

VARIETIES OF JAPANESE SLANG (WAKAMONO KOTOBA) IN LOOK BACK MANGA BY TATSUKI FUJIMOTO

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Abstract. This study aims to find out the variety of Japanese youth slang that is often found in manga based on the pattern of word formation. This research is based on the influence of the development of slang varieties whose impact can be seen through the use of these varieties of language in Japanese comics or more commonly known as manga. Nowadays, youth slang, known in Japanese as *wakamono kotoba*, is increasingly used in manga. In addition, Japanese pop culture is considered increasingly popular, including manga and its adaptations, so the use of *wakamono kotoba* not only affects Japanese youth, but also has an impact on language for Japanese pop culture lovers of various ages from all over the world. According to Akihiko Yonekawa (1998), there are several types of word formation processes in *wakamono kotoba*. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative method with literature study technique. Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that there are four types of *wakamono kotoba* formation most commonly found in manga, whose use depends on the situation and atmosphere as well as the user group or community.

Keywords: *wakamono kotoba*, manga, word formation

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures who need and depend on each other. As social creatures, social interaction is necessary in social life through communication. Rogers and Kincaid (in Zhao & Zhan: 2020) describe that communication is a process in which two or more people exchange information and produce an understanding of the information received. Communication requires information content that is easily expressed through media, namely language. Language as a symbol system in the form of arbitrary sounds used by members of society to relate and interact with each other (Bloomfield in Gardiola Ayu: 2013).

The Japanese culture of diversity in speech is influenced by different backgrounds in terms of age, gender, social status, social environment, and so on in the variety of language used. The Japanese language has undergone many changes over time, triggering the desire of a group to create a 'secret' language that only applies and is understood by their group. One of the most notable changes is *wakamono kotoba*, *wakamono* meaning 'young person or teenager' and *kotoba* meaning 'word' which can be translated as slang used by the younger generation. *Wakamono kotoba* has been used 10-30 years ago and has the characteristics of word reversal (*gyakukeisei*), the use of foreign languages (*gairaigo*), composition (*fukugougo*), mixing (*konseigo*), abbreviation or shortening (*karikomi*) and acronym (*toujigo*) of the original word (Julia and Utari: 2023). The use of *wakamono kotoba* in the digital era has also affected the development quite rapidly, this can be seen from informal conversations, social media interactions, and even in *manga*. This phenomenon shows that language can change along with the development of technology and popular culture and the role of young people using language as a medium of expression and group solidarity.

The phenomenon of the development of *wakamono kotoba* allows for a process of changing meaning along with changes in word formation from the original word (Kuwamoto in Julia and Utari: 2023).

There are several previous studies, namely "Analysis of Wakamono Kotoba (Slang Words) as the Interjections in LINE Chat Conversation" by Nadiya Nurhamidah Hidayat and Dewi Kusri (2021). This study is to determine the development of how to use wakamono kotoba, a type of interjection between teenagers who do not know each other in conversations via LINE media. Similar research was conducted by Julia Angelina and Utari Novella (2023), namely "Sound Change In Japanese Wakamono Kotoba: Morphophonemic And Semantic Study". Where this study focuses on understanding the types of sound changes, word formation, and changes in meaning that occur with morphophonemic theory. Both studies discuss and study the methods of formation and development in use, but do not discuss their use in writing that contains information in reading such as in manga.

Therefore, this research focuses on knowing the variety of Japanese youth slang that is often found in manga based on the pattern of change and word formation through Akihiko Yonekawa's theory (1998) through qualitative description with literature study techniques. By conducting this research, it is hoped that it will have an impact not only on Japanese youth, but also on the language of Japanese pop culture lovers of various ages around the world in understanding information conveyed through writing in manga media.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

This research is based on the theories used in previously researched research relevant to the use of slang varieties. A well-known theory in language varieties is defined by William Labov (in Rahmadhani: 2024) through sociolinguistic theory where language varieties are influenced by social factors such as age, social status and gender which are analyzed for their relationship in society to form social identity. This is reinforced by Nugroho's (2021) research, which defines the function of slang as a tool to assert social status as well as a form of resistance to create space for more inclusive and expressive freedom of speech. Both theories explain the interrelationship behind the rampant use of slang in society, especially among young people, which aims to strengthen relationships between individuals as a shared identity.

