**DEPARTMENT OF
LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES**

ALTERED POTENTIAL FORM
IN WRITTEN JAPANESE

A quantitative corpus analysis of *ranuki-kotoba*

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Abstract

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Purpose: This is a study on the frequency of *ranuki-kotoba* in written Japanese. It is apparent that *Ranuki-kotoba* is gaining popularity as there have been multiple surveys and opinion polls on the topic. There has however not been many quantitative analyses of pre-existing data to examine the current use of *ranuki-kotoba*. Therefore this paper aims to carry out a large scale analysis of the current state of *ranuki-kotoba* in written Japanese throughout various media categories.

Theory: It is believed that *ranuki-kotoba* are more frequent among verbs with stems consisting of only one or two moras, and less frequent among verbs with three or more moras. Previous studies have shown that this appears to be true, but the amount of study cases have not proven to be large enough to do a definitive claim on its feasibility.

Method: Through the use of the SHONAGON version of the BCCWJ (Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese), an analysis of five *ranuki-kotoba* and their standard form counterpart has been carried out to get a broad view of words with different lengths. The corpus covers 11 media categories and consists of approximately 105 million words used in various texts ranging from the year 1976 to 2008.

Result: *Ranuki-kotoba* still appears to be rare outside colloquial situations and in situations where it's frequently used, the standard *–rare* form is still used a lot. It was however noted that style seemed to have little to no impact on the frequency of *ranuki-kotoba* as style appear to be determined more according to the media category it exists in.

Table of content

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This thesis is about so-called *ranuki-kotoba* (lit. word with *ra* dropped) in Japanese. It is a variation of the grammatical function to express potentiality in certain Japanese verbs. As a rule, potentiality is expressed by conjugating the verb to passive voice by adding *–(r)are* to the stem of a verb. However *ranuki-kotoba* is formed by dropping the *ra* from the *–(r)are* suffix used to create this passive voice conjugation, leaving only the suffix *-re*. *Ranuki-kotoba* is restricted to verbs whose stem ends with a vowel (vowel verbs), such as *tabe-ru* (to eat) and *oki-ru* (to get up). Although the stem of the irregular verb ku-ru (to come) changes in passive voice, it too can be subject to *ranuki-kotoba*. The following examples compare the standard *–rare* form to *ranuki-kotoba*:

(1) *tabe**rare**ru* can eat (standard) → *tabe**re**ru* can eat (ranuki-kotoba)

(2) *oki**rare**ru* can get up (standard) → *oki**re**ru* can get up (ranuki-kotoba)

(3) *ko**rare**ru* can come (standard) → *ko**re**ru* can come (ranuki-kotoba)

The conjugation for verbs with stems that end with a consonant (consonant verbs), like *kak-u* (to write) and *yom-u* (to read) generally never take the *–rare* form to express potentiality. This is done by adding the suffix *–e* to the stem, rather than *–rare*. This will be explained in more detail in section 2.1.

Kinsui (2003) describes *ranuki-kotoba* as an important ongoing grammatical change in Japanese. The study of language change usually depends on past historical documentation and can be difficult to grasp sometimes, but since *ranuki-kotoba* is an ongoing grammatical change, it is possible to study it from various perspectives. The form is often considered substandard in Japanese (Banno et al., 2011: 30), but it is however increasing in popularity, especially among younger people, and could potentially replace the standard *–rare* form in the future.

1.2 Problem, Aim and Research Questions

Even though there has been several studies on the topic of the *ranuki-kotoba*, most studies have been done through surveys, looking at the attitude and awareness of the usage of *ranuki-kotoba* (Shioda & Takishima, 2016). There has not been an attempt to do a large scale quantitative analysis of the current usage in written Japanese throughout various forms of media. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine when *ranuki-kotoba* is used in various written media and how frequent *ranuki-kotoba* is in an environment of written Japanese. The following questions will try being focus of this study:

1. Does the frequency of *ranuki-kotoba* vary comparing the various media categories and genres in the SHONAGON corpus?
2. How frequent is *ranuki-kotoba* when comparing styles (direct vs. polite; spoken vs. written)?
3. Does the result of this study confirm any findings made in previous studies?

