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Analysis of the Regret Speech Act in Japanese

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A B S T R A C T

The characters in Japanese animation (or *anime*) are the center of this study, which examines the ways in which they demonstrate regret. Many prior studies have used anime as research study material because it is one of the media that is extremely interesting to analyze from a variety of perspectives. For this analysis, researchers used information from 14 episodes of the 24-minute-long anime series Golden Time. The animation depicts the daily lives of Japanese college students, and the numerous struggles they endure are depicted through several expressions of regret. The data gathered is derived from transcripts of talks carried out by the anime characters and is utilized as research material. The collected data was 54 regret speech act utterances and then examined using a qualitative descriptive approach. The data were then classified into the varieties of regret indicated by Pink. After being analyzed, it was shown that *noni* form dominates the regret speech acts performed in anime, and the types of regret speech acts that are commonly employed are those related to regret of an action or opportunity that should have been taken by someone. It is also known in this study that Japanese people tend to express regret by providing information about facts that differ from what they expected, causing them to feel regret. When they express regret, they may also blame themselves for their actions.

INTRODUCTION

The speech act is an important subject of pragmatic study as it enables avoiding issues when someone's utterance is difficult to grasp (Rahayu, 2021). A speech act is also defined as behavior in which the speakers not only tell something to communicate how they feel but also have a purpose behind what they say (Gowasa, Radiana & Afifah, 2019). The current research focuses on the utterances that represent the speech act of regret in a variety of situations such as a failure to be responsible,

sincere, or wise, missed possibilities that we didn't take, the worst decision that we decided, or when we are neglecting the individuals who are essential to us (Pink, 2022).

Humans experience regret as one sort of emotion. According to Zeelenberg and Pieters (2007), regret is an emotion felt by a person when they realize or imagine that their current situation 5would be better if they had made a different decision in the past, and it is fundamentally different from negative emotions such as anger, disappointment, guilt, shame, and others.

Everyone will have a different experience when coping with this one feeling because it might be felt during the process of selecting whether or not to do something. Furthermore, regret can be experienced through past (retrospective regret) and future (anticipated regret) decisions, where past experience provides information about the elements that will shape future behavior, so that regret related to past experiences can be a life lesson, and regret as anticipation for the future is instrumental in seeing flashbacks in the past regretful experiences and being a guide in making a decision in the present that will affect future. Furthermore, regret can also be viewed as difficult in acknowledging when there is a conflicting desire that cannot be articulated and only takes the form of an indirect desire in a person and appears empty and silent, and someone usually tends to be cautious in regret (Price, 2017).

Each country's expression of regret differs. But at the time, the author wishes to reveal the typical Japanese one. The form of a regretful expression that is commonly expressed by people from this cherry blossom country according to Komiya, Miyamoto, Watabe, and Kusumi (2011) is more influenced by actions related to wasting time and making poor decisions. Meanwhile, factors that upset or hurt friends or family members have a greater influence on Japanese people in interpersonal situations. This is consistent with the Japanese mindset that characterizes their character, namely 和 (*wa*) which means harmony, where maintaining harmony in a group is a priority for them to survive and be resilient in times of anything (Lu, 2017). In his study, Searle classifies regret as an expressive illocutionary speech act that aims to express attitudes and feelings about a situation or a reaction to other people's attitudes and actions (Saifudin, 2019).

Anime or Japanese animation has previously been used in research on illocutionary speech acts in Japanese. Anime can be used as one of the media that can have a positive influence on young people who are facing a lot of pressure, especially in the current times, usually deal with that by reducing or releasing the pressure by looking at the animation that will calm their minds. In terms of the main characters or heroes in anime, many demonstrate a sense of always struggling and never giving up to instill that spirit in the younger generation. Furthermore, through anime, they can gain extensive knowledge and a deep understanding of Japanese customs and culture (Sen & Rong, 2019). As also shown in a Japan

Foundation (2018) survey conducted in Southeast Asian countries including Indonesia, anime is one of the highest reasons to encourage young people to learn Japanese and recognize the language.

