

Language Style Analysis in Young Sheldon Series Season 4 Episode 1

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the types of language styles used by the characters in Young Sheldon Season 4 Episode 1 and to analyze how these styles reflect their identities and social relationships. Grounded in Martin Joos's (1967) sociolinguistic theory, The Five Clocks, the research classifies language styles into five categories: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. A qualitative content analysis approach was employed to collect, categorize, and interpret data from character utterances throughout the episode. The findings reveal the use of four language styles from 44 identified utterances: formal style (18%), consultative style (27%), casual style (37%), and intimate style (18%). The analysis determined that casual style is the most dominant, primarily reflecting the informal and familial context that forms the core of the series' narrative. The strategic use of consultative style highlights intellectual and guidance-based interactions, while the significant presence of intimate style, particularly between the twin protagonists Sheldon and Missy, underscores their deep emotional bond and serves as a narrative device to explore themes of change and vulnerability. The study concludes that the characters' linguistic choices are not random but are deliberate tools for constructing identity, negotiating social dynamics, and enhancing narrative authenticity. This research demonstrates the practical application of sociolinguistic theory in media analysis, providing a framework for understanding how scripted dialogue conveys complex social and personal meanings.

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INTRODUCTION

Language functions as a central medium through which humans express thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and intentions across various communicative modes. Beyond spoken and written forms, language also manifests through gestures, signs, and multimodal expressions that convey meaning within social interaction. Ahearn (2016) conceptualizes language as a form of social practice used to construct, negotiate, and maintain identities, social relationships, and power structures within a community. This perspective positions language not merely as a communicative tool but as a dynamic social mechanism through which individuals shape their self-presentation and influence how they are perceived by others. As a result, language becomes a resource for generating meaning that extends beyond the literal interpretation of words.

Building on the understanding of language as a social practice, language style emerges as a crucial component in analyzing how individuals adjust their linguistic choices across varying social and situational contexts. Language style refers to the particular ways in which speakers select vocabulary, structures, tones, and other linguistic features to communicate appropriately and effectively. Zhang (2025) highlights language style as an adaptive form of linguistic behavior influenced by contextual expectations, social norms, and communicative intentions. This conceptualization illustrates that stylistic choices are deliberate and socially responsive, functioning as a means for speakers to express identity, display stance, and maintain interpersonal alignment. Thus, language style becomes a performative tool that bridges personal expression and social meaning.

The socially meaningful nature of language style is further emphasized in research examining how individuals modify their speech according to relational and cultural dynamics. Dragojevic et al. (2016) explain that speakers may shift toward or away from their interlocutor's style through convergence or divergence to negotiate social distance, affiliation, or authority. This demonstrates that language style operates not only as an informational medium but also as a relational strategy used to manage closeness, respect, and power in communication. Eades (2018) similarly argues that stylistic variation reflects broader cultural expectations, group identities, and social hierarchies, showing that language choices are shaped by both personal agency and cultural norms. Taken together, these perspectives highlight that language style is a socially embedded phenomenon that reveals how individuals navigate identity, culture, and interpersonal relationships through linguistic choices.

The dynamic expression of language style becomes particularly evident when considering the sociolinguistic factors that shape how speakers adjust their choices in real interactions. Factors such as age, gender, social background, education, and communicative purpose influence how individuals manage meaning and relational positioning in conversation. Eckert (2016) asserts that linguistic style is inseparable from social meaning, emerging as speakers actively negotiate their identities within specific communities. This claim is strengthened by Bucholtz and Hall (2019), who emphasize that speakers continually modify their language in response to relational expectations, illustrating that style-shifting is a strategic and context sensitive act. These ideas collectively reinforce the view that language style is not fixed but shaped by ongoing social negotiation. Accordingly, understanding stylistic variation requires a theoretical model capable of capturing how linguistic choices relate to social interaction and communicative intent.

