizes that language plays a crucial role as a strategic tool in supporting the effectiveness of vocational learning. Teachers' use of a more relaxed language style is understood as an effort to create a comfortable, communicative classroom atmosphere, enabling students to engage more easily in the learning process.

Several local studies in Indonesian vocational school contexts have highlighted the significance of register variation in classroom communication. Research on teacher and student interaction has shown that teachers often employ consultative registers to facilitate guided discussions and ensure mutual understanding between participants (Sirait & Akmal, 2023; Butar et al., 2019). Other studies also reveal that English teachers in vocational settings frequently alternate between formal, consultative, and casual registers to adjust to the learning objectives, classroom atmosphere, and students' levels of comprehension. Such patterns indicate that teachers' choice of register is not merely a matter of personal preference but a pedagogical strategy to enhance engagement and communicative effectiveness in the EFL classroom (Ambarsari et al., 2022; Anwar, 2019). A study by Rose (2018) on pedagogical register analysis demonstrated that teachers' register choices are pedagogical decisions that

directly influence the achievement of learning objectives, not simply a matter of personal style. Furthermore, Basturkmen (2025) emphasized that language learning in vocational contexts requires an understanding of specific registers relevant to the workplace's needs. These studies strengthen the originality of this study, as the focus on register use by EFL teachers in vocational schools (SMK) in Indonesia makes a significant contribution to the international discourse on register variation in language teaching in vocational education contexts.

Based on research and theory that discusses language style, especially in the education field, it can provide a specific overview of the importance of knowing and understanding this aspect to create an efficient interaction process for teachers and students. Language style can offer different interpretations to the interlocutor; this is the basis for why language style is important to research. In line with previous research and theories related to language style, this research will discuss language style using the theory from Joos (1962) as the fundamental theory in this study. Although several studies have examined teachers' language styles in secondary and tertiary education, research focusing specifically on vocational school contexts remains limited. Most previous research has described the general use of Joos's five registers, but few have explored how these styles operate within the practical and skill-oriented learning environment of vocational schools. This study fills that gap by concentrating on the three most pedagogically relevant registers, formal, consultative, and casual, and examining how they shape classroom interaction and communication effectiveness in EFL teaching. Understanding register use in vocational schools provides both theoretical and practical insights: theoretically, it expands sociolinguistic perspectives on how register choice reflects institutional and relational dynamics in education; practically, it helps English teachers adjust their communication styles to enhance engagement, clarity, and rapport with students preparing for professional fields.

Based on the elaboration previously, this research has two main objectives: (1) first, this research aims to find teachers' dominant language style in one of the vocational schools in Yogyakarta, and (2) second, this research aims to describe the role of the language style the teachers use. Considering that in education, it is very important to know the language style aspect in the communication process to avoid miscommunication between teachers and students, to achieve maximum learning processes and learning outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language styles

Language style is related to how speakers, as agents in social spaces, express their positions and communicative goals (Moore, 2004). In the process of interaction, a particular style of language can significantly affect how messages are received and interpreted by listeners (Gunawan et al., 2019). This aligns with Tarigan's (1985) view that language style functions as a form of rhetoric in which word choice, whether spoken or written, can persuade or influence an audience. Furthermore, language style reflects the speaker's way of organizing ideas so that the meaning conveyed can be more easily understood by others. In the context of vocational education, Ikuenomore (2024) emphasized that choosing the right language helps bridge the complexity of learning material so that it can be effectively received by students. Several factors, including education, social status, age, and gender, may influence style choice, as speakers adapt their communication to suit specific contexts (Indra & Hamzah, 2018). In educational settings, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, language style plays a crucial role in shaping teacher–student interaction. Teachers' stylistic choices affect not only how knowledge is delivered but also how students respond, participate, and build understanding. Therefore, analyzing language style within teacher–student communication provides insight into how pedagogical relationships and learning outcomes are constructed through language use.

