



An Identity Reflection through the Language Style Used by the Main Character in *The Bear* TV Series

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Abstract. This study aims to identify the types of language styles employed by the main character in The Bear TV series and to analyze how the most dominant styles reflect the main character's identity. According to Joos (1967), language style is defined as an individual's manner of communication, which is adjusted according to specific contexts and situations. This study adopts a qualitative approach utilizing a content analysis design to collect, categorize, and interpret relevant data from the main character's utterances throughout the TV series. The theoretical framework guiding this study is Joos' (1967) Five Clocks theory, which categorized language styles into five types: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. Based on the analysis of the main character's utterances, three of the five language styles were identified: consultative (5 instances), casual (51 instances), and intimate (16 instances). Among these, the casual style emerged as the most frequently used. The predominance of the casual style indicates that the main character exhibits an egalitarian identity and tends to minimize hierarchical distinctions. This result is particularly significant given the hierarchical nature of professional kitchen environments, where strict chains of command are typically upheld. Despite holding the position of head chef, the main character demonstrates a preference for fostering collaborative and equal relationships with co-workers, as evidenced by his consistent use of casual style. This study highlights how language style functions as a reflection of the main character's identity, offering insight into the main character's personality, particularly his intense emotions and perfectionism, as conveyed through recurring linguistic choices across various situational and conversational contexts.

Keywords: *Language style, Sociolinguistics, Martin Joos, The Bear, TV series*

INTRODUCTION

According to Joos (1967), language style is how a person speaks by choosing specific words that are appropriate to the situation, interlocutor, or context of the conversation. Joos categorized language style into five types based on the level of formality: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. Deliberate word choice helps facilitate smooth communication, prevent misunderstandings, and ensure the recipient fully comprehends the message. In addition to serving as a means of communication, language can also reflect a person's identity. In a formal context, language is often related to a person's culture and lifestyle, as the way a person speaks can reflect their social background.

The phenomenon of language style is not limited to daily interactions but is also prevalent in audiovisual works, including movies and TV series. The focus on language style analysis has become a popular topic among researchers, and several studies have explored this phenomenon. The first study, by Adiari and Sulatra (2023), analyzed the main character in the *Wednesday* series. Using Joos (1967) and Holmes (1992) theories, the researchers found that casual style was used most frequently. The frequent use of casual style was influenced by the character's stubborn and indifferent personality. The second study, by Indahsari et al. (2023), applied Joos' theory to identify language styles used by the main character in *The Great Debaters* movie. This study employed a qualitative approach to analyze the data. The results indicated that the main character most frequently uses the consultative style. This can be attributed to the frequent interactions between Mr. Tolson and his students, which occur in both formal and informal settings. And the last study, conducted by Febriana et al. (2024), analyzed the language styles used by Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark, the main characters in *The Hunger Games* movie. Joos (1976) theory was applied to help identify the language styles used by the main characters. A qualitative approach, particularly documentary methods, was used to gather the data. The results suggested that the casual style is predominantly used due to the numerous informal situations in the movie and the relatively small age gap between the characters.

Several previous studies have shown that language styles are frequently used to create flexibility in communication within movies or series. However, prior studies had primarily concentrated on thematic discussions, often emphasizing interpersonal dynamics, particularly family relationships and peer interactions. Therefore, the current study is conducted to fill the gap by analyzing *The Bear*, which is a workplace drama. *The Bear* is a TV series directed by Christopher Storer, which first aired in 2022, chronicled the professional and personal journey of Carmen "Carmy" Berzatto, a highly skilled chef trained in prestigious restaurants. Following the unexpected death of his brother, Carmy returned home to assumed management of his family's beef sandwich shop. This transition placed him in an unfamiliar and challenging environment that contrasts sharply with his previous fine-dining experience. As Carmy attempted to revitalize the struggling restaurant, he encountered various characters from diverse social backgrounds. The characters' interactions generated a complex dynamic in which varied language styles emerge, contributing to the narrative's distinctive tone and texture.

This TV series focused on the establishment and development of a restaurant, which involved a distinct linguistic style that differs significantly from the language typically used in series portraying everyday life. The researcher used Joos' (1967) theory to identify the various language style used by Carmy. Having outlined the language styles employed by Carmy, this study proceeds to examine how these linguistic choices serve not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of his identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociolinguistics

