

An Analysis of Language Styles used by The Main Character in “The Great Debaters” Movie

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted in order to know the types of language styles and the dominant type of language styles used by the main character in The Great Debaters movie. This research used descriptive research approach to analyze the subject. This research used theory by Martin Joos (1976) to find the language styles in the main character’s utterances in the movie. The result showed that there are 48 data found from the main character’s utterances. The details of language styles found in the main character’s utterances in the movie were 0 data for Frozen Style, 7 data for Formal Style, 30 data for Consultative Style, 8 data for Casual Style, and 3 data for Intimate Style. The dominant type of language style used by the main character in The Great Debaters movie is Consultative Style with 30 data found. Also, there were 3 factors that influenced the language styles in the main character’s utterances in the movie, they were the Participants, the Setting, and the Topic.

Keywords: *Language Style, Main Character, The Great Debaters*

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INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures who in their daily life use language to interact with each other. By using language, humans can easily convey their speech, opinions, and feelings. Humans do not use only one language but vary depending on where the speakers come from and what their social backgrounds are.

Holmes (2013) states that language varies according to its use and users, where it is used and to whom it is used and who utilizes it. There are two categories of language, they are spoken and written communication, including body language. The use of language itself consists of sounds, gestures, and signals that have their patterns and meanings. The examples of spoken language are in conversation, speech, discussion, television broadcast, or radio. Meanwhile, written language is used in poetry, newspapers, comics, articles, or journals.

Language cannot be separated from a scientific study called sociolinguistics. It focuses on the relationship between society and language use. In sociolinguistics, language has a relation to social phenomena. Sociolinguistics is intended to show how people utilize language which is influenced by such factors as race, class, and gender. This also shows that language style is a part of sociolinguistics. Language style is one of the crucial aspects in the study of sociolinguistics variation. Language style is a way of speech and/or a kind of utterance which is formed by means of conscious and intentional selection, systematic patterning and implementation of linguistics and extra-linguistic means, with respect to the topic, situation, function, author's intention and content of an utterance (Missikova, 2003). Language style also varies depending on the contexts and situations. For example, a president must use an appropriate language style when delivering his speech. Since the context is formal, the president must use a formal language style. It is different when a child talking to his or her friend. He/she must use casual language style because his/her relationship with his/her friend is very close, so that he uses a language style that is more comfortable to use with each other.

According to Merriam Webster's dictionary, "movies are projected pictures in which a person and the objects seem to move". For helping the researcher to analyze and identify the language styles used by the main character in the movie, the researcher used Martin Joos' theory in 1976. There are five main language styles derived from the theory of Martin Joos, they are frozen style, formal style, consultative style, casual style, and intimate style.

By using this theory, it was identified what the types of language styles were that the main character frequently used in certain places or situations. Through Martin Joos' theory, the results of the language style can be used as examples in real-life situations.

The reasons for selecting this topic were first that not only this research gave additional knowledge about the language styles in the movie, but also it could be one of the ways for the readers to dig deeper about five language styles suggested by Martin Joos' theory.

There were so many inspiring educational movies based on real-life stories, such as *Dead Poets Society*, *Stand and Deliver*, and *Freedom Writers*. But "*The Great Debaters*" was chosen because this movie depicts the struggle of black people to obtain recognition as Americans with equal rights. "*The Great Debaters*" tells about a professor named Melvin B. Tolson from Texas in 1935 and is based on a real life story. This movie illustrates the racism and discrimination issues that occurred at the time in Texas, USA. This movie also shows the viewers the black people struggled to obtain recognition and equal rights in America, thus this movie was chosen because it had historical and educational value that could give additional knowledge to the viewers.

This movie represents the utterances of real-life conversation. It is not enough to only recognize every word spoken by the main character, but it is also important to understand the context and to whom the main character is speaking. Thus, this study was being conducted to contribute and help the readers, especially English Education Program students, to not only know how to speak English, but also know how to apply the

appropriate language style when delivering their speech according to the contexts and situations.

