The Stylistic Dimension of Language in the Age of Adaline Movie

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Abstract. This study explores the stylistic and functional dimensions of language in The Age of Adaline movie by analyzing the types of language style and function used in the script. Grounded in Martin Joos' theory of language style and Roman Jakobson's theory of language function, the research adopts a qualitative method with a discourse and sociolinguistic analysis approach. The study aims to identify how various styles and functions of language are utilized to shape character interactions and support the narrative. The findings reveal the presence of all five language styles proposed by Joos: casual style occurred most frequently (35 instances), followed by consultative (8), intimate (8), formal (5), and frozen (1). This distribution indicates a dominant use of casual language to reflect everyday, spontaneous conversation among characters. In terms of language function, the study identified four out of six functions: referential (21 instances), emotive (19), conative (10), and phatic (7). However, metalingual and poetic functions were not found in the analyzed dialogues. The results suggest that the film emphasizes natural, expressive communication, with a strong focus on information sharing, emotional expression, and maintaining social interaction. These functions support the narrative's romantic and dramatic elements, as well as highlight character development and relationships. Overall, this study offers valuable insights into how language is used effectively in film dialogue to reflect social relationships, convey emotional depth, and fulfill communicative intent. It contributes to the broader understanding of language use in media and provides a model for analyzing other films from a sociolinguistic perspective.

Keywords : Film Dialogue, Language Function, Language Style, Sociolinguistics, Stylistic Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a powerful and dynamic tool that shapes human interaction, reflecting not only individual thoughts and emotions but also broader social relationships and cultural norms. It allows speakers to navigate various contexts by adjusting their tone, word choice, and level of formality to suit different audiences and situations. These variations in language use often referred to as language styles play a crucial role in establishing meaning, managing relationships, and guiding the flow of communication.

In spoken and written discourse, language style helps convey the speaker's intent and the nature of the relationship between participants. Styles range from highly formal and ritualistic expressions to casual intimate and spontaneous forms of speech. Each style carries specific social signals and cues influencing how messages are received and interpreted. The choice of style can affect the emotional tone clarity and effectiveness of communication especially in settings where interpersonal dynamics and contextual awareness are essential.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of previous studies have explored the concept of language style in various contexts, providing a strong theoretical foundation for further analysis. Haqqo in 2016 examined stylistic elements in advertisements from The Jakarta Post and identified three key approaches: hard sell, soft sell, and straightforward, based on William Well's theory. Although this study focused on commercial texts, it illustrates how stylistic choices are shaped by communicative purpose and target audience. Similarly, Noviyanti in 2022 investigated the language styles used by English teachers in classroom settings and found that casual style was the most frequently used. Her findings indicate that factors such as speaker roles, topics, and social environments influence stylistic variation. These observations are consistent with Joos' framework, which highlights how language style varies according to degrees of formality and social distance. In educational settings, casual and consultative styles are often preferred to establish rapport and ensure clear communication.

Further research by Purba, Saragih, and Manik in 2021 analyzed the language styles present in teenagers' Instagram captions using Joos' five style categories. Their findings revealed that casual style was dominant, followed by intimate, formal, consultative, and frozen styles. The informal and personal nature of social media encourages relaxed language use, reflecting how users adapt style to fit digital interaction. Across these studies, regardless of medium or context, language style emerges as a socially driven choice influenced by audience, purpose, and setting. The consistent application of Joos' theory in diverse domains supports its continued relevance in stylistic analysis. This literature affirms that film, as a rich medium of interpersonal dialogue and narrative development, offers a valuable site for examining the use and variation of language styles in contemporary communication.

3. METHOD AND THEORY

This study investigates the stylistic dimension of language in The Age of Adaline, a 2015 romantic drama film directed by Lee Toland Krieger. The film centers on Adaline Bowman, a woman who mysteriously stops aging after a near-fatal accident. As she moves through different phases of life while remaining physically unchanged, Adaline interacts with various characters across emotional and social contexts. These interactions provide a rich source for analyzing how language style reflects personal relationships, social roles, and communicative intent.

