English Register and Its Contextual Meaning in COVID-19 Outbreaks Used in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the COVID-19 outbreak has been gradually changing the condition, which caused the rise of some registers in society to describe the conditions that are impacted by the outbreak. As some of those registers already existed before the outbreak, thus, those registers automatically have different meanings adjusted by the condition or the context. This study aimed to analyze the registers during COVID-19, the contextual meaning of those registers, and how those registers are understood and used in society. In response to the problems, this study utilized descriptive qualitative research. In collecting the data, document review and unstructured interviews were applied, and the data obtained were analyzed by using content analysis. The result of this study revealed that; 1) there were fifteen English registers of COVID-19 found and used in Indonesia; 2) those registers have contextual meanings as it adjusted by the existing conditions; and 3) most of people understand those registers well, provided by their perceptions or thoughts that are close to the actual contextual meaning of those registers. Thus, it can be concluded that people comprehend those register clearly so that they can use those register properly

Keywords: contextual meaning, COVID-19 Outbreak, register

1. INTRODUCTION

Register is considered as the use of certain terms in a certain context or topic including the use of register in the topic of recent outbreaks called COVID-19. Those registers are used to describe some conditions that are slowly changed and impacted by the outbreaks, such as some activities people used to do outside must be conducted at home or, in a simple way; people work from home (WFH). In Indonesia, there are also some new registers, one of those register is Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar (PSBB) which describes a condition where people have to do social distancing in a big scale. It means that people are not allowed to go anywhere unless they have any urgent things. It is almost similar to the word 'lockdown', yet the difference is that people are totally not allowed to go anywhere when lockdown is implemented.

Register contains specific communication purposes based on the context and field people talk about and what meaning people want to express. The assumption of registers is that the words or phrases refer to the specific fields or particular linguistic variants used in communication (Biber and Cornad, 2019). Some words or phrases used in specific contexts and field can be the one used in related context and field, so those words or phrases do not exist in another context and field. It can also be used in another context and field, but the meaning will be different. Those words will have multiplemeanings and communicative purposes as they follows the context and field.

About registers and their meanings, those words must be understood based on the contexts or fields that are being talked about. There are some researches discussing registers in the certain fields,

but the discussion of registers of COVID-19 and how the people understand and use the registers in their interactions has not been yet clarified; what registers the people understand and do not understand based on the contexts of use in society. So that's why the discussion of COVID-19 registers becomes significant for this study since it will enhance the knowledge about what registers come up during pandemic and how the contextual meaning of those registers grasped and employed in society.

In the context of COVID-19, there has been some registers which were already used a long time ago before the outbreak happened. According to Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (2020), some registers that were already used before the outbreak are WFH (discovered at 1995), self-isolation (discovered at 1834), social distancing (1957), and so on. Also, according to the result of an interview of McPherson, a senior editor of OED, with BBC around in May 2020, she said that COVID-19 is the only new word added the to dictionary.

Finding the meaning of registers means that the meaning is different from one field to the other fields. Therefore, those words must be connected with the contexts to know the intended meaning socially. Sometimes, people who know the literal meaning of words do not understand what is meant in a certain context. Elgort (2017) stated that putting an effort to find the meaning in context can be beneficial rather than not doing it.

Registers must be understood based on the certain fields. Each field, context, and situation have its own register; and the meaning can be different because it can be used outside the related field, context, and situation. Ahmad et al (2018) indicated that some participants were able to find the meaning of registers based on the context. In addition, this is also stated by Elgort et al (2019), where the meaning of registers can be determined with the role of definition.

From those explanations, it can be seen that registers cannot be separated from everyone's life. Each register has its own communication purpose depending on the field and situation. It means that registers are important and can be helpful in the use of language. For instance, Deng (2019) showed that the use of register, especially when it is used consistently, can help a writer to make the text more coherent, also the use of context of situation (field, tenor, and mode) can help the writer to construct an argument in the writer's text. Moreover, Yang (2019) found that register analysis can be helpful and valuable in translation quality assessment. In addition, Artilah et al. (2017) stated that the use of registers can make the communication more efficient and easier to describe the situation or condition. However, the awareness of using registers in communication does not happen to some people in their use of language. Lee and Chan (2015) showed in their study that Cantonese students were still lacking in using registers appropriately especially related to the formality.

