

A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Language Styles in the Main Characters' Utterances in *Bride Wars* (2009) Based on Martin Joos' Five-Style Framework

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i2.2224>

*Mieyrandha, Olga Dona Retsi, Tutik Haryani, Laura Meylinda Maharani^{abcd}

¹²³⁴Universitas Palangka Raya, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: mieyrandha504@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This study analyzes the differences in linguistic style in *Bride Wars* (2009) using Martin Joos' (1967) Five Styles of Speech as a guide. The study employs a descriptive qualitative design to examine 45 curated statements from the film through the documentation method. There were five types of information: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. This was done according to Joos' rules for language. Some of these are the level of formality in the conversation, the words used, the way feedback is given, and how close the people are to each other. The results show that the most common style is casual (40%), then consultative (22.22%), intimate (20%), formal (13.33%), and frozen (4.44%). The results show that changes in the film's style are mostly due to changes in emotions and relationships, not changes in the institution's hierarchy. You can be sarcastic and fight in a casual way, but you can also show that you're friends and close. Being formal doesn't mean you're in charge; it means you're not close to someone. People still talk to each other at work the same way. In scenes of reconciliation, the intimate style is very clear, which shows that things are back to normal between the two people. People don't use frozen style very often, and when they do, it's only in formal settings. The research shows that language style is a dynamic continuum and a useful sociolinguistic tool for figuring out where you fit in film discourse.

Keywords: *Sociolinguistics, Bride Wars, Martin Joos, Language Style*

Article History:

Received 25th February 2026

Accepted 25th March 2026

Published 26th March 2026



INTRODUCTION

People talk to each other and share information through language. People think that this very complicated social event is the best way to find out how they feel, how they get along with others, and what's going on. Sociolinguistics does not consider language as an autonomous phenomenon; rather, it perceives it as intricately linked to society and culture. It can show how people are different from each other in terms of power, closeness, distance, or hierarchy, just like a mirror. People do more than just send words when they talk to each other; they also learn about themselves and what they want to say. People's speech changes all the time, depending on how they feel about the person they're talking to. This includes the words they choose, how they put their sentences together, and how they talk.

Movies and other types of audiovisual media are great ways to learn about how language and society work together. A movie is a carefully made version of real life where the way people talk is carefully planned to show how the characters are changing, move the story along, and build character. In movies, people's speech changes over time, just like it does in real life. People can use different levels of language to show how they think people talk to each other in groups. This is why scripts for movies are both art and a good way to learn about language and culture.

Film analysis is significant in sociolinguistic research because it transforms intricate social interactions into coherent and fluid narratives. Researchers can examine the evolution of styles in films that depict various forms of relationship development systematically. People talk to each other in real life, but in movies, the dialogue is carefully written to show how

relationships change, how people feel, and how they handle power. So, watching movies is a safe and important way to learn how the way people talk can change their lives.

Researchers employ the theory posited by Martin Joos in *The Five* (Joos, 1967) to discern these differences. Joos discovered the reasons for regional speech variation. He made five levels to show the different styles: "frozen," "formal," "consultative," "casual," and "intimate." These depend on how well the speaker and listener know each other and how well the message fits into the conversation.

The frozen style is the most formal. For instance, it is used in laws and religious texts that don't need feedback. When you give a speech or make an official announcement, you use a formal style of one-way communication that doesn't stop. When a doctor talks to a patient, that's called the consultative style. This is a professional way to talk that needs the person who is speaking to give feedback and more information. The casual style is like how friends talk to each other. It uses slang, ellipsis, and other things that both people in a conversation should know, like when friends talk. Lastly, there is the private way of talking that you only use with family and close friends.

Linguists can watch a wide range of movies. Romantic comedies, or "rom-coms," are a lot of fun. Many people say that it's hard to get along with other people, even those who are close friends or business contacts. You should read Gary Winick's *Bride Wars* if you want to know how language changes over time. Liv and Emma have been best friends since they were kids. Because of a mistake by the clerk, they are getting married at the same time and place, which makes things harder for them.

Bride Wars is a great movie for sociolinguistic discourse because the characters' relationships change a lot. They start out as good friends, but then they fight and make up. This is a great place to see style changes that work and have a story structure. Different ways of using language show how friendship, competition, and sabotage change as a relationship grows.