Five language styles modified by a degree of formality (Joos, 1962) are formal, frozen, consultative, casual, and intimate styles. The five styles or registers have aspects that describe their respective language styles, according to the context of their use. An explanation of the five register language styles can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Five types of language styles by Joos (1962)

Frozen	In this register, the language structure cannot be changed. This style is the most formal style, with the context of use being used in situations that require a very high level of formality, such as state documents, ceremonies, etc. This type of language style usually uses sentences that are quite long and structured, with excellent grammar. Listening or reading is not permitted, and also asking questions to the speaker.
Formal	Formal register is used in general formal situations and is usually used at events such as graduations or ceremonies, which are used in large or medium group contexts. Some of the characteristics of using this register in the interaction process are using vocabulary that tends to be formal, avoiding word repetition, and using complex grammar. This type of language style is usually used when the communication process occurs

	with strangers or the interlocutor or the speaker does not know each other's background.
Casual	Casual style is used between friends and co-workers in <i>casual</i> or <i>informal situations</i> . If observed in-depth, this style will give rise to some informal vocabulary, such as everyday language, slang, and so on.
Consultative	Joos explained that the consultative style is a language style used in the context of <i>semi-formal situations</i> . This register is used in semi-formal conversations, such as between doctors and patients, as well as discussions in small groups.
Intimate	Intimate style can be described as a language style used closely with family, close friends, partners, or lovers in the communication process. The characteristics of this register are the use of special personal codes, the use of words that indicate <i>intimate relationships</i> , as well as a lot of vocabulary in verbal or non-verbal communication, such as non-standard forms.

In the context of classroom language styles in the Indonesian context, previous research reports that the three most used language styles are formal, consultative, and casual styles (Mashitoh & Wiyanto, 2023; Manurung et al., 2024; Ningsi et al., 2022). This research considers these three language styles to be the focus of this study.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore teachers' use of language registers in English language teaching at a vocational school. The case study approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth understanding of a bounded context, focusing on how teachers apply formal, consultative, and casual registers in authentic classroom interactions. This design emphasizes rich, contextualized descriptions rather than generalization, aligning with the qualitative paradigm that seeks to interpret meaning and patterns of communication within real educational settings. Thus, it was chosen because it is suitable for uncovering the phenomenon of teachers' use of language styles in the context of English language teaching and provides an in-depth description of the events or problems studied (Maxwell, 2012; Williams & Katz, 2001).

3.2 Research Setting

The research was conducted at a vocational high school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Participants included seven English teachers who completed a questionnaire, and two teachers who were interviewed to obtain more in-depth data. In addition to this, the selection criteria were based on three main considerations: (1) teachers who had at least two years of teaching

experience in vocational education, ensuring familiarity with both pedagogical and vocational contexts; (2) teachers who actively used English as the medium of instruction in their classes; and (3) teachers who were willing to participate in both the questionnaire and interview sessions. Based on the elaboration previously, the participant selection in this study was conducted using a purposive sampling technique, as it allowed the researchers to select subjects relevant to the research focus (Merriam, 1998; Pei, 2021). These criteria were intended to ensure that the participants could provide rich, appropriate, and reflective insights into the use of language registers in actual classroom communication.

3.3 Instrument and Data Collection Technique

The main instruments used in this study were a questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire was structured using a Likert scale (1–4) consisting of three main sections: formal, consultative, and casual. To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the instrument underwent a process of content validation through expert judgment. The draft questionnaire was first reviewed by two experts in English language education and applied linguistics to evaluate the relevance, clarity, and coverage of each item in relation to the study's objectives. Based on their feedback, several items were revised for wording precision and contextual suitability, while additional statements were added to improve the instrument's comprehensiveness. This expert validation process ensured that the questionnaire accurately represented the constructs of formal, consultative, and casual registers, thereby enhancing its content validity and reliability for data collection.

Each section contained eleven statements designed to identify the language style tendencies used by teachers in the learning process. This instrument was used to obtain simple quantitative data regarding the frequency and dominance of register use by teachers. In addition, this study also used in-depth interviews as a second instrument to enrich the data obtained from the questionnaire. The interview guide was structured in the form of semi-structured questions, so that the researcher maintained a framework of main questions but also provided flexibility for participants to explain their experiences and considerations in using certain language styles.