According to Georgieva (2014), sociolinguistics can be considered a relatively young branch of study, as most of its significant developments began to emerge in the late 1960s and 1970s. However, the studies of the relationship between word meaning and culture, which fall within the scope of sociolinguistics, have been explored for a much longer period. Sociolinguistics adopts a relatively broad approach, involving various

aspects such as the identity of the speaker, the purpose of the interaction, and the ways in which particular linguistic variables relate to the grammatical structures of a language. Sari (2022) stated that language in this field is understood as an open system, shaped by its usage and subject to various social variables such as educational background, social status, and cultural heritage. These variables significantly influence how individuals communicate and express themselves. Consequently, sociolinguistics explores language not merely as a tool for communication, but also as a mechanism that constructs and reflects social relationships, cultural norms, and individual identity. From this perspective, language analysis extends beyond grammatical structure to encompass the ways in which language practices are embedded in and shaped by social contexts (Hymes, 2020). One of the aspects examined in this branch is language style, which refers to the variation in language use influenced by contextual factors such as the interlocutor and the setting of the conversation. These language styles not only reflect the diversity inherent in human communication but also offer valuable insights into a character's identity. A more detailed explanation of language styles is provided in the following sub-section.

Language Style

According to Joos (1967), language style can be compared to clocks constructed from the same material but displaying different times based on their individual settings. This analogy underscores that while speakers may use the same language, their communicative styles can differ significantly. Such variation emerges from differing social contexts, including interactions with peers, educators, superiors, and across formal or informal settings. Due to the varying contexts in each conversation, speakers employ a range of language styles. These styles are deliberately selected and adapted to facilitate smooth communication and ensure that the intended message is effectively conveyed to the interlocutor. According to Joos (1967), language styles are divided into five types, each of which is described in the following paragraphs.

The first type is frozen style, a key feature of this style is its strict and formal language structure, which prevents personal interpretation. Frozen style suits situations where the speaker keeps a clear social distance, maintaining an impersonal relationship between the people involved. The second type is formal style, marked by clear and precise language. It is used when the speaker addresses an attentive audience, requiring them to carefully organize their sentences before speaking. The third type is consultative style, a key feature of this style is the listener's active involvement during the conversation. This style often includes responses like "I see," or "yes," which show that the listener understands or agrees with the speaker. The fourth type is casual style, marked by slang and ellipsis. Casual style usually used in informal situations, like when talking with friends or family. The fifth style is intimate style, typically employed in highly personal or private contexts. Intimate style does not permit the use of slang or language that includes explicit background information.

Identity

Identity constitutes a defining characteristic that represents who an individual is, encompassing both self-perception and the way one is perceived by others across diverse social contexts. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is not an inherent or static trait present from birth, but rather a dynamic construct formed through ongoing social interactions embedded in everyday life. This process is profoundly

shaped by language, which functions as a central mechanism in the formation and expression of identity. An individual's identity articulated through a range of linguistic markers, including language style and the attitudes conveyed during interaction, such as tone of voice, intonation patterns, and other verbal features. Consequently, language serves not merely as a means of communication, but as a crucial instrument in the construction and performance of both social and personal identity.

METHOD

The researcher employed qualitative research approach. Creswell (2013) described qualitative research as a complex approach that includes diverse and complex elements that are difficult to define explicitly. This approach was employed because it focuses on non-numerical data, making it suitable for this study, which analyzes utterances quoted from characters in *The Bear* TV series.

This study employed a content analysis design as the design for examining the language style used by the main character. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis design should be justified not just for efficient and fair data processing, but also based on the context of the text being studied. Content analysis was selected as the research design because it enabled the researcher to uncover how the main character's word choices reflected particular language styles, as well as how those styles conveyed aspects of the character's identity.

The data source for this study is the first season of *The Bear* TV series. The data for this study consist of Carmy's utterances throughout the first season.

In this study, the primary instrument employed was the researcher herself. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), humans possess a distinctive capacity to comprehend and assess the meaning of diverse interactions with research objects. For this reason, they are selected as the main instrument in data collection, since designing a non-human instrument that can adequately adapt to the diverse realities encountered during the research process is nearly impossible.

In order to collect the data, the researcher began by watching all eight episodes of the first season of *The Bear*, followed by multiple rewatchings to gain a deeper understanding of the contextual elements in each scene. Then, the researcher transcribed each utterance based on the existing subtitles. Specific lexical items that reflected particular language styles were then highlighted within the transcript. Finally, utterances exemplifying these language styles were compiled for further analysis.

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed it by first identifying the types of language styles in the utterances. Each utterance was then classified using specific codes: FR (frozen), FO (formal), CO (consultative), CA (casual), and IN (intimate).

Then, the researcher explained the linguistic features of each utterance to justify its classification and quantified the frequency of each style to determine the most dominant one. Finally, the researcher interpreted how the most frequently used language style reflected the main character's identity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The table below presents the frequency of language styles identified in *The Bear* TV series. A total of 72 instances were identified by the researcher, comprising five instances of consultative style, 51 instances of casual style, and 16 instances of intimate style. Based on the result, it can be concluded that the casual style is the dominant

language style employed by Carmy, the main character in *The Bear*. The prevalence of this style is evident in Carmy's frequent use of informal expressions, including coarse language. This phenomenon can be attributed to the high-pressure environment commonly found in professional kitchen settings, which influences Carmy's manner of communication with his co-worker. Consequently, the use of the casual style in this context reflects not only Carmy's identity but also the social and emotional dynamics underlying his speech acts.