A qualitative descriptive method was employed to collect and analyze the data. The primary source is the film The Age of Adaline, supported by its screenplay and verified English transcriptions to ensure the accuracy of the dialogue. Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques, which included watching the film multiple times, cross-referencing with the script, and identifying utterances that reflect features of language style. The analysis draws on Martin Joos' (1967) framework, which classifies language into five styles: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate.

The analytical procedure consisted of four main stages. First, preparation involved selecting relevant literature, viewing the film, and reviewing the script to ensure consistency between spoken and written dialogue. Second, classification involved categorizing utterances according to Joos' language style types. Third, the researcher conducted a detailed analysis of the identified utterances, focusing on the stylistic choices made by characters in different contexts. Fourth, the findings were validated by comparing them with Joos' theory and other scholarly sources.

To complement the qualitative analysis, descriptive statistics were used to present the frequency and percentage of each language style observed in the data. The analysis focused on the dialogue of key characters, particularly Adaline, and examined how style shifted in response to the changing dynamics of each interaction. Only utterances that clearly demonstrated features of Joos' stylistic categories were included in the final analysis. This approach ensured a focused and theory-driven examination of how stylistic variation operates within the narrative and character development of the film.

Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that examines the interaction between language and society. It focuses on how language is influenced by social factors such as class, age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, and cultural background. This field does not treat language as an isolated system but as a social phenomenon deeply rooted in human interaction. Sociolinguistics recognizes that language changes depending on who is speaking, who is being addressed, what is being discussed, and where the interaction takes place. These variations are seen as meaningful, offering insights into the social identities, relationships, and structures that shape everyday communication.

The study of sociolinguistics reveals how language functions not only to convey information but also to express social meaning. It explores how individuals use language to establish identity, assert power, maintain solidarity, and navigate group membership. Concepts such as dialects, registers, speech communities, code-switching, and language choice are

central to sociolinguistic analysis. These phenomena demonstrate that language is closely tied to context and that it evolves alongside social change. Sociolinguistics also considers how societal norms, institutions, and historical factors influence language use over time, making it a vital tool for understanding both linguistic and cultural dynamics.

Within this broader sociolinguistic framework, language style represents one way in which speakers adjust their language to fit different social contexts. Though just one component of sociolinguistic variation, style reflects how speakers manage formality, familiarity, and interpersonal relationships through language. The way people speak in formal settings, casual conversations, or intimate exchanges reflects the social roles they inhabit and the expectations placed upon them. Even subtle changes in tone, word choice, or sentence structure can signal shifts in social distance or emotional intention. Thus, language style, while only one part of sociolinguistic inquiry, provides a useful entry point for understanding how language operates as both a communicative and social resource.

Language Style

Individuals' ways of speaking, or "style," are shaped by the broader social patterns that surround them (Eckert, 2001). These patterns are not simply external influences; rather, they are internalized and uniquely interpreted by each person, becoming an integral part of their linguistic identity. Language style refers to the distinctive ways language is used across various contexts, reflecting changes in formality and underlying social dynamics. There are five types of language styles according to Martin Joos' theory in 1967.

Frozen Style

The Frozen style is a highly formal, rigid, and often ceremonial form of language characterized by fixed expressions, unchanging structure, and a lack of interactive elements. It is typically used in contexts where tradition, authority, or solemnity is emphasized such as in legal language, religious rituals, national anthems, or formal proclamations. In this style, language is preserved exactly as it is, memorized or recited without alteration, making it the least dynamic and most scripted among Martin Joos' five language styles. Its main function is to establish respect, tradition, or official status rather than to engage in spontaneous communication.