Based on the theoretical perspectives discussed earlier, it is essential to establish a linguistic model that systematically explains how speakers adjust their language according to contextual, social, and relational factors. Joos (1967) offers one of the most influential frameworks for understanding language style, stating that stylistic variation emerges as speakers navigate different levels of formality and interpersonal distance. Joos's (1967) concept of language style emphasizes that linguistic variation is shaped by social distance, participant roles, and communicative situations. In this view, style is understood as the strategic adjustment of language to meet contextual demands rather than a fixed linguistic property. Speakers modify their vocabulary, sentence structure, level of explicitness, and tone in response to shifting interpersonal relationships and situational expectations. Joos classifies language style into five categories such as frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate each representing different degrees of formality and relational closeness. These categories illustrate how language can move along a continuum from highly rigid forms to expressions that are deeply personal and emotionally grounded. His framework provides a comprehensive basis for analyzing stylistic changes in interactions, allowing researchers to observe how linguistic choices function to construct identities, roles, and social meanings.

To enrich the theoretical and empirical foundation of this research, several previous studies related to language style have been reviewed. Amin and Aziz (2025) conducted a qualitative descriptive study entitled "Language Style Used by Online Content Creators on TikTok"

published in *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication Studies*. Their findings demonstrated that content creators tend to employ casual and intimate styles to construct closeness and relatability with viewers, indicating that digital interactions influence stylistic choices. Meanwhile, Rahman (2024) in his article “The Role of Language Style in Building Persuasive Messages in Political Campaign Speeches” published in *Journal of Applied Discourse and Communication*, utilized a rhetorical discourse analysis method and revealed that politicians predominantly use formal and consultative styles to maintain credibility while still attempting to connect with the public through subtle informal expressions. Furthermore, Sari (2023) in “Language Style in Young Adult Fiction Writing: A Stylistic Analysis” published in *Journal of Literary and Cultural Expression*, applied stylistic analysis and discovered the dominance of casual and intimate styles to portray modern youth identity, emotional dynamics, and interpersonal closeness among characters.

From the theoretical foundations and previous studies discussed it shows that language style is contextual and is strongly influenced by communication goals, relationships between speakers, and social situations. However, there is still a research gap in the context of audiovisual media, especially television series that have richer dialogue dynamics because they must reflect characters, family relationships, humor, and storyline development. *Young Sheldon* is a relevant example because the series takes up the life of young Sheldon Cooper, a child with a high level of intelligence but unique and often rigid social abilities. The series features Sheldon's interactions with family, teachers, schoolmates, and the wider social environment, so his dialogue contains a variety of language styles that are interesting to analyze. Episode 1 of Season 4 specifically highlights Sheldon's transition to higher education and faces new challenges in both academic and family settings. This situation results in various forms of communication that reflect changes in social roles, age differences, and the level of closeness between characters. As such, the series provides powerful material for understanding how language styles emerge, change, and function in structured narrative contexts.

The context of dialogue in *Young Sheldon* features a variety of social relationships and interactional objectives, requiring a study that is able to capture changes in the level of formality and relational closeness in detail. Based on the sociolinguistic framework proposed by Joos (1967), this study aims to systematically examine the use of language styles in *Young Sheldon* Season 4 Episode 1. Specifically, this research is guided by the following research questions: (1) What types of language styles are used by the characters in *Young Sheldon* Season 4 Episode 1? and (2) How do these language styles reflect the characters' social relationships, communicative purposes, and situational contexts within the narrative? By addressing these questions, the study seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how stylistic variation functions as a sociolinguistic resource in televised media discourse.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Language and Society

Language is widely understood as a social practice rather than a neutral communication tool. Ahearn (2016) explains that language functions as a medium through which individuals construct identities, negotiate social relationships, and maintain power structures within a community. This view emphasizes that linguistic choices are shaped by social interaction and cultural context, making language an active element in social life. Eckert (2016) further argues that language variation carries social meaning, as speakers use linguistic forms to signal group membership, stance, and social positioning. Her work highlights that style is not accidental but socially motivated. Similarly, Bucholtz and Hall (2019) emphasize identity construction through language, showing how linguistic practices reflect and shape social relations. Together, these studies establish that language use is inherently social and that stylistic variation functions as a meaningful indicator of social identity and interaction.

Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics examines the relationship between language and society by analyzing how social factors influence language use. Holmes (2013) defines sociolinguistics as the study of who speaks what language to whom, in which context, and for what purpose. This definition underscores the importance of context, participants, and communicative goals in understanding linguistic behavior. Georgieva (2014) explains that sociolinguistics adopts a broad analytical scope, encompassing social variables such as age, gender, education, and institutional setting. These variables affect how speakers choose linguistic forms in interaction. Hymes (2020) reinforces this perspective by viewing language as a culturally embedded system shaped by social norms and communicative competence. Collectively, these scholars highlight that sociolinguistics provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing language style as a socially conditioned and context-dependent phenomenon.