Table 1. Frequency of Language Styles Employed

No	Types of Language Styles	Frequency
1	Frozen Style	0
2	Formal Style	0
3	Consultative Style	5
4	Casual Style	51
5	Intimate Style	16
Total Data		72

Discussion

1. Frozen Style

The frozen style is typically employed in highly formal or ceremonial contexts and is characterized by the use of fixed and unalterable expressions. According to Joos (1967), this style is appropriate for situations in which the speaker maintains a distinct social distance, thereby preserving an impersonal relationship between communicative participants. This study revealed that the main character in *The Bear*, Carmy, did not employ a frozen style.

2. Formal Style

Formal style refers to a communicative style commonly employed in contexts that require a certain degree of politeness and etiquette, such as professional environment or official meetings. This style is characterized by the use of standardized, well-structured, and unambiguous language. (Joos, 1967). In this study, the researcher did not identify any use of formal style by Carmy.

3. Consultative Style

The consultative style represents a form of language use in which the speaker explicitly provides background information, ensuring that the intended meaning is not implied but rather directly conveyed to the listener. A defining characteristic of this style is the continuous and active participation of the listener throughout the communicative exchange (Joos, 1967). In this study, the researcher identified 5 utterances used by Carmy that illustrated the use of a consultative style.

a. Data 1

Carmy : *"Sydney, stir that pot for me, please, Chef."*
 Sydney : *"Yes, Chef. You want a cartouche?"*
 Carmy : *"Please. Thank you, Chef."*

The dialogue occurred between Carmy and his co-worker, Sydney. The context of the conversation was situated in the kitchen, where the two were collaboratively preparing a meal. While Carmy was occupied with cutting vegetables, he provided Sydney with clear instruction to stir a dish that he had previously prepared. The instruction was delivered in a respectful and polite manner, and Sydney responded in a cooperative way. With clear instructions given by Carmy and Sydney's response of "Yes, Chef," which indicated two-way communication in the dialogue, Carmy's utterance can be categorized as consultative, as both features reflected characteristics of the consultative style.

b. Data 2

Carmy : *"Broken sauce, Chef. Need a new one."*
 Junior Chef : *"Yes, Chef."*

This scene depicted Carmy's past experience as a sous chef at his former restaurant. The dialogue took place between Carmy and a junior chef. As part of his responsibility to ensure that each dish was served to the highest standard, Carmy was approached by the junior chef for feedback on a sauce she had prepared. After evaluating the sauce, Carmy determined that it required further improvement and suggested that it be remade. The junior chef promptly accepted the feedback and proceeded to prepare a new sauce. Carmy's clear, structured, and directive manner of communication enabled his interlocutor to immediately grasp his intention, prompting a quick and respectful response: "Yes, Chef." Thus, Carmy's utterance in this scene exemplified a consultative style.

4. Casual Style

According to Joos (1967), characteristics of the casual style include the use of slang and ellipsis. Joos also stated that ellipsis constitutes one of the primary distinctions between casual and consultative styles. In this study, the researcher identified 51 utterances used by Carmy that demonstrate the use of casual style.

a. Data 4

Chi-Chi : *"What am I, a Coinstar?"*
 Carmy : *"That's like three hundo, Chi-Chi."*

This utterance reflected a casual style, as demonstrated by the use of slang terms such as "hundo." The term was uttered by Carmy in response to a question from his acquaintance, Chi-Chi, who remarked, "What am I, a Coinstar?" after Carmy provided him with additional payment in the form of a bag of coins. In response, Carmy explained that although the money consisted of coins, it amounted to "three hundo." The word "hundo" is a colloquial variant of the word "hundred," which was commonly used in informal conversational contexts. Therefore, Carmy's utterance can be classified as casual, as the use of slang is a defining feature of the casual style.

b. Data 19

Carmy : *"You wanna run this place, you fucking slob?"*

Carmy's utterance was directed at his cousin, Richie, who had previously shown displeasure with Carmy's decision to take over the restaurant. The utterance was delivered shortly after the restaurant received a C grade following an inspection conducted by the Chicago Board of Health, which identified several violations. In

response to this outcome, Carmy immediately suspected Richie as the cause. Consequently, he uttered the sentence as an expression of his frustration toward Richie's attitude, which often contradicted his decisions in managing the restaurant. The use of the word "slob" reflected a casual style, as it is a form of slang that, in this context, referred to someone who behaves carelessly or in a disorganized manner.

c. Data 34

Carmy : *"Yo, Fak. Yeah, we need you here ASAP, bro..."*

This utterance was delivered by Carmy when he was calling his friend, Fak, who frequently assisted in repairing various damages at the restaurant. This utterance reflected a casual style, as evidenced by Carmy's use of the slang term "ASAP" (as soon as possible), which is commonly employed in informal contexts, particularly in conversations between friends to request that something be done immediately. This supports the classification of Carmy's utterance as casual style, given that one of the defining features of this style is the use of slang expressions. Additionally, Carmy used the curse word "fucked" to emphasize that the toilet was severely damaged.

