

# THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF POPULAR CULTURE: ANALYZING MILITARY SPEECH IN MANGA

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## Abstract

This study investigates Japanese popular culture, focusing on *manga* as a central cultural product that offers rich narrative and visual content that reflects both universal and culturally specific themes. One key concept explored in this study is *yakuwarigo*, or “role language”, a linguistic phenomenon where specific speech patterns convey a character’s social role, age, gender, or personality. *Yakuwarigo* serves as a tool for character development, allowing readers to infer traits through language. The research includes a pragma-linguistic analysis of *yakuwarigo* in *manga*, focusing on the speech of military leaders. Using Erwin Smith’s communication acts from *Shingeki no Kyojin* (‘Atacul titanilor’) as a case study, the analysis examines how his speech patterns shift between formal, honorific language when addressing superiors and direct, motivational language with subordinates. This duality highlights the adaptability and strategic clarity of his role as a leader. The study also evaluates the Romanian translations of his addresses, assessing how effectively they retain the original pragmatic and linguistic nuances, thus contributing to the understanding of cultural and linguistic transfer in *manga* translations.

**Keywords:** *popular culture, manga, yakuwarigo, military leader speech, pragma-linguistic analysis*

## INTRODUCTION

Popular culture holds a central place in contemporary society, characterized by its fluid and dynamic nature. Its influence on language, communication, and social interaction is significant, as this cultural chameleon constantly redefines itself. Situated at the intersection of tradition and modernity, popular culture adapts to new socio-political landscapes, introducing new narratives and serving as a medium through which cultural identities are reframed and reconfigured. Its multifaceted nature invites scholars to examine not only its evolving forms but also its role in shaping contemporary identities, perceptions, and worldviews. The dialectical interplay between continuity and change emerges as a key principle. While popular culture thrives on innovation, it also bears the imprint of historical legacies and socio-cultural continuities. This dynamic tension requires nuanced research into the complex interrelations between old and new, familiar and novel, as they converge to shape the cultural landscape of the present era. The transformative, adaptable, and multifaceted nature of popular culture underscores its critical significance in contemporary life. As a vessel through which societal values are expressed and constructed, popular culture demands a deeper understanding of its evolving contours and the lasting impact it has on the contemporary human experience.

In the contemporary context, popular culture is often described in terms that highlight its close connection to consumerism, typically being attributed a lower value compared to what is often classified as “high” culture (O’Brien, Szeman 7). According to Fiske (23), although mass culture is based on consumerist values, it cannot be considered merely “consumption” but has the value of “culture”. Even when industrialized, culture cannot be reduced to a mere exchange of commercial goods; above economic interests lie the interests and aspirations of people. Conceptualizing popular culture as a consumerist form emphasizes its accessibility and popularity among the masses, in contrast to the exclusive demands of “high” culture, which often presupposes limited access based on education and knowledge levels. This dichotomous distinction is also reflected in the term “mass culture”, suggesting that popular cultural products are mass-produced to meet the entertainment and consumption demands of the public, while “high” culture is associated with aesthetic value, intellectual understanding, and profound substance (Fiske 14).

The present study focuses on Japanese popular culture products, specifically comic books known as *manga*. Japanese culture represents a fascinating intersection between tradition and modernity, where archaic and innovative elements coexist in a unique and dynamic way. This subtle balance between these two essential components reflects the profound influence of Japanese history and cultural values on the development of contemporary society.

### **JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE – MANGA**

*Manga*, *anime*, *cosplay*, the *kawaii* concept, video games, J-Pop and J-Rock music, as well as eccentric fashion represent key factors motivating Romanians to study the Japanese language. However, academic engagement with Japanese popular culture in Romania remains relatively limited. Constructive stereotypes associated with Japan over time have played a significant role in generating foreign interest in popular culture products. A distinct appeal of *manga* and *anime* lies in their ability to allow the audience to identify with the characters and find themselves within their stories. The themes, messages, and principles conveyed in these works are easily recognizable and have universal applicability, often retaining their relevance in contemporary contexts (Pelea 15).

Post-war Japanese popular culture was characterized by exceptional prolificity, intense vitality, and commercial success, despite the evident tendency of the Japanese to incorporate Western elements. After the war, in the context of the devastation of traditional culture and its frequent active subjugation, the Japanese population enthusiastically embraced aspects of the popular culture of the occupying forces. Despite aspirations toward American lifestyle symbols, the Japanese simultaneously managed to generate a specific context for their own post-war popular culture. A relevant example is that of cartoonist Osamu Tezuka, whose admiration for Walt Disney's creations intersected with his own initiative to direct his creations in a distinct, deeper, and more complex direction. This process created the favourable framework for the rise of *manga*, Japan's specific art form in the field of comics, transitioning from a medium exclusively for children to a major influence in the national cultural landscape (Schilling 9).