Several researchers have previously conducted research on illocutionary speech acts contained in the anime, such as Putra (2020), who examined the directive illocutionary speech acts in the anime entitled D-Frag and discovered that the type of directive illocutionary speech used in the anime was widely used in the narrative of ordering and begging. The study suggested examining further other types of speech acts in the animes such as expressive, declarative, assertive, or commission. Ramadiani and Putri (2021) have also examined the forceful illocutionary speech acts in the *Nichijou* anime, where many assertive speeches act intended to tell something based on the fact that the anime is about high schooler characters in the anime are facing many problems in their daily life activities which resulted in the in utterances of the speech act. Besides, there are also studies on illocutionary speech acts that do not employ anime as the source data , such as study on illocutionary speech actions committed by high school students. It was discovered that children's speech acts consisted of ordering, exhibiting, prohibiting, and thanking. Another one is the study of Japanese people's expressive speech act on Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's resignation where it was found that the majority of the respondents gave thankful expressions other than negative responses such as critics, blame, and others. The study also suggested that the examination regarding the expressive speech act on the intercultural language is required (Astami, 2021).

Those findings have sparked the author's interest in examining more about the regret speech act which is included in the anime media. The result of this research is expected to relate to the intercultural aspect of the language to help the non-Japanese speaker have a better understanding of the importance of the cultural values contained in the regret speech act by the Japanese.

RESEARCH METHODS

The descriptive qualitative research method was used to investigate this regretful speaking act. The research data was obtained by selecting the anime with the most regret speech acts, which is ゴルデ

ンタイム(Golden Time) episodes 1-14, with a total of 54 regret utterances. Each episode lasted approximately 24 minutes, and it was also one of the most popular fall anime from 2013 to 2014, according to MyAnimeList. This anime depicts the lives of several university students who encountered numerous problems and sometimes regretted their responses to those problems. The combination of stories that linked together all episodes, whether it's about their daily activities, love life, or others, are also the reasons this anime was finally chosen as the resource data.

The technique utilized in this research is the observation and recording technique, in which the author examines the use of regretful speech acts by characters in the anime and then records and translates them. After obtaining the data, the researcher classified it in the form of speech acts based on Pink's regret theory (2022) and analyzed it using a discourse analysis approach to describe and provide an understanding of the classification of data sources in the form of transcripts of anime characters' conversations. Furthermore, the data were validated with the calculation of the percentages of the data to get the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The author categorizes the collected data into the regret category expressed by Pink, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The classification of the regret speech act.

Regret Speech Act	Amount	Percentage
Foundation Regret	11	20%
Bold Regret	25	46%
Moral Regret	10	19%
Connection Regret	8	15%
Total	**54**	**100%**

It was found that the highest frequency of regret speech acts is related to missed opportunities we did not take with a total of 25 times (46%) followed by the regret speech act related to the failure of being responsible, sincere, or wise with total 11 times (20%), then the regret speech act related to the worst decision that we take with total 10 times (19%) and lastly the regret speech act related to

when we neglecting the people who are important to us with total 8 times (15%).

Regrets Related to Actions or Opportunities

The proclivity to express regret used in the Golden Time anime is when someone has an idea that there should be an action or opportunity that they can get if they could go back in time and do it. This is consistent with the findings of Papé and Martinez (2017), who discovered that people tend to feel regret in the past compared to the future because missed opportunities in the future affect changing their thoughts about their feelings of regret compared to those in the past. It is also based on the fact that the Japanese people tend to be very careful about what they decide and try to minimalize the same mistakes that they did in the past. This is committed to the values adopted by Japanese society, namely 義 (gi), which whenever somebody made a decision, whether successful or unsuccessful, is part of the burden that must be accepted in full responsibility (Suliyati, 2013). Here are some of the illustrations of how this regret speech act is used in the anime.

Data 1
何年も何年も同じことを繰り返している
Nannen mo nannen mo onaji koto o kurikaeshite iru
"I've been doing the same things for years"
(Golden Time Episode 4, at 06.25)

As seen in Data 1, in the preceding expression, the speaker feels regret because of the past actions that she believes are wrong but continues to do. This can be seen in the Japanese particle ～ *mo*, which means "too". It is used in Japanese to highlight several things at once to demonstrate an explanation (Rizky, Yuniarsih & Ristiawati, 2019). This expression of regret is further clarified by the use of the word *onaji koto* which means 'the same thing' to show the thing that is regretted by the character named Kaga who describes the sentence as an act that has been done by herself.

Data 2
確かにコンパの時の俺ってマジで言った過ぎだよな。。
Tashika ni konpa no toki no ore tte maji de itta sugi dayo na..
"I can't believe what I said at the party"
(Golden Time Episode 7, at 09.45)

The speaker's regret in the above expression is due to an error in his words, so he also feels the need to take an opportunity to apologize or express his regret to the person who has been hurt by the speaker's words. The form of the word used in Japanese is ~*tte*, with an emphasis on one's own mistakes, and the use of the form ~*dayone*, which is a casual form of *desu yo ne*, where the speaker seeks approval from the interlocutor for the mistakes the speaker has made as a form of regret.