2. *Ranuki-kotoba*

2.1 History

The Japanese language is an agglutinative language, which means that fixed parts are added to word stems to give them different grammatical functions. This is very prominent in the Japanese verbs who have a great amount of conjugations depending on their grammatical function. Conjugating Japanese verbs is done by keeping the morphological stem of the verb and adding suffixes to the stem. The stem is the initial part of the verb that does no change when it's conjugated. In Japanese there are two major verb groups named after the type of letter at the end of the verb stem: vowel verbs (or: one-grade verbs) which have stems that end with a vowel, like *mi-ru* (to see) whose stem ends with an *i*, and *tabe-ru* (to eat) whose stem ends with an *e*. Accordingly, consonant verbs (or: five-grade verbs) have stems that end with a consonant, such as *kak-u* (to write) whose stem ends with a *k*, and *yom-u* (to read) whose stem ends with an *m*. There are also two verbs that fall under the minor group of irregular verbs. These are *kuru* "to come" (*ka*-irregular) and *suru* "to do" (*sa*-irregular).

The potential form of Japanese verbs originates from the suffix for creating passive voice. The suffixes for voice in Japanese that we use today can be traced back to the Heian period (794-1192) in the form of *–raru* and *–sasu*. They were also used in the form that is used in modern Japanese today, respectively in the form *–(r)are* and *–(s)ase*, (Shibatani 1990, Frellesvig 2010: 237). Originally they had similar use, but with time their usage became more distinct and only *–(r)are* came to refer to passive, and *–(s)ase* came to express causative. When creating passive, consonant verbs drops the initial *'r'* due to the Japanese language not allowing two consonants to stand together. Therefore only using *–are* when forming passive with consonant verbs. Accordingly, *tabe-ru* (to eat) becomes *tabe-rare-ru* (to be eaten) in passive, and *nom-u* (to drink) becomes *nom-are-ru* (to be drunk) The *ka*-irregular and *sa*-irregular becomes *korareru*[1] and *sareru* (to be done) respectively.

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[1] The passive meaning of *korareru* does not have a literal translation in English, and is mainly used in compound verbs such as *mottekorareru* ([something] is being brought) and *tsuretekorareru* ([someone]] is being brought).

The passive suffix *–(r)are* is also used to express potentiality, spontaneity and for honorific expression. Thus using the passive suffix, one word can have four different meanings. The following examples are made by the author of this paper.

(4) 電気がつけられた。

   The light was turned on.

   (Passive)

(5) 私はリンゴを食べられない。

   I cannot eat apples.

   (Potential)

(6) 先生は東京へ行かれます。

   The teacher is going to Tokyo.

   (Honorific)

(7) ここに来る度に、子供の頃が思い出される。

   Every time I come here, I remember my childhood.

   (Spontaneous)

 Even if *–(r)are* can be used to express all these meanings, an alternative form can be used to separate the meaning to only express potentiality. Consonant verbs customarily use the *–e* suffix to express potentiality instead of *–(r)are*. Though the potential meaning of *–(r)are* does occur in certain dialects such as in Osaka and Kyoto in words like *kakarehen*[2] (cannot write), the *–e* form has been used since the late Muromachi period (1333-1573) and is the preferred way of expressing potentiality with consonant verbs (Frellesvig 2010: 338). Following are two examples with the same meaning where only the form for creating potential form are different:

(8) 先生は酒が飲まれない。

   The teacher cannot drink alcohol. (*-(r)are* form)

(9) 先生は酒が飲めない。

   The teacher cannot drink alcohol. (*-e* form)

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[2]here *-hen* is a way to express negation, common in the Kansai region (southern-central Japan), similar to *–nai*.

Although (8) and (9) has the same meaning grammatically, (8) would generally be understood as an honorific expression.

Vowel verbs on the other hand, use an altered form of *–(r)are* by dropping the *ra*, leaving just *–re*. This is where the word *ranuki-kotoba* comes from, as the *ra* has been omitted from *–(r)are*, creating a "word with *ra* dropped". In other words, *ranuki-kotoba* is a term used to describe a vowel verb expressing potentiality with only *–re* rather than the full *–(r)are* form. Following are two examples with identical meaning:

(10) 昨日、寝られなかった。

　　Yesterday I was unable to sleep. (-(r)are form)