Japanese comic books have not had a longstanding presence in Romania. Initially marketed exclusively in Japan, Japanese popular culture productions experienced global expansion with the popularization of the *anime/manga* phenomenon. This expansion included entry into markets in the United States, France, Germany, and other European countries, including Romania. Starting in 2005, a specific market for Japanese comics began to take shape in Romania, evidenced today by the existence of a limited number of online platforms that facilitate access to translated *manga* and *anime* in Romanian. These translations, known as fanscans or fanscalations, are produced by passionate communities of fans. Notable platforms contributing to this initiative include RoManga, RoScans, Shinobi-Fansub, Anime Kage, AnimeG, and Mangazutto.

In addition to these online platforms, there are also stores that sell *manga*, contributing to the diversification of options available to Romanian readers. Among these stores are Manga Shop, Cărturești, and Emag. For example, Manga Shop offers both Japanese-style comics (*manga*) and American-style comics, reflecting the plurality and diversity of offerings available to the Romanian public.

This development of the *manga* market in Romania is an indicator of the growing interest in Japanese culture and its forms of visual and narrative expression. Moreover, it contributes to enriching the local cultural landscape, providing Romanian readers with access to a variety of international works and artistic styles.

### PROJECT NEZUMI BY NEMIRA

On August 8, 2022, Nemira Publishing House announced the launch of the NEZUMI Project, the first collection of *manga* translated into Romanian, which would be published starting in September of the same year. This initiative to release Romania's first manga imprint was supported by the "Angela Hondru" Romanian-Japanese Studies Center and His Excellency, the Ambassador of Japan, Hiroshi Ueda.

The debut of this collection featured two notable series: *Mireasa străvechiului mag* (*Mahō tsukai no yome*) by Yamazaki Kore (30.11.2013 –) and *Regatele Ruinei* (*Hametsu no ōkoku*) by Yoruhashi (05.04.2019 –). Subsequently, other widely appreciated collections were added, such as *Lecții de vals* (*Dekoboko*

*no waltz* by Morino Kikori (04.7.2020 – 05.11.2022), *Shino nu își poate spune numele* (*Shino-chan wa jibun no namae ga ienai*) by Oshimi Shūzō (21.12.2011 – 17.10.2012), and one of the most recent and popular series, *Atacul Titanilor* (*Shingeki no kyojin*) by Isayama Hajime (09.09.2009 – 09.04.2021), among others, which are published monthly.

This editorial initiative not only diversifies Romania’s cultural offerings but also represents an important step in promoting contemporary Japanese literature. The support provided by the “Angela Hondru” Romanian-Japanese Studies Center and the Embassy of Japan highlights the importance of cultural collaboration between the two nations.

### **YAKUWARIGO AND THE MILITARY LEADER’S SPEECH**

The following analysis, based on a selected corpus from a Japanese comic, will examine the “military leader’s speech”, a category not yet distinctly defined or studied within the *yakuwarigo* framework in the specialized literature consulted for this research.

In contemporary linguistic studies, both in Japan and internationally, researchers (such as Yamaguchi Haruhiko, Sadanobu Toshiyuki, Teshigawara Mihoko, Bekeš Andrej, Duc-Harada Patrycja, Rahardjo Hardianto, Unser-Schutz Giancarla) have begun to pay increased attention to the use of emblematic conventions and linguistic stereotypes in Japanese comics. These stereotypes are associated with various character types within Japanese popular culture. This recent trend in research, which gained momentum particularly after 2000, highlights a growing concern with the connection between characters’ distinctive speech features and their roles in the narrative. The theoretical foundation of these linguistic studies is based on the concept of *yakuwarigo*, proposed and defined by the Japanese linguist Kinsui Satoshi. *Yakuwarigo* has been translated into English as “role language”, “character language”, or “stereotypical speech”, reflecting the idea that the language used by characters in fictional works is closely tied to their symbolic and functional roles within the story. The use of *yakuwarigo* extends beyond the medium of *manga* and encompasses a wide range of fictional and performative contexts, such as *anime*, novels, video games, theatre, and advertising. Although *manga* serves as a prominent platform for the application of *yakuwarigo*, primarily due to its heavy

reliance on written dialogue to construct and convey character personalities and social roles, this linguistic phenomenon is equally relevant and applicable in other media forms.

This approach emphasizes how language can be used to quickly and effectively communicate specific traits of characters, such as age, gender, social status, or personality, through culturally recognized and accepted linguistic patterns. Thus, *yakuwarigo* becomes a valuable tool for analysing how language contributes to character construction and development in Japanese comics, offering a unique perspective on the interaction between language, culture, and fictional representation.