Data 3
ちゃんと言葉にすれば良かった...
Chanto kotoba ni sureba yokatta…
"I should have told her"
(Golden Time Episode 9, at 21.09)

This expression is spoken by the speaker named Yana as a result of regret over missed opportunities in the past, namely telling something to his interlocutor, where in the past the speaker had several opportunities to express his feelings of love to the interlocutor, but because he hesitated, he did not tell it in the end. The use of the form ~*ba yokatta*, which means "should," demonstrates this, whereas in Japanese the usage indicates that there should be something that can be an alternative to an action that can be taken or an action that has not previously been taken.

Regrets Related to Responsibility, Sincerity, and Wisdom

A sense of responsibility is a natural thing that every human being in this world possesses because having a sense of responsibility allows us to be more appreciated by those around us. Maier (2019) also contends that accepting responsibility in the sphere of society, particularly in modern times such as these, is critical because human nature is constantly seeking the best way to gain an "advantage" in living life. This attitude can lead to the human being's autonomy, where being responsible for oneself means regulating the individual's way of life. To realize a sense of responsibility, especially to themselves (*jiko sekinin*), Japanese people constantly try to adjust and regulate their daily actions to suit the state, political economy, and social conditions of the people in their environment (Hook & Takeda, 2007). The Japanese people also do not shy away from being sincere and not expecting a response from others (*omoiyari*), and this attitude demonstrates that Japanese people always try to give what other

people need (loyalty) and avoid actions that can harm others (Nindya, 2017). And if they fail to do these, they will feel regret. Here are some examples of expressions of regret in the Golden Time anime for a lack of responsibility, sincerity, and wisdom.

Data 4
俺は。。俺のせいだと思って...
Ore wa…　ore no sei dato omotte…
"I think it's my fault "
(Golden Time Episode 3, at 12.50)

In Data 4, the speaker expresses regret because the speaker feels irresponsible to the interlocutor for causing them to experience an event that should not have occurred. It is clear in his expression in the form of blaming himself, namely, ~*sei*, which in Japanese means "because" caused by something negative that we do to others.

The Japanese, as depicted in this story, are prone to a particular brand of self-blame; when experiencing an emotion they perceive to be reckless and potentially harmful to others, the Japanese are more likely to opt for a course of action that does not place that responsibility on anybody else. As Nindya (2017) indicated, this holds true.

Data 5
「そういう事をしない」、いい彼女になりたかったのに、またダメだったよ！
'Sou iu koto o shinai', ii kanojo ni naritakatta noni, mata dame datta yo!
"I wanted to be a good girlfriend who wouldn't do those things. I failed again."
(Golden Time Episode 12, at 11.50)

The speaker's expression of regret in Data 5 above indicates that she feels sorry because she believes she acted foolishly. According to the anime story, the speaker caught the interlocutor working part-time despite the speaker's request that the interlocutor not do so. As a result, because the speaker acted hastily, the speaker slapped the interlocutor in front of many people. She also expressed her regret for not being wise enough to be a good partner for the interlocutor, using the expression *takatta*, which in Japanese means someone's desire for something, and *noni*, which expresses a speaker's dissatisfaction with the reality that is not as expected.

Data 6
今さら届いても遅いんだよ。私は間に合わなかった。。
Ima sara todoite mo osoindayo. Watashi wa maniawanakatta…
"It's too late for my signal to reach him"
(Golden Time Episode 13, at 00.58)

The speaker in Data 6 feels irresponsible to the interlocutor in the above expression because she is not on time to come according to the previous promise and does not have time to express what she wants to say to the speech partner. The form of ~*temo*, which means "even though" in Japanese, expresses the speaker's regret, where the use of *temo* is to state that, despite the fact that two things were said, something happened in it.

The speaker used the phrase *maniawanakatta*, which means late or not on time, to demonstrate his lack of personal accountability. Because she is Japanese and hence is bound by a strict observance of the value of each passing second, the speaker views this as irresponsible. The Japanese have a disciplined cultural outlook that encourages them to maximize their use of time, as they believe that the more they accomplish and the higher the quality it is, the better (Sukaimi & Said, 2018).