5. Intimate Style

Intimate style refers to language styles typically employed in highly personal or private contexts. Intimate style does not permit the use of slang or language that includes explicit background information (Joos, 1967). In this study, 16 utterances used by Carmy were identified by the researcher as illustrating the intimate style.

a. Data 1

Carmy : *"Corner! Smaller fry scoops today, Chef. Behind!"*

This utterance was delivered by Carmy during a particularly hectic moment in the kitchen, when the chefs were intensely focused on preparing food ingredients at their respective stations. To prevent collisions between individuals, Carmy signaled to the chefs by shouting "Corner!" and "Behind!" These terms were employed by chefs to warn others that someone was passing by. The use of these codes indicated that Carmy's utterance reflected the intimate style, as the terms employed are unique and understood exclusively by members of a specific community, in this case, the kitchen staff.

b. Data 2

Marcus : *"Low on olive oil, Carmen."*

Carmy : *"Heard."*

Carmy's response reflected an intimate style because, when his co-worker, Marcus, informed him that the olive oil was running low, Carmy simply responded with "Heard." This indicated that Carmy had acknowledged and understood the information without needing to provide a detailed response. The term reflected Carmy's use of the intimate language style, marked by the absence of explicit information in the utterance.

c. Data 16

Carmy : *"Housekeeping, Chefs."*

All Chefs : *"Yes, Chef."*

Carmy said "Housekeeping, Chefs" to signal to the chefs that it was time to clean the kitchen area. Although he only delivered a brief statement without providing further

explanation, the chefs immediately understood his intention and responded by saying, “Yes, Chef.” Therefore, Carmy’s utterance reflected an intimate style, as he employed a coded expression that was readily understood by those around him without the need for additional clarification.

6. A Reflection of Carmy's Identity

After conducting a comprehensive analysis of Carmy's utterances in the first season of *The Bear*, the researcher identified that the most prevalent language style employed by Carmy is the casual style, with a total of 51 instances. The frequent use of casual language reflects Carmy's character identity as a chef operating in a high-pressure restaurant kitchen environment. This casual style is frequently marked by the use of strong or explicit language, particularly within work-related contexts. Although professional settings typically necessitate the use of more formal language, the series portrays a chaotic and stressful kitchen atmosphere that prompts characters, including Carmy, to communicate in a spontaneous and emotionally charged manner. This suggests that Carmy prioritizes practical effectiveness and task completion over adherence to linguistic formality.

Consequently, the predominance of casual style not only reflects the intense demands of the work environment but also reflects Carmy's egalitarian identity. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, “egalitarian” denotes the belief that all individuals possess equal value and are entitled to equal opportunities. This egalitarian identity is evident in Carmy’s interpersonal interactions, which de-emphasize rigid social hierarchies, even within a traditionally hierarchical workspace. Carmy appears to value equal, collaborative relationships with his co-workers over maintaining formal boundaries. Although the egalitarian aspect of his identity is most prominently demonstrated in the workplace, it is also evident in his personal life. This is exemplified by the fact that Carmy never emphasizes his experience as a chef at one of the world’s most prestigious restaurants.

CONCLUSION

An understanding of language style holds significant importance, as it enables individuals to choose words more thoughtfully and appropriately based on the communication context. In addition to its application in everyday interactions, knowledge of language style is also relevant in the realm of audiovisual media, such as movies and TV series. By recognizing various types of language styles, viewers can identify the identities or characteristics of characters in a narrative by observing how they communicate in different situational contexts.

After conducting an in-depth analysis of the language style employed by the main character in the first season of *The Bear* TV series, namely Carmy, the researcher identified three types of language styles used across a total of 72 utterances. These styles included the consultative style (5 instances), casual style (51 instances), and intimate style (16 instances). Throughout the eight episodes comprising the first season, Carmy predominantly utilized the casual style, despite the primary setting being a restaurant where he worked. Based on the dominant use of the casual style, it can be concluded that this reflected Carmy's identity as a head chef who placed less emphasis on social hierarchy and instead prioritizes collaborative relationships with his co-workers. This indicated that Carmy exhibited an egalitarian identity. Moreover, this

style also highlighted Carmy's emotional disposition in responding to the stressful nature of his work environment.

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