Based on the background and rationale in this article, this study will focus on (1) the registers found during COVID-19 outbreaks, (2) the contextual meanings of the registers, (3) and how the registers are understood in society.

2. METHOD

This study adopted qualitative approach to explore and to understand the register and its contextual meaning used during COVID-19 outbreaks. It is in line with Creswell (2009) and Neuman (2014) that qualitative research is aimed to explore meaning in social problems. Moreover, it was also descriptive research as it aimed to describe how those registers used during the recent outbreaks; as it also explained by Kothari (2004) that descriptive research is aimed to describe something that has already happened or is happening.

Moreover, the data was collected through two techniques that were document review and unstructured interview. Document review was utilized for taking data from online newspaper called Jakarta Post from April 2020 to October 2020; it was used to get an understanding by reviewing the

text (O'Leavy, 2017). The selected editions that were used for this study had been considered as well as the range of times were related to the time this study was conducted and the outbreak itself was on the climax during those times. Then, unstructured interview was used in order to find out the way people understood and used the COVID-19 registers in their daily lives. Regarded to data that were taken from interview, it was taken by interviewing around five people which consist of a university student, a seller, and three housewives; which they were selected because they were represent each social status, mainly middle and low social status. After the data were collected, the data then were analyzed by using content analysis as well as the researcher tried to obtain interpretation through the content of the newspaper and the transcript of the unstructured interview; content analysis tend to focus on verbal characteristics of the text (Merriam, 2009; Drisko and Maschi, 2016; and Kothari, 2004).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Register of COVID-19

After doing several steps of collecting and analyzing data, there were fifteen COVID-19 registers found; especially registers which commonly used in Indonesia. In this part, the COVID-19 registers were obtained from online newspaper Jakarta Post. Those registers are divided into two categories that are social registers and medical registers.

Table 1. List of COVID-19 registers

No	Social Register
1.	Lockdown
2.	Social distancing
3.	Physical distancing
4.	Quarantine
5.	Self-isolated
6.	New normal
7.	Stay at home
8.	WFH (Work from home)
9.	SFH (Study from home)
10.	Partial lockdown
11.	Large-scale social restriction (PSBB)
No	**Medical register**
12.	PCR (*Polymerase Chain Reaction)* test
13.	Rapid test
14.	Rapid antigen test
15.	Coronavirus/COVID-19

3.2 Registers and Its Contextual Meaning

It can be seen from the table 1 that some of those registers already exist and they have been used by the society long time ago. The emergence of coronavirus makes those words have another meaning and they are used to describe the situation during COVID-19 situation. Now, take a look at those registers, they can be classified into social category and medical category. Those registers will be described its use before COVID-19 and after COVID-19.

Lockdown itself actually means a condition where people are restricted to come to or leave an area because of harmful situation. The harmful situation likely caused by an incident such as a threat

of danger (terror, bomb threat, and so on). While, during COVID-19, lockdown means a restriction in which people are not allowed to go outside and all outside activities are stopped in order to prevent the spread of the virus widely. For the context, the word 'lockdown' itself in Indonesia was not explicitly used, even the word was not used yet it was being talked by many people. Noted from an article in *Jakarta Post* newspaper, written by Atika (2020), the government tended to use 'strict restriction' instead of lockdown in order to prevent the worst situation.

Social distancing, according to OED (Oxford English Dictionary), the phrase was used firstly in 1957 as the description of the way people deliberately separate or distance themselves from other people socially. Then, for the period of COVID-19, social distancing referring to a condition where people have to socially distancing themselves from other people in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

Physical distancing refers to a condition where people have to distance themselves from other people physically or keep a safe distance with other people in order to prevent the spread of the virus. Slightly, it is almost the same with the register social distancing, while it is actually difference. Physical distancing is considered appropriate in describing current situation in which people have to maintain a safe distance with other people in order to prevent the more spread of the virus.