The data collection technique was carried out in stages. First, the researcher distributed questionnaires to seven English teachers at the vocational school that served as the research location. The questionnaire results provided an initial overview of the most dominant language styles used. Second, to gain a deeper understanding, the researcher conducted interviews with two teachers selected based on the criteria of active involvement in learning and willingness to provide further information. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, lasting

approximately 30–45 minutes for each participant, then recorded and transcribed for further analysis. By using a combination of questionnaires and interviews, this study sought not only to capture the tendency of language style use but also to explore the reasons, functions, and socio-pedagogical contexts behind teachers' register choices in teaching.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The qualitative data were analyzed using the Miles & Huberman (2014) model, which includes four main stages: data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. The data from the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed through an integrative qualitative approach. First, the questionnaire results were summarized to identify the dominant types of registers used by teachers. These quantitative tendencies served as a preliminary framework to guide the interpretation of interview data. The interview transcripts were then coded thematically to explore teachers' reasons, perceptions, and contextual factors influencing their register choices. The two data sources were subsequently compared and integrated through triangulation, allowing the researchers to confirm, complement, and enrich the findings. This integration ensured that the analysis captured both the frequency patterns from the questionnaire and the deeper pedagogical insights from the interviews, providing a comprehensive understanding of teachers' language register use in the classroom.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 The results of the questionnaire

Based on the results of questionnaires and interviews, it can be concluded that the consultative register is the most dominant language style used by the teachers in this study. The results of the questionnaire have a total of 11 questions in each register section (formal, consultative, casual). Consultative register appears as a language style that is often used by teachers when implementing the learning process, which is indicated by the highest overall score (S:243). Followed by a formal register (S:213), and the lowest score was the casual type (S:184). Chart 1 below explains that each level has a different mean score concerning the use of language styles in the classroom by teachers based on the results of the questionnaire:

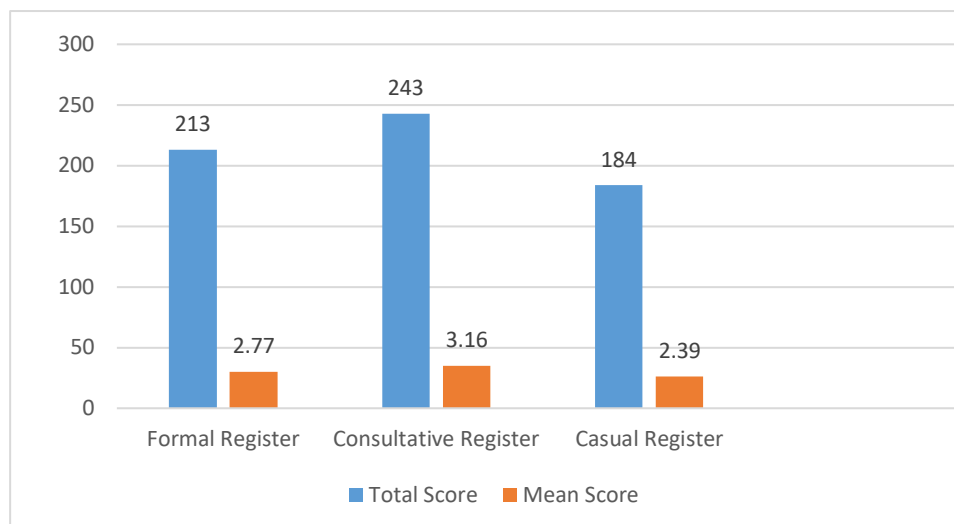


Figure 1. The score results of the language styles

Figure 1 shows that the consultative register is the language style with the highest score based on the questionnaire results filled out by research participants in this study, followed by formal and then casual. This is also in line with the results of the interview data with two teachers regarding the use of the three registers. Formal registers and Casual registers are often used in various teaching cases by adjusting specific reasons, such as the context of the material and the purpose of use.

Table 2 below also indicates that the consultative register obtained the highest overall mean score among the three types of registers, confirming its dominance in teachers' classroom communication. The distribution of mean scores shows some variability across participants, with Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 achieving the highest mean score of 3.64, while Teacher 5 recorded the lowest at 2.91. This variation suggests that although all teachers employ consultative language patterns, the intensity and frequency of use differ depending on teaching experience, classroom context, and lesson focus. Teachers with higher mean scores tend to integrate consultative interaction more actively, using questioning, clarification, and guided responses to involve students in meaning negotiation. Conversely, those with lower means may rely more on formal explanations or structured instructions. Overall, the pattern reflects the communicative nature of vocational classrooms, where teachers balance authority and approachability to facilitate both task-oriented and interpersonal learning processes.

