

Research Article

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**Identifying language style used by the main characters in the movie
*Lost in Translation***

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Abstract

Language styles in communication can be categorized by their degree of formality. This phenomenon can be seen in both real life communication and different types of media that involve social interaction. One media that showcases the diverse language styles people use in their communication is movies. This study aimed to analyze the language styles employed by the main characters in the film *Lost in Translation* using Martin Joos' theory of language styles and identified the social factors influencing these styles using Janet Holmes' framework. To conduct the study, the researchers applied a qualitative descriptive method. The data was obtained from a conversation involving two main characters of *Lost in Translation* movie, named Bob Harris and Charlotte. The findings reveal 67 data of language styles in the movie, categorized as follows: 4 formal styles (5.9%), 8 consultative styles (11.9%), 45 casual styles (67.9%), and 10 intimate styles (14.9%). Furthermore, 94 data of social factors influencing language style were identified, there are 23 data of participant (24.4%), 49 data of topic (52%), 4 data of setting (4.2%), and 18 data of function (19%).

Keywords: language style; social factor; *Lost in Translation*; movie

1. Introduction

People are naturally born to be social beings. As a result, communication is becoming an important part of how they maintain their social life. Through communication, people can connect with each other by sharing ideas, building relationships, and expressing their emotions. Breen and Candlin (1980), Morrow (1977), and Widdowson (1978) (as cited in Richards and Schmidt, 2014) reveals that communication has several characteristics as follows: 1) it is a part of social interaction and acquired from the social interaction itself, 2) requires an immense level of unpredictability and innovation in structure and message, 3) it occur in discourse and sociocultural contexts that give controls on proper language usage as well as clues to ensure correct interpretation of utterances, 4) It happens under limited psychological and other Under certain circumstances, such as memory constraints, weariness, and distraction, 5) in communication, aim or purpose is the main requirement (it could be to inform, to persuade, to appreciate, etc), 6) includes authenticity, the language use is flexible rather than following what is written in the textbook, and 7) is evaluated as successful or not based on real outcomes. From this explanation, it could be seen that language plays a big role as a medium in conducting communication.

In its implementation, language can be differentiated due to several factors. It could be the factor from the speaker itself such as gender, age, and social status or the external factor including setting, context, and situation. Thus, these factors create language styles that can be used by the speaker in particular events. In linguistics, there is one study that is related to the language style in society. This study is called sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics examines the relationship between language use and specific communities, which include the variety of communities, place, and ethnicity and how it is related to each person's social categories, such as class, gender, etc (Van Herk, 2012). Sociolinguistics examine language as an important tool in society, including what kind of language style to use and the factors behind the use of it in society. Holmes (2013) stated that social factors can determine language style used based on its formality. She also explained four primary social factors influencing the choice of language style: they are participant, topic, setting, and function. Based on these factors people naturally change their language style by paying attention to the choice of grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, or tone.

Language style could be seen in various types of media. One literary work that has been popular and enjoyed by many people is movies. Monaco (1977) stated that a movie, also referred to as a form of recorded art, combines practical, environmental, visual, dramatic, storytelling, and musical elements (as cited in Li & Kuo, 2003). Movies are a complex form of literature that is organized as a way to express the movie-maker's ideas by showing viewers a series of interconnected events that continuously build the plot of the movie. Movies are usually made based on the story in real life, consequently it reflects on how people communicate in everyday life. In the movie we can see the portrayal of each character which includes the language style and other factors that affect the language style used.

There are several studies regarding the language style employed in movies. Aprilia et al (2021) conduct a study regarding language style used in *The Ron Clark Story* movie. According to Joos' theory of language style, the study identified four distinct language styles used by the characters in the movie. These include 90 instances (57.3%) of casual style, 46 instances (29.3%) of consultative style, 13 instances (8.3%) of formal style, and 8 instances (5.1%) of intimate style. The dominant language style is casual style. Another study also done by Dewi and Skolastika (2024) on analysing the language style used in the movie entitled *Instant Family*. The result shows there are four language style identified in the movie based on theory by Martin Joos, it consists of 11 data formal style (36,6%), 2 data consultative style (6,7%), casual 8 data casual style (26,6%), and 9 data intimate style (30%). The prevailing language style in the movie is formal style.