(11) 昨日、寝れなかった。

　　Yesterday I was unable to sleep. (ranuki-kotoba; -re form*)*

Example (10) uses the standard *–rare* form, while (11) uses the *–re* form i.e. *ranuki-kotoba*. Both the *–re* form (for vowel verbs) and the *–e* form (for consonant verbs) is restricted to describing potentiality, and does not take the meaning of any other passive forms. Whereas the *–e* form is an accepted grammatical structure used since the Muromachi period, *ranuki-kotoba* is used to a much less extent and would not come into existence until much later. *Ranuki-kotoba* started appearing in Tokyo as late as the end of the Taishō era (1912-1926) in words such as *koreru* (can come) and *nerenu* (cannot sleep). They then gained more popular usage amongst young people through the usage of words such as *mireru* (can see) and *tabereru* (can eat). However, as it was seen as a dialectal variation from regions outside of Tokyo, the spread was relatively slow. It spread more rapidly in regions west of Tokyo such as Chūgoku, Shikoku and Chūbu among others (Kinsui 2003).

2.2 Languages and Styles

Noda (2005) states that when analysing Japanese language styles there are three points of interest: Direct and polite style, spoken and written language, and hard and soft expressions. These differences in style is considered to be directly relevant to the occurrence of *ranuki-kotoba* as it is supposed to be more casual and also generally part of spoken language. Noda (ibid.) separates polite and direct styles through the utterance of final copula. Direct style is

defined by the final copulas *da* and *dearu*. This style is frequently used for colloquial conversations or when writing essays, novels, newspaper articles and academic articles. The two copula *da* and *dearu* can be further divided into subgroups where *da* is a plain form, not giving any sense of politeness or formality, and *dearu* is considered more formal and is rarely used in casual situations. Following the expectations of the occurrence of *ranuki-kotoba,* it should therefore not appear in sentences where *dearu* is used, as it contradicts the statement that it is only used in colloquial speech and not formal situation. Polite style is defined by ending sentences with *desu* or *masu*. This is used to express politeness in conversations or when speaking to large number of people. Following are a few examples of the various styles.

(12) 日本の首都は東京だ。(direct, plain)

    Tokyo is the capital of Japan

(13) 日本の首都は東京である。(direct, formal)

    Tokyo is the capital of Japan

(14) 日本の首都は東京です。(polite)

    Tokyo is the capital of Japan

All three sentences translate into 'Tokyo is the capital of Japan', but the various styles give different impressions.

The next group is spoken and written language. Noda (2005) gives the following examples where (15) is spoken language and (16) is written language;

(15) 壊れてるんじゃなかったよ、あれ。

    That wasn't broken

(16) あれは壊れているのではなかった。

    That wasn't broken

They can both be translated into 'That wasn't broken', but in (15) *teiru* has become *teru*, and *dewa* has been contracted to *ja*. The usage of the final particle *yo* is also present in (15). The distinction between these two can often be generalised by stating that spoken language is more casual, while written language is more formal. This distinction is however not always applicable, as there are numerous ways of expressing formality in spoken language as well

through hard and soft expressions. Noda (ibid.) gives the following examples where (17) is spoken but with hard expressions, and (18) is spoken with soft expressions:

(17) やはり謝礼は必要だと存じます。

    I believe a reward is required after all.

(18) やっぱりお金とかあげないといけないんじゃないでしょうか。

    I guess I've got to give you money or something after all

Even though the choice of words are different, both sentences convey a similar meaning. However (17) uses words such as *sharei* (reward) and *zonjiru* (I believe), that are words of Chinese origin, which give the sentence a sense of hardness. Example (18) on the other hand uses words only appearing in spoken language, such as *toka*, making it softer.

In accordance with these definitions of language styles, comparative lists can often be found which allow for easy referencing and assignment of words to a particular style. For this paper a list by Ikeda (2014) will be used to distinguish the language style of the sentences appearing in this analysis.

2.3 Previous studies

The most significant previous study on *ranuki-kotoba* is found in Kinsui's (2003) article. He suggests that *ranuki-kotoba* appears much more frequently in verbs with stems consisting of only one or two mora, such as *mi-ru* (to see) and *tabe-ru* (to eat). Verbs with stems consisting of three or more mora, such as *shirabe-ru* (to inquire) and *kangae-ru* (to think), rarely take on the *–re* form. Kinsui (ibid.) also points out that *ranuki-kotoba* appear on a word to word basis, rather than being a grammatical construction used consciously. In cases where verbs has the same number of mora, a clear increase in *ranuki-kotoba* could be seen in more common words that would be used more often in one's younger years. Words learned after the person has a firm concept of grammatical functions of affixes were less likely to be *ranuki-kotoba*.