Then, there are quarantine and self-isolation. *Quarantine*, according to OED (Oxford English Dictionary) is a borrowing word from Italian "quarantine" which is discovered in the middle of 17th century. For the meaning itself, it seems like there is no change or additional meaning; it refers to a healthy person who may expose or interact with someone who end up impacted, to separate him/herself from other people in order to prevent the spread of the virus. While, the register '*self-isolation*' was discovered in 1834 and was used to describe countries that chose to separate or move away from the rest of world politically and economically (OED, 2020); now, during the recent outbreak, it refers to the impacted person who is isolated from other people in order to prevent the spread of the disease.

Next, *new normal* refers to the situation in which people are slowly able to do activities outside, yet there some changes in it; there are some new habits that people must do, especially during COVID-19 where people must obey to do the health protocols (wearing mask, do physical distancing at least one or two meters, and washing hands). In Indonesia, this word was slowly used as Indonesia progressively to do economical activities as it was noted in a newspaper article from *Jakarta Post* (2020) which described that some regions in Indonesia could apply new normal situation and reopen economical activities if the cases showed significant decrease of infections.

Moreover, '*stay at home*' in prior to COVID-19, this register refers to someone who barely goes out or someone who enjoy doing something at home instead of doing activities outside, specifically mother or father who stays at home to look after the children instead of going out to work (OED); while, during recent outbreak, it means something that people have to do at home, especially if there is no something urgent, people are suggested to stay at home and do all activities at home. All is ruled in order to prevent the more spread of the virus.

Work from Home (WFH), according to OED (2020), this register was found in 1995 and was used to describe people who does their work at their own home. Then, during COVID-19, it describes people who have to do their work at their own home because of the emergence of coronavirus that can endanger people. While *Study from Home* (SFH) is the kind of WFH implemented to all schools in Indonesia in which all students must study at home. The students do these activities every day since COVID-19 are likely have high risk for the students. Thus, learning process is done through online classes by using Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and so on.

Another register is *partial lockdown*. This register describes a situation in which some areas are restricted to society to have access in and out to this area. It is different from lockdown in which it is completely restricted to all people to access the area. Partial lockdown is different from the register PSBB (*large-scale social restriction*) used in Indonesia. The register *PSBB* is relatively new since it appears for the first time in COVID-19 pandemic. The register PSBB (*large-scale social restriction*) used in Indonesia is more closely similar to lockdown, yet the difference is that people are still allowed to work outside and go out when there is something urgent. In simple way, all activities outside home are limited, people are still able to do some activities but not as free as before the outbreak of COVID-19.

Afterwards, *PCR test*. The emergence of this test is to detect if someone is positive coronavirus or not by taking the sample from nose and/or throat. This test takes a long time not only in taking the sample, but also in revealing the result. The procedure itself needs several hours. Then, the result will be revealed two to three days after the test. However, even though it takes a long time, the result of this test is accurate.

Rapid test is not as complex as PCR test and it is faster than PCR test. Yet, the result of the test only shows whether the sample is reactive to virus or not and less accurate than PCR test. This test is done by taking the sample from blood and it only needs ten to fifteen minutes to get the result. Then, after several months, there are kinds of rapid tests, such as *rapid antigen* and *rapid antibody*. Rapid antigen is considered the same as swab test, even some people somehow called it as swab antigen.

Last is *coronavirus/COVID-19*. As it already known, coronavirus is a new discovered virus which causes the emergence of a new disease named coronavirus disease (COVID-19). This virus firstly discovered in China specifically in Wuhan, and then this virus slowly spread to other countries including Indonesia.

3.3 Registers and Its Contextual Meaning Based on People's Understanding

Regarding to people's understanding, there are various perspective towards COVID-19 registers. Lockdown was considered as complete restriction to daily activities. People are totally not allowed to go and have activities outside, and there is also no access for people to go or come to the area. Other than that, the participant (Mrs. W) also thought that lock-down sounds like being in jail as well as she thought that lockdown is totally restricted and people must stay at home in order to prevent the more spread of virus.