Regrets Related to Moral

There are times in life when we choose the wrong path or option, although we have several other options. Shortland, Alison, Thompson, Pink, and Keig (2020) stated that uncertainty between confusion over their expectations and their expectations of the performance of others, as well as organizational pressures, can lead people to make the worst decisions in their lives. When an individual who belongs to a certain group faces judgments from outside the group, they will tend to adopt a "blame" culture, which will influence the choices that exist within the group. When compared to people in other countries, Japanese society has a characteristic in which they prefer to make a decision thoroughly and slowly. This is due to the Japanese people's collective nature in all decision-making (Yates & Oliveira, 2016). The collective culture of Japanese society can be interpreted as various actions taken by the community itself individually being stronger when combined with those of others and everything being more possible if done together (Takano, 1997). If they make the wrong decision, they will

naturally feel bad about it. Here are some examples of how this regret appears in the anime.

Data 7
今は後悔している。そうだよね、嫌われてるばかりしているね。
Ima wa koukai shiteiru. Soudayone, kirawareteru bakari shiteiru ne.
"I regret it now. You're right, I keep giving him reasons to hate me"
(Golden Time Episode 3, at 17.40)

The speaker in Data 7 expresses regret because she feels bad that he has chosen to pursue people who don't like her at all, causing the people she is pursuing to become irritated with her. In fact, if the speaker can choose not to do so and instead concentrate on her original goal of studying fashion abroad, she will not feel regret. The speaker's expression of regret can be seen in the form of *koukai shite iru*, implying feeling regret. The speaker says this to demonstrate that she is troubled by the knowledge that she has made a poor decision and wishes he could undo it. Furthermore, she expresses the form of ~*ne*, which in Japanese seeks approval for what the speaker has said about the actions she should not take.

Data 8
それサイズが違うのに店一目惚れしで衝動買いちゃったんだよね
Sore saizu ga chigau noni mise hitomeboreshi de shoudou kaichattan dayone
"They weren't my size but it was love at first sight. It was an impulse buy"
(Golden Time Episode 6, at 06.00)

The expression in Data 8 above expresses regret for the speaker's worst decision. After all, despite knowing that there are many options for shoes that fit her foot size, the speaker chooses to buy shoes that don't fit her because she likes the model of the shoes. As a result, the speaker was urged to return the shoes she had purchased to give to her junior who needed new shoes for campus extracurricular activities. The speaker also expresses regret about her decision-making in the form of ~*noni*, which expresses the speaker's dissatisfaction with the reality that is not as expected, which is followed by the addition of the form ~*dayone*, which is the usual form of *desuyone* and has meaning in Japanese, namely to ask for approval from the speaker's speech partner of what the speaker expresses.

While the speaker employs the more common *kaichatta* form of *katte shimaimashita* in Japanese, the form *~te shimaimashita* can be used to indicate that something terrible was done accidentally because there was no intention or plan to do so. Her regret stems from the fact that he bought a new pair of shoes without first determining whether or not they would fit properly.

Data 9

私、間違ってるかな、万里。やっちゃいけないことをやろうとしているかな。。

Watashi, machigatteru kana, Banri. Yaccha ikenai koto o yarou toshiteirukana

"Am I wrong, Banri. Am I trying to do something I shouldn't do?"

(Golden Time Episode 9, at 10.18)

The speaker's regret in the above expression stems from her decision to make the worst decision despite knowing that there are better options. The speaker named Linda is said to have caught her older brother's fiancée having an affair with another man and chose to expose the bad deed by photographing it with a cell phone. The speaker also expressed regret for considering doing this to her interlocutor, despite knowing that it would be better if she met her brother's fiancée in person and had a good conversation. The expression of regret can be seen in the form of *kana*, which in Japanese means that the speaker wants to confirm something to the interlocutor or that the speaker is concerned about something.

The speaker says "*yaccha ikenai koto o yarou to shite irunda*" to demonstrate that she has contemplated doing something he shouldn't do when there should be another better action she could take.

Regrets Related to Human Relations

Neglecting someone important in our lives can also play a role in the development of regret in us. Neglecting other people is a form of exclusion or rejection of others. This form can result in someone's feelings being generally negative while using the silent treatment, with anger and frustration dominating throughout the silent period, but yet it also allows the people to re-evaluate the situation from the perspective of their opponent, potentially reducing situational and relational differences between the people and the opponent. Though this re-evaluation has its costs in terms of overthinking and ruminating.

For Japanese people, ignoring someone may contradict their life principle, namely *meiwaku*, because this principle is ingrained in them as an attitude of not wanting to be a burden to others or to make the main problem not for the immediate environment, but rather for the burden on relatives/environment in a relationship that is not too close/intimate (Cahyani, 2021). The following are some examples in the anime regarding the regret of neglecting someone, particularly the important ones.