The research gap for this research is that the writer categorized the language styles uttered by the main character in the movie according to Martin Joos' theory. This research was conducted to make the readers understand the language style used by the main character in "The Great Debaters" movie. It also aimed to describe the types and find the most dominant type of language style used by the main character in the movie.

In language learning, the use of language styles for students is very important, because there are probably still some students who use language styles without paying attention to the context and situation. Developing the language styles in a language learning can make the students understand that the use of language styles in daily life also have benefits for them, such as being more aware when speaking to the teachers or lecturers who have a higher level of education, and they can be more precise when deciding the appropriate words or sentences to write on an academic paper since it uses formal style based writings.

The students or readers can have a look at this research as an example of the appropriate usage of language styles in the terms of writing. This research also used movie as the tool to gain the data, which focused on the utterances of the main character. Thus, the readers can see the choice of words that is more appropriate to use in an educational context. Also, this research is expected to give contributions to the readers to be able to speak appropriately according to the language styles used.

METHOD

The researcher used the descriptive qualitative method in conducting this research. According to Williams (2007) he stated that one identifier of qualitative research is the social phenomenon being investigated from the participant's viewpoint. The researcher analyzed the data and described the types of language styles used by the main character in The Great Debaters movie. He also mentioned that qualitative research aims to describe, explain, and interpret collected data. Descriptive research often uses visual aids such as graphs and charts to give the reader understanding of the data collected.

Creswell (2014) states that qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. He also mentioned that the process of qualitative research includes emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data collected.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Findings of the Language Style

No.	Language Styles	Total
1.	Frozen Style	0
2.	Formal Style	7
3.	Consultative Style	30
4.	Casual Style	8
5.	Intimate Style	3
Total Data		48

In this research, the writer focused on analyzing the main character's utterances. From the data collected, the writer has found 48 utterances by the main character in The Great Debaters movie. The dominant type of language style used by the main character in The Great Debaters movie is consultative style with 30 data found.

For frozen style, there was no frozen style found in the main character's utterances. Frozen style is the most formal language style. It is often used in formal situations such as formal ceremonies, court, and state documents.

Formal style is a kind of style which the speaker is usually more careful about the pronunciation, choice of word and sentence structures for doing something important. In this data, there were 7 utterances found for formal language style. The utterances can be seen in one of these dialogues from the movie:

(Data 1)

6:15-6:48

Mr. Tolson

: "I am the darker brother. They send me to eat in the kitchen when company comes. But I laugh, and I eat well, and I grow strong. Tomorrow, I will sit at the table when company comes. Nobody'll dare to tell to me eat in the kitchen then. Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am, and be ashamed. I, too, am America."

The data above classified as a formal style because the main character, Mr. Tolson, starts off the movie by quoting a paragraph from a poet during a class. The sentence he was using was in the correct grammatical order and it sounded formal when he delivered it. It also indicated that the situation or the location was on campus and he was giving a lecture to his students.

(Data 5)

6:15-6:48

Mr. Tolson

: Gentlemen and lady. This is the hot spot. You will enter it at your own risk.

Data 5 shows that Mr. Tolson was using "Gentlemen and lady" instead of "guys" or "everyone" because the context itself was formal. Although the setting was in his house, he

was addressing his students “Gentlemen and lady” because their relationship with each other were students and lecturer. Not friends or family.

Consultative style is a language style that is used in a semi-formal communication situation. The slang and ellipsis might not be used in this style, but informal markers of rapport like “*hmm*”, “*yes, I know*”, “*umm*”, and informal linguistics elements like *about*, *so*, and so on may still be used. In this data, there were 30 utterances found for consultative language style. The utterances can be seen in:

(Data 3)

8:31-8:41

Henry L. : What’s a professor doing in the middle of the night dressed like a cotton-chopper?

Mr. Tolson : What’s the student doing in the middle of the night throwing his life away?

Henry L. : It’s funny. I thought I was defending myself.

Mr. Tolson : Mm.

Data 3 shows both MR. Tolson and his student, Henry Lowe, spoke to each other in a consultative style. Consultative style is used to speak between formal and informal situations, such as between a lecturer and a student in campus. In the data found, Mr. Tolson’s response was simple and short such as “*Mm.*”. In consultative style, the simple or short response are often like “*uh*”, “*hmm*”, “*well,*”, “*I don’t think so*”, and “*it’s funny*”

(Data 15)

15:03-15:10

Mr. Tolson : Mr. Farmer.