In Sole's (2013) study, a survey was conducted to analyse Japanese speakers' use of *ranuki-kotoba* based on situation and the speaker's conscious awareness of it. She found that certain verbs, such as *shinjiru* (to believe) seem to be very unacceptable as *ranuki-kotoba*, regardless of context or level of formality. This would affirm Kinsui's (2003) theory that *ranuki-kotoba*

indeed appear on a word to word basis. Sole (2013) also noted that the quantity of her survey was very low, suggesting that an analysis of bigger scale might show a clearer progress. This paper aims to extend on that and do a large scale analysis to increase instances.

3. Method

3.1 Material

This study is a quantitative analysis of *ranuki-kotoba* done with the use of the BCCWJ (Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese). The free access version of the BCCWJ, SHONAGON, currently contains a total of 172,675 articles throughout 11 different media categories, giving a database of approximately 105 million words used in various texts ranging from the year 1976 to 2008. The media categories listed as main categories are "Books/Publications (fiction and non-fiction)", "Magazines", "Newspapers", "Government Reports", "Textbooks", "Information Bulletins", "Yahoo! Chiebukuro (the Japanese version of "Yahoo! Answers"; a community-driven Q&A forum)", "Yahoo! Blogs", "Poetry", "Law Texts" and "National Diet Records". Using the SHONAGON corpus will therefore give a broad view of the usage of *ranuki-kotoba* in contemporary written Japanese.

3.2 Procedure

To compare with the previous studies done by Kinsui (2003) and Sole (2013), five different verbs mentioned in their studies: *kuru* (to come), *miru* (to see), *taberu* (to eat), *shinjiru* (to believe) and *kangaeru* (to think), have been chosen to be that basis of this study. They are all commonly used verbs with verb stems that range from one (*ku-ru, mi-ru*) to four (*kangae-ru*) to analyse through the SHONAGON corpus. The occurrences of both standard *–rare* form and *ranuki-kotoba* will be subject to analysis, making a total of ten entries. To avoid misrepresentation only words including the *kanji* in the verb stem will be part of this analysis. Words can sometimes be used without the usage of kanji, but since the SHONAGON version of the BCCWJ does not specify the parts of speech, this may lead to unwanted words in the data. To further limit possible misrepresentation, only words in negated form (with the suffix *-nai*) will be analysed. Due to the lack of word separation in Japanese sentences, the semantic meaning of a sentence can be ambiguous if only the stem and passive suffix were to be used in the search. The potential form is however very likely to appear in negated form as it is believed to have derived from the negation of spontaneous passive (Narrog 2012: 141). The ten words used for this analysis will therefore be: *korarenai* (cannot come, standard form),

korenai (cannot come, *ranuki-kotoba*), *mirarenai* (cannot see, standard form), *mirenai* (cannot see, *ranuki-kotoba*), *taberarenai* (cannot eat, standard form), *taberenai* (cannot eat, *ranuki-kotoba*), *shinjirarenai* (cannot believe, standard form), *shinjirenai* (cannot believe, *ranuki-kotoba*), *kangaerarenai* (cannot think, standard form) and *kangaerenai* (cannot think, *ranuki-kotoba*).

4. Analysis, results, and discussion

4.1 Overall results

The result of analysis for the ten test words chosen in each media category are presented in Table 1 below.

	korarenai	korenai	mirarenai	mirenai	taberarenai	taberenai	shinjirarenai	shinjirenai	kangaerarenai	kangaerenai
Books/Publications	51	22	675	18	216	4	1186	0	1119	0
Magazines	1	0	45	2	21	0	49	0	43	0
Newspapers	0	0	13	0	3	0	5	0	9	0
Government Reports	0	0	42	0	0	0	0	0	17	0
Textbooks	1	0	10	0	1	0	2	0	1	0
Information Bulletins	26	1	16	0	4	0	0	0	4	0
Yahoo! Chiebukuro	3	14	83	162	66	26	100	0	138	2
Yahoo! Blogs	10	23	97	93	76	42	104	0	77	0
Poetry	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	0
Law Texts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Diet Records	5	0	24	4	4	0	9	0	100	0
Total	97	60	1005	280	391	72	1457	0	1510	2

Table 1 – Number of times a word appears in a text.