Semantically, the term *yakuwarigo* is composed of *yaku* – ‘role’, *wari* – ‘distribution’, and *go* – ‘word’. In his works published since 2000, Kinsui Satoshi provides several definitions of *yakuwarigo*, the most complete and concise being found in his book *Virtual Japanese: The Mystery of Role Language* (*Vācharu nihongo: yakuwarigo no nazo*).

When hearing a certain way of speaking (such as vocabulary, expressions, phrasing, intonation, etc.) evokes the image of a specific type of person (age, gender, occupation, social class, era, appearance, personality, etc.), or when a specific type of person is indicated and one can imagine the kind of language that person would likely use, that way of speaking is referred to as *yakuwarigo* (role language).

(Kinsui 205)

According to this definition, the concept of *yakuwarigo* proposes an investigation of the relationship between the language used by fictional characters and the image projected in the mind of the reader or listener. These speech patterns are constructed based on linguistic, social, and cultural stereotypes present in Japanese society, including elements of vocabulary, grammar, phonetic characteristics, fixed expressions, etc., that evoke certain attributes of the speaker, such as gender, age, social status, region of origin, race, and more (Teshigawara, Kinsui 37-58).

Having established the concept of *yakuwarigo* as a framework for understanding how linguistic stereotypes are employed to convey character traits in fictional narratives, let us turn our attention to a specific application of

this phenomenon: the speech of the military leader. By analyzing the unique linguistic features associated with this role, the aim is to explore how these speech patterns contribute to the portrayal of leadership, authority, and strategic thinking in *manga*, with a particular focus on the character of Erwin Smith from *Shingeki no Kyojin* ('Atacul Titanilor'). The speech of the military leader undoubtedly shares common traits with what Kinsui Satoshi (109) terms "male speech" (*danseigo*) or "boss speech" (*kyōshigo*). I believe that, since certain common features exist between these types of speeches and the type that is the focus of this study, we can consider "military leader speech" as a subcategory of "male speech".

However, the specificity of the profession and the distinct personality of the characters lead to linguistic particularities that can be attributed exclusively to this category. Therefore, the detailed analysis conducted in this study will attempt to identify these unique characteristics, thus contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of military leader speech. The exploration of these linguistic elements will be grounded in a careful examination of the characters' verbal interactions and the context in which they occur, offering an in-depth perspective on the function and significance of this type of language within the analyzed narrative.

For this study, I intend to analyze the Romanian translations made by professional translators. The idea for such an analysis took shape with the launch of the NEZUMI By NEMIRA project, which recently began publishing some of the most popular *manga* series, including 'Atacul Titanilor'. Translators Antonia Ivanciu, Mălina Coșan, and Cosmin Tița translated this comic using Japanese as the source language. It is essential to note that this analysis does not question the quality of the translations; they simply serve as a case study for the strategies employed by professional translators. The analysis will focus exclusively on how *yakuwarigo* markers are rendered in Romanian and will offer an evaluation of the semantic and pragmatic losses inherent in this process. Through this research, I intend to highlight the challenges and solutions adopted by translators in the context of cultural and linguistic transfer, considering the complexity and specificity of the language used by characters in *manga*. Thus, this effort will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of translation on the perception and reception of the target text by the Romanian audience.

As mentioned earlier, the *manga* from which the studied corpus is taken is *Shingeki no Kyojin* ('Atacul Titanilor'), a series written and illustrated by Isayama Hajime. The action of this series takes place in a dystopian universe where humanity lives in cities protected by three colossal walls designed to defend them from humanoid titans, giant man-eating creatures. The narrative follows the fate of the protagonist, Eren Yeager, who vows to exterminate the titans after they destroy his hometown and kill his mother. This story quickly became a cultural phenomenon and achieved remarkable critical and commercial success, solidifying its position as one of the best-selling *manga* series of all time.

The character that piqued my interest is Erwin Smith, the 13th commander of the Scout Regiment (*chōsa heidan 13-dai dan*). The selection of the analyzed scenes was made considering the nature of his interlocutors; in other words, I aimed to exemplify and analyze acts of communication addressed to both his superiors and subordinates within the military hierarchy. Thus, the first three examples analyzed are taken from an address to a committee trying to convince them of the necessity of integrating Eren into the Scout Regiment, arguing for the recovery of Wall Maria. For the final part of the analysis, I chose a more extensive discourse in which Erwin attempts to motivate new recruits to join the Scout Regiment.

This dual approach to interactions, both with superiors and subordinates, is essential to fully understand the complexity and nuances of Erwin Smith's speech. In addresses to superiors, Erwin uses formal, deferential utterances, emphasizing reason and unyielding logic, elements that underscore his status as a strategic leader. Conversely, in interactions with subordinates, his wording becomes more direct and mobilizing, reflecting his oratory skills and his ability to inspire loyalty and courage among his soldiers. Thus, the analysis of Erwin Smith's speeches not only highlights the distinctive features of "military leader speech", but also illustrates how it can vary depending on the interlocutory context and communicative purpose.

