



The Shifting of Language Style of The Main Character in The Wild Robot Film 2024: A Sociolinguistic Approach

Shafira Mutiara Lestari¹, Tri Arie Bowo², Donal Fernado Lubis³

^{1,2,3}Department of English Literature, Universitas Bangka Belitung

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-03 Revised: 2026-06-25 Accepted: 2026-06-30 Keywords: <i>Sociolinguistics, Style Shifting, Wild Robot, Language Style</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10049 Corresponding Author: Shafira Mutiara Lestari shafiramutiara12@gmail.com Department of English Literature, Universitas Bangka Belitung	<i>This study aims to analyze the language style and style-shifting used by the main character, Roz, in the animated film The Wild Robot (2024). This study is conducted through a sociolinguistic approach by using Martin Joos' theory of language style, which includes five categories: Frozen, Formal, Consultative, Casual, and Intimate. In addition, this study also uses Susan Ervin-Tripp's theory of stylistic shift, which includes three main factors: Addressee, Speech Condition, and Rhetorical Shift. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The data is obtained through the transcription of Roz's dialogue in the film. The results of the 52 data analyzed, with the dominant language style being casual language style as much as 13 data, formal language style as much as 12 data, consultative language style as much as 11 data, then intimate language style as much as 10, and the last is frozen language style as much as 6 data. shows that Roz experienced a significant development in language style, from a frozen and formal language style to a more relaxed and intimate language style. The analysis also reveals several occurrences of style shifting in the movie. Among the influencing factors, speech condition appears most frequently with 47 occurrences, followed by addressee with 32 occurrences, while rhetorical shift appears only once. These shifts mainly occur due to changes in interlocutors and situational contexts, leading Roz to adjust her language style accordingly. This finding proves that language in fictional works such as animated films can reflect complex and representative social dynamics. Thus, this study contributes to expanding the scope of sociolinguistics and confirms that language has an important function in shaping identity and relationships between individuals, even in the context of fictional narratives.</i>

1. Introduction

Language is an important component in social life and functions as a system of meaningful and articulated sound symbols used for communication (Ehlen et al., 2023). Through language, people express thoughts, emotions, and ideas while also building social relationships and identities (Sargin, 2025). Linguistics is the scientific study of language, including its structure and use (Canagarajah & De Costa, 2016). Linguistic studies can be divided into microlinguistics, which focuses on language structure such as phonology, morphology, and syntax, and macro-linguistics, which studies language in relation to external factors such as social conditions, culture, and norms (Khasanah, 2024; Sargin, 2025). One important branch of macro-linguistics is sociolinguistics, which examines the relationship between language and society. Sociolinguistic studies show that language functions in social contexts and that social factors influence language use (Hudson, 1996).

Language style can be influenced by factors such as personality, context, and the relationship between speakers (Musyaffa & Dewi, 2024). People often adjust their language style depending on whom they speak with and the situation in which communication occurs. According to Joos (1967), language style can be classified into five types: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate styles. In addition, Tripp's Style-Shifting Theory explains that changes in language style may occur due to three factors: addressee, speech conditions, and rhetorical shifts (Ervin-Tripp, 2001).

Several previous studies have examined language style in films. For example, Wahyudiantari (2023) analyzed language styles in the novel *Wonder* and found that all five language styles proposed by Joos appeared in the dialogues between characters. Ramadhan (2023) also examined language styles used by the main character in *The Paper Chase* movie and found that casual style was the most dominant form used in conversations. Another study by Nurmawati (2023) investigated the language style of King T'Challa in the movie *Black Panther* and reported that consultative style appeared most frequently in interactions between the king and other characters. These studies show that film dialogues can reflect sociolinguistic variations in language style.

However, most sociolinguistic studies still focus on real-life communication rather than fictional media. Fictional works such as films are often considered less authentic sources of sociolinguistic data. Nevertheless, recent research has suggested that fictional media can represent social interaction and linguistic variation. According to Anastasia Stamou (2018), fiction can serve as a valuable object of sociolinguistic study because it reflects social meanings, identities, and language ideologies through character interactions. However, most sociolinguistic studies focus on human characters, while non-human characters such as robots remain underexplored. Robotic characters provide a unique perspective on language development as they interact with their social environment.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the language styles used by the main character in the animated film *The Wild Robot* and to examine how language style shifts occur in the character's interactions. The film tells the story of Roz, a robot who learns to adapt to life on a wild island and gradually develops relationships with animals. At the beginning of the story, Roz communicates in a rigid and highly formal robotic manner. However, as she interacts with different characters and social situations, her language style gradually changes. This transformation provides an interesting case for examining how language style adapts to social interaction.