Table 2. The overall mean scores per teacher

	Overall Mean Score		
	Formal Register	Consultative Register	Casual Register
Teacher 1	1.64	2.82	2.91
Teacher 2	3.82	3.55	2.82
Teacher 3	2.18	3.64	3.09
Teacher 4	3.09	3.64	2.00
Teacher 5	2.91	2.90	2.27
Teacher 6	3.36	2.00	1.45
Teacher 7	2.36	3.55	2.18

In the other part of the questionnaire analysis, it shows the formal register items indicate a moderate level of use among teachers based on Table 3, with mean scores ranging between 2.57 and 2.86 across all statements. The highest means (2.86) appear in several items related to delivering structured material, introducing formal texts, and maintaining professional boundaries between teachers and students. In contrast, the lowest mean (2.57) is found in the item related to students perceived ease of understanding formal texts, suggesting that although teachers frequently use formal language for clarity and authority, they recognize that it may not always enhance student comprehension. This distribution suggests that in vocational classrooms, formal registers are applied selectively, primarily when addressing complex or official materials, reflecting the teachers' attempt to maintain professionalism while remaining aware of the communicative limits of overly formal discourse.

Table 3. The overall mean scores of the formal register question

Formal Register Question Items	Mean Score
1. I often use formal, structured, and polite language when teaching English in class.	2.71
2. I feel it is important to use formal, structured, and polite language when speaking in public in a school environment.	2.71
3. I feel that the use of formal, structured, and polite language is important in teaching official texts such as speeches or materials in English classes.	2.86
4. I often introduce texts with formal, structured, and polite language to students in English learning.	2.86
5. When providing material in English, I tend to provide material using language that tends to be formal, structured, and polite.	2.86
6. In my opinion, students tend to find it easy to understand texts or speeches that use formal language.	2.57
7. Using formal, structured, and polite language in teaching materials makes interactions more meaningful or authoritative for students.	2.86
8. The use of formal, structured, and polite language in an English text can inspire students in the class I teach.	2.71
9. I feel that using formal language will maintain the boundaries between teachers and students in a particular context.	2.86
10. In the context of socializing with colleagues, I will tend to use formal, structured, and polite language to interact.	2.71
11. I feel comfortable when speaking or communicating in formal, structured, and polite language in the context of interacting with colleagues.	2.71

Among the three types, the consultative register obtained the highest and most consistent mean scores, ranging from 2.86 to 3.43, showing that it is the most dominant style used by teachers. The highest mean (3.43) is observed in the item stating that semi-formal language can inspire students, while several items with means between 3.14 and 3.29 highlight teachers' comfort and preference for using semi-formal expressions to maintain both respect and approachability. The relatively small variation among items suggests that teachers consistently value the consultative style as a communicative bridge between authority and familiarity. In vocational contexts, where learning emphasizes practical interaction and guided instruction, the consultative register appears to support student engagement and task-based collaboration, aligning with pedagogical goals of balancing professionalism with relational accessibility.

Table 4. The overall mean scores of the consultative register question

Consultative Register Question Items	Mean Score
1. I often use language that tends to be semi-formal, paying attention to the boundaries between teachers and students when teaching English material in class.	3.14
2. I feel it is important to use semi-formal language when speaking in public in a school environment.	2.86
3. I feel that the use of semi-formal language is important in teaching formal texts such as speeches or materials in English classes.	3.14
4. I often introduce texts in semi-formal language by paying attention to grammar rules for students learning English.	3.00
5. When providing material in English learning, I provide material with language that tends to be semi-formal.	3.29
6. In my opinion, students tend to find it easy to understand texts or speeches that use semi-formal language.	3.00
7. Using semi-formal language, paying attention to grammar rules and politeness levels in teaching materials, makes interactions more meaningful or authoritative for students.	3.29
8. The use of semi-formal language in an English text can inspire students in the class I teach.	3.43
9. I feel that by using semi-formal language, I will build a deeper relationship with students while still maintaining certain boundaries.	3.29
10. In the context of socializing with coworkers, I will tend to use language that tends to be semi-formal, but still considers grammar rules and status, and social factors.	3.14
11. I feel comfortable when speaking or communicating in a language that is not too formal but still takes into account the context of politeness and linguistic rules.	3.14