The scenes will be presented in parallel, with the original Japanese text on the left side of the page and the Romanian translation, published by Nemira, on the right. This dual presentation method allows for a direct and detailed evaluation of the linguistic and stylistic equivalence between the source and target texts, providing the opportunity to observe the extent to which the





The pragmatic message intended by the *mangaka* is conveying an authoritative and persuasive address meant to underscore the strategic importance of Erwin's proposal. As a military leader, Erwin must inspire confidence and determination, and his proposal must be clear and concise in order to convince the committee of the necessity of Eren's inclusion. The Romanian translation retains most of the essential elements of the original text. However, there are notable differences, which I will briefly analyse below.

The Japanese version offers a simple *Hai*, signifying agreement and respect. In Romanian, the addition of the phrase "să trăiți" ("may you live long", a formal salute not present in the source text) heightens the level of formality and respect.

The next sentence, *Chōsa heidan 13-dai danchō Erwin Sumisu yori teian sasete itadakimasu.*, clearly specifies Erwin's role and authority. The Romanian translation, "Al 13-lea comandant al Diviziei de Cercetași, Erwin Smith, la datorie" ("The 13th Commander of the Survey Corps, Erwin Smith, reporting for duty."), maintains the sense of authority, but the phrase "la datorie" ("reporting for duty") introduces an element of personal involvement that is not explicitly in the original. Furthermore, it omits the translation of the verb phrase *teian sasete itadakimasu*, which means "permiteți-mi să propun/să sugerez" ("allow me to propose/suggest"), where Erwin politely expresses his intention to request something through a formal humble construction (*kenjōgo*). The Romanian version does not accurately reflect the structure of the original sentence. The phrase "la datorie" is not present in the source text and introduces a new element that alters the original meaning. Additionally, omitting the phrase "permiteți-mi să propun/să sugerez" reduces the clarity of Erwin Smith's specific action. This version shifts the focus from the act of making a proposal to Erwin's presence and role, which may confuse the reader regarding the original intent of the message.

The next line, *Wareware chōsa heidan wa Eren wo seishikina dan'in toshite mukaeire kyōjin no chikara wo riyō shi uōru Maria wo dakkan shimasu.*, is expressed in a formal and direct manner, emphasizing the strategic objectives of the plan. The Romanian translation, "Îl invităm pe Eren să se alătore oficial Diviziei de Cercetași, să-i folosim puterea de titan ca să recuperăm zidul Maria în numele omenirii." ("We invite Eren to officially join the Survey Corps, to use his titan power to reclaim Wall Maria in the name of humanity."), largely preserves the

clarity and structure of the original. However, the addition of “în numele omenirii” (“in the name of humanity”) introduces an emotional dimension and moral weight absent in the Japanese text, shifting the tone to one of idealism.

A notable difference lies in the translation of the verb *mukaeire* as “îl invităm” (“we invite him”). The Japanese *mukaeire* translates as “to receive” or “to welcome”, carrying a neutral and formal tone that emphasizes the organization’s decision to integrate Eren into its ranks. It does not imply any initiative or decision-making on Eren’s part. This phrasing reflects the hierarchical nature of the relationship, positioning the Survey Corps as the authority. Pragmatically, it conveys a sense of inclusivity and official recognition while maintaining a tone of institutional formality. In contrast, the Romanian translation “îl invităm” (“we invite him”) suggests a request or offer, implying that Eren has a choice to accept or decline. This change introduces a more egalitarian relationship, reducing the hierarchical tone of the original, and shifting the dynamic to one that appears more collaborative and participatory.

The use of *wareware* (“we”) in the Japanese text further underscores the collective identity of the Survey Corps. As a formal pronoun, it highlights the speaker’s affiliation with the group and reinforces the sense of institutional unity, responsibility, and even patriotic sentiment. From a pragma-linguistic perspective, this lexeme signals that the statement represents a collective decision made by the organization, rather than an individual opinion. The omission of a direct equivalent in the Romanian translation reduces the emphasis on this collective identity, making the statement feel less formal and slightly less representative of the organization’s authority.

The verb *riyō suru* (“to utilize”) has a neutral and strategic connotation in the source text. It emphasizes practicality without suggesting personal exploitation. It focuses on the functional and calculated use of the titans’ power as a resource to achieve their goal of reclaiming Wall Maria, aligning with a military and strategic tone. In the Romanian translation, “să-i folosim puterea de titan”, the possessive pronoun “lui” (the “i” from “să-i”) (his) is added, which personalizes the action and makes it more targeted at Eren as an individual. Pragmatically, this change shifts the tone from neutral and strategic to one that could be interpreted as more reliant on or exploitative of Eren, potentially suggesting a dependency on him specifically.