The Concept Language Style

Language style refers to systematic variation in language use influenced by social context, audience, and communicative purpose. Joos (1967) conceptualizes language style as variation based on levels of formality and social distance, offering a foundational classification that remains influential in sociolinguistic research. Expanding on this idea, Bell (1984) introduces Audience Design theory, which explains that speakers adjust their language primarily in response to their audience. This theory highlights the interactive nature of stylistic choice. Coupland (2007) further views language style as a resource for identity construction, emphasizing that speakers actively use stylistic variation to project social personas and relational stances. Eckert (2016) conceptualizes style as social practice, arguing that stylistic choices actively produce social meaning rather than merely reflect context. These perspectives collectively frame language style as a dynamic, strategic, and socially meaningful aspect of communication.

Types of Language Style by Joos (1967)

Joos (1967) classifies language style into five categories: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate, based on the degree of formality and social distance between speakers. Frozen style is characterized by fixed and ritualized expressions used in ceremonial contexts. Formal style is used in institutional settings that require careful planning and social distance. Consultative style occurs in professional or instructional interactions involving two-way communication. Casual style is employed among peers and family members, marked by informal expressions and shared background knowledge. Intimate style is reserved for close relationships and relies on private codes and emotional closeness. This classification provides a systematic framework for analyzing how speakers adapt linguistic choices according to social roles, interactional goals, and situational contexts. As noted by Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), Joos's framework remains relevant because it clearly links linguistic variation to social structure. Therefore, it is particularly suitable for analyzing language use in television series, where dialogue reflects both social norms and narrative functions.

METHOD

The researcher employed a qualitative research approach. Creswell (2013) explains that qualitative research is a complex approach that involves multiple interpretative practices, making it suitable for analyzing non-numerical data such as spoken language. This approach was chosen because the present study focuses on analyzing the verbal expressions produced by characters in *Young Sheldon* and interpreting the contextual meaning behind the use of language style. This study employed a content analysis design to examine the types of language style used by the characters in the selected episode. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis is not only a technique for systematic and objective data processing, but it must also be justified based on the contextual characteristics of the text being investigated. Content analysis was selected because it

enables the researcher to uncover how the characters' lexical choices represent particular language styles and how these styles reflect interpersonal relationships and social meanings within the narrative.

The data source of the study is *Young Sheldon* Season 4 Episode 1. The data consist of all utterances produced by the characters throughout the episode. Only spoken dialogues that contain identifiable language style features were included for further examination. In this study, the primary instrument was the researcher. As stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), human researchers possess the unique ability to interpret, evaluate, and understand contextual variations in natural settings. Because language style involves nuanced and context-dependent interpretation, the human researcher is considered the most appropriate instrument for collecting and analyzing the data.

To collect the data, the researcher first watched *Young Sheldon* Season 4 Episode 1 several times to understand the storyline, situational contexts, and character interactions. Next, the episode's dialogues were transcribed based on the subtitles. Utterances that indicated specific language styles were then highlighted within the transcript. Finally, the selected utterances were compiled and organized according to their stylistic features for further analysis. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed them through several steps. First, each utterance was identified and categorized based on Joos's (1967) five language style classifications: FR (frozen), FO (formal), CO (consultative), CA (casual), and IN (intimate). Second, the researcher examined the linguistic features of each utterance to justify its classification. Third, the frequency of each language style was calculated to determine the dominant style in the episode. Lastly, the researcher interpreted how the dominant language style and its distribution reflect character relationships, social context, and the narrative function within the episode.

To reduce subjectivity in data analysis, several strategies were applied. First, clear operational definitions of each language style based on Joos's (1967) framework were established prior to analysis to ensure consistent categorization. Second, each utterance was analyzed by considering not only linguistic features but also contextual factors such as participants, setting, and communicative purpose. Third, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the data and classifications to ensure analytical consistency. Finally, theoretical triangulation was employed by comparing the findings with relevant sociolinguistic studies to strengthen interpretative validity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the research on language styles in the television series *Young Sheldon*, specifically focusing on Season 4 Episode 1. The primary objective is to identify and examine the application of Joos's (1967) five language styles; frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate within the character interactions. The data, comprising 44 conversational excerpts, were analyzed to determine how different social contexts, relationships, and communicative purposes influence the characters' stylistic choices. The findings reveal distinct patterns in language use that reflect the characters' relationships and the social situations they navigate.