The results for the casual register show the lowest overall means, ranging between 2.14 and 2.86, indicating that teachers use casual language less frequently in classroom instruction. The relatively lower means (2.14) on items about teaching materials and student comprehension imply that teachers perceive casual language as less effective for formal learning objectives. However, slightly higher scores (2.43–2.86) on items related to comfort and social relationships suggest that teachers still use casual expressions occasionally to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. This pattern reflects a functional differentiation in teachers'

register use; casual language is reserved for informal or interpersonal moments, rather than for academic explanation, showing an awareness of the balance between approachability and pedagogical rigor in vocational classrooms.

Table 5. The overall mean scores of the casual register question

Casual Register Question Items	Mean Score
1. I often use language that tends to be relaxed or non-formal when teaching English material in class.	2.29
2. I feel it is important to use language that tends to be relaxed or non-formal when speaking in public in a school environment.	2.29
3. I feel that the use of language that tends to be relaxed or non-formal is important in teaching formal texts such as speeches or materials in English classes.	2.71
4. I often introduce texts with language that tends to be relaxed or non-formal to students in English learning.	2.43
5. When providing material in English learning, I tend to provide material in a relaxed or non-formal language.	2.14
6. In my opinion, students tend to find it easier to understand texts or speeches that use language that tends to be relaxed or non-formal.	2.14
7. Using language that tends to be relaxed or non-formal in teaching materials makes interactions more meaningful or authoritative for students.	2.29
8. The use of language that tends to be relaxed or non-formal in an English text can inspire students in the class that I teach.	2.29
9. I feel that by using language that tends to be relaxed and non-formal, it will establish close social relationships with students.	2.43
10. In the context of socializing with colleagues, I tend to use non-formal or casual language.	2.43
11. I feel comfortable when speaking or communicating in non-formal or casual language.	2.86

Overall, the questionnaire analysis reveals that teachers' register use in vocational schools reflects a dynamic adaptation to the communicative demands of their classrooms. The pattern of responses suggests that teachers consciously adjust their language between clarity, structure, and approachability to support both instructional delivery and student engagement. This indicates that register choice is not merely a matter of preference but a pedagogical response to the practical and relational contexts of vocational education, where effective communication is closely tied to learning motivation and interaction quality.

4.2 The results of the interview

In the results of the interview with Teacher 1 (T1), based on the results of the interview data analysis, it was concluded that flexibility in using formal and casual language styles is crucial for a teacher to be effective and to establish relationships between teachers and students. In the question "Do you think there is a special or specific reason why you use this style of language?" T1 believes that formal and casual language styles are based on the context of the teacher's needs.

"...If it is formal, it is usually for materials that are easy to understand when you use formal language. But if it is casual, it will be more about our approach to the students

so that they also feel closer or friendly, and they understand or are more comfortable asking us questions” (Teacher 1)

By adjusting the context of students' needs related to the material, Teacher 1 added that he could consider using formal or casual registers. Additionally, according to her, using a formal language style helps convey clear and serious teaching material, while in conditions that require a more comfortable approach and building relationships between students and teachers, casual language can be implemented in this case. Considering the use of these two registers allows teachers to create an effective learning environment for students in the classroom learning process. Furthermore, T1 illustrated in this interview that in the context of formal registers and casual registers, each has similarities when used in the context of teaching in the classroom.

".... Formal and casual, in my opinion. If the first specific reason is that if for example it is formal, it is more about when we convey the materials that we must seriously convey formally and indeed the goal is to make students think that the material must be understood if it is casual, and it is more about how to approach the students." (Teacher 1)

These two types of registers or language styles play a crucial role in creating a good learning process. According to T1, the use of formal language has a role in conveying serious material or requires a level of formality that is used quite frequently. This is in contrast to the casual register, which has a role as an institution between students and teachers and is used to create a comfortable atmosphere and support a good communication process between both parties. The use of these two language styles allows the teacher to adapt the approach according to a particular context, where the ultimate goal of using these two registers is to convey maximum material to students.