The verb *dakkan shimasu* (“to recapture”) is militaristic, formal, and direct, emphasizing the strategic action of reclaiming Wall Maria. It is devoid of emotional or idealistic undertones, reflecting a purely practical military objective. Additionally, this verb carries historical and cultural significance, as it has been predominantly used to refer to Japan’s efforts to reclaim lost territories, evoking connections to war trauma and the annexation of islands once under Japanese control. In the Romanian translation, the addition of “în numele omenirii” (“in the name of humanity”) introduces a moral or ideological justification absent in the original text. This shifts the tone from strategic to idealistic, framing the mission as part of a larger, noble cause. Pragmatically, this addition amplifies the emotional appeal of the statement, potentially increasing its resonance with the audience but diverging from the original’s straightforward military tone.

The conclusion of this first intervention, *Ijō desu.*, is a formal and polite closing that signals the end of the statement with precision and finality. The Romanian translation, “Atât am de zis” (“That’s all I have to say”), retains the conciseness of the original but adds a more personal and direct tone. While effective, using the past tense could have added a degree of reflection, solemnity, and gravitas to the statement, better aligning with the formal tone of the original.

Overall, the Romanian translation captures the core meaning and structure of the original Japanese text but introduces several tonal shifts that alter the pragmatic effects. The translation places greater emphasis on emotional and moral dimensions, reduces the hierarchical tone, and personalizes certain actions. While these changes may enhance the emotional appeal and relatability for a Romanian audience, they soften the formal and authoritative tone of the original, which is rooted in military hierarchy and strategic objectivity.

This first analysed example highlights the following characteristics of military leader speech:

→ Formality and politeness: Commander Erwin Smith stands out through his use of verb forms that express the highest degree of politeness, specifically humble language (*kenjōgo*).

→ Clarity and conciseness: His wording is structured clearly and directly, with each sentence being concise and to the point, reflecting the strategic nature of his discourse and Erwin’s authority.

In the next selected scene, Erwin Smith continues his argument regarding the optimal strategy for reclaiming the wall.



Figure 2: *Shingeki no kyōjin*, 2009-2021, vol. 5, cap. 19, p. 41/43

E.g. 2: Source language (transliteration): *Kare no chikara wo karireba uōru Maria wa dakkan dekimasu. Nani wo yūsen suru beki ka wa meikaku da to omowaremasu.*  
 Target language (Romanian): „Cu puterea lui de titan putem recupera zidul Maria. Cred că este evident care e opțiunea prioritară.”

Through the speech patterns attributed to him, the *mangaka* clearly and directly emphasizes Erwin Smith’s argument in favour of utilizing Eren’s power to reclaim Wall Maria. Erwin employs concise and authoritative language to convey his message and persuade the committee of the strategic importance of the proposed plan. The original sentence *Kare no chikara wo karireba uōru Maria wa dakkan dekimasu* underscores the necessity of leveraging Eren’s abilities. The Romanian translation “Cu puterea lui de titan putem recupera zidul Maria” (“With his titan power, we can reclaim Wall Maria”), successfully preserves the clarity and strategic emphasis of the original.

The second sentence in Erwin’s intervention, *Nani wo yūsen suru beki ka wa meikaku da to omowaremasu*, conveys the clarity of the mission’s priorities. The Romanian translation, “Cred că este evident care e opțiunea prioritară” (“I

believe it is clear what the priority option is”), captures this message with similar clarity. However, it introduces a subtle tonal shift due to the translation of the respectful form (*sonkeigo*) *omowaremasu* as the first-person singular “cred” (“I believe”).

The verb *omowaremasu*, a respectful form of *omou* (“to think”), conveys an impersonal or indirect expression of opinion. It distances the speaker from the statement, making it less assertive and more objective or deferential. This usage is characteristic of formal contexts, particularly in hierarchical or professional settings, where it serves to soften the tone and show respect by avoiding imposing the speaker’s perspective on the listener. In contrast, the Romanian verb “cred” (“I believe”), as a first-person singular expression, makes the statement direct and personal. While this formulation effectively communicates the speaker’s explicit opinion, it departs from the detached, respectful tone of the Japanese original, rendering the statement more assertive and engaging.

Despite this tonal difference, the Romanian translation effectively retains most of the original nuances and intentions. It maintains the clarity and conciseness necessary to underscore Erwin’s authoritative message, allowing Romanian readers to grasp the strategic importance of the proposed plan and empathize with the character’s determination and leadership. In terms of the characteristics of military leader speech, Erwin’s language is direct and unambiguous, emphasizing the strategic objective with precision. These qualities are preserved in the Romanian translation, ensuring that the argument remains clear, concise, and aligned with the tone of a decisive leader.