From the descriptions above, the researcher intends to examine the language style employed by the main characters in the movie *Lost in Translation*. This movie tells the story of an American actor, Bob Harris, who travels to Japan to film a whiskey commercial. During his stay, he encounters Charlotte, a woman who is following her photographer husband that has a work in Japan. The two characters experience feelings of being left out and lonely in the unfamiliar cultural setting, leading them to form a connection and find solace in each other's company as they explore the city of Tokyo together. The reason why researchers choose this movie is because of its cross-culture communication that could have an effect on the main characters' language style used. To analyse the data, the researchers applied Martin Joos' theory of language style and the categorization of social factors influencing language style by Janet Holmes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a study that investigates the relationship between language and society. According to Wardaugh and Fuller (2015), sociolinguistics explains how language functions in our daily conversations and the media we have access to, as well as the existence of societal norms, rules, and laws dealing with language.

2.2 Language Style

Language styles refer to the use of various expressions and language variations in different settings to convey the same information (Ducrot & Todorov, 1993). Missikova (2003) also defines language style as intentional choice, arrangement, and use of linguistic and non-linguistic elements based on the context, purpose, the author's intent, and substance of an utterance. According to these explanations, language style is a distinctive manner of using language influenced by various aspects, including participants, context, and function. The use of language style involves preferences about word choice, tone, sentence structure, and other language features that reflect the speaker's or writer's aim and the context of the communication. In its application, language could be varied according to its style. classifies language style into five categories: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate.

2.2.1 Frozen Style

Joos (1967) describe frozen style as a form of language that is utilized in highly formal situations, such as in formal ceremonies, palace, court, and international meetings. The term 'frozen' itself refers to the fixed pattern of language, including complex grammatical sentence structure and high-level vocabulary. This style is often used in front of a large audience, it involves pre-arranging content, using an overly dramatic tone, and employing various rhetorical strategies (Simamora & Sherina 2022).

2.2.2 Formal Style

Formal style occurs in formal contexts where communication is one-way, meaning there is no interruption (Joos 1976). Considering this style is dominantly one-way communication, people are using formal style to inform others or give direction for something. This style develops complex sentences by using standard form, correct grammar, and eloquent words and expressions. Contractions, colloquial language, and ellipsis are avoided in this type of language style.

2.2.3 Consultative Style

This style is usually employed in semi-formal situations. Consultative style mainly uses two-way communication, which means that the listener is required to give feedback and responses in the conversation. Consultative style often identified by the use of small responses such as "Huh", "Yes", "No", etc. Joo (1976) stated that the main components of this style are the speakers providing background information and the recipient responding continuously

2.2.4 Casual Style

Joos (1976) stated that casual style is a language style commonly used in casual contexts or non-formal situations that is adequate in conversations between friends or coworkers. This style often does not prioritize grammar accuracy in the sentences (Dewi & Skolastika, 2024). Slang words, ellipsis, contraction, and idiomatic expressions are mostly found in this style.

2.2.5 Intimate Style

This type is often used by participants with close relationships, such as close friends and family members (Joos 1976). This language style includes the use of intimate labels, such as "dear", "darling", "babe", "honey" or other nicknames that indicate closeness of the participants. This style usually used simple sentence structure, fragmentary vocabulary, short words and rather focused on the non-verbal communication and tone of the speaker. Intimate style also characterized by the use of inside jokes and private code that only the participant knows.

2.3 Social Factors in Language Style

In sociolinguistics, it is stated that language styles used by people are influenced by several social factors. According to Holmes (2013) language style can be influenced by four social factors: the participant, setting, topic, and function.

2.3.1 Participant

In a particular conversation, the participant includes both the speaker and the audience they are addressing. This factor is related to the relationship and social background of people involved in the conversation, including age, gender, profession, class, and social status. For example, people use frozen style in international meetings because the participants are professionals in their field with a high educational background.