In the context of the interview with Teacher 2 (T2), the results were the same, but there was a slight difference between the two answers or responses related to the use of language styles in the educational context. From the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that the language style used by educators can influence the communication or interaction process between teachers and students. According to him, the use of formal and semi-formal language is considered more effective in maintaining word structure and avoiding misunderstandings, and can maintain the figure of the teacher's role model.

"....Usually the goal is for students to understand more optimally, by using formal language. The goal is to avoid misunderstandings between teachers and students in the context of the lesson. Also, at least using formal or semi-formal language *mas* the

teacher must be formal in front of the students. The goal is to make it easier for students to understand when they use formal language because the language is more structured. This is the kind of teacher who is a role model. As a role model, the goal is to be a role model and to be imitated by the students." (Teacher 2)

In the context of the interview above, T2 explained that the use of formal registers in classroom learning aims to maximize students' understanding and avoid potential misunderstandings during material delivery. For T2, formal language represents professionalism and structure, helping teachers convey complex content while reinforcing their role as models of appropriate communication. This perspective contrasts with that of T1, who emphasized flexibility in alternating between formal and casual styles depending on the classroom context. While T1 viewed the casual register as a means to create a relaxed atmosphere and encourage student participation, T2 prioritized the maintenance of authority and linguistic discipline through formal expression. This contrast highlights the variability in teachers' communicative preferences, where differences in experience, teaching style, and perception of classroom dynamics influence their register choices in vocational EFL instruction.

"... Obviously, sir, I think if we as teachers use formal language, it is like being more polite, so there are boundaries between teachers and students in the classroom. So as a teacher, I feel more comfortable if I explain in normal language. "It's probably a little bit different if I'm in a canteen with a student, so maybe it's a bit of a formality, or a casual one. So, it's okay to use casual, it's not bad either." (Teacher 2)

Formal registers can avoid miscommunication because the structured, clear, and neat structure in the formal style ensures students understand the material well. T2 also illustrates that the use of formal and semi-formal can create a polite impression. This does not cover establishing clear boundaries between teachers and students in maintaining discipline and respecting teacher authority. However, T2 explained that casual is not completely bad because this form of language style can be implemented when students and teachers are in situations that do not require or demand formal roles, for example, the interaction process in the canteen, or outside the school environment.

Formal registers and informal registers are two forms of language styles that are confirmed to be frequently used by teachers. Each of these has a purpose and is appropriate to the context. When the teacher wants to explain in a formal, serious situation and requires clarity using structured and neat language, formal registers can be used in the learning process, if the teachers want to collaborate in a slightly relaxed manner so they can establish relationships

with students, consultative or semi-formal can be considered in the interaction process. Casual, has quite different functions and roles, establishing relationships with students so that later they feel comfortable interacting with teachers in a friendly atmosphere, especially if the teacher promotes feelings of comfort and closeness between both parties. Table 6 below is the conclusion of the analysis of the role of formal, consultative, and casual language styles.

Table 6. The roles of formal, consultative, and casual registers in language teaching

Register Style	Role in Language Teaching	Direct Links to Evidence
Formal Style	Providing the clarity and structure needed to convey complex or serious material. Used to maintain professionalism and authority towards students, and to create an organized and disciplined learning environment. The use of this register also has a role in minimizing the risk of miscommunication and ensuring students understand the material well.	Interview data from T2 shows that formal language “helps convey complex material clearly and strengthens the teacher’s professional role.” The questionnaire item on structured explanation received a mean score of 2.86, indicating consistent use for academic content.
Consultative Style	The register stands as a bridge between formal and casual language in classroom learning. This register has a role in maintaining the structure and clarity of the material by involving aspects of a flexible or more relaxed atmosphere. This explains that this register is used when the material is not too heavy, but still maintains a structured explanation, helping students stay focused but still relaxed and comfortable while communicating.	Questionnaire results show the consultative register has the highest mean score (3.43), confirming frequent use. Interview excerpts from T1 and T2 describe it as a strategy to “make students comfortable asking questions” and “avoid misunderstandings while staying approachable”.
Casual Style	Creating closeness and a friendly atmosphere between teachers and students, the use of this register allows teachers to build closer relationships with their students by prioritizing comfort in the learning environment, thereby reducing tension.	Based on questionnaire data, casual register obtained the lowest overall mean (2.14–2.86), suggesting limited but contextual use. Interview responses highlight teachers using casual expressions to “reduce tension” and “encourage student engagement in informal moments.”