The development of technology is followed by the influence of the creation and dissemination of slang words through social media. Aminatun & Safitri's research (2023) discussed that the variety of slang in Indonesia focuses on creativity and adaptation to global culture influenced by social media, where this shows closeness to local culture but still has local nuances that show the country's identity. Slang is not only a means of communication, but also a symbol of social status and identity. Jeanette (2021) also discusses the use of slang on social media because it is instant and viral. The dynamic use of slang creates an identity to share pop culture references and language trends that may be difficult for the older generation to understand. Crystal (2021) adds through her research that this virality creates a variety of languages that reflect different social and cultural behaviors that are prevalent in different circles. However, Alexandra (2020) explains that teenagers in the UK use slang because of the background where young people are often under social and cultural pressures related to social and political changes such as issues of race, class, etc.

Through existing research, we see that the use of slang in social media is not just a linguistic phenomenon, but also part of a larger social and cultural dynamic. The use of slang among teenagers-both on social media and in everyday life-can be seen as a mirror of larger social and cultural dynamics. Slang is not only a means of communication, but also a symbol of social identity that reflects social change, resistance to traditional norms, and a way to adapt to technological developments and popular culture. Therefore, slang reflects not only linguistic creativity, but also the process of identity formation and reaction to social and political pressures faced by the younger generation.

Wakamono Kotoba (若者言葉) is composed of two Japanese words, namely wakamono (若者) meaning young people and (言葉) meaning speech or words, so the literal meaning of wakamono kotoba is the language of young people. Matsumoto, et. al (2019) define wakamono

kotoba as slang or terms used by people from junior high school age to around their thirties. It is usually used to enhance communication, entertainment, and solidarity, to convey ambiguous images, or to hide/lighten/clarify something. Maslakha (2022) states that wakamono kotoba is also called informal dialect in the form of either slang or ryuukou-go used by teenagers or certain communities and is temporary, just a variety of language. In contrast to formal Japanese, the language style of young Japanese tends to be characterized by ungrammatical word order, dropping particles, or ending words in an informal way.

According to Akihiko Yonekawa's theory (1998) in Maslakha (2022), there are several processes in the formation of wakamono kotoba, which are as follows:

1.1. Word shortening (省略)

Removing a word or part of a word to form a new word, such as :

- (1) Remove the first part of a word. For example, アルバイト (arubaito) => バイト (baito), which means part-time job).
- (2) Remove the last part of the word. For example, まじめ (majime) => まじ (maji), which means really.
- (3) Remove the middle part of the word. For example, むずかしい (muzukashii) => むずい (muzui) which means difficulty or hardship.
- (4) Remove the endings of the first word and the second word in a compound word. For example, いたずら電話 (itazura denwa) => いた電 (Ita den) which means prank call.
- (5) Remove the last part of the first word in a compound word. For example, ポケットベル (pokettoberu) => ポケットベル (pokeberu) which means an electronic device for messages and phone notifications.
- (6) Remove the last part of the second word in a compound word. For example: ボディコンシヤス (bodikonsyasu) => ボディコン (bodikon), which means body awareness.
- (7) Shorten a sentence or phrase. For example, 茶色い毛 (chairoke) means brown-haired.