James F. Jr. : Yes, Sir.

Mr. Tolson : I have eyes in the back of my head and ears on both sides. Stand up.

In data 15, the main character, Mr. Tolson, called one of his students by his last name and the student suddenly responded. After that, Mr. Tolson continued to ask his student to stand up politely but serious at the same time.

Casual style is the most informal type of speech which mostly used between peers. This style is not in good grammatical sentences and it is often used in informal or casual situations using informal language and slangs. In this data, there were 8 utterances found for casual language style. The utterances can be seen in:

(Data 6)

1:17:28-1:17:38

Mr. Tolson : How you doing, Miss Becker?

Mrs. Becker : I’m fine. You all right?

Mr. Tolson : Yes, Ma’am.

Mrs. Becker : I got your rooms ready.

Mr. Tolson : Thank you.

Data 6 shows that this dialogue classifies as a casual style. One of the casual style’s characteristics is that the sentence tends to be ungrammatically correct. Mr. Tolson’s

sentence is not grammatically correct when he asked Miss Becker. This shows that the atmosphere in the scene tends to be relaxed and comfortable so the grammar is not necessary to be correct.

(Data 7)

1:23:11-1:23:30

James F. Jr : Where's Samantha?

Mr. Tolson : She's not coming with us.

Henry L. : Why not?

Mr. Tolson : Why do you think? I took her to the bus station. She wanted to go back to school. You wanted your chance. This is it.

In data 7, the scene took place in a car, not even close to campus or formal area. Mr. Tolson was with 2 of his students and they were speaking casually. There was not any seriousness that occurred in this scene so this data is classified as casual style.

Intimate style is a private type of speech that is often used by couples, family, or close friends. In this data, there were 3 utterances found for intimate style. The utterances can be seen in:

(Data 1)

58:31-58:37

Mr. Tolson : Yes, I did, honey, and nobody knows that better than you know. Oh, I'm fine. I'm fine.

In data 1, Mr. Tolson was talking to his wife at his house. His utterance is classified as intimate style. Intimate style is a private language style that developed between lovers, family, or even closest friends. The underlined sentence shows the example of the use of intimate style; "Yes, I did, honey." The word "honey" is a name given by Mr. Tolson to his wife. It makes the communication way more comfortable since they are husband and wife.

(Data 3)

1:27:59-1:28:06

Mrs. Tolson : Honey?

Mr. Tolson : Don't you tell anybody.

Mrs. Tolson : No.

In data 3, it is also classified as intimate style because the way Mr. Tolson asked her wife to tell anybody about the letter was not serious nor formal. But it was more in soft and relaxed tone.

According to the data findings, the use of language styles in this movie is not only categorized as formal and casual styles but also some other utterances indicate other language styles as well, such as consultative style and intimate style.

In this research there were also a few factors that influenced the main character's utterances. The 3 factors that influence the main character's language styles in the movie are: The participants; people who take part in something. The language styles are shown through the dialogue uttered by the main character in which he speaks with several speaking partners; they are the students, his friends, and his wife. The setting; it is also one

of the factors that influence the language styles used by the main character, for example at campus, at the main character's house, in the car, and at the train station. The last one is the topic; it is the most influential factor in language style. It is also important to know the context when delivering the topic that wants to be talked about. The speakers would not speak if there was no topic. Most of the utterances were talking about debate. In this movie, Mr. Tolson was the coach and lecturer, so the topic he talked about mostly is debate.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the five language styles used by the main character in The Great Debaters movie, the researcher discovered 4 out of 5 language styles used by the main character in The Great Debaters movie. They are Formal Style with 7 data, Consultative Style with 30 data, Casual Style with 8 data, and Intimate Style with 3 data, which makes it 48 data in total. And for the dominant type of language style used by the main character is Consultative Style with 30 data. The factors that influenced the language styles used by the main character were also written down in this research, they were participants, the setting, and the topic.

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