> *(Transcript 1)*
> *D: "Then, what about lockdown? Does it also sound like people to be jailed because they are not allowed to go?"*
> *W: "Yes, it does. They are totally not allowed to go anywhere, all the activities are stopped, and there is no access to go from and come to the place."*

Based on the transcript 1, Mrs. W conveyed her thought about lockdown in which she considered that people are totally now allowed to go and have activities outside, and there is also no access for people to go or come to the area. Other than that, she also thought that lock-down sounds like being in jail as well as she thought that lockdown is totally strict and people must stay at home in order to prevent the more spread of virus. Moreover, compared to the actual contextual meaning of lockdown that is a restriction for people to go and have activities outside in order to slow down the spread of the virus, it can be recognized that this register is well understood based on the way Mrs. W perceived

the word *lockdown*. Although she had another perspective that lockdown sounds like being in jail, yet she still had the same perspective of the contextual meaning of *lockdown* during pandemic.

Social distancing was considered differently. There were two participants (Miss R and Miss K); Miss R thought that social distancing is a limitation of interaction with other people, interaction that she referred is communication, in which communication is a part of social interaction (transcript[2]); while Miss K perceived it as a restriction to make a crowd in which it is more related to physical distancing (transcript[3]).

> *(Transcript 2)*
> *D: "Oh, I see. Then, hmm, I want to know about something. What do you think about physical distancing and social distancing?*
> *R: "Hmm… physical distancing is maintaining distance between each other, and social distancing is… hmm… limiting our interaction with other people."*
>
> *(Transcript 3)*
> *D: "Hmm, I want to ask something. What do you know about physical distancing? Also, is it different with social distancing?"*
> *K: "Hmm, physical distancing is… we have to maintenance the distance with other people; then, social distancing is… like we do not allow to make a crowd, something like that."*

It can be seen in transcript 3 that Miss K had different perception with Miss R (in transcript 2) about 'social distancing'. While social distancing was considered as limiting social interaction by Miss R, then it was considered as a restriction to make a crowd by Miss K. Take a look at the contextual meaning of social distancing, the way Miss K perceived social distancing is more related to the register physical distancing. Making a crowd is associated with many people clustering in a place, it automatically makes people standing closely to each other. Moreover, based on the perspective from Miss K, it can be said that she was not really understand social distancing well.

Mostly, registers are usually understood only by certain group of people since every groups have its own language in order to make the communication more efficient; just as how it has been described and explained by other researchers before. However, in this case, the registers that have been mentioned and described above are used not only by certain group of people, but also all society; since the virus which causes a new outbreak still exists and the outbreak is still going on until undecided time. Also, as those registers are often mentioned, written, read, and heard by the people, and some are already familiar in society, perhaps people may gradually understand the use of those registers related to the context. The constantly use of those registers should have been made people coherent with the context, as it had been said by Deng (2019) that the constant use of registers makes the text is more coherent; then, not only text, but the conversation will be coherent too.

Based on the Miss R's understanding in transcript 2, social distancing was considered as a limitation of interaction with other people. Interaction that she referred is communication, in which communication is a part of social interaction. Subsequently, look at the contextual meaning of social distancing during the outbreak that has been written in the first paragraph which is a limitation of social interaction such as limiting communication with other people, and compared it with the answer from Miss R; it can be seen that she had the same perception with the contextual meaning of the register. It means that Miss R grasped the register social distancing well.

The following data described in transcript 4 and transcript 5 are about social distancing and physical distancing. People were consciously familiar with those registers that are synonymous with Indonesian term 'jaga jarak' (distancing), referring to social or physical distancing. For instance, if a person does not like someone, the person will automatically keep distancing socially and physically, such as limiting the interaction with someone and try keep away from that person. While, during the outbreak, those registers are finally used specifically and people understood it just like the actual contextual meaning during the outbreak. It means that people were also aware of the context (situation).

(Transcript 4)
D: "Oh, I see. Then, hmm, I want to know about something. What do you think about physical distancing and social distancing?
R: "Hmm… physical distancing is maintaining distance between each other, and social distancing is… hmm… limiting our interaction with other people."

(Transcript 5)
D: "Hmm, I want to ask something. What do you know about physical distancing? Also, is it different with social distancing?"
K: "Hmm, physical distancing is… we have to maintenance the distance with other people; then, social distancing is… like we do not allow to make a crowd, something like that."

Regarding to perception of physical distancing; according to those extracts, both Miss R and Miss K have the same interpretation of physical distancing. They perceived physical distancing as maintenance distance physically with other people. Remembering that physical distancing means that people have to physically keep safe distance with other people in order to prevent the more spread of the virus. Then, looking back at the perceptions from Miss R and Miss K in those extracts, it can be recognized that the register physical distancing is well understood. It also means that there is no change in the meaning since both of them have the same thought with the contextual meaning of the register.