1.1.2 Foreign words absorption (借用)

The formation of wakamono kotoba is due to the process of absorbing a word from a foreign language, but the meaning remains unchanged. For example: ミルク from milk

- 1) Change of punctuation (読み替え)
The formation of wakamono kotoba by changing the way it is read. For example, changing the reading of kanji from kunyomi to onyomi and vice versa. For example, 出発 is pronounced shuppatsu when the correct pronunciation is followed, and changes to deppatsu when it becomes *wakamono kotoba*.
- 2) Word reversal (到置)
The formation of wakamono kotoba by reversing the position of the word. Example: 本物 (honmono) is changed to 物本 (monohon), which means original or original object.
- 3) Change of speech (言い替え)
The formation of wakamono kotoba by changing the way of speaking from Japanese to English. Example: 新しい (atarashii) is changed to ニューい (nyuui), which has a new meaning.
- 4) Sound Conversion (音の転化)
The creation of wakamono kotoba by changing the pronunciation or sound of a word. For example, the word ちがう (chigau), which means wrong, is pronounced as ちげー (chigee).
- 5) Composition (混交)
The joining of two or more words to form a new word. Example: 気持ちわるい (kimochi ga warui) is combined to form キモイ (kimoi), which means disgust.
- 6) Initialization (頭文字化)
The process of forming wakamono kotoba by writing the word from the first letter as a representative of a word. Example: オデ (OD) is derived from おならがでる (Onara ga Deru), which means to pass wind.
- 7) Word Blending (名詞の複合)
The formation of wakamono by combining or mixing words from Japanese with words from foreign languages to form new words. When writing mixed words with katakana

characters. Example: イケメン (Ikemen), which means handsome young man. イケメン comes from いけてる (iketeru) and man, which is a combination of Japanese and English.

8) Parody (もじり)

A word-formation process used to express language and entertainment. For example, シングルベル (singuruberu) means to spend Christmas alone.

9) Verbal Derivation (動詞の派生)

Verba derivation is the process of forming a verb by adding the syllable "ru" to the end of a noun. Example: 図書館に行 becomes としよる (toshoru), which means to go to the library.

10) Adjective Variation

Forming words by adding the affixes 「い」 and 「ぽい」 to adjectives. Example 水っぽい (Mizuppoi) means like water Mizuppoi comes from the noun "mizu" : water and becomes an adjective by adding the suffix poi.

11) Nominal Derivation (名詞の派生)

Noun derivations are nouns that are formed by adding chan, san, kun, and other suffixes after the affixation process. Example: ジャズさん (Jazzu-san) means a person who speaks in a loud tone. The word ジャズ is derived from the word jazz, which is a genre of music.

12) Verb Combinations (動詞の複合)

The process of forming wakamono kotoba by adding the suffix する (suru) to a noun. For example, コーヒーする (koohiisuru) means to drink coffee.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative descriptive method. The data obtained in the form of words, images, and the purpose of this method is to present a complete picture of an event or intended to expose and clarify a phenomenon that occurs (Rusli, 2021). The method in this study consists of the stages of data collection, data analysis, and presentation of the results of data analysis. In the stage of data collection, the researcher uses the literature review technique, which is a technique that uses written material as the main data source because it is considered the most suitable for recording data in the data source. The research took data sources in the form of a Japanese comic, commonly called manga, titled *Look Back* by Tatsuki Fujimoto. This comic tells the story of two girls pursuing their dreams from childhood to adulthood, so it is very suitable as a data source that shows the application of *wakamono kotoba* in the lives of young Japanese people. The collected data were analyzed by categorizing the data based on the classification of types of word formation and meaning according to the theory of Akihiko Yonekawa (1998) in the form of descriptive analysis, and then the researcher drew conclusions from the analysis conducted.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Through data collection, the slang in Tatsuki Fujimoto's manga *Look Back* shows the use of *Wakamono Kotoba* in everyday life in each storyline through document analysis. *Wakamono Kotoba* includes the use of terms, abbreviations, and contains elements of informal expressions. The following are the results of the data obtained through the classified research.

