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# LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT: EXPLORING STYLE VARIATION IN THE CLASS OF ENGLISH FOR JOURNALISM

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***Abstract***
*Language styles are present in different social groups in the communication process, and this language phenomenon necessitates attention to ensure effective communication.The objective of this research is to investigate the ways in which different language styles are produced, as well as the extent to which social factors and dimensions drive the use of certain languages.This research utilizes qualitative methods, with participant observation serving as the primary data collection technique. The data are the utterances of the participants (students and lecturers) of the English for Journalism class. The findings of this study demonstrate the existence of at least four styles that are alternately employed in this class, namely formal, intimate, consultative, and casual. Various societal factors also tend to play an active role in the selection of a particular language style, namely setting, participants, situation and topic, social-solidarity distance, status, formality, and referential and affective function scale. These findings underscore the adaptability of language choice in the classroom, which is flexible and adapts to the interaction of social factors and classroom context.*
***Keywords:*** *Language Styles; Social Factors and Dimensions; Academic Environments, Effective Communication*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, individuals increasingly engage in communication across various cultural, national, and racial boundaries (Jackson, 2020). This trend suggests a persistent opportunity for interactions characterized by linguistic flexibility, where individuals interact with others using languages and methods that are unfamiliar to them. Consequently, individuals have the potential to learn and adopt novel ways of interacting, resulting in the emergence of new linguistic variations. In essence, individuals who have the opportunity to interact with others are likely to experience growth in knowledge and language proficiency.

Language is defined as a system that is actively and dynamically (Milroy & Gordon, 2008; Tagliamonte, 2012) used in society to facilitate ongoing

connectivity between individuals through social interaction (Fitch & Sanders, 2005). Due to the growing need to socialize, people are increasingly actively using language for their needs. They become more familiar with the language and its variations and continue to learn to accept them where previously they may not have been accepted in certain communities (Hernandez-Campoy, 2019). The process of adoption has been shown to provide individuals with greater choice in terms of vocabulary, style, and language. Consequently, the linguistic needs of individuals in society can be met with the dynamism of language, thereby facilitating their social interaction with the broader community.

Language dynamics are pivotal in emphasizing that no two individuals speak in an identical manner (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). Each person has selected a particular manner and language to utilize in their interactions with others. Even if they speak the same language, individuals have experienced different things and have distinct needs. These experiences and situations serve as the starting point for developing and changing long-standing habits.

Certain linguistic expressions may not be deemed appropriate for specific circumstances (Fairclough, 2013; Romaine, 2000). Dynamic sociocultural contexts have historically precipitated shifts in linguistic expression and modes of communication (Woods, 2017). Individuals endeavor to adapt their language to align with the linguistic norms prevalent within their respective communities. Within the context of higher education, educators have established guidelines delineating the acceptable language to be used in academic discourse. Consequently, when students engage in communication with their instructors, they employ the language structure that has been instituted within the academic milieu. This language may not be one that is routinely used by everyone; however, as students need to interact with their lecturers, they must adapt to the language patterns accepted in that environment.Therefore, certain factors in society have long supported the development of language.

Language development manifest in a variety of societal environments, including academic ones. The latter offers more opportunities for regular communication, which in turn leads to a greater variety of linguistic expressions. This necessity results in individuals exhibiting diverse characteristics and

characteristics of their language. Consequently, they modify their language in response to various social factors, such social class, ethnicity, gender, age, and geographical dialect (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). This underscores the notion that individuals have distinct purposes for the information they convey, highlighting the complexity and variability inherent in language use (A et al., 2017).

The comprehension of linguistic variation confers a multitude of advantages to users of interaction, primarily by enhancing the efficacy of communication. The selection of an appropriate style and vocabulary for the conveyance of ideas is a hallmark of effective language variation, fostering clarity and persuasiveness, and thereby mitigating the occurrence of misunderstandings . For instance, the composition of a research proposal with a formal character lends credibility and authority to the author, while a proposal written in an informal tone can diminish the persuasiveness of the argument.