Data 10

あたし、この間のあれは告白されたのはカウントしていないよ。コンパの席のことだもん。なのに、あんな風に逃げられたらさ。。

Atashi, kono aida no are wa kokuhaku sareta no wa kaunto shite inai yo. Konpa no seki no koto damon. Nanoni, anna fuu ni nigeraretara sa …

"I don't count what happened the other day as a confession. It happened at the party. But if he runs away from me like that…"

(Golden Time Episode 7, at 10.25)

The speaker expresses regret for ignoring someone who has expressed his feelings for her. The speaker named Ooka believes that what the person who expresses his love for her says is not serious because she is at a gathering event with other friends and eventually ignores the speaker's feelings. Finally, the speaker feels guilty and regretful because he does not take the speaker's words seriously. The speaker uses the *nano ni* form, which means "although" in this expression of regret, which is similar to the *noni* form, which expresses the speaker's dissatisfaction with the reality that is not as expected.

The narrative style followed the standard form of *desu mono*, which in the usual form is *da mon*. The Japanese word mon, in its different forms, is used to communicate the speaker's discontent or a cause for expressing it. Here, "*konpa no seki koto damon*" might be interpreted as the speaker's justification for the preceding statement: "*…kokuhaku sareta no wa kaunto shite inai yo*" which suggests that she does not consider or assume that she has been given that statement by someone before which caused her to have the regrets.

Data 11

全部逆なんだよ、万里。あたし、時々すごくバカなんだ。バカのあたしを許してくれよ。

Zenbu gyaku nanda yo, Banri. Atashi, tokidoki sugoku baka nanda. Baka no atashi o yurushitekure yo.
"It's all the opposite, Banri. Sometimes I'm really stupid. Forgive me for being stupid"
(Golden Time Episode 8, at 02.10)

Speakers in Data 11 express regret for neglecting other people, as in the preceding expression. According to the anime story, the speaker told her friends that she did not regard the interlocutor as someone special that she likes, but rather as a friend. The interlocutor who seriously likes the speaker is heartbroken, and when they finally face each other, the speaker expresses regret for ignoring the interlocutor's feelings. The expression of regret is expressed by emphasizing the act of overlooking what the speaker did, specifically in the *yo* form, which in Japanese means to emphasize what the speaker wishes to convey.

It is clear from the narration that the narrator has given some thought to the deeds she has come to regret (*zenbu gyaku nanda yo*). In the statement, "it is all the opposite," it is clear that the speaker is demonstrating that she does not intend to ignore the feelings of the interlocutor, but that she is doing so because she is being pressured by her friends.

Data 12
ね、加賀さん。あたしだって辛いんだよ。そうは見えないかもだけど、だってさ。。だって柳ってばさ。。「二度と話しかけるな」と言ってるんだよ
Ne, Kaga san. Atashi datte tsurain dayo. Sou wa mienai kamo dakedo, dattesa.. datte Yana tte sa.. 'Nidoto hanashi kakeruna' to itterun dayo
"Hey, Kaga-san… it's hard for me too. I know it may not seem that way. After all… After all, Yana said.. he told me to never speak to him again"
(Golden Time Episode 8, at 14.10)

The speaker in Data 12 expresses regret to the interlocutor for ignoring the feelings of someone who has expressed his love for the speaker, which causes the speaker to feel hurt and even asks the speaker not to talk to him again. The speaker employs the form *dayo*, which is the simplified form of *desuyo* and has the same meaning as the *yo* form, namely to emphasize what the speaker wishes to convey.

The phrase "*nidoto hanashi kakeruna*" indicates that the interlocutor has requested that the speaker refrains from further communication with her, prompting the speaker to reflect on her actions.

CONCLUSIONS

This study is focusing on the study of the regret speech act used in Japanese anime. According to the findings, the use of the expression of regret in this anime is dominated by the use of the form of regret when someone misses an action or opportunity that they should be able to take because they could not do so in the past. Furthermore, the *noni* form dominates various expressions of regret. It can be seen that Japanese people tend to express regret by providing information about facts that differ from what they expected, causing them to feel regret. When they express regret, they may also blame themselves for their actions.

The author acknowledges that further improvement is necessary for this research. Regarding the course of future study, it is hoped that future research will include additional studies on this expression of regret where sources other than anime can contribute to support the findings in this study. To further clarify the results, it would be helpful to conduct a survey among native Japanese speakers.

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