Formal Style

Often found in academic, professional, and official contexts, the Formal style emphasizes precision, organization, and respectful tone. Unlike casual conversation, it avoids contractions, slang, and colloquialisms, opting instead for complete sentences and standard grammar. Speakers or writers using this style typically maintain a sense of distance from their

audience, aiming for clarity and authority rather than personal connection. Whether in presentations, reports, or formal speeches, this style serves to deliver information in a polished and structured manner, reinforcing the seriousness or importance of the subject at hand.

Consultative Style

Conversations between professionals and those seeking guidance such as doctors and patients or teachers and students often rely on a consultative style. These exchanges blend formality with interaction, allowing space for questions, clarification, and active engagement. While the language remains respectful and grammatically standard, the tone is more flexible than in formal speech. Speakers often provide background information, anticipating the listener's need for understanding. This style supports clear communication while encouraging participation, making it ideal for informative yet approachable dialogue.

Casual Style

Everyday conversations among friends, peers, or family members often reflect what's known as the casual style. This way of speaking feels natural and relaxed, filled with informal language, contractions, and even slang or inside jokes. Unlike more structured styles, it doesn't follow strict grammar rules and often includes interruptions, unfinished thoughts, or shared references that don't need explaining. Because the people involved usually know each other well, there's no need for formality or detailed background information. Casual style creates a sense of closeness and ease, helping people connect through familiar, spontaneous dialogue.

Intimate Style

Intimate style is the most personal and emotionally charged form of communication, shared only between individuals with a strong bond such as romantic partners, very close friends, or family members. This style often includes private language like pet names, inside jokes, or meaningful silences and can even rely on gestures, eye contact, or tone alone to convey meaning. The usual rules of grammar and sentence structure are often set aside as understanding comes from shared experience and deep familiarity. Intimate style creates a space of trust and closeness where communication feels effortless, instinctive, and deeply human.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this movie, the writer could find all the language styles that exist according to the theory of Martin Joos. Among them are frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate styles. Each style plays a major role during the storyline. From the data analysis, researchers

find 57 data in total for these styles, the distribution of which is shown below:

a. Casual style (61.40%; n = 35 data)

b. Consultative style (14.04%; n = 8 data)

c. Intimate style (14.04%; n = 8 data)

d. Formal style (8.77%; n = 5 data)

e. Frozen style (1,75%; n = 1 data)

Frozen Style

Data 5 – A throwback scene

"On June 16th, 1929, just as Adaline Bowman and her mother stopped to admire the expanse, where three years hence construction would be finished on the Golden Gate Bridge, a young engineer displayed uncommon gallantry."

The narration employs formal and precise language, specifying the exact date and referencing future events with a measured tone that conveys significance and gravity. By highlighting the moment when Adaline and her mother pause to admire the landscape before the Golden Gate Bridge is built, the scene emphasizes the importance of this historic location and moment in time. The carefully structured phrasing, such as "displayed uncommon gallantry," adds a dignified, almost literary quality, elevating the event beyond ordinary experience. This creates an atmosphere of reverence, as if the narrator is preserving a meaningful memory for posterity. The scene feels like a carefully documented snapshot of the past, inviting the audience to appreciate the weight of history unfolding quietly before them.

Formal Style

Data 21 – Library (Adaline's Workplace)

"Mr. Jones, On behalf of the San Francisco Heritage Society I'd like to express our sincere gratitude for your most generous gift."

This dialogue reflects a formal tone because it uses polite and respectful language typical of professional or official settings. The speaker addresses the recipient with full respect, acknowledging their status. By representing an entire organization, the message gains authority and emphasizes that the gratitude is collective, not just personal. The carefully chosen words express deep appreciation in a refined and courteous way, highlighting the importance of the contribution. The phrasing avoids casual language and contractions, maintaining professionalism. This formality suits the workplace environment and the significance of an official moment of recognition where clear and respectful communication is expected.

Casual Style

Data 12 – New Year's Eve Party

"Adaline: What's your resolution?