5. DISCUSSION

The dominance of the consultative register in teachers’ classroom communication reflects the interactive and practice-oriented nature of vocational education. Unlike general secondary or higher education, vocational schools emphasize hands-on learning and task-based instruction, which requires teachers to maintain both clarity and interpersonal connection. The consultative style enables teachers to guide students through technical content while encouraging active participation and feedback. This balance is also evident in the interview data, where teachers reported using semi-formal expressions to “make students feel comfortable asking questions” (T1) and to “avoid misunderstandings while still sounding approachable” (T2). Such responses illustrate that the consultative register supports the dual

function of teaching in vocational settings, transmitting specialized knowledge and fostering communicative confidence among learners. Therefore, its dominance is not coincidental but rooted in the pedagogical demands of vocational classrooms, where interaction and relational proximity are essential to achieving learning effectiveness.

Furthermore, the interview results show that formal style is preferred when the learning material is complex and requires coherent and structured explanations. Conversely, teachers utilize a casual style to create a comfortable and friendly classroom atmosphere, allowing students to feel more comfortable asking questions and engaging in discussions. This combination of registers emphasizes the teacher's role as a facilitator, able to adapt their communication style to the context and learning needs. Thus, the variety of language styles used by teachers serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as a pedagogical strategy to maintain a balance between professionalism and social closeness. This finding implies that teacher training and professional development in vocational schools should emphasize communicative adaptability, helping teachers recognize when to shift between formal, consultative, and casual registers to suit lesson objectives and classroom dynamics. By becoming more aware of their register use, teachers can foster clearer instruction, build rapport with students, and create a classroom atmosphere that supports both technical skill development and communicative competence, which are essential outcomes in vocational education.

When compared with the findings of international studies, the results of this study have both relevance and interesting differences. [Qin & Wang \(2021\)](#) emphasized that student engagement in EFL learning is strongly influenced by teachers' pedagogical discourse choices, where a combination of formal and interactive modes can increase student participation. This aligns with the dominance of the consultative style found in this study. Meanwhile, [Tong et al. \(2024\)](#) showed that differences in teacher experience also influence the discourse patterns they choose in class, with experienced teachers tending to use formal registers to maintain structure, while younger teachers are more flexible in shifting to casual styles. These findings reinforce the findings of research in vocational high schools that show that register use is contextual, influenced by teaching objectives, materials, and strategies for building relationships with students.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that teachers' register selection is part of a complex pedagogical strategy. The dominance of a consultative style, supported by formal and casual styles, indicates that teachers act not only as transmitters of material but also as managers of social interactions in the classroom. By comparing local and global findings, this study

contributes to a richer understanding of the dynamics of register use in English language learning, particularly in vocational contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that teachers' register choices in vocational EFL classrooms are closely tied to the communicative and pedagogical demands of their teaching context. The predominance of the consultative and formal registers reflects teachers' efforts to balance authority with accessibility, aligning with Joos's (1962) theory that language style shifts according to formality, purpose, and audience. In vocational education, where teaching involves both the transmission of technical knowledge and the development of workplace communication skills, the consultative register functions as an effective bridge between instruction and interaction. These findings contribute to EFL pedagogy by emphasizing that register use is not merely linguistic variation but a strategic element of classroom management and engagement. Practically, this study suggests that teacher education programs should help instructors cultivate register awareness and flexibility, enabling them to adjust their communicative style to support clarity, motivation, and student participation in diverse classroom situations.

Furthermore, language styles in an educational context are inseparable from classroom interaction and learning effectiveness. Teachers, as central figures in the instructional process, need to develop awareness of how different registers function in shaping communication. It is therefore recommended that teacher training programs incorporate practical modules on classroom discourse and register use, helping teachers recognize when and how to shift between formal, consultative, and casual styles according to lesson goals and student needs. By consciously managing their language style, teachers can enhance clarity, foster engagement, and build positive classroom relationships, key factors for effective EFL instruction in vocational settings.

7. REFERENCES

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