2.3.2 Setting

This factor relates to where the interaction takes place and what is the social context involved in the interaction. Places such as home, school, office, public area, etc can influence the language style choices. The setting of time also affects how people use the language style. Therefore, understanding formal and non-formal situations is playing an important role in the language style choice.

2.3.3 Topic

The topic is connected to what the conversation is talking about. It includes the seriousness and importance of the topic being discussed. For example, conversation about daily life or chit-chat with friends usually used a casual style, while topics about business relationships used formal style.

2.3.4 Function

The last factor is the function of the language. It relates to why the conversation happened and why the speaker had to conduct the conversation. This factor involves the information and goals aimed by the speaker.

3. Methods

To conduct the study, the writer applied a descriptive qualitative research method. Descriptive research is an approach that attempts to provide descriptive explanations regarding the data, features, and relationships of phenomena to be studied (Djajasudarma & Nadeak, 2006). This method focused on analysing qualitative data of specific phenomenon by its pattern or relationship. This method is chosen because it is suitable to the aim of the study in which the researcher attempts to identify and describe the language style utilized by the main characters in the *Lost in Translation* movie, as well as the factors that influenced it.

The source of data is the *Lost in Translation* movie that is written and directed by Sofia Coppola. The researcher conducted an observation in order to collect data. Observation was done by these following steps; 1) Watching the *Lost in Translation* movie, 2) Transcribing the conversation that involves the two main characters (Bob and Charlotte), 3) Rewatching the movie to make sure the data obtained was correct.

To analyse the data, the researcher used content analysis. Content analysis refers to a research technique that produces systematic and reliable conclusions from texts into the contexts in which they are used (Krippendorff, 2018). Analysis was done in these following steps; 1) Identifying the language style used and factors that influenced it by using Joos' theory and Holmes' theory, 2) displaying the data result, 3) describing and discussing the data, and 4) drawing conclusions.

4. Results

According to Martin Joos' theory, the main characters in the movie "Lost in Translation" applied four different language patterns with a total 67 data taken from the dialogue of the movie.

Table 1. Types of Language Style used by the Main Characters in *Lost in Translation* movie

Types of Language Style	Quantity	Percentage
Frozen Style	-	-
Formal Style	4	5,9%
Consultative Style	8	11,9%
Casual Style	45	67,1%
Intimate Style	10	14,9%
Total	67	100%

In the *Lost in Translation* movie, there are 94 data found on factors influencing language style based on Holmes (2013) theory.

Table 2. Categorization of Social Factors influencing the Language Style Used by the Main Characters

Social Factors Influencing Language Style	Quantity	Percentage
Participant	23	24,4%
Topic	49	52%
Setting	4	4,2%
Function	18	19%
Total	94	100%

5. Discussion

5.1 Frozen Style

According to the writer's research, none of the data matches this category. It is reasonable to assume that the frozen style was not used in this movie since the genre of the movie itself is romance comedy drama.

5.2 Formal Style

There are 4 utterances with a 5,9 % percentage found in the movie that fall into this category. Formal style is commonly employed in a formal setting with a significant amount of exchanged information.

Data 1

(00:02:49-00:02:57)

Translator : “We will pick you up in the morning”.
Bob : “Okay.”
Translator : “See you tomorrow”.
Bob : “Great, short and sweet. Very Japanese, I like that”.
Translator : “My pleasure”.

This data above showed the first meeting of Bob and the translator. The relationship between Bob and the translator is tied up with business matters, so the style of language used is the formal style. Since it was their first meeting, both of them greeted each other kindly. In these utterances, it can be seen that Bob is giving eloquent words and expressions which is one of the formal language style characteristics. It could be seen in the sentence “*Great, short and sweet. Very Japanese, I like that*” that Bob feels honored to meet the translator. He expressed it by saying compliments to create a great impression before their work started.

The factors influencing language style in the data above are the participants and the setting. The participants that were involved in the conversation are the translator and Bob. Since it was the first meeting and they are in a business matter relationship, they use formal language style. The setting takes place at the lobby of the hotel Bob will stay in for a few days.