Additionally, recognizing linguistic variation fosters inclusivity by allowing individuals to express themselves in a variety of ways, thereby reducing feelings of alienation and enhancing engagement. Consequently, academic institutions must acknowledge and accommodate these differences to create an environment that encourages participation from all members, irrespective of linguistic background.

**The Concept of Styles**

In general, language users adopt a particular style when interacting with society (Meyerhoff, 2019; Romaine, 2023), based on various social factors such as formality, complexity, and audience(Holmes & Wilson, 2022). These users may completely change the language that they use, or they may modify it. Some of the main changes include formal, casual, consultative, frozen, and intimate (Joos, M., 1967 as cited in Purba et al., 2021).

a. The **Deliberative (Formal)** Style is employed in formal settings where the speaker seeks to intentionally extend the dialogue with the listener. This style is typically utilized by professionals such as businessmen, lecturers, teachers, and individuals engaged in formal contexts. They employ formal language to ensure clarity and professionalism in communication.

b. In contrast, **Casual Styles** are employed when participants aspire to establish intimacy or foster a certain degree of familiarity. The objective of this Style is to establish a more comfortable and informal communication. It facilitates more natural and unobtrusive interactions, allowing individuals to communicate more easily and avoid formal barriers. This Style is commonly used in informal situations and in language employed between friends or in closer relationships, as illustrated by the following example: "Oh, hi! That's great."
c. The **Consultative Style**, on the other hand, is typically employed in more structured discussions, such as in job applications, business transactions, and professional interactions. This Style facilitates meaningful conversations while upholding professional standards, making it a valuable tool for various contexts. Professional discussions, such as those between accountants and clients, judges and lawyers, and doctors and patients, may benefit from the use of this Style.
d. The **Oratorical Style**, also known as the Frozen Style, is used by professional speakers in official settings. These contexts establish certain rules and patterns in communication. The frozen Style, on the other hand, is often employed in formal speeches, proclamations, and academic discourse, where precise and structured communication is paramount.
e. The **Intimate Style**, reserved for close relationships such as family members, is employed to foster strong bonds between participants. This Style is used for more personal purposes, including conversations between a mother and daughter or a husband and wife.

The development of language Styles continuously occurs and is shaped by exposure to diverse linguistics environments. Language users exhibit a high degree of freedom in their selection of Styles, for instance a student who often shifts from informal language used in daily interactions to a more formal Style choices when engaging in academic settings, such as class or other professional environments. In fact, this observed dynamic shift in language choice emphasizes

the existence of specific societal factors that influence the selection of particular Styles by individuals.

Societal factors strengthen the profound impact on language styles as well as compelling evidence of the intricate interconnection between language and society(Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021).The examination of the myriad societal factors that influence linguistic interaction needs to be defined through the impacts of social factors such as participants, settings, topics, and functions; and social dimensions such as solidarity-social distance scale, status scale, formality scale, and referential and affective function scale (Holmes & Wilson, 2022) to the language.

Holmes and Wilson divide four social dimensions which are:

1. **Solidarity-social distance scale**: differentiates language used through participants' relationship in how intimate or distant relationship impacts high solidarity or low solidarity of the language participants.

2. **Status scale**: also refers to participants' relationship that is relevant to the status of participants in linguistic choices. Superior people get high status in addressing such as Mr., Mrs., Prof., etc. Otherwise, subordinate people get low status in addressing by only calling their name.

3. **Formality scale**: related to the setting of participants' interaction. A formal setting requires high formality and an informal setting requires low formality.

4. **Referential and affective function scale**: concerned with a topic or the purposes of interaction. Higher information content affects lower affective content while lower information content affects higher effective content.

A substantial number of research have been dedicated to the exploration of language styles. One notable study was conducted by Muslimawati (2022) (Muslimawati, 2022), who examined the factors that influence the use of formal and informal language. The study identified a set of factors that significantly

determine language, including formal situations, communication purposes, status and age differences, and familiarity. Research conducted by A et al (2017) determined that certain factors in the situational context, such as purpose of communication, determine the choice of lexical items used in communication. In a similar vein, Tanasy (2020)'s research identified factors such as stratification, distance, and kinship as influential in shaping the politeness patterns exhibited by the Dusun Tangkuru society in its interactions with the Makassar language and Pasaribu (2021)‘s research identified that there are different power and social status (position) factors that caused the choice of language.