Looking at the overall usage of the *–re* form, it is shown that the *–rare* form is used notably more than the *–re* form. The *–rare* form appears 4460 times, while the *–re* form only appears 414 times. In other words, the *–rare* form appears over ten times more than the *–re* form. This could be due to the ambiguity that follows the *–rare* form to express passive, spontaneous, and honorific meaning as well. Below are some examples of texts for comparison:

(19) 鳥に食べられないかと少し心配なのですが … (Yahoo! Chiebukuro)

　I'm a bit worried that it might get eaten by a bird …

(20) 他人に見られないようにする (Book/Publication)

　Try to not be seen by other people

(21) 夕食が食べられないこともしばしばありました。 (Book/Publication)

　There were many times where I couldn't even eat supper.

(22) インターネットでしか見られないスポーツの試合 (Magazine)

A match that you can't view other than on the internet.

In both case (19) and (20), the –*rare* form is used to express passive. In (21) and (22), even though the same conjugation of the word is used, the –*rare* form here expresses potentiality.

It can also be seen that there are no occurrences of *shinjirenai* in any media category. As Sole (2013) noted, *shinjiru* seems to be a verb that appears very unacceptable as *ranuki-kotoba*. Furthermore, *kangaerenai* only appeared twice in this analysis. This agrees with Kinsui's (2003) thesis that verbs with longer stems are much less used with *ranuki-kotoba*, if at all.

4.2 Comparing media categories

When comparing the number of occurrences of *ranuki-kotoba* in the different media categories in table 1, it can clearly be seen that the majority of occurrences exist in three categories: Books/Publications, Yahoo! Chiebukuro and Yahoo! Blogs. Approximately 90% of the words used for this analysis appear in these three categories. One reason for this could be that colloquial Japanese is much more frequent in these three media categories, compared to the other ones.

As *ranuki-kotoba* is mainly used in spoken language, cases outside written dialogue are as expected rare. Apart from Books/Publications, Yahoo! Chiebukuro and Yahoo! Blogs, where monologues and dialogues are common, only 8 other instances were noted to have used *ranuki-kotoba* based of the words chosen for this analysis. Comparing that to the three previously mentioned categories, *ranuki-kotoba* was used 406 times, which shows that it is used much more in colloquial texts or in texts where colloquial dialogues occur. This shows however that there are instances outside of colloquial usage where *ranuki-kotoba* does appears, if yet few.

According to Kinsui (2003), the usage of *ranuki-kotoba* is said to be increasing in popularity. However there are only four cases where it is used more times than that of the –*rare* form when comparing within the same media category. Three instances appear in the categories Yahoo! Chiebukuro and Yahoo! Blogs through the words *korenai* and *mirenai*. One also appears in Poetry, but due to low appearance of both the –*rare* form and *ranuki-kotoba*, it is difficult to do a comparison.

As both *korenai* and *mirenai* are the two shortest words in the list, yet has the most occurrences, this further strengthens Kinsui's thesis regarding stem length affecting the occurrence of *ranuki-kotoba*. In Sole's (2013) survey on *ranuki-kotoba*, she notes that the word *mienai* (cannot be seen/is not in sight) was preferred by the respondents rather than *mirenai* which may have contributed to the low outcome in this analysis as well. Even though *mieru* refers to something being in view of the speaker, some use this form as "able to see" (Martin 1975). When looking up *mienai* through SHONAGON, it appeared approximately 15 times more than *mirenai*.

4.3 Analysing styles by genre

Throughout the three media categories with highest word occurrences, a further look at genres showed a very even usage of *ranuki-kotoba*. There was no indication that a particular genre would favor *ranuki-kotoba* compared to others. There was however a noticeable difference between styles showing level of politeness. The following subsections will cover the various styles in each media category more thoroughly.

4.3.1 Books/Publications

The results of analysing the style usage of *ranuki-kotoba* in Books/Publications can be seen in table 2.

Style	korenai	mirenai	taberenai	shinjirenai	kangaerenai	Total
Polite	3	3	0	0	0	6
Direct	19	15	4	0	0	38
Mixed	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2 – occurrences of ranuki-kotoba in Books/Publications separated by style.