Data 2

(01:17:36-01:17:49)

Bob : “Miss Kawasaki? It’s Bob Harris... Yes, I would love to do this talk show... I would... I would love to change my plan for the day.”

In this data, Bob was making a call to Miss Kawasaki or the translator. In this data, the function and the participant are related to the business context, as a result the character of Bob Harris applied formal style language. Consequently, Bob stated his intention clearly by using the standard sentence structure consisting of Subject, Verb, and Object. Moreover, In the sentence “*Yes, I would love to do this talk show...*”, he used eloquent words and expressions to persuade Miss Kawasaki that he wanted to go to the talk show instead of doing another schedule. These characteristics are essential features of the formal style.

The factors of the language style used in data above are participants and function. The participants in the conversation are Bob and Miss Kawasaki or the translator. As mentioned before in the Data 1 the relationship between them is business partners which make them mostly use formal language style for each other. The function of the utterances above is to inform and confirm something, in this case Bob is informing Miss Kawasaki that instead of doing another schedule, he wanted to do the talk show.

5.3 Consultative Style

The findings of this study revealed 8 data of the main character utilized the consultative style in the movie. This style usually involves simple reactions such as “yes”, “huh”, “oh”, etc.

Data 3

(00:11:17-00:11:51)

Translator : “Could you do it slower and more intensity?”
Bob : “Okay”.
Bob : “For relaxing time, make it Suntory Time.”

The conversation above happens when Bob is shooting his Whiskey advertisement. Since all the staff are Japanese, he was accompanied by a translator. In these utterances, the translator was giving instructions as said by the director. The sentence “*Could you do it slower and more intensity?*” implies a semi-formal conversation where advice or recommendations are given. Then Bob replied with “*Okay*” as a sign that he understood and directly applied the instructions. The small response like “okay” and the function of the conversation here indicated that this data used the consultative language style.

Participants and function are the two aspects that shape language style in the conversation above. Participants involved in the conversation are the translator and Bob. Since the translator is helping Bob to communicate with Japanese staff, the conversation between them is also using consultative language style. The function of the conversation is giving instructions, in this case the translator is giving instructions to Bob on how to pose and do the slogan as said by the director.

Data 4

(00:17:14-00:17:42)

Woman : “Do you like massages?”
Bob : “I don’t think I like massages anymore.”
Woman : “My stockings”.
Bob : “What?”
Woman : “Lip them”.

This conversation takes place in a semi-formal situation when a woman suddenly sneaks into Bob’s room. The woman identified herself as a masseuse sent by Mr. Kazuzo. Bob seems confused with the situation since he either didn’t ask anything or wanted to meet someone. When the lady started the conversation by asking some questions, Bob replied to her with a small response like “*what?*” which shows that it belongs to a consultative style.

The factors influencing the language style in the data include the participants and the topic. In this conversation, the participants are the ‘Woman’ and Bob. The woman here is someone who Bob doesn’t know and sees for the first time. Since the woman is acting ‘rude’, Bob didn’t use formal language and instead used a consultative language style. The topic of the conversation is about the woman asking unexpected questions such as “*Do you like massage?*” and asking Bob to take off her stocking. The topic is not formal and rather ridiculous, which makes Bob use a consultative language style.

5.4 Casual Style

There are 45 data with a percentage of 67,1% representing the casual style, making it the most frequent language style found in the movie. The following are examples of the main character's casual language style.

Data 5

(00:34:20-00:34:27)

Charlotte : “I hope your Porsche works out.”
Charlotte : “Cheers for that.”
Bob : “Cheers for that, kanpai!”

The data above shows the casual style used by the two main characters. This conversation takes place at the hotel bar when Charlotte and Bob start to get to know each other. They talked about their lives and current activities. In this conversation, Charlotte jokingly asked Bob if he owns a Porsche in the middle of his current midlife crisis. Bob said that he didn’t and wanted to have one. Then Charlotte

cheered him up and Bob replied in fun with “*kanpai*” which means cheers in Japanese language. The informal situation and the use of slang words such as “cheers” and “kanpai” here imply that Charlotte and Bob interact in a casual style.