Table 1. Frequency of Language Style in *Young Sheldon* Season 4 Episode 1

No.	Type of Language Style	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Frozen Style	0	0%
2.	Formal Style	8	18%
3.	Consultative Style	12	27%
4.	Casual Style	16	37%
5.	Intimate Style	8	18%
	Total	44	100%

Table 1 indicates that casual style is the most frequently employed (37%), followed by consultative style (27%), while formal and intimate styles each account for 18% of the interactions. The frozen style was not identified in this episode. This distribution reflects the episode's primary focus on family dynamics and educational contexts, where informal communication and information exchange predominate.

Discussion

This discussion section systematically addresses the research questions by identifying the language styles present in the episode and explaining how each style is closely related to key social factors, namely the speech participants, the setting of the conversation, the topic discussed, and the purpose of the communication. By analyzing the characters speech through Joos's (1967) framework, we can observe how the choice of language style is not random, but rather a strategic response to the interaction of these contextual variables. The following analysis will outline the relationship between each identified language style such as formal, consultative, casual, and intimate and the specific social dynamics that govern the characters interactions, thus revealing how language functions as a mechanism for constructing identities, negotiating relationships, and advancing the narrative in Young Sheldon.

Frozen Style

The frozen style was not identified in this episode. This absence is consistent with the episode's domestic and educational settings, which do not involve the ceremonial or ritualistic contexts that typically require fixed, formulaic language.

Formal Style

Formal style is observed in situations that demand politeness, respect, and social distance, especially in interactions involving authority figures or in contexts where social impressions are important. The appearance of this style is directly influenced by the configuration of specific social factors in each interaction.

Excerpt 1

(00:00:48,482 --> 00:00:50,542)

Principal Petersen: "Sheldon, **you are a remarkable young man.**"

Sheldon: "**Thanks.** And you're a remarkable old man."

The use of formal style in this exchange is a direct outcome of the interplay between the participants, setting, topic, and communicative goals. The speech participants are a school principal and a student, establishing a clear hierarchical relationship based on institutional authority. The conversation setting is the principal's office, a formal and professional space that inherently demands adherence to social decorum and reinforces the power dynamic. The topic discussed is the formal recognition of Sheldon's academic achievements, a serious matter that warrants a respectful and official tone. The principal's communicative goal is to deliver institutional praise and affirm his professional role, which he achieves through the formal utterance, "Sheldon, you are a remarkable young man." This statement employs a full nominal address ("Sheldon"), the complete verb phrase "you are" instead of the contraction "you're," and the elevated adjective "remarkable" all linguistic choices that construct a respectful, measured, and authoritative compliment fitting for the setting. Even Sheldon's semantically unconventional response retains the structural formality expected in this context by using "Thanks" instead of a casual alternative and mirroring the formal compliment format with "And you're a remarkable old man," demonstrating his cognitive understanding of the setting's social rules despite his personal idiosyncrasy.

Excerpt 2

(00:10:21,087 --> 00:10:22,419)

Dale: "You go to church, **don't you?**"

George Sr.: "Yeah, when I'm not hungover."

The use of the formal tag question "don't you?" in Dale's inquiry is a strategic linguistic choice directly shaped by the social factors of the interaction. The speech participants, Dale and George Sr., are acquaintances in a social setting where they aim to build rapport without assuming familiarity. The topic of religious practice is personal and potentially sensitive, requiring a polite approach. Dale's communicative goal is to seek personal information while showing respect and maintaining a polite social distance. The tag question "don't you?" serves this purpose perfectly it softens the inquiry, presents it as a request for confirmation rather than a direct probe, and adheres to conversational politeness norms, thereby framing the entire exchange within a formal communicative structure despite the informal setting.

Consultative Style

The consultative style emerges in professional and educational contexts where the exchange of information requires the active participation of the listener. This style is characterized by structured, goal-oriented dialogue, in which both parties contribute to the transactional flow of information.