A substantial body of research has been dedicated to investigating the role of social factors in language variation. However, only a limited number of studies have examined language variation in specific academic disciplines, such as English for Journalism. The present study focuses on the influence of various societal factors on general linguistic adaptation in formal academic contexts. under two primary objectives. Firstly, it explores the manifestation of divergent language styles (i.e., formal, consultative, casual, and intimate) in classroom interactions within an English for Journalism course. Secondly, it investigates the extent to which social factors and dimensions influence language styles.

A close examination of the language styles exhibited by students enrolled in the English for Journalism course has yielded concrete insights into the manner in which learners employ formal, consultative, casual, and intimate language styles in academic settings. Moreover, this study serves to broaden the existing discourse on sociolinguistic variations by investigating the impact of social factors, including participants, settings, functions, and topics, as well as social dimensions, such as status, formality, and solidarity, on students' style choices in academic discourse settings.

## METHOD

In conducting this research, Due to the need to understand the social phenomenon (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Grenier & Merriam, 2019), This research implemented a descriptive qualitative method with documentation techniques and table checklist to collect data (Busetto et al., 2020; Mackey & Gass, 2012). The sources of data are collected from the spoken utterances that contain the style used by the nine students (20s) and one lecturer (30s) in the English for Journalism class at Jakarta International University. The nine participants are the third-year undergraduate students majoring in English Literature, ranging from B1 intermadiate to C1 advanced, and have been studying English for academic and professional purposes. In another side, the lecturer is an experienced lecturer who has been teaching for more than 5 years. The research data was taken from the analysis of the participants' conversations. In collecting data, researcher audio-recorded and transcibed the conversations, ensuring accuracy by cross-checking with participants when necessary. After that, the researcher coded the transcriptions thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles et al., 2014), following the principles of qualitative content analysis. The followings are the steps included:

1. Recoring conversation
2. Transcribing the recorded coversation verbatim
3. Identifying and categorizing utterances
4. Applying thematic coding based on Martin Joss‘ language style theory
5. Analyzing the data
6. Displaying the data and discussion
7. Concluding

The conversation was recorded in December, 2022, in the English for Journalism class. While recording the conversations, the researcher observed and took part in the conversations. The situation and conversations naturally occurred without any change in the behavior of participants from the usual English for Journalism class.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used Martin Joss' (1972) classification of language styles including frozen, formal, consultative, caseal, and intimate styles. The language style used by the participants in the English for Journalism class at Jakarta International University is classified into several categories.

In identifying the factors influencing participants to use various language style in the English for Journalism class, the researcher uses Holmes' (2022) sociolinguistic framework, considering factors such as setting, participants, topic, and function of communication.

For the purpose of enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was applied by comparing data across different interactions and cross-referencing coding with a second independent coder. Furthermore, member-checking was conducted by allowing participants to review their transcriptions and coded utterances to confirm accuracy (*Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N. (2018) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches. 4th Edition, SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks. - References - Scientific Research Publishing*, n.d.)

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The present study addresses two primary issues. First, it explores the language styles employed by participants of English for Journalism classes. Second, it explores the social factors that influence the styles chosen by participants. To maintain the anonymity of the participants, the data are presented using codes C1-C10.

### 8. Formal Style

In the context of higher education, formal style should be an integral component of all interactions within the academic environment. Every participant, whether student or faculty member, tends to employ formal conversational norms during academic interactions.

**C4** **:** Good afternoon, everyone!
**C11** **:** Good afternoon.
**C4** **:** We are the last group and we are going to present the last discussion about writing for broadcasting. My name is

[Name]." and my partner is [Partner's Name]."

**Excerpt 1: Formal Style**

The formal style is typically manifested through the adherence to clear linguistic standards (Muslimawati, 2022) used in formal situation (Woods, 2017).