The conversation also showed that participant and topic are the social factors influencing the language style choice. The participants are Charlotte and Bob who are starting to get comfortable and close with each other. The topic of the conversation is about their current life, in this case Charlotte was cheering Bob to achieve his wish to own a Porsche.

Data 6

(00:59:17-00:59:23)

Bob : “Didn’t you feel any pain?”
Charlotte : “Yes, it really hurts.”
Bob : “Those toes are almost dead!”

The dialogue above shows the main characters using casual style. This scene takes place in a restaurant where they were taking lunch. In the middle of the conversation, Charlotte told Bob that she is in pain because she hurt her foot the other day. When she showed him her hurting foot, Bob jokingly said “*That toes are almost dead!*” because it seemed that the wound was severe. Charlotte then laughed at Bob’s reaction. The casual style used in this data can be identified by the informal situation and the contraction “Didn’t” used by Bob which is a short form of *did* and *not*.

The language style used in the dialogue above is influenced by two factors; participant and topic. The participants are Charlotte and Bob who have already become friends. The topic is about Charlotte who hurt her foot the day before.

5.5 Intimate Style

The main characters in the movie employ the intimate style in 10 utterances, accounting for 14.9% of the total data. This style is typically used in conversations between close friends and family members.

Data 7

(00:40:05-00:40:22)

John : “Yeah, call those guys, I’ll be back on Sunday. I love you.”
Charlotte : “I love you.”
Charlotte : “I’ll see you, okay.”

The conversation above shows the intimate style used by the main character, Charlotte and her husband, namely John. In this conversation John, who is a photographer, was going to work for a few days and left Charlotte alone in the hotel. The intimate style can be found in the private language used by Charlotte and John which is the sentence “*I love you*”. This sentence is usually used by people in close relationships to express their affection. In this scene they also have an intense eye contact and kiss which creates intimacy in the situation.

In the data mentioned above, the participant had an impact on the use of linguistic style. Charlotte and John are a young couple who have been married for two years. The close relationships between them encourage the use of intimate language style.

Data 8

(01:26:57-01:27:14)

Charlotte : “When are you leaving?”
Bob : “Tomorrow.”

Charlotte : "I'll miss you."

The dialogue above shows the intimate style of both main characters. This dialogue happened on the last night before Bob went back to America. Charlotte knew that Bob would be leaving soon and asking him to make sure when exactly he went back to America. The intimate style can be found in the private language "I'll miss you" used by Charlotte. This sentence shows Charlotte's unwillingness at Bob's departure. The intimacy of the situation also could be seen by the intense eye contact and facial expression between two main characters in this scene.

In the dialogue above, the participant, topic, and function are social factors influencing the choice of language style. The participants of the dialogue are Bob and Charlotte who have a close relationship toward the end of the movie. The closeness between them encourages the use of intimate language style. The topic is about Bob going back to America. The function of the conversation is to express sadness or longing to someone, in this case Charlotte was sad by Bob's departure.

6. Conclusions

After analysing the language styles of the two main characters in the movie *Lost in Translation*, this study identified 67 data representing four different language styles from the five types proposed by Joos (1967). These included 4 data of formal style (5.9%), 8 data of consultative style (11.9%), 45 data of casual style (67.9%), and 10 data of intimate style (14.9%). The variation in language style used by the main characters is influenced by several factors within each conversation. There are 94 data found of social factors influencing language style used according to the theory by Holmes (2013), consisting 23 data of participant (24.4%), 49 data of topic (52%), 4 data of setting (4.2%), and 18 data of function (19%).

Based on the data, the dominant language style found in the movie is casual style with 45 data (67.9%) and the dominant factor influencing language style used is the topic with 49 data (52%). These findings can be an example on how language style choices could be differentiated based on its formality. Moreover, the social factors of the interaction play a big role in influencing the use of language style.

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