Table 1. Data classification of the formation of *wakamono kotoba*

No	Formation Category	Data	Page
1	Word Shortening (省略)	なんすか	3
		キモ	18
		オッサン	27

		ウッセー	109
		やっぱ	111
		ダサイ	116
		ヤバッ	116
2	Foreign Words Absorption (借用)	ファーストキス	2
		ステップアップ	40
3	Sound Conversion (音の転化)	うめー	1
		すげー	3
		すげえ	7
		ウッセー	109
		うるせええ	109
		ちげー	111
4	Composition (混交)	キモ	18
		メンドくさい	131

The research results obtained through Tatsuki Fujimoto's Look Back manga resulted in wakamono kotoba, which were classified into 4 forms based on their formation, namely word shortening, foreign language borrowing, sound conversion, and word composition forms, with a total of 17 wakamono kotoba in the table. From the table, it can be seen that the use of wakamono kotoba tends to be the result of unique modifications from standard language, and in history reflects its practice in everyday life in society. The following is an analysis of each form:

3.1 Word Shortening (省略)

In the data results, word shortening is a form of wakamono kotoba, most commonly found in Tatsuki Fujimoto's Look Back manga. In a variety of slang that has a shortened form, certain words are usually shortened according to how the word is read when pronounced or taken as a syllable (Rahmadhani: 2024). In Indonesian, this form is commonly referred to as abbreviations and acronyms, which is a common phenomenon that will always exist in any language. The wakamono kotoba form of word shortening has goals and challenges, including word forms formed on the basis of speed of speech and efficiency of conveying information in a community. Of course, this form can be understood by peers who are used to communicating in this way. Although there are clear goals that are favored, there are certainly impacts in this word shortening, including being a trigger in the emergence of potential confusion and uncertainty in understanding the information conveyed for outside young people or even young people who have not adapted. The use of this form of wakamono kotoba can be a challenge for communication difficulties as well as the ability to struggle to understand complete and formal language.

1) なんすか

なんすか is a shortened form of なんですか with the middle part of the sentence removed. It means "What's wrong?"

2) キモ

キモ is a shortened form of キモイ derived from the composition of 気持ちが悪い by removing the end of the first and second words and combining them into one. This word has undergone two changes in form. In this data, there is a deletion of the last part of the word. キモ means "disgust" or "disgusting".

3) オッサン

オッサン is a shortening of おじさん that removes the middle part of the word. オッサン means "middle-aged man" or commonly called "om".

4) ウッセー

ウッセー is a shortened form of うるさい, which means loud. In addition to being a type of wakamono kotoba formed by word shortening, ウッセー is also a type of wakamono kotoba formed by sound conversion.

- 5) やっぱ
やっぱ is a shortened form of やっぱり, which means "obviously" or "I knew it." This word leaves out the last part of the word.
- 6) ダサイ
ダサイ is a shortening of 駄作, which means "trash," but in this word the meaning is more like "suck." This word leaves out the last part of the word. ダサイ contains a lexical expression where the meaning does not match the actual meaning. This happens because of the influence of socio-cultural factors of communication needs in communication in society.

3.2. Foreign Words Absorption (借用)

The form of wakamono kotoba in the form of borrowing words from foreign languages is one of the linguistic phenomena that follows the development of times, trends, and viral ease, especially in English as an international language. In Japanese itself, there is wasei-eigo or Japanese-made English, which is an English word, but the meaning and usage have changed according to Japanese socio-culture. In the era of globalization, young people reflect creativity by modifying foreign words with Japanese subculture. The results of the data we obtained include

- 1) ファーストキス
ファーストキス is a borrowed form of the English word first kiss. The Japanese language itself actually has the vocabulary hatsu-kisu, but the impression and meaning is more traditional, intimate, and emotional compared to faasuto-kisu, which is more trendy and lighthearted and often used in pop culture, movies, and by young people.
- 2) ステップアップ
ステップアップ is a borrowed form of the English word step up. It is commonly used in Japanese society because it has the feel of describing career advancement and performance improvement.