Excerpt 3

(00:00:54,021 --> 00:00:58,222)

Principal Petersen: "Between his **coursework** and his **AP tests**, **he's met all of his academic requirements**. He even **managed to get a good grade in PE**."

The principal's utterance is a clear example of consultative style, characterized by its informative, structured, and transactional nature, shaped by specific social factors. The speech participants are an authority figure (the principal) and clients (Sheldon's parents), creating a context where expert information must be relayed clearly and received with understanding. The conversation setting is an official meeting in the principal's office, framing the interaction as a professional consultation. The topic is Sheldon's detailed academic progress, a matter requiring precise and factual communication. The principal's communicative goal is to inform and ensure comprehension, which necessitates a two-way exchange of understanding. He achieves this by using key informative phrases: "coursework" and "AP tests" specify the domains of assessment, "met all of his academic requirements" provides a definitive, summative conclusion, and "managed to get a good grade in PE" adds a specific, noteworthy achievement. This structured delivery of factual milestones is designed not just to state information but to facilitate the parents' understanding and invite their confirmation or questions, fulfilling the core function of consultative style.

Excerpt 4

(00:06:21,047 --> 00:06:26,812)

Sheldon: "**Do you think I can make it** from one end of the college campus to the other in under ten minutes **including a bathroom break?**"

Dr. Sturgis: "**I don't know. How important is the bathroom break?**"

This dialogue is a quintessential example of consultative style, governed by the specific social and contextual factors of an academic advisory session. The speech participants are a

student (Sheldon) and his professor (Dr. Sturgis), defining a relationship built on guidance, expertise, and collaborative problem-solving. The conversation setting is implied to be an academic advising context, a formal yet interactive space dedicated to planning and inquiry. The topic is a precise, logistical concern about time management and campus navigation. The communicative goal for Sheldon is to seek actionable advice and validation for his plan, which he frames through the consultative phrase "Do you think I can make it...", explicitly inviting Dr. Sturgis's evaluation. The inclusion of the specific parameter "including a bathroom break?" further refines the query, demonstrating the detailed, transactional nature of the exchange. Dr. Sturgis's goal is to engage with the query critically and seek necessary clarification to provide a meaningful response. He does this by first acknowledging uncertainty ("I don't know.") and then posing a follow-up question that probes the priority of the variables involved: "How important is the bathroom break?". This response transforms the interaction from a simple Q&A into a collaborative problem-solving session, where both participants actively contribute to defining and addressing the issue, perfectly embodying the two-way, participatory essence of consultative style.

Casual Style

Casual style dominated the episode's interactions, particularly in family settings and peer relationships, characterized by informal vocabulary, elliptical expressions, and a reliance on shared background knowledge. This style functions primarily to reinforce social bonds and group solidarity.

Excerpt 5

(00:08:13,326 --> 00:08:17,024)

Georgie: "Oh. Hold on. Hold on. **Your chair, my lady.**"

Mary: "**My lady**'? Where did that come from?"

Georgie: "I don't know. **My brain.**"

This interaction exemplifies how casual style is shaped by intimate social factors. The speech participants are a mother and son, indicating a familial relationship characterized by familiarity and comfort, not formality. The conversation setting is a family dinner, a private, relaxed environment where informal communication is the norm. The topic is a spontaneous, playful interaction without a serious agenda. Georgie's communicative goal is not to convey critical information but to create a moment of humor and affection within the family. He achieves this through the informal and playful address, "Your chair, my lady." This phrase employs a chivalrous yet clearly joking term ("my lady") that would be out of place in a formal setting, instantly signaling the casual and affectionate tone. Mary's response, "My lady'?", repeats the term with a questioning intonation, highlighting its unexpectedness but within a framework of shared understanding, not genuine confusion. Georgie's final, highly elliptical response, "My brain.", is a hallmark of casual style. It omits a full verb phrase or explanation (e.g., "It came from my brain"), relying entirely on the shared familial understanding that his mother will interpret this as a humorous, non-literal explanation for his spontaneous remark. This entire exchange prioritizes relational bonding and in-group understanding over linguistic completeness or precision.