In transcript 6, which talks about quarantine and self-isolation, those registers are only considered that self-isolation is stricter than quarantine; while, quarantine sounds like stricter since the person who in quarantine have to monitor his/her condition and check if the person have some symptoms for fourteen days, then the person may do a test to know if the person positive COVID-19 or not.

(Transcript 6)
D: "Is self-isolation and quarantine different? I somewhat still confuse about it."
W: "I think it is almost same, but I am not really sure. I think self-isolation is stricter than quarantine, and the person must be alone."
D: "Is it like to be jailed? Something like that?"
W: "Yes, it is."

Based on the transcript 6, there is no more explanation from the perspective conveyed by Mrs. W that self-isolation is stricter than quarantine. However, instead of giving more explanation about that, she had another perception that is self-isolation also sounds like being in jail as the person must be alone during isolation; same like she perceived about lockdown. Recalling the contextual meaning of quarantine and self-isolation; quarantine is separating health people—who had interaction with the

suspect or might get exposed—from other people, then isolation is separating the infected person from other people. It can be considered that during isolation, the person is not allowed to move since the person is infected by the virus. Then, about quarantine and self-isolation, Mrs. W considered that self-isolation is stricter than quarantine. She also had another perception, that is, self-isolation also sounds like being in jail as the person must be alone during isolation. Similarly, she perceived it like lockdown.

In transcript 7 to transcript 9, the extract data describe how the people realize with the condition during the pandemic era. The register 'new normal' becomes a new term introduced by the government after the situation of COVID-19 can be controlled. Although the register 'new normal' sounds relatively new, the people are familiar with this register because the term is used and understood as the condition happening at the moment in which during the new normal, people are able to do activities again, yet the health protocols must be obeyed.

> *(Transcript 7)*
> *D: "Yes. Even though we are in new normal era, we are still not able to do anything like we used to. What do you think?"*
> *S: "I agree. We can do some activities but it feels different since corona, we have to do health protocols."*
>
> *(Transcript 8)*
> *D: "Then, what do you think about new normal? Since we are in new normal era, I want to know about it from others perceptions."*
> *R: "We can do activities outside but we have to obey the health protocols."*
>
> *(Transcript 9)*
> *D: "Alright. Oh yeah, I said new normal before, what do you think about new normal?"*
> *W: "We can do the activities outside, but there are some changes when we do it. Also, we must obey to health protocol."*

As it has written in transcript 7, 8, and 9; those people (Miss S, Miss R, and Mrs. W) had the same perceptions about new normal. They perceived that new normal is a condition in which people can do activities outside again, yet since the pandemic is not over yet, people must obey to the health protocols in order to prevent the more spread of the virus. Furthermore, recalling the meaning of new normal conveyed by the country's official that is people were allowed to have activities outsides yet they must keep practicing the health protocols; it can be realized that the meaning of new normal remain the same in society as Miss S, Miss R, and Mrs. W owned the same perceptions with the meaning from the official. It also means that they understood the register new normal well.

Then in transcript 10 and transcript 11, even though the registers 'stay at home' and 'large-scale social restriction (PSBB)' are kinds of having an overlapped meaning, yet people still understand the what does it mean about those registers; that is to limit interaction with other people and stay at home as much as possible, and only go out when there is something urgent.

> *(Transcript 10)*
> *D: "Then, during the pandemic, we are appealed to stay at home, right? What do you think of stay at home?"*
> *N: "Hmm… we do not go anywhere…?"*

D: "Oh, but what if we something urgent? Are we still able to go?"
N: "Yes, it can be like that."
D: "Oh, so it is almost the same when we are in PSBB, right?"
N: "Yes, it is."