The aforementioned dialogue exhibits several features that confirm its use of a formal language style. Primarily, it opens with a polite greeting, "Good afternoon, everyone," a gesture considered polite and respectful in formal settings, such as presentations or meetings. Considering the context of the dialogue, the use of this greeting is appropriate. This sentence is employed by students who are presenting in front of their class and their friends, for example. The next feature is a structured introduction, marked by the phrase "We are the last group and we will deliver the final discussion on writing for broadcasting. "Structurally, this sentence can be categorized as clear and orderly, a characteristic of formal communication. In this context, students avoid informal expressions when starting their discussion. Furthermore, students tend to introduce themselves in a complete manner, for example, "My name is..." and "My partner is...", thereby aligning their language with formal communication standards. Conversely, in informal contexts, students might opt for nicknames and the first-person pronoun "I'm" in place of "My name". The subsequent feature pertains to the employment of an objective tone. For instance, the sentence "We are going to present the last discussion about writing for broadcasting" conveys a focus on the task at hand, devoid of personal opinions or casual comments, thereby emphasizing a neutral and objective stance. Conversely, an informal style might entail a statement such as "Hey, guys! We're going to talk about writing for broadcasting. I'm [Name] and this is [Partner's Name]."

A more thorough examination of the factors that led to the occurrence of the aforementioned dialogue is warranted. From a social factors perspective, particularly with regard to the **participants** involved in the conversation, this dialogue was initiated by students delivering a presentation before an audience comprising their classmates and instructors. Generally, students tend to employ a more formal language when delivering a presentation in front of an audience.

Additionally, the presence of the lecturer has been observed to influence the atmosphere of the event, particularly in the classroom setting. The authority figure of the lecturer has been shown to encourage the use of more formal language. This also illustrates a certain **Solidarity – Social Distance Scale** and **Status Scale** between the speaker and the audience. Even though they are peers, the presentation context increases the social distance proved by the formal introduction in which casual one is inappropriate.

In accordance with this perspective, the background setting in which the interaction occurs assumes significant importance. In this particular context, the presentation is conducted within the confines of a classroom, thereby establishing an academic environment. Such a formal setting naturally necessitates structured and polite communication (Sheikha & Inkpen, 2012). This also shows certain **Formality Scale.** Moreover, the topic under consideration significantly influences the appropriate language style during formal activities, such as presentations. The topic of "Broadcasting," being an academic and professional subject, is a technical or specialized topic. Typically, the speaker employs formal language that is clear, precise, and respectful of the subject matter, directing the discussion with meticulous care. Moreover, the primary objective of this presentation is to impart knowledge to a substantial audience, compelling the speaker to convey information with clarity and professionalism, consistent with the formal style. In summary, the present analysis corroborates the hypothesis that the subject conversation is oriented more toward the dissemination of factual information, emphasizing formal interaction **(referential)** as opposed to the expression of emotions **(affective).**

### 9. Casual Style

The casual style is a linguistic variety employed in situations characterized by an informal and relaxed ambience. This style is primarily used in informal contexts, such as conversations among friends and family members. However, there are instances where it is also employed in academic settings, particularly during class activities.

**C1** **:** You write a broadcasting script. So, after their presentation, we will be brainstorming, okay? The topics you prepared. We will do it together

and we will discuss. Sounds good?
**C2 :** Yes, Miss. **Okay, dokey.**

**Excerpt 2: Casual Style**

The utilization of this linguistic variety is intended to cultivate a sense of intimacy and enhance mutual comprehension of the information being transmitted. In academic settings, its usage also serves to eliminate linguistic barriers, thereby facilitating more seamless communication. Casual style, as a rule, are characterized by various linguistic features that do not conform to the standard, such as the use of shortened words and colloquial expressions.