Out of the three largest media categories where *ranuki-kotoba* appeared, Books/Publications had the fewest occurrences. Out of the 44 cases of direct style, only a six were written in polite style, making direct style a clear majority. This is possibly due to the nature of the media category, where written style is preferred for narration and colloquial dialogue. There were however only a handful of cases were somewhat formal language was found.

(23) … より質的な差異があると見れないであろうか。

　　　… whether it is possible to see a more qualitative difference.

　　　"Sōsa to bōgyo", Osamu Watanabe (1995)

(24) つまりある程度表示している時間がないと動きが早くて見れないからである。

In other words, this is because movements are too fast to see if time is not displayed to some degree.

"Konpyūta no riyōgijutsu", Muisuri publ. (2005)

(25) 芝居の当日、講堂に全校生徒がぎっしり集まり、いよいよ白雪姫の番となった。白井ひさ子は、まっ白いドレスを着て、まともに見れないくらい美しく、…

On the day of the play, the auditorium was packed with all the students, and at last it was time for Snow White. Hisako Shiroi wore a white dress and was so beautiful you couldn't look right at her…

"Te no hira no hokuromura", Kōji Suzuki (2004)

Both (23) and (24) are using direct style in the form of the *dearu* copula, giving them a sense of formality. They are also non-fiction publications, further expected to utilise written language. The result shows that *ranuki-kotoba* do appear in texts with written language, but in very few cases. Example sentence (25) is taken from a novel, and even though it's not part of a quote, it can be seen as a narration. Even though it uses written language to a certain degree, as it is not using *dearu*-style, classifying this as formal style may prove difficult. Rather, it could be seen as written language with a slightly subdued level of formality, making it very direct but not casual.

4.3.2 Yahoo! Chiebukuro
The results of analysing the style usage of *ranuki-kotoba* in Yahoo! Chiebukuro can be seen in table 3.

Style	*korenai*	*mirenai*	*taberenai*	*shinjirenai*	*kangaerenai*	Total
Polite	8	138	23	0	2	171
Direct	6	17	3	0	0	26
Mixed	0	7	0	0	0	7

Table 3 – occurrences of ranuki-kotoba in Yahoo! Chiebukuro separated by style.

In Yahoo! Chiebukuro, *ranuki-kotoba* was used mainly with polite style (171 out of 204 cases). This is most likely due to Q&A forums being a discussion between people who are not on close terms with each other. Therefore a more polite attitude is probably taken to not appear too blunt or overly formal. Additionally some cases showed use of mixed styles, using both polite and direct style.

The occurrence of *mirenai* was much greater compared to the other words with its 162 cases and was used with various styles. The following sentences are examples of all various styles:

(26) いくつか見れないのもあるが、こんなのでいいんか？

Should I be fine with not being able to view several of them?

(27) [DVD-R]の場合ほとんど見れますが、[DVD+R]の場合見れないことがある。

I can view most of them if they are [DVD-R], but sometimes I can't view [DVD+R].

(28) 役者に好みの人がいる場合しか最後まで見れないと思われる。［…］　これですか？

It is believed that only fans of the actors can watch it to the end. […] Is it this one?

In (26) a very colloquial style is used. In (27) both polite and direct style is used, giving a relatively polite and formal feeling. Example (28) is the only case where written language is used of all 162 cases of *mirenai*. This appears to be a part of a description of a TV-drama quoted as a reference, where the author uses polite style outside of the quotation. It is possible that the original text appeared outside Yahoo! Chiebukuro originally, but this is not distinguishable from the data. This can be seen as out of 162 cases only 1 time did *mirenai* appear with written language, making it very rare.

4.3.3 Yahoo! Blogs
The results of analysing the style usage of *ranuki-kotoba* in Yahoo! Blogs can be seen in table 4.

Style	*korenai*	*mirenai*	*taberenai*	*shinjirenai*	*kangaerenai*	Total
Polite	9	30	21	0	0	60
Direct	14	58	21	0	0	93
Mixed	0	5	0	0	0	5

Table 4 – occurrences of ranuki-kotoba in Yahoo! Blogs separated by style.