In transcript 10, it can be seen that Mrs. N considered the register stay at home is almost same with large-scale social restriction (PSBB). She stated that stay at home is a condition in which people do not go anywhere unless people have something urgent. So far, the register stay at home is indeed used to warn people to not go anywhere, especially if there is no urgent thing; and engage people to take care of themselves, their family, and all people around them from the virus. Based on the explanation before, it can be realized that Mrs. N understood this register well as it written in the extract above. Moreover, *stay at home* was understood well and considered the same as the actual contextual meaning. A participant (Mrs. N) perceived *stay at home* as a condition in which people do not go anywhere unless people have something urgent; she also considered the register *stay at home* is almost the same as large-scale social restriction (PSBB).

In transcript 11, Mrs. N seemed also understand large-scale social restriction (PSBB) well. It can be seen in transcript 11, the researcher tried to ask about PSBB by comparing it with lockdown; then, she stated that during PSBB, people are still allowed to go outside, while during lockdown, people are not allowed to go outside. Take a look back to her perspective about stay at home, she conveyed her thought about PSBB same with her thought about stay at home. During PSBB, people are indeed appealed to stay at home and limiting their interaction with other people as much as possible if people have to go out. Thus, it can be recognized that her perception is same with the contextual meaning of PSBB; it also means that PSBB is understood well.

(Transcript 11)
D: "What is the difference between PSBB and lockdown?"
N: "Hmm… the difference is… when we are in PSBB, we are still able to go outside; but when we are in lockdown we are not allowed to go outside."
D: "Oh, so do you mean that we are totally not allowed to go outside when lockdown, is it right?"
N: "Yes, it is."

Next, transcript 12 and transcript 13 discuss PCR test and rapid test in which those registers were understood like the actual meaning during the outbreak. From the transcripts, Mrs. W shared her thought about PCR test. She said that PCR test is a test which is done by taking the sample from nasal cavity (nose). Then, to get the result, people have to wait several days and this test is more accurate than rapid test since the result is positive or negative. At the same time Mrs. W also argues that rapid test is simpler than PCR test since it is done only by taking the sample from blood yet this test is less accurate than PCR test because the result is only reactive or non-reactive. See the following extract.

(Transcript 12)
W: "So far I know that PCR test is done by taking a sample from nasal cavity, it needs more times to get the result, and the result is positive or negative; but it is more accurate and expensive than rapid test. Then, rapid test is done by taking a sample from our blood, it is simpler than the PCR test, and the result is reactive or not."

(Transcript 13)

W: "So far I know that PCR test is done by taking a sample from nasal cavity, it needs more times to get the result, and the result is positive or negative; but it is more accurate and expensive than rapid test. Then, rapid test is done by taking a sample from our blood, it is simpler than the PCR test, and the result is reactive or not."

Based on the transcript above, seemed like Mrs. W understood the register well. She conveyed that PCR test is a test which is done by taking the sample from nasal cavity (nose); then, to get the result, people have to wait several days; and this test is more accurate than rapid test since the result is positive or negative. By looking at transcript 12, it can be said that there was no change in the meaning since it was understood like it should be.

The lack of awareness or understanding of those registers is reminding to the study conducted by Lee and Chan (2015) which stated that the lack of awareness could arises a difficulty to use the language in real situations effectively.

However, even though there are a few data show the lack of understanding, yet most of them understand those register well even though is not really detail. It can be said also, that most of those registers were understood well. It happens because they share the same experience, everyone experiences this kind of situation. As Holmes (2013) considered register as the use of language in which it is developed among society and certain groups who share the same experience, knowledge, job, situation, and skills in order to make the communication more effective and appropriate. During this kind of situation, there are some new habits that people have to do, and some activities that cannot be done like it used to be; thus, it makes the language and its meaning develop regarding to the experience and situation that people share together.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion presented above, this research takes the conclusion that English registers during COVID-19 have been used by people in Indonesia based on their understanding and context of use in communication. There are fifteen COVID-19 English registers found in the online newspaper Jakarta Post that they are now familiar to all people in Indonesia. From those fifteen registers, there are four registers that are relatively new or just discovered when the virus began to spread in Indonesia and those registers are large-scale social restriction (PSBB), rapid test, rapid antigen test, and coronavirus/COVID-19. In addition, the use of registers in a certain condition can be understood differently because the people have their own perceptions based on the contexts. In other words, the meaning of the registers can change based on the context of use in society. In general, most of people literally understood those registers and use them in their lives and in their communication. They share the same experience, hear and read those registers everywhere and every time.

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