As indicated by the data above, this dialogue is classified as a casual language style due to the presence of several key characteristics. Primarily, it employs informal vocabulary and phrases, as evidenced by expressions such as "Sounds good?" and "Okay, dokey." These phrases underscore the informal and communicative nature of the discourse, reflecting everyday spoken language rather than formal expressions. Additionally, the speaker utilizes simple contractions and shortened sentences, such as "We will do it together and we will discuss." This sentence maintains a casual tone, whereas the speaker may opt for a more formal choice, such as, "After their presentation, we will exchange ideas and engage in discussion on the topics you have prepared. "The Interaction Style feature, with the use of the word "Okay?" as a question tag, also emphasizes the casual style of danger and makes the conversation more interactive. In a more formal context, alternative choices include "Is that clear?" or "Do you agree with this plan?" The aforementioned dialogue also evinces a tone of familiarity, showcasing a friendly and relaxed exchange between the speaker and the audience, which is characteristic of casual interactions.

A preliminary analysis has identified several social factors involved in the emergence of the aforementioned conversation. The first social factor that emerged was the close relationship between the speaker and the students, which contradicts the general prediction that conversations between students and lecturers will always be formal. In this situation, the close relationship between the speaker and the students appears to facilitate relaxed communication

(Muslimawati, 2022). This phenomenon also illustrates a certain Solidarity-Social Distance Scale. In this case, even though the first speaker may have a higher status, the social distance between them is low. Certain status, similar to (Tanasy et al., 2020) impacts on the language used. However, the use of approachable, casual language serves to minimize the status gap. It is important to note that in an academic context, such as a classroom, not all conversations will necessarily lead to a formal language style. If further exploration is warranted, this conversation is situated outside the context of a presentation. While the subject matter pertains to broadcasting, this dialogue is a follow-up to an invitation extended to students to attend a brainstorming session. This particular context is less formal than a presentation or lecture, and as such, the social dimension is reflected in the use of affective language, which conveys friendliness and fosters a comfortable atmosphere.

10. **Consultative Styles**

The Consultative Style is a style of communication that is typically employed in more structured environments to facilitate dialog while maintaining professional standards. This style is considered an invaluable tool in a variety of settings. As the name suggests, the Consultative style is usually used for in-depth discussions that are consultative in nature, especially when communicating with individuals who have superior knowledge or when offering advice from others. The utilization of this approach can foster a collaborative environment with the aim of creating clarity and understanding among all parties involved.

This style is characterized by features such as polite questions, which aim to show respect for the interlocutor (Male et al., 2024), as well as clarification and confirmation. Its primary function is to initiate interactive dialog, with individuals posing questions such as "Can you explain more about that?" or "Do you have an opinion on this matter?" to invite collaboration and deeper exploration of the topic at hand with the discussion partner.

Consider the following dialogue:

C4 : But at this moment in time, if the opinion polls are to be believed, there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. So, I would like to ask Ruth to figure it out. **What do you**

**think?**

C3 : If the opinion polls are to be believed, there seems to be no other way. There's no way.

**Excerpt 3: Consultative Style**

The preceding dialogue exemplifies a consultative style, characterized by a nuanced interplay between formal and casual language. This model, which involves the provision of opinions or the solicitation of counsel, is frequently employed in semi-formal contexts to facilitate the exchange of information. The consultative style is distinguished by several key characteristics, which are outlined below. The principal characteristics of the consultative style are characterized by a moderate level of formality, with personal involvement manifested through phrases such as "at this moment in time" and "if the opinion polls are to be believed." The speaker adopts a measured tone, exhibiting respect, which is characteristic of a consultative context, where the tone is neither overly formal nor rigid. Another frequently described characteristic is an invitation for input and opinion, as evidenced by the sentence "I would like to ask Ruth to figure it out. What do you think?" This sentence exemplifies a structured request for input, which typically occurs in the context of meetings and interviews. This request is neither a directive (formal) nor an informal suggestion, but rather a polite, professional entreaty. The Transitional and Clarification Phrase characteristics, exemplified by phrases such as "there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel" and "if the opinion polls are to be believed," further substantiate the consultative nature of the conversation. However, this style is characterized by its analytical and explanatory nature. Specifically, the speaker employs elaboration to clarify and reinforce salient points in the discussion topic, thereby facilitating comprehension and preventing potential misinterpretations.