The results gave a wide variety of styles and language. Most common was direct style, but the direct to polite style ratio was the narrowest compared to other categories. In the case of *taberenai*, direct and polite style were even used to an equal amount of times. There were also a certain number of cases where the author used both styles. This could be due to the authors of the blogs are free to write in any style they choose, using whatever style fits better to what they want to express. The following sentences are typical examples of cases where *ranuki-kotoba* appeared:

(29) 次回の放送は１０月１８日（土）です。あっ。。この日は…リアルで見れない日だわ（＾＿＾；）

The next broadcast will be on Saturday, October 18ᵗʰ. Ah! That day… I can't watch it IRL.

(30) [...] ここって凄く険しい階段なので、足の悪い人は登って来れないんじゃ？

The stairs here are really steep, so people with bad knees can't climb them, right?

(31) 相方がいないとご飯食べれないんですけど超腹減った。。。

I can't eat if my partner isn't here, but I'm super hungry…

All blog entries used either very colloquial speech or moderate polite speech. They more or less replicate the way someone would potentially speak to someone in person. Various emoticons are also very prominent to add a visual suggestion of emotion when reading. There were also no cases where *ranuki-kotoba* was used together with written language.

5. Summary and Conclusion

The present study has examined the occurrence of *ranuki-kotoba* by using the large scale written language corpus SHONAGON, that contains approximately 105 million words used in various texts ranging from the year 1976 to 2008 including the media categories "Books/Publications", "Magazines", "Newspapers", "Government Reports", "Textbooks", "Information Bulletins", "Yahoo! Chiebukuro", "Yahoo! Blogs", "Poetry", "Law Texts" and "National Diet Records".

Even though *ranuki-kotoba* is said to grow in popularity, we have yet to see it being used to a great amount outside colloquial situations. Even in cases where it does appear somewhat frequently, the standard *–rare* form is still used diligently. When comparing the various media categories it was shown that *ranuki-kotoba* appeared very rarely outside three of the media categories: "Books/Publications", "Yahoo! Chiebukuro" and "Yahoo! Blogs". This is most likely due that these media categories leave the choice of style to the author. In media such as "Magazines", "Newspapers", "Textbooks" etc. the style is most likely chosen to be as proper as possible to not appear substandard as is often associated with *ranuki-kotoba*. When futher analysing each media category by subsequent genres, it was found that the usage of *ranuki-kotoba* was not more prominent in any specific genre, but evenly spread out through most genres.

In this study *ranuki-kotoba* also appears together with both direct and polite style to equal amount. The result also showed that direct and polite style alone is not adequate in describing the formality of politeness of a sentence. It is necessary to examine other words that co-occur together with *ranuki-kotoba*. The style does not appear to have any impact on the choice of the author using *ranuki-kotoba* or not. The style appears to be more dependent on what media category or what situation it's used in. "Books/Publications" showed to use more direct style to match the media category, whereas "Yahoo! Chiebukuro" showed to have more cases of polite style due to it being a place of people engaging in dialogues with each other. There were cases where *ranuki-kotoba* appeared together with written language. However these were very few and only appeared in Books/Publications. There were also some cases of *ranuki-kotoba* in situations that could be considered to be highly formal, such as in the "National Diet Records". The style could not be seen as written language, but the formal nature of the National Diet would imply that *ranuki-kotoba* would not be used. This study shows that such is not the case.

This also gives another perspective where the current grammatical change of *ranuki-kotoba* can be further analysed in contemporary Japanese.

The present study also confirmed Kinsui's (2003) claim that *ranuki-kotoba* is more frequent with verbs with shorter stem, and very rare among verbs that consists of longer stems. The words *korenai*, *mirenai* and *taberenai* cover more than 99% of the occurrences of *ranuki-kotoba* in this study, leaving *shinjirenai* and *kangaerenai* with extremely rare occurences in this study. There were absolutely no cases of *shinjirenai* which also coincides with Sole's (2013) observation that it is a word that is very unlikely to be used as *ranuki-kotoba*. As this analysis was restricted to negative non-past indicative by means of the suffix *–nai*, another study covering multiple inflections or suffixes might prove different.

Due to the great number of occurrences of *ranuki-kotoba*, doing a fully detailed analysis have proven difficult. The search function in SHONAGON is eminently limited and narrowing down the search criteria to only negative non-past indicative may have been overly constricting to give a fair result. SHONAGON also does not give full access to the complete texts, which makes it difficult to understand the context of some cases. As *ranuki-kotoba* rarely appeared outside the media of books and internet forums and blogs, a more detailed analysis of those areas might show to be more fruitful.

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