This research applies the language style framework proposed by Martin Joos (1967) and the style-shifting concept proposed by Susan Ervin-Tripp (2001) to analyze how social context influences language use. The novelty of this research lies in examining language

style and style-shifting in an animated film featuring a robotic character, providing a new perspective on sociolinguistic analysis in fictional communication contexts.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the language styles used by the main character in the film *The Wild Robot (2024)* and to identify the social factors influencing language style shifts. The analysis is based on the language style theory proposed by Martin Joos in *The Five Clocks*, which classifies language styles into five types: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate styles. In addition, this study examines the phenomenon of style shifting influenced by social contexts, such as addressee, speech conditions, and rhetorical shifts, as explained by Susan Ervin-Tripp.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. The data source of this research is the dialogue of the main character, Roz, in the movie. The data consist of dialogue segments produced by Roz during her interactions with other characters in the film. The data were collected using a documentation technique. The researcher watched the film several times, obtained the movie subtitles as a transcript, and cross-checked them with the spoken dialogue to ensure accuracy. From the collected dialogues, 52 dialogue data were selected because they represent the use of different language styles and the occurrence of style shifting in the character's interactions.

The data were analyzed through several steps. First, the dialogue data were coded and classified based on Joos's five categories of language style. Second, instances of language style shifting were identified by comparing Roz's language use across different interaction contexts. Third, the shifts were analyzed using Ervin-Tripp's framework to determine the social factors influencing the changes, including addressee, speech conditions, and rhetorical shifts. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the film and cross-checked the transcript with the original dialogue. Peer checking was also conducted by discussing the classification of language styles among authors and with colleagues familiar with sociolinguistic analysis.

3. Result

Research Findings

This study analyzes the language styles used by the main character in *The Wild Robot (2024)* and examines the occurrence of style shifting influenced by social contexts. The analysis is based on Martin Joos's (1967) classification of language styles: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate.

Figure 1. The Flow Chart of Data Language Style & Style - Shifting

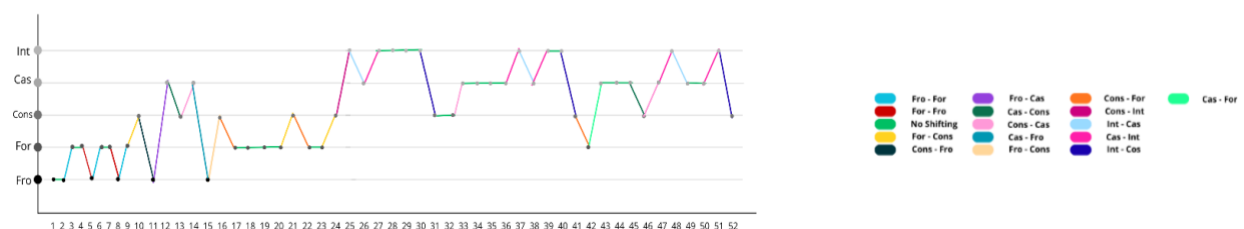


Figure 1 illustrates the distribution and shifting pattern of language styles used by the main character across the 52-dialogue data analyzed in this study. The horizontal axis represents the sequence of the dialogue data from 1 to 52, while the vertical axis represents the five language styles proposed by Martin Joos (1967): Frozen (Fro), Formal (For), Consultative (Cons), Casual (Cas), and Intimate (Int). Each point indicates the language style used in a particular dialogue uttered by the main character. The connecting lines between points represent the occurrence of style-shifting, showing how the character changes her

language style from one dialogue to another. At the beginning of the story, the character tends to use more rigid styles such as frozen and formal. However, as interactions with other characters increase and social relationships develop, the language style gradually shifts toward consultative, casual, and intimate forms. This pattern indicates the character's communicative adaptation within different social contexts.

The researcher discovers that there are 52 data in the Wild Robot movie that contain language style based on data analysis. The table below displays language style data in total number and frequency of occurrence. The data are analyzed using Joos's language style theory.

Table 1 Data of Language Styles in The Wild Robot movie

No	Language Style	Data
1.	Casual Style	13
2.	Formal Language Style	12
3.	Consultative Language Style	11
4.	Intimate Language Style	10
5.	Frozen Language Style	6
Total		52

The table above shows that casual style appears most frequently, with 13 occurrences. This indicates that informal communication becomes dominant as the main character develops closer relationships with other characters on the island. Formal style appears in 12 data and is mostly used when the character delivers structured information related to her programmed functions. Consultative style appears in 11 data, mainly in situations involving two-way communication where the character asks questions or seeks information.

Meanwhile, intimate style is found in 10 data and is used when the character communicates with those who have closer relationships. The least frequent language style used in the movie is frozen style with 6 data. This style appears mostly at the beginning of the movie when the main character delivers fixed, programmed expressions or system-like statements. Overall, the variation of language styles in the movie reflects how the character gradually adapts her communication style according to different social contexts.

Table 2. Data of Style-shifting Factors in The Wild Robot movie

No	Style-shifting Factors	Data
1.	Speech Condition	47
2.	Addressee	32
3.	Rhetorical Shift	1

The analysis also reveals several occurrences of style shifting in the movie. Table 2 presents the distribution of style-shifting occurrences in The Wild Robot movie. The analysis identified a total of 52 instances of style shifting. Among the three influencing factors, speech condition appears most frequently with 47 occurrences, followed by addressee with 32 occurrences, while rhetorical shift appears only once. The shifts in language style are mainly influenced by addressee and speech condition, which cause the main character to adjust her language according to the situation. The detailed examples and explanations of language style and style shifts are discussed further in the discussion.