3.3. Sound Conversion (音の転化)

Sound conversion is the wakamono kotoba form of changing the pronunciation or writing of words in the form of the final morpheme with simplification for the purpose of easier pronunciation, to produce expressive effects, or to adapt to the nuances of conversation. In social life, sound conversion is often used to create a more relaxed, familiar, or even dramatic feeling, depending on the context of the young people.

- 1) うめー
うめー is a pronunciation change of the word うまい (umai), which means "tasty" or "clever". The use of うめー is more free, expressive and relaxed, emphasizing a very pleasant feeling or experience.
- 2) すげー
すげー is a modification of the pronunciation of the word すごい (sugoi), which means "big". This form of wakamono kotoba is more casual and familiar in situations of awe, surprise, or to express amazement more dramatically.
- 3) すっげえ
すっげえ is another pronunciation variant of すごい and すげー. The meaning and impression that distinguish them in use is that the すっげえ form gives a stronger and more dramatic impression.
- 4) ちげー
ちげー is a pronunciation change from ちがう (chigau), which means "not". It is a form often used by young people that emphasizes a stronger rejection or disagreement in a more casual and familiar way, but sounds harsher and more assertive in response.
- 5) ウッセー
ウッセー is a modification of the pronunciation of the word うるさい (urusai), which means "loud" or "annoying". This somewhat rude and casual form of the word is used to respond to something that is considered annoying or noisy with a more emotional, aggressive, and frustrated context.

6) うるせえ

うるせえ is a variation of うるさい in addition to ウッセー. The use of うるせえ gives more emphasis and a very emotional feel. This emphasis is already at the point where you feel very annoyed or even angry.

3.4. Composition (混交)

Wakamono kotoba often involves word composition, where two or more words are combined to produce a term with a meaning distinct from the original words. In some cases, word composition also includes abbreviation or shortening. This is intended to provide young people with convenience and ease in communication.

1) キモ (Kimo)

キモ is an example of *wakamono kotoba* formed through word composition. The term キモ is derived from the phrase 気持ちが悪い (*kimochi ga warui*), which means "feeling unpleasant." This phrase is condensed into a single word that conveys a stronger and more vulgar sense of disgust or discomfort toward something or someone. Besides being a composition, this form of *wakamono kotoba* also falls into the category of word shortening.

2) メンドくさい (Mendokusai)

メンドくさい originates from the combination of 面倒 (*mendou*), meaning "trouble," and 腐る (*kusaru*), meaning "to rot." The composition of these two words creates a new term that signifies "annoying" or "troublesome." This combination implies a situation that has surpassed the tolerable limit, evoking not only annoyance and inconvenience but also an intense sense of discomfort, dissatisfaction, or even aversion toward something.

Wakamono kotoba allows for the complete alteration of kanji, often based solely on phonetic similarity or the efficiency of pronunciation, which can significantly change the original meaning of the word. This linguistic phenomenon is not always universally accepted (Sakuma in Julia & Utari, 2023). A study of the manga *Look Back* by Tatsuki Fujimoto identified four types of transformations in *wakamono kotoba*. Each transformation serves a distinct purpose and conveys a particular nuance compared to the original word. Some words undergo semantic shifts that can only be understood by exploring their origins and the contextual background of the information conveyed. The transformation of *wakamono kotoba* is closely tied to its role as a reflection of subcultural dynamics within society. This phenomenon will continue to evolve in tandem with technological advancements

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of *wakamono kotoba* data identified in the manga *Look Back* by Tatsuki Fujimoto, this study collected 17 data points categorized into four types of word formation according to Yonekawa's (1998) theory. These categories include word shortening, borrowing from foreign languages, sound conversion, and composition. The data reveal instances where *wakamono kotoba* fits into two formation categories simultaneously, as well as cases where a single word gives rise to two variations. This demonstrates that the formation of *wakamono kotoba* is a continually evolving process influenced by subcultural dynamics within society. Therefore, it is expected that future research will examine *wakamono kotoba* using data sources that reflect the social and cultural dynamics of society across various age groups and backgrounds, as well as explore its formation.

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