The commander’s final intervention in this scene of the *manga* presents the risks associated with the proposed solution.



Figure 3: *Shingeki no kyōjin*, 2009-2021, vol. 5, cap. 19, p. 62/64

E.g. 3: Source language (transliteration): *Eren no „kyojin no chikara” wa fukakutei na yōso wo tabun ni fukunde ori, sono kiken wa tsune ni hisonde imasu. Soko de Eren ga wareware no kanrika ni okareta akatsuki ni wa sono taisaku toshite Rivai heishichō ni kōdō wo tomo ni shite moraimasu.*

Target language (Romanian): „Sunt multe lucruri neclare în legătură cu puterea de titan a lui Eren, așa că va exista mereu un pericol. Dacă Eren va fi pus sub supravegherea noastră, Căpitanul Levi va fi responsabil de disciplinarea lui.”

Erwin’s speech aims to highlight the uncertainties and risks associated with Eren’s titan power, as well as the precautionary measures that will be implemented to manage these risks. His address is methodically structured to present a persuasive solution, emphasizing the strategic role of Captain Levi in controlling and disciplining Eren.

The Romanian translation demonstrates an effective equivalence in conveying the pragmatic meaning of the original text. The first sentence, *Eren no “kyojin no chikara” wa fukakutei na yōso wo tabun ni fukunde ori, sono kiken wa tsune ni hisonde imasu.*, emphasizes the inherent uncertainties and risks. The translation, “Sunt multe lucruri neclare în legătură cu puterea de titan a lui Eren, așa că va exista mereu un pericol” (“There are many unclear aspects regarding Eren’s titan power, so there will always be a danger”), effectively preserves the essence of the original message. It clearly communicates both the uncertainty and the ongoing risks, maintaining the pragmatic intent of the original.

Regarding the proposed solution and Levi’s role, the source text, *Soko de Eren ga wareware no kanrika ni okareta akatsuki ni wa sono taisaku toshite Rivai heishichō ni kōdō wo tomo ni shite moraimasu.*, outlines the strategy of assigning Levi the responsibility of overseeing Eren. The target text, “Dacă Eren va fi pus sub supravegherea noastră, Căpitanul Levi va fi responsabil de disciplinarea lui” (“If Eren is placed under our supervision, Captain Levi will be responsible for disciplining him”), slightly adapts the formulation for clarity while maintaining the core pragmatic message. The adaptation provides a clear and accessible explanation of Levi’s role, aligning with the strategic tone of the original.

In terms of Erwin’s speech style, it is both clear and authoritative, carefully designed to address the risks while advocating for the proposed measures. His use of formal terminology and complex sentence structures reflects a tone of professionalism and determination, characteristics essential for a military leader addressing a high-stakes scenario. The speech’s logical structure ensures that the risks are acknowledged and mitigated within the proposed framework, further reinforcing his credibility and leadership.

The Romanian translation of Erwin Smith’s address succeeds in maintaining the clarity, authority, and logical structure of the argument. It allows Romanian readers to grasp the strategic importance of the proposed measures and empathize with the character’s determination and professionalism, emphasizing the characteristics of military leader speech.

Having analysed an address to a higher-ranking audience, the next discourse aims to motivate a group of young recruits to join the Scout Regiment. Due to space limitations, only the first portion of this communication is depicted through a *manga* panel, and only a few sentences with significant pragmatic weight were selected for analysis.



Figure 4: *Shingeki no kyōjin*, 2009–2021, vol. 5, cap. 21, p. 113/115



E.g. 4: Source language (transliteration): *Watashi wa chōsa heidan danchō Erugin Sumisu. [...] Shikashi konkai no kyojin no shūgeki ni yori shokunra wa hekigai chōsa nami no keiken wo shiirareta. [...] Shikashi da konkai no shūgeki de ushinatta mono wa ōkii ga kore made ni nai hodo jinrui wa shōri e to zenshin shita. Sore wa shūchi no tōri Eren Ieigā no sonzai da. [...] Mō ichi do iu... Chōsa heidan ni hairu tame ni kono ba ni nokoru mono wa chikajika hotondo shinu darō. Jibun ni kiite mite kure jinrui no tame ni shinzō o sasageru koto ga dekiru no ka wo.*

Target language (Romanian): „Eu sunt comandantul Diviziei de Cercetași, Erwin Smith. [...] Totuși, din cauza ultimului atac al titanilor, toți de aici ați simțit pe pielea voastră ce înseamnă o expediție în afara zidurilor. [...] Am pierdut mulți oameni în timpul atacului, așa e, dar am făcut și progrese nemaivăzute până acum de om. După cum ați ghicit deja, mă refer la existența lui Eren Jaeger. [...] Repet: majoritatea celor care decid să rămână aici și să se alăture Diviziei de Cercetași cel mai probabil vor muri. Ascultați cu atenție ce vă spune inima și întrebați-vă dacă sunteți în stare să vă închinați viața omenirii.”

The author’s intention is to capture the tension and gravity of the situation the characters face while Erwin Smith uses his oratory skills to mobilize new recruits to join the Scout Regiment. His address is meant to inspire, yet also to convey frightening figures, thereby offering a clear vision of the necessary sacrifices and the risks involved.

The illocutionary act begins with a succinct introduction intended to establish his legitimacy as a leader. The Romanian translation, “Eu sunt comandantul Diviziei de Cercetași, Erwin Smith.” (“I am the Commander of the Survey Corps, Erwin Smith.”), retains the formal and authoritative tone of the original Japanese: *Watashi wa chōsa heidan danchō Erugin Sumisu.*

To contextualize the invitation to join, and to outline the harsh reality and necessary sacrifice, Erwin reminds them of the extreme experience they endured due to the titans’ attack. “Totuși, din cauza ultimului atac al titanilor, toți de aici ați simțit pe pielea voastră ce înseamnă o expediție în afara zidurilor” (“However, due to the last attack of the titans, all of you here have experienced first-hand what it means to go on an expedition outside the walls”), translates

the gravity of their direct experience and sacrifice, as in the original message: *Shikashi konkai no kyōjin no shūgeki ni yori shokunra wa hekgai chōsa nami no keiken wo shiirareta.*

Progress and hope are suggested through the appeal to trust in their new ally, Eren. Once again, the Romanian translation, “Am pierdut mulți oameni în timpul atacului, așa e, dar am făcut și progrese nemaivăzute până acum de om. După cum ați ghicit deja, mă refer la existența lui Eren Jaeger.” (“We lost many people during the attack, that’s true, but we also made unprecedented progress for humanity. As you’ve already guessed, I am referring to the existence of Eren Jaeger”), successfully conveys the intended pragmatic message in the original Japanese text: *Shikashi da konkai no shūgeki de ushinatta mono wa ōkii ga kore made ni nai hodo jinrui wa shōri e to zenshin shita. Sore wa shūchi no tōri Eren Ieigā no sonzai da.* In this context, Erwin Smith aims to underscore the strategic importance of using Eren’s powers to reclaim Wall Maria, continuing to reinforce his argument by stating directly and concisely that the recovery of Wall Maria is possible with Eren’s power.

Erwin concludes his discourse with an appeal to honesty and sacrifice, attempting to inspire the new recruits through a direct, sober, and sombre declaration of the real and great risks associated with joining the Scout Regiment. This approach highlights Erwin’s sincerity and his desire to ensure that only those truly dedicated remain. The phrase *Mō ichi do iu*, translated as “Repet” (“I repeat”), is used to emphasize the importance of his message and to draw attention to his warning. The confrontation with reality is made through a brutally honest statement, *nokoru mono wa chikajika hotondo shinu darō* (“majoritatea celor care decid să rămână [...] cel mai probabil vor muri.”), meant to test the determination and courage of the potential recruits. The appeal to introspection, *Jibun ni kiite mite kure* (“întrebați-vă dacă sunteți în stare”), urges profound and personal reflection, focusing on the devotion necessary to join the cause of humanity. The ultimate motivation, *jinrui no tame ni shinzō o sasageru koto ga dekiru no ka wo* (“să vă închinați viața omenirii”), is the climax of the speech, appealing to idealism and the willingness to sacrifice for the common good.

The Romanian translation largely retains the meaning and seriousness of the original message. The use of the verb “repet” (“I repeat”) accurately reflects Erwin’s intention to reiterate and emphasize his warning. Additionally,

the phrase “majoritatea celor care decid să rămână aici și să se alătore Diviziei de Cercetași cel mai probabil vor muri” (“Most of those who choose to stay here and join the Survey Corps will most likely die”) closely conveys the harsh reality Erwin presents. However, the translation provided for the final phrase, *Jibun ni kiite mite kure jinrui no tame ni shinzō o sasageru koto ga dekiru no ka wo*, suggests a deeper and more personal introspection than the original: “Ascultați cu atenție ce vă spune inima și întrebați-vă dacă sunteți în stare să vă închinați viața omenirii” (“Listen carefully to what your heart tells you and ask yourselves if you are ready to dedicate your life to humanity”). The Romanian phrase may be interpreted as an appeal to emotions, whereas the original is more about evaluating one’s capacity for personal sacrifice. Therefore, a translation with a higher degree of pragmatic equivalence might be: “Întrebați-vă dacă sunteți în stare să vă închinați viața pentru binele umanității” (“Ask yourselves if you are capable of sacrificing your life for the good of humanity”).