4. Discussion

After analyzing the data, the researcher explains in more detail the language styles used by the main character in the movie *The Wild Robot* and the social factors that influence the use of these styles:

Language Styles

Overall, the findings show that Roz uses all five language styles proposed by Joos (1967), but the distribution of these styles reflects the character's social adaptation throughout the movie. Casual style appears most frequently because Roz gradually develops closer relationships with the animals on the island. As Roz spends more time interacting with them, the communication becomes less formal and more emotionally expressive. This finding supports Holmes's (2013) explanation that casual language commonly occurs among individuals who share close social relationships and interact in relaxed situations.

The dominance of casual and intimate styles in the later parts of the movie also reflects Roz's development of social identity. At the beginning of the story, Roz communicates mostly using frozen and formal styles because her language is controlled by a programmed robotic system. These styles represent mechanical and impersonal communication. However, as Roz learns to interact with the animals and takes responsibility for caring for Brightbill, her language becomes more flexible and emotionally expressive. This shift suggests that language style functions not only as a communication tool but also as a representation of identity and social belonging within a community (Coupland, 2007).

These findings are generally consistent with previous studies on language style in fictional media. For example, Ramadhan (2023) found that casual style was the most dominant form used by the main character in *The Paper Chase*. Similarly, Wahyudiantari (2023) reported that all five language styles appeared in the novel *Wonder*, showing that literary and cinematic dialogues often reflect sociolinguistic variation. However, the present study differs from previous research because the language user is a non-human character, namely a robot. Unlike human characters, Roz's language style initially reflects a programmed system rather than natural social communication. The gradual shift from frozen and formal styles to casual and intimate styles therefore illustrates a process of linguistic adaptation and identity transformation, which becomes the unique aspect of this study.

In addition, the findings support sociolinguistic theories that language choice is strongly influenced by social relationships and interactional contexts (Hymes, 1974; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). As Roz forms closer relationships with Brightbill and other animals, the communication style becomes less formal and more personal. This indicates that language style is dynamic and can change according to social distance, emotional connection, and communicative purpose.

Style-shifting

According to Susan Ervin-Tripp (2001), stylistic shift (style-shifting) occurs when a speaker changes their language style depending on social factors within an interaction. Ervin-Tripp explains that these shifts are commonly influenced by three main factors: addressee, speech condition (situational context), and rhetorical purpose. Changes in these factors may cause speakers to adjust their level of formality, vocabulary choice, or tone in order to suit the social situation and their relationship with the interlocutor.

In *The Wild Robot*, several shifts in Roz's language style can be explained through these three factors. When Roz receives the responsibility to care for Gosling after the accidental death of its parent, the new emotional situation affects the way she

communicates with the animals. At first, Roz uses a frozen style that reflects her rigid robotic programming, but as she begins interacting more closely with the animals, her language becomes more flexible and shifts to a consultative style. This change is mainly influenced by the speech condition, where her new role and emotional involvement affect her communication.

Another stylistic shift occurs when Roz interacts with Vontra, another robot from the same company. In this situation, the addressee influences Roz's language because Vontra communicates using a formal style. As a result, Roz adjusts her language to match the formality of her interlocutor. However, when the interaction becomes less rigid, her language shifts into a casual style. A similar shift appears when Roz interacts with humans and Brightbill. Roz tends to use a formal style when speaking to humans because of social distance and authority. In contrast, when she communicates with Brightbill and other animals with whom she has a close relationship, her language becomes more casual and relaxed. This shift shows the influence of both addressee and speech condition.

In addition, a stylistic shift also occurs when Roz speaks with Fink and Gosling while they are building a house together. In this interaction, the change is influenced by addressee, speech condition, and rhetorical shift. Roz initially responds to Fink using a more serious and formal tone, but when she speaks to Gosling, who is still young and has difficulty pronouncing her unit name, she changes to a more relaxed and simpler language. This change reflects a rhetorical shift, where Roz adjusts her way of speaking to make it easier for Gosling to understand, even giving him a simpler name to call her. The speech condition, which involves cooperation while building their shelter, also encourages a more interactive and supportive communication style.

5. Conclusion

The results of in-depth research on language style and style-shifting factors that influence language style changes on Roz in the film *The Wild Robot*, found that the language style that Roz uses in the film *The Wild Robot* is (52) data, with the dominant language style is casual language style as much as 13 data, formal style as much as 12 data, then consultative language style as much as 11 data, then intimate language style as much as 10, and the last is frozen style as much as 6 data.

Meanwhile, the factors that influence Roz's language style changes are speech conditions, addressee, and rhetorical purpose. These three factors influence Roz's style-shifting. The change in style shifting is mostly influenced by the speech condition factor as much with 47 data, then the second addressee as much with 32 data points, and finally, rhetorical shift as much with 1. The language style the main character frequently uses is the Casual language style, because the main character experiences several changes in language style. At the beginning, the language used by the main character speaks using the Frozen and formal language style, then in the middle of the movie, using the consultative language style, