

A LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO CHARACTER INTERACTION: SPEECH STYLE AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE SHORT STORY *YUMMY, HAPPY, GOOD-TIME SOUP!*

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ABSTRACT

Language enables us to make sense of everything in the world, from the most basic to the most complex matters. It provides a means for speakers to communicate openly with their listeners. To ensure that interlocutors understand the speech, the speaker must convey it effectively by paying attention to language structure, word choice, intonation, and other factors to prevent misunderstandings by learning speech style. This research focused to find out the types of speech style that occurred in the short story. The researcher applied Martin Joos's (1967) theory of speech styles to explore the types of speech styles used by characters in the short story "Yummy, Happy, Good Time Soup". This research used qualitative methods to gain information about the speech style of the characters. The study focused on finding out types of speech styles, such as frozen style, formal style, consultative style, casual style, and intimate style, particularly in the short story entitled "*Yummy, Happy, Good Time Soup!*" Hence, in this research, the data came from the script of a short story performed by three characters namely Mabel, Old Lady namely Mabel, and Mabel's Mom namely Mabel. The researcher found out that in the dialogue between Mabel, the Old Lady, and Mabel's Mom, three speech styles were observed: formal, consultative, and casual. The formal style appeared once, the casual style appeared seven times, and the consultative style also appeared once. Notably, the casual style was the most frequently used.

Keywords: *Speech Style, Frozen Style, Formal Style, Consultative Style, Casual Style, Intimate Style*

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most powerful means by which individuals express who they are and how they relate to others. It functions not only as a channel of communication but also as a reflection of social position, personal identity, and cultural belonging. In literary texts, language takes on an even more complex role: it becomes a crafted medium through which authors construct character, reveal social relationships, and convey the subtle tensions that exist within a community.

The way a character speaks—their choice of words, tone, rhythm, and level of formality, often reveals more about their social identity than their actions or physical description.

The short story *Yummy, Happy, Good-Time Soup!* provides a rich opportunity to explore how language shapes character interaction and expresses social meaning. The story's dialogue captures the rhythms and nuances of everyday speech, revealing how people use language not only to communicate but also to position themselves within social hierarchies and cultural frameworks. Through its conversations, the story highlights how individuals perform identity—how they adapt their speech to express solidarity or distance, respect or authority, inclusion or exclusion. By examining these shifts in speech style, one can uncover how linguistic choices become a mirror of the characters' internal worlds and their relationships to the society around them.

This paper takes a linguistic approach to understanding character interaction in *Yummy, Happy, Good-Time Soup!* and focuses on how speech style reflects aspects of social identity. Using key ideas from sociolinguistics—such as style-shifting, politeness strategies, and speech accommodation—the study explores how the author employs variations in language to mark differences in class, gender, age, and cultural background. Each character's manner of speaking provides clues about their personality and social position, as well as about the broader cultural dynamics that shape their behavior and relationships.

At the same time, the story demonstrates that language in literature is never neutral. Speech acts and stylistic shifts carry emotional and ideological weight, often revealing underlying tensions and unspoken hierarchies. For instance, moments of linguistic conflict—interruptions, changes in register, or avoidance of certain forms of address—may indicate power struggles or attempts to assert independence. In this sense, the dialogue in *Yummy, Happy, Good-Time Soup!* functions not only as a tool for narrative progression but also as a reflection of the characters' efforts to negotiate identity and belonging within a social structure that values conformity and cultural harmony.

By analyzing speech style as a representation of social identity, this study aims to show that the author's use of language is central to understanding both character development and thematic meaning. The interplay of linguistic features within the story underscores the idea that language is inseparable from human experience—that how people speak reveals who they are, where they come from, and how they wish to be seen. Ultimately, this paper argues that a linguistic reading of *Yummy, Happy, Good-Time Soup!* deepens our understanding of the story's portrayal of individuality, community, and the intricate ways that language reflects the social world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language

People use language to convey their information, meanings, ideas, and emotions, allowing them to connect with others at any time and place. Language enables us to make sense of everything in the world, from the most basic to the most complex matters. It provides a means for speakers to communicate openly with their listeners. Children acquire language naturally and effortlessly at an early age by hearing and using it in conversation (Ramirez et al., 2012). It means that listening serves as a means of receiving language input while speaking acts as a method of producing language output, both of which are crucial for effective communication. Furthermore, people can effectively learn the language by using it correctly in conversation (Wahyuni & Rozi, 2020). In conversation, people often use speech as a means to convey the language.

Language Style

To ensure that interlocutors understand the speech, the speaker must convey it effectively by paying attention to language structure, word choice, intonation, and other factors to prevent misunderstandings. Amanda & Donal (2019) emphasize that a skilled speaker should choose the right sentence structure and context to aid comprehension. This involves considering the listener's position and selecting an appropriate language style for different interlocutors to avoid social issues. Holmes (2013) noted that language style involves varying word

choices while conveying the same information, adapting based on the audience and context. Also, Asrofah et al. (2017) argue that a speaker's communication style reflects their characteristic and adjusts word choices without altering the sentence structure, tailored to the listener's role. It lets the speaker know to deliver the utterance properly.

The use of language style in novels is crucial for shaping the narrative. Authors typically have distinctive language styles in their works, which contribute to the aesthetic quality of the literature. Zainnudin (1992) notes that many experts agree that language style involves employing various linguistic techniques in sentence construction to achieve particular effects. However, they often overlook the direct and indirect meanings conveyed through these language styles. Joos (1967) noted that speech style is divided into some branches, namely frozen style, formal style, consultative style, casual style, and intimate style.

There were several researchers investigated the use of language style. Cahyanti (2024) found out that all of those speakers which native and non-native speakers of English attend to apply all of those styles in their utterances. Saleh (2018) examined language style in the film “Tanah Surga Katanya” by Brajamusti and identified all the types of language styles present in the movie. However, some researchers did not detect all the language styles in the speakers' dialogues. Khotimah (2019) analyzed the language style in “The Queen”, particularly focusing on Queen Elizabeth, and found that she used consultative, casual, intimate, and formal styles. This indicates that not all language styles are applicable in communication, as their use depends on the interlocutor's position.

Speakers can use language styles freely in their communication. Dewi et al. (2020), who studied language style among native English speakers in romantic movies, identified all types of language styles. Similarly, Hermagustiana (2018) explored the language styles of non-native speakers, specifically EFL teachers, and found the use of formal, casual, and consultative styles in teaching practices. In a related study, Maraden (2016) examined language styles in Indonesian films using Joos's theory, identifying five types: frozen, formal, consultative (the most common), casual, and intimate. This research indicates that language style is

utilized not only by native speakers but also by all speakers, who achieve natural communication similar to that of native speakers.

Building on previous research, the current study concludes that speech styles are present in both written and spoken contexts. It appears that speakers can use various speech styles in their utterances across different situations. Upon reviewing earlier studies, the researcher identified a gap: none specifically focused on short stories for children. Despite their brevity, these stories often feature a range of speech styles. To address this gap, the researcher applied Martin Joos's (1967) theory of speech styles to explore the types of speech styles used by characters in the short story "Yummy, Happy, Good Time Soup".

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilizes qualitative research methods to gather data. Qualitative research involves a deep examination of individual units and analysis of complex phenomena (Bassey, 1999). It uses numerical data to support findings rather than as the primary data source and does not rely on hypotheses. In line with this approach, the research focuses on describing the speaker's use of speech style in communication, specifically examining the types of their usage.

This research indicated a written discourse study, especially in the pragmatics area. This research used qualitative methods to gain information about the speech style of the characters. The study focused on finding out types of speech styles, such as frozen style, formal style, consultative style, casual style, and intimate style, particularly in the short story entitled "*Yummy, Happy, Good Time Soup!*" Hence, in this research, the data came from the script of a short story performed by three characters namely Mabel, Old Lady namely Mabel, and Mabel's Mom namely Mabel. Last, the short story was taken from the storyberries.com.

The researcher applied several steps to discover the findings of this research. First, the researcher started to read the script from storyberries.com. Then, the researcher wrote the transcript of the story because the story could not be downloaded. While transcribing it, the researcher took some notes that might

contain the speech style. Here, the researcher classified it based on Joos's theory. Next, the researcher calculated it to discover the frequently used speech style. Last, the researcher concluded by interpreting the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher found interesting things. Here, the researcher found the findings based on Joos's theory (2000). Those speakers applied the speech style in their utterances automatically.

a. Formal Style

This style is used when the speaker is in a challenging or crucial situation. It adheres to a formal pattern with minimal or no audience interaction. A key feature is that the speaker addresses individuals by their title rather than their name or surname. Additionally, this style follows a standardized format, using modal verbs like would, could, should, might, can, or may. In this short story, "Yummy, Happy, Good Time Soup!" formal style occurred just once. It can be seen in the dialogue below:

Mabel: "Miss...sorry, what was your name?"

Based on the dialogue, Mabel applied 'Miss' at the beginning of her utterance. Using that word was the characteristic of formal style. Mabel applied that word to ask someone else in their first meeting. As we know, in the first meeting, commonly we used a formal style to address someone else because we still lack information relating to the interlocutor.

b. Consultative Style

This particular style blends formal elements with societal expectations that apply to its users. Unlike the formal style, which involves longer sentences and is used in structured communication, this style features shorter sentences typical of everyday conversation. It falls under the consultative style category, where speakers alternate, and responses are brief, often using a limited set of standard signals. In the short story "Yummy, Happy, Good Time Soup!," the formal style is used only once, as illustrated in the dialogue below:

Old Lady : “Let’s get this fixed up, shall we?”

Mabel : “Uh-huh” (nodding)

Based on the dialogues above, Mabel answered Old Lady by using a short statement. By adding a gesture, Mabel’s response implicated she agreed with the Old Lady’s statement. Here, as explained before, using short answers in the dialogue was the characteristic of the consultative style.

c. Casual Style

In a casual style, language is used in laid-back or everyday situations, such as when friends or family members chat outside of formal settings like classrooms. This style features the use of first names or nicknames instead of titles and surnames. It often includes slang, vulgarities, and colloquial expressions. Key differences from the consultative style include the use of ellipses or omissions to shorten sentences, with a focus on the end of sentences. This style frequently drops unstressed words at the beginning of sentences, affecting articles, pronouns, auxiliaries, and the verb "to be." Slang terms, which are informal and recognized by certain groups like teenagers, are common. For example, "want to" become "wanna" and "going to" becomes "gonna." In the short story "Yummy, Happy, Good Time Soup!," the formal style appears seven times, as shown in the dialogue below:

Old Lady: “That’s right. Here, lemme show ya!”

According to the dialogue presented above, the Old Lady applied slang in the middle of her utterance. When the Old Lady used the word ‘lemme’ which means let me, she wanted to show Mabel something. In this style, the speaker can apply slang freely in their utterance as long as both of speaker and interlocutor understand each other and get the meaning of the sentence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from the previous section, the researcher identified several speech styles used by the speakers in the short story 'Yummy, Happy, Good Time Soup!' This variation in speech styles occurs naturally depending on the context of the conversation. In the dialogue between Mabel, the Old Lady, and

Mabel's Mom, three speech styles were observed: formal, consultative, and casual. The formal style appeared once, the casual style appeared seven times, and the consultative style also appeared once. Notably, the casual style was the most frequently used.

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