Regan   : Same as always, true love. How about you?

Adaline : To live this year as though it were my last."

Regan   : Well, you never know, it could be, at our age. So, hell yeah, let's live."

The use of informal and conversational language in this scene reflects a casual style typical of everyday interactions among close friends. Short, simple sentences combined with familiar expressions create a relaxed and approachable tone. The friendly and genuine nature of the exchange shows a comfortable relationship without the need for formal or complex language. The New Year's Eve party setting further encourages openness and spontaneity, allowing the characters to share personal thoughts honestly. Overall, the interaction captures the warmth and natural flow characteristic of casual communication, while still maintaining clarity and coherence appropriate for academic analysis.

Consultative Style

Data 34 – Vet

"Veterinarian : His urean creatine levels are way too high, which means his kidney

are failing. The toxins are building up and his body can't handle it.

Adaline   : Is he in pain?

Veterinarian : It's difficult to say.

Adaline   : If you were me, what would you do?

Veterinarian : I'd be thinking about... what a wonderful life he's had, how lucky you

are to have found each other."

This dialogue is consultative because it involves a professional (the vet) providing important information and guidance to someone (Adaline) who needs advice and emotional support. The vet explains the medical situation clearly but gently, using language that is understandable and compassionate. The exchange includes questions and answers, showing a two-way interaction where Adaline seeks clarification and expresses her concerns. The vet's responses are thoughtful and sensitive, helping Adaline process difficult news and consider her options. This style reflects a supportive, advisory relationship where expert knowledge is shared to help someone make a personal, often emotional decision.

Intimate Style

Data 45 – Ellis' parents' house

"William : Forty years, Baby, come on... Second choice? Uh-uh. Honey, you're

blowing this all out of proportion."

Kathy   : Am I?

William   : Are you jealous?

Kathy   : Yeah, as a matter of fact.

William   : Look, look, it was fleeting, inconsequential.

Kathy   : Sounded like you were more than that.

William   : I love you.

Kathy   : I love you, too."

This scene between William and Kathy demonstrates intimate style through both their verbal and non-verbal communication, revealing the emotional depth of their long-term relationship. Their language is personal and emotionally expressive, filled with affection, frustration, and vulnerability. William uses endearing terms that reflect comfort and closeness built over many years. His reassurance is not just a romantic gesture but a meaningful reminder of their bond. Kathy's responses, especially when she openly admits to feeling jealous, show emotional honesty which is an important aspect of intimate communication.

Their exchange feels natural and unfiltered with interruptions and short emotionally loaded replies that signal a deep familiarity. Non-verbal cues such as tone, facial expressions, and likely body language further convey connection and mutual understanding. Set during their 40th wedding anniversary weekend, the scene carries even more emotional weight as it reflects both the challenges and enduring affection in their relationship. The mutual expression of love at the end reinforces the sincerity of their bond, making this a clear example of intimate style rooted in trust, emotional openness, and shared history.

Above are just a few data that are described because the rest have the same reasons as to why they can fit into each style.

5.   CONCLUSION

The researcher has successfully analyzed The Age of Adaline using Martin Joos' theory of language styles by identifying all five types: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate, through a total of 57 data points. The findings show that casual style dominates with 35 data (61.40%), followed by consultative and intimate styles with 8 data each (14.04%), formal style with 5 data (8.77%), and frozen style with 1 data (1.75%). This distribution reflects the film's focus on natural and everyday interactions, particularly among friends, colleagues, and loved ones, making casual style the most frequently used. Consultative and intimate styles appear in emotionally charged or supportive exchanges, while formal style is found in professional or ceremonial moments. Although frozen style appears only once, it holds

significance in elevating the historical tone of a narrative flashback. Overall, The Age of Adaline effectively presents all five language styles in contextually appropriate ways, with each contributing to the depth and realism of the film's characters, dialogues, and social settings.

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