Excerpt 6

(00:13:35,782 --> 00:13:36,782)

Missy: "**I get it.**"

Sheldon: "**What do you get?**"

This conversation is a clear manifestation of casual style, driven by the unique social dynamics between the speakers. The speech participants are twin siblings, Missy and Sheldon, whose relationship is defined by an exceptional level of shared history, daily experience, and mutual understanding. The conversation setting is a private moment between them, free from external social pressures. The topic, though not explicitly stated in the excerpt, is part of a larger, ongoing emotional or situational context that is fully known to both twins. Missy's communicative goal is to signal her comprehension or empathy regarding this unstated context, which she does with the ultimate in elliptical efficiency: "I get it." This phrase assumes Sheldon will know exactly what "it" refers to, eliminating the need for any explanatory preamble. Sheldon's communicative goal is to seek a minimal confirmation of her understanding, which he does by zeroing in on the key word with his question, "What do you get?" Rather than expressing confusion (e.g., "Get what?"), his phrasing accepts the shared referent ("it") and simply asks for her specific take. The stark brevity and syntactic simplicity of both utterances would be confusing or rude in a less intimate context but here function perfectly, demonstrating how casual style thrives on extensive shared background knowledge and serves to efficiently manage understanding within a close-knit relationship.

Intimate Style

Intimate style emerged in deeply personal moments between close family members, characterized by private codes and emotional vulnerability.

Excerpt 7

(00:13:45,258 --> 00:13:49,161)

Missy: "You're scared everything is gonna be different and it'll be hard. And you're **gonna miss the way that it was.**"

Sheldon: "**How do you know that?**"

Missy: "'Cause **that's how I feel.**"

This conversation is a powerful example of intimate style, shaped entirely by the unique closeness and emotional context shared by the speakers. The speech participants are the twin siblings, Missy and Sheldon, who share the deepest possible familial bond, allowing for extraordinary emotional access and vulnerability. The conversation setting is a private, emotionally charged moment of transition. The topic is their shared, unspoken fears about impending change and loss a subject of profound personal significance. Missy's communicative goal is to articulate Sheldon's internal emotional state for him, offering empathy and solidarity. She achieves this by voicing his deepest fear with the phrase "gonna miss the way that it was," which encapsulates a complex sentiment of nostalgia and anticipated loss. Sheldon's response, "How do you know that?", is not a denial but a stunned acknowledgment of her accurate insight, highlighting the depth of their connection. Missy's ultimate revelation, "'Cause that's how I feel," completes the intimate circuit. This statement transcends simple explanation; it establishes a shared emotional reality, implying that their bond is so profound that their internal experiences are mirrored and mutually understood without words. The utterance relies on the shared emotional experience as the sole necessary context for comprehension, eliminating the need for further justification or detail a defining feature of intimate communication.

Excerpt 8

(00:14:20,159 --> 00:14:22,822)

Sheldon: "It's comforting to know that you **feel the same way that I do.**"

Missy: "That's why I said it, **dumbass.**"

This conversation serves as a definitive example of the intimate style, where the unparalleled closeness of the interlocutors allows for linguistic codes that subvert social norms for expressing affection. The two interlocutors, twins Missy and Sheldon, share a bond that transcends the typical sibling relationship, allowing for a level of candor and coded communication inaccessible to others. The tone of the conversation is a continuation of their deeply personal and vulnerable moment. The topic remains their shared emotional state regarding the impending change. Sheldon's communicative goal is to explicitly acknowledge the profound comfort provided by their shared understanding, which he does by directly stating, "feeling the same way I feel." This expression of shared vulnerability and emotional attunement is central to their intimate relationship. However, Missy's communicative goal is to acknowledge this shared feeling while deflecting the potential sentimentality of the moment in order to maintain their established dynamic. She achieves this through the use of an intimate code: the affectionate insult "stupid." In this particular context, one shared only by them, the term "stupid" does not function as an actual insult. Rather, it is a personal linguistic sign that conveys deep affection, understanding, and solidarity. Its meaning "I love you, and of course we feel the same way" can only be fully understood within the framework of their unique relationship. The use of such terms, which might be inappropriate or offensive in other contexts, perfectly illustrates how the intimate style operates on emotionally charged personal codes that reinforce the exclusivity and depth of the bond between speakers.