The examination of cinematic linguistic style constitutes a unique subset within the expansive fields of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. Numerous scholars have examined the role of various language types in constructing cinematic reality. For instance, (Chen, 2018) analyzed the use of specific words in *Legally Blonde* to demonstrate their representation of gender roles and empowerment. (Sihombing, 2021) utilized Joos' Five Styles of Speech in a workplace setting, citing *The Devil Wears Prada*, to demonstrate how differing communication styles reveal organizational hierarchy and the imperative of survival in a professional context. (Fang, 2019) examined the evolution of dialogue in romantic comedies to illustrate the interactions among individuals from various social classes and power structures. Other research has indicated that altering a film's style can facilitate the moral growth and development of its characters.

These contributions are significant; however, a discernible gap in the research remains. Most of the studies that came before this one mostly look at hierarchical relationships (like the employer-employee relationship), professional settings, youth slang, or traditional romantic relationships. There is insufficient research utilizing Joos' framework to analyze stylistic transitions in equal-status female friendships characterized by emotional decline and competition. A lot of people have talked about *Bride Wars* in the news and in feminist studies, but no one has done a full linguistic analysis that uses Joos' Five Styles of Speech to sort and explain its dialogue. This means that you don't fully understand how stylistic variation works in relationships that are structured horizontally, where emotional change not institutional hierarchy drives linguistic change.

Liv and Emma are both equal, so their social status doesn't change how they talk to each other. The situation is affected by how serious the conflict is, how close the people are to each other, and how they plan to resolve it. When two people who used to be close friends become enemies, it makes you think about how people use different levels of style to show who is in charge, keep people apart, or bring them back together. Previous studies have not thoroughly examined this aspect.

This study seeks to fill the gap by examining the linguistic styles used in *Bride Wars* (2009) through the lens of Martin Joos' Five Styles of Speech. This study aims to identify and categorize the various speech styles in the film; it subsequently examines the evolution of these styles as emotions and relationships progress; ultimately, it explores the implications of these transformations for fostering friendship, rivalry, emotional detachment, and reconciliation within egalitarian contexts.

This study builds on Joos' theoretical framework by investigating the progression of styles within a narrative focused on female friendship. This makes it more useful when there isn't a clear leader. It also helps us see how the way people talk in movies changes over time. The results should help EFL students because they show that "formal" and "informal" styles can change. They are instead on a continuum that is shaped by feelings and relationships.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design, appropriate for the examination of language utilization in non-numerical formats. (Creswell & Creswell., 2018) contends that qualitative research prioritizes the interpretation of social phenomena via naturally occurring data, making it suitable for the examination of linguistic styles in film dialogue. The descriptive approach enables the researcher to analyze and clarify how characters employ diverse speech styles based on context, interpersonal relationships, and communicative goals, without the use of statistical measurement. This research employs (Joos, 1967) Five Styles of Speech theory, which classifies language into five specific categories: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. This framework is especially relevant for film analysis, as dialogue represents social distance, power dynamics, and emotional intimacy among characters. (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021) contend that language style is deeply connected to sociolinguistic context, as speakers adapt their language according to participants, setting, and subject matter. Consequently, this theoretical framework enables the analysis of how linguistic variation mirrors social relationships and emotional dynamics in cinematic discourse.

Respondents

This study does not incorporate human respondents; it employs a qualitative descriptive research design focused on film dialogue analysis. The movie *Bride Wars*, which Gary Winick directed, is the main source of information. The data includes things that both important and unimportant characters say in the movie. The movie was picked because it shows different types of social interactions, such as fights, conversations between wedding planners, and interactions between best friends. These different situations show how people and the social setting can change how language is used.

Instruments

The principal instrument of this study is the researcher, in accordance with qualitative research standards. The researcher utilized: The movie *Bride Wars* as the main source of information. The script for the subtitles as a guide A data sheet to write down the statements you choose We wrote down each chosen utterance, along with information about the speaker, the person being spoken to, a description of the scene, and our first guess at the style of language. The analysis is based on (Joos, 1967) Five Styles of Speech theory, which says that there are five ways to speak: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate.

Data analysis

We used the documentation method to get the data, which means looking at and analyzing materials that have already been written down. The only evidence used in this study was the movie and its official subtitle script. The researcher watched the movie a lot to see how the characters talked to each other, acted in different situations, showed their feelings, and got along with each other. The subtitle script was used to make sure the words were right and to avoid making mistakes when writing them down. We chose sentences that clearly fit into one of Joos's five ways of speaking. We didn't include sounds that didn't fit into a clear interactional context, like sounds that weren't part of a conversation or sounds that didn't

mean anything. This made it easier to understand the analysis. This method of keeping records makes sure that the information always comes from trustworthy audio and video sources.