Erwin structures his speech to be clear, concise, and impactful, appealing directly to the reason and emotions of the recruits. He emphasizes the real dangers and the necessity of supreme sacrifice for the good of humanity. The Romanian audience, familiar with this type of content through *anime* and *manga* adaptations, will find the translation appropriate and resonant. The translation is relevant and maintains the necessary dramatic and motivational effect to captivate and inspire the audience.

Regarding Erwin’s communication style, it is worth noting his ability to adapt his style according to his target audience. The initial examples analysed are characterized by statements employing polite language (*teineigo*), with a subtle incorporation of humble language (*kenjōgo*). This linguistic choice suggests a hierarchical distance between the speaker and the interlocutor. The phrase *hai* is also a formal way to confirm and draw attention to the beginning of an official speech. Erwin uses precise and technical vocabulary, typical of a military leader addressing a high-ranking audience, with the goal of convincing them of the validity of his proposal. His sentences are clear, concise, and direct, reflecting the decisive and authoritative nature of a military leader. The sentences are well-constructed to ensure comprehension and to emphasize the key points of the proposal. Erwin’s intention is to convince the committee of the strategic necessity and legitimize Eren’s inclusion, while highlighting both the advantages and the precautionary measures to manage the risks involved.

On the other hand, when addressing the cadets, he uses a more colloquial style, with shortened verb forms, while also employing terms like *shokunra*, which translates into Romanian as “doamnelor și domnilor”, “prietenî”, “voi toți”, “dumneavoastră” (DJR 710). Primarily used by men with mild respect toward those of equal or lower rank (NKD Vol. 10 689), *shokunra* expresses the respect he feels toward these young individuals willing to sacrifice their lives. The use of this appellation is particularly relevant from a pragmatic perspective, as it is employed to address a group with respect, but also with a note of superiority. It is a formal term that conveys both the due esteem and the authority of the speaker. Once again, Erwin uses precise and technical vocabulary, reflecting both his role as a military leader and the necessity of conveying clear and strategic information. The sentence structures are complex and well-organized, reflecting the strategic thinking and logic of the speech. They are articulated clearly, with the goal of presenting plans and risks in a comprehensible manner.

Erwin Smith’s addresses reflect the essential characteristics of military leader speech: formality, clarity, determination, and well-articulated strategy. The use of polite language (*teineigo*), complex grammatical structures, and technical vocabulary underscores his authority and competence. The Romanian translation must preserve these elements to faithfully reflect the character’s intentions and position, ensuring that the audience perceives both the authoritative tone and the strategic plan being presented.

## CONCLUSION

The pragma-linguistic analysis of Erwin Smith’s discourse, the 13th commander of the Scout Regiment, highlights the complexity and nuances of his language, tailored both for interactions with superiors and for those with his subordinates. This dual approach is essential to fully understand the characteristics and functions of military leader speech. Erwin employs humble language (*kenjōgo*) when addressing superiors, emphasizing both his respect and authority. The use of polite expressions (*teineigo*) and complex verbal constructions demonstrates deference toward his audience. His communication acts are clearly and directly structured, with each sentence

being concise and to the point. This feature reflects the strategic nature and his authority as a military leader.

Erwin adjusts his speaking style depending on the audience. In interactions with superiors, his language is formal and respectful, whereas in interactions with subordinates, his speech becomes more direct and mobilizing. In his appeal to the recruits, Erwin uses engaging wording to inspire loyalty and courage. He emphasizes the strategic importance of the missions and the necessary sacrifices, appealing to idealism and the willingness to sacrifice for the common good. However, he does not hide the risks and dangers associated with the Scout Regiment's missions. He is honest and direct in presenting the difficulties, which contributes to building trust and respect among his subordinates. The commander calls for introspection, asking the recruits to evaluate their capacity for personal sacrifice for the good of humanity.

Based on the pragma-linguistic analysis, I conclude that the main characteristics of military leader speech are:

- Formality and politeness: the speech maintains a level of deference through its use of *teineigo* and passive or indirect constructions. This aligns with the need for a military leader to balance respect for his audience with the authority required to guide and persuade them.
- Clarity and conciseness: the speech has a clear and direct structure, with each sentence being concise and to the point, reflecting the strategic nature of the discourse and Erwin's authority.
- Adaptability: his speaking style varies according to the audience (superiors vs. subordinates).
- Ability to motivate: he employs engaging wording to inspire loyalty and courage.
- Frankness in expression: he presents risks and dangers without omissions to ensure his men are prepared to face reality.

Erwin Smith's communication acts essentially reflect the characteristics of military leader speech: formality, clarity, conciseness, adaptability, the ability to motivate, and honesty. These traits are crucial to ensuring the success of missions and maintaining the morale and loyalty of his subordinates. The Romanian translation of Erwin's speeches retains a high

degree of relevance and accuracy, successfully conveying to Romanian readers the original intentions and nuances of his messages.

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