The analysis reveals that casual style is the most prevalent linguistic register in the episode, accounting for 37% of all interactions. The dominance of casual style in this episode is not merely a quantitative finding but reflects the narrative orientation of *Young Sheldon* as a family-centered sitcom. Casual style allows characters to express spontaneity, humor, and emotional accessibility, which are essential for portraying everyday family life. The frequent use of informal expressions, ellipsis, and shared references reinforces the sense of intimacy and realism, enabling viewers to emotionally connect with the characters. Thus, casual style functions as a narrative strategy to naturalize character interactions and maintain audience engagement rather than simply reflecting informal settings. This predominance aligns with the show's domestic setting and focus on family relationships, where informal communication naturally occurs. This finding resonates with the study by Sari (2023), which highlighted the dominance of casual and intimate styles in portraying youth identity and interpersonal closeness in young adult fiction. Similarly, Lisdawati (2021) observed that casual style is frequently used in digital content to foster relatability and connection, a function mirrored here in the familial interactions within *Young Sheldon*.

The significant presence of consultative style (27%) reflects Sheldon's academic journey and the numerous guidance-seeking interactions with mentors and authority figures. This aligns with Rahman's (2024) finding that consultative style is strategically used in persuasive and instructional contexts to maintain credibility while facilitating understanding. Joos (1967) posited that consultative style arises in transactional interactions where information exchange is central a concept clearly embodied in Sheldon's dialogues with Dr. Sturgis and Principal Petersen.

The equal distribution of formal and intimate styles (18% each) highlights the narrative balance between external social conventions and internal emotional dynamics. Formal style typically occurs in institutional settings or with authority figures, adhering to the norms of politeness and social distance as outlined by Joos (1967). In contrast, intimate style emerges in key emotional moments, particularly between Sheldon and Missy, serving to underscore their special sibling bond through private codes and emotional vulnerability a stylistic choice that Joos described as "private, coded speech shared only between intimates."

The complete absence of frozen style is consistent with the contemporary, non-ceremonial nature of the episode's events, reinforcing Joos's (1967) observation that frozen style is reserved for ritualistic or highly fixed communicative contexts, which are absent in this narrative setting. Collectively, these patterns of language use not only validate Joos's theoretical framework but also demonstrate how linguistic choices are strategically employed to characterize relationships,

convey social identities, and navigate diverse social contexts throughout the narrative, thereby enhancing the series' authenticity and emotional depth.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has demonstrated the significant role of language style as a reflection of character identity and social dynamics within audiovisual narratives. Through the application of Joos's (1967) theoretical framework to *Young Sheldon* Season 4 Episode 1, the analysis reveals how linguistic choices are strategically employed to construct relationships, convey emotional states, and navigate diverse social contexts. The examination of 44 character utterances identified four distinct language styles, with casual style emerging as the most predominant (37%), followed by consultative (27%), and both formal and intimate styles (18% each). The notable absence of frozen style aligns with the episode's contemporary domestic and educational settings. The prevalence of casual style underscores the central importance of family interactions in the narrative, where informal communication, elliptical expressions, and shared understanding facilitate authentic relational dynamics.

More significantly, the findings reveal how specific language styles correlate with character identity. Sheldon's frequent use of consultative style in academic contexts reflects his intellectual identity and need for precise information exchange, while the intimate style shared between Sheldon and Missy reveals their profound emotional bond and mutual understanding during periods of transition. The strategic shifts between formal and casual styles among adult characters further illustrate their navigation of social expectations and personal relationships.

This study also contributes to sociolinguistic theory by demonstrating the continued relevance of Joos's (1967) language style framework in the analysis of contemporary media discourse. The findings show that language style in scripted television dialogue functions not only as a reflection of social context but also as a deliberate narrative device for constructing identity, managing relational dynamics, and conveying emotional depth. In the context of media discourse analysis, this study highlights how stylistic variation enhances narrative authenticity and audience engagement by mirroring everyday social interaction. For future research, similar analyses could be extended to other episodes or seasons to examine stylistic consistency and development over time. Comparative studies across different television genres or cultural contexts may also provide deeper insights into how language style functions as a sociolinguistic resource in media narratives. Additionally, future studies may integrate audience reception analysis to explore how viewers interpret and respond to stylistic variation in televised dialogue.

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