Data Collection

The qualitative interpretative methods described by (Creswell & Creswell., 2018) and (Miles et al., 2020) were used to analyze the data. The first step was to sort and code the chosen statements. After that, each statement was put into one of the five speech styles, as Joos said. The classification looked at things like how formal the conversation was, what words were used, how the sentences were put together, whether or not feedback was given, whether or not slang or ellipsis were used, whether or not the speakers had the same background knowledge, and how close they were to each other emotionally. This process made sure that the categories were based on theoretical definitions and not on what people thought.

After being put into groups, we looked at each statement in context by looking at the relationships between the speakers, the level of emotion, the power dynamics, and how the story moved forward. The last step was to figure out how different styles in the movie show how people can be friends, enemies, emotionally distant, and then make up.

Trustworthiness and Validity

This study utilized theoretical triangulation and peer verification to ascertain the credibility and reliability of the findings. The categorization of speech styles was analyzed using Joos's framework as well as comprehensive sociolinguistic viewpoints on language and context to maintain conceptual coherence. It was important to watch the movie several times to make sure it was correct in context and to avoid any confusion. Also, the chosen data and their classifications were reviewed by peers who are experts in sociolinguistics to reduce any bias that might come from personal opinion. These methods make the qualitative results more accurate and trustworthy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the classification of 45 selected utterances in the *Bride Wars* movie, based on Martin Joos' (1967) Five Styles of Speech. A total of 45 selected utterances were analyzed and classified into five categories like frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. The results are presented in the distribution table below.

Findings

Distribution of Language Style

Table 1. Distribution of Language Style

Language Style	Frequency	Percentage
Frozen	2	4.44%
Formal	6	13.33%
Consultative	10	22.22%
Casual	18	40%
Intimate	9	20%
Grand Total	45	100%

Table 1 shows that casual style is the most frequently used language style in the film, accounting for 18 out of 45 utterances (40%). This indicates that informal interaction dominates the communication among characters. Consultative style appears 10 times (22.22%), making it the second most frequent category. Intimate style occurs 9 times (20%), followed by formal style with 6 occurrences (13.33%). Frozen style is the least frequent, appearing only 2 times (4.44%). The data demonstrate that the majority of utterances fall within informal and semi-formal categories, while highly formal or ritualized speech occurs minimally.

Distribution of Language Style Based on Relationship Phase

Table 2. Distribution of Language Style by Relationship Phase

Relationship Phase	Dominant Style	Frequency
Friendship Phase	Casual	10
Rivalry Phase	Casual/Formal	14
Reconciliation Phase	Intimate	8
Professional Context	Consultative	10
Ceremonial Context	Frozen	2

Grand Total	45
-------------	----

Table 2 shows that the casual style is the most common way to talk during the friendship phase, with 10 cases (22.22%). During the rivalry phase, there are 14 instances (31.11%) of both casual and formal styles. This is the most for any type of relationship. During reconciliation, intimate style takes over, with 8 instances (17.78%). At work, people use the consultative style 10 times (22.22% of the time), but they only use the frozen style 3 times (6.67% of the time) at ceremonies. The distribution indicates that alterations in the relational context throughout the narrative correlate with variations in style.