11. **Intimate Style**

The intimate style is a form of communication characterized by a relaxed and informal style of expression that is typically employed in close-knit social settings. Its use has been observed in a variety of contexts, including academic

environments such as classroom activities. Conversations that employ this style are distinguished by a unique manner of addressing others, the use of abbreviated words, and occasionally unclear articulation. Notably, this style of interaction does not adhere to conventional social boundaries, facilitating a relaxed and informal exchange among the speakers.

C2 : Minus. Minus point. **'cause** you give us the wrong information. **Hahaha**
C5 : Sorry. Sorry. **Hehehe**

**Excerpt 4: Intimate Style**

The students in this class appear to have a closer relationship than others, as evidenced by the casual language they use in their conversations. The students' use of informal language, such as the casual "cause" instead of "because," further underscores the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of their interactions. Their light-hearted interactions, exemplified by their humorous responses to each other's comments, highlight the comfort and familiarity that defines their relationship.

Consequently, in such interactions, the value of formality in a class is not echoed. Students opt for their more familiar and relaxed ways, which can facilitate the participants to express themselves freely, often resulting in humorous or playful dialogues. This way is also to show their identity as a close friend (Dinasta et al., 2024). Thus, in terms of language dynamics, this certainly illustrates that this intimate language style can strengthen interpersonal relationships, allow individuals to communicate in a simple way, and reflect good understanding and relationships.

## CONCLUSION

A comprehensive understanding of the dynamic nature of language necessitates a meticulous examination of the societal factors that give rise to the manifestation of varied linguistic styles. These dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping the precision of language selections and styles.This study commenced with the identification of numerous linguistic phenomena that evolve within academic settings, such as the English for Journalism course. It then proceeded by

meticulously unraveling the underlying motivations and factors that give rise to these phenomena.

The study identified at least four categories of dynamic interactions among formal, consultative, casual, and intimate styles, based on the nature of class activities.The use of formal language at the commencement of the presentation, consultative style during the question and answer session, casual style to enhance shared understanding of the information conveyed, and intimate style during humorous interactions, laughter, and informal corrections, serve to illustrate the extent to which this class utilizes various language variations in its interactions. However, the underlying factors that precipitate these variations in language usage merit further investigation.

It is an irrefutable fact that social factors and dimensions have exerted a substantial influence on the language style employed (Parinduri et al., 2024). A pertinent illustration of this phenomenon is the manner in which the role of conversation participants adjusts the formality of their language. For instance, students exhibit a propensity to adjust their language patterns when the interlocutor is a peer or instructor.In addition, setting and topic factors play a pivotal role in this regard, particularly in determining the level of formality. For example, during a presentation, formal language is more imperative. Conversely, informal styles are more prevalent in informal settings. However, the present study also revealed that participants employed these language styles in class during discussions.The Status scale accentuates the power dynamics between teachers and students, actively encouraging adjustments to an appropriate style (Meiristiani, 2011; Pasaribu et al., 2022), such as more formal or consultative. The solidarity-social distance scale (high-low) elucidates the transition to casual and intimate styles among close peers (high solidarity). Furthermore, the formality scale and the referential/affective function scale, such as in tasks requiring factual accuracy, promote the use of formal styles. Conversely, tasks or emotions involving emotions encourage casual or intimate interactions. In conclusion, these findings underscore the adaptability of language choices in the classroom, where they are flexible and adapt to the interplay of social factors and classroom contexts.

Research on language style is of significant importance; however, further exploration is necessary to ensure a comprehensive understanding of this subject. Language usage varies among individuals, necessitating the careful selection of appropriate language for specific contexts. This research is particularly relevant for students, as it equips them with effective communication strategies, especially within the context of classroom interactions. Additionally, practitioners of language can benefit from this research by gaining insights into language variations that can be employed in the classroom setting.It is important to note, however, that this research is subject to certain limitations. To further elucidate the involvement and relationship of factors in society with the language style that is created, researchers must consider similar issues and explore further. Direct perspectives from related parties, such as lecturers and students, are also necessary to gain a more complete understanding of this phenomenon.

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