Discussion

The results show that the way people talk in *Bride Wars* changes a lot depending on how they talk to each other and how their feelings change, not because of a set order. The results of the distribution show some important sociolinguistic patterns. The data show that the casual style is the most common type, making up 40% of the total. Joos (1967) says that people who are good friends often talk to each other in a casual way. This style has things like shared background knowledge, ellipses, and informal word choices. This style is common, which shows that the main characters are still friends. On the other hand, the results show that the movie's casual style serves two different social purposes. When friends get along, they feel safe and are together. In rivalry, though, the same informal structure turns into a place for sarcasm, competition, and emotional conflict. This shows that you don't always know someone well if you use informal language. The emotional context, on the other hand, changes how people see casual style. So, casual style is a helpful way to show how relationships change over time. People use formal style less often (13.33%), but it stands out more when they are competing. The shift toward more structured and regulated conversation shows that people are emotionally detached, not that they are in charge, because there is no hierarchy. This supports the sociolinguistic idea that the way you talk shows how you relate to other people. If both people are equal, making a relationship official can help you avoid breakups, stress, or emotional distance. The movie shows that you can be formal even if you're not rich. 22.22% of the data is in a consultative style, which is common in professional wedding planning. This stability shows that how people talk is more about the situation than the tension between them. The emotional rivalry is getting worse, but the characters still follow the rules of structured and reciprocal interaction that the institution has set. This discovery indicates that speech style is influenced by both relational emotions and contextual expectations. In this case, professional settings restrict the number of languages permitted and ensure consistent communication, even amidst disagreement. Intimate style is used in 20% of all speech acts, and it happens most often when people are getting back together. Joos says that intimate style is very personal and should only be used with people you know well. This means that things are getting better between people now that it is back in the story. It is important to remember that intimacy is not something that happens on its own. Instead, it is created through changes in style that make the language more personal and emotionally direct. The change from a formal or confrontational casual style to an intimate one shows that people have moved on and are back together. The movie shows how relationships change and how to get back together through the way people talk. Finally, the frozen style only happens 4.44% of the time, and only during ceremonies. The movie only being shown in a few theaters shows that it cares more about real-life interactions than institutional discourse. Frozen faces are more like traditional markers than ways to show how you feel. Joos' framework effectively illustrates how language style functions as a dynamic sociolinguistic instrument for constructing, negotiating, distancing, and reestablishing social relationships in films.

CONCLUSIONS

The results indicate that variations in language style in *Bride Wars* are predominantly influenced by emotional and relational dynamics, rather than by institutional hierarchy. That 40% of the style is casual shows how close the main characters are as friends. But "casual" can mean two things: it can mean support when things are going well, or it can mean sarcasm or

competition when things are going badly. This shows that the meaning of style changes depending on the situation. Formal style (13.33%) doesn't make it clear who is in charge. Instead, it shows that you aren't very close to your feelings, especially when things are tense. Consultative style (22.22%) is mostly used at work, which shows that people talk differently depending on the situation, even when their feelings change. The intimate style (20%) is most clear in scenes of reconciliation, which shows how it helps people get back in touch with their feelings. The frozen style (4.44%) is not common and only happens in religious settings. The research shows that language style is a dynamic continuum that can be used in many ways to show how people are positioned in movie conversations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Universitas Palangka Raya from the bottom of their hearts for all the help they gave them with their studies while they were working on this research. We would like to thank the teachers of the English Education Study Program for their helpful advice, constructive criticism, and constant support throughout the research process. The use of several supporting research tools also helped this study. Microsoft Excel was used to help sort and group the chosen utterances into five speech style categories based on Martin Joos' framework. We looked at academic databases like Google Scholar to find relevant books and articles about sociolinguistics and language style analysis. The authors also want to thank their friends, family, and coworkers for their support, encouragement, and helpful conversations throughout the research process.

REFERENCES

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2018). Online data collection. In C. Cotter & D. Perrin (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 233–249). Routledge. (<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315694344>)
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Walker, D. (2010). *Introduction to research in education* (8th ed.). Wadsworth.
- Bednarek, M. (2018). Language and television series: A linguistic approach to TV dialogue. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 130, 107–120. (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.04.006>)
- Bednarek, M., & Caple, H. (2017). The discourse of television news. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 113, 12–23. (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2017.03.006>)
- Boggs, J. M., & Petrie, D. W. (2016). *The art of watching films* (9th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4–5), 585–614. (<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407>)
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and discourse: A resource book for students*. Routledge.
- Dynel, M. (2018). Irony, deception and humour in film discourse. *Pragmatics & Society*, 9(1), 1–26. (<https://doi.org/10.1075/ps.00001.dyn>)
- Eckert, P. (2000). *Linguistic variation as social practice*. Blackwell.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Jaworski, A., & Coupland, N. (2019). *The discourse reader* (3rd ed.). Routledge. (<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315838281>)
- Joos, M. (1967). *The five clocks*. Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Kádár, D. Z., & Haugh, M. (2019). Understanding politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 145, 91–102. (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.02.002>)
- Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Montoro, R. (2020). Stylistics and film dialogue. *Language and Literature*, 29(4), 363–378.](<https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947020958231>)
- Spolsky, B. (1998). *Sociolinguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Tagliamonte, S. A. (2020). Variationist sociolinguistics: Change, observation, interpretation. *Language in Society*, 49(3), 445–450. (<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404520000254>)
- Trudgill, P. (2000). *Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and society* (4th ed.). Penguin.
- Wales, K. (2014). *A dictionary of stylistics* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2021). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (8th ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Yule, G. (2010). *The study of language* (4th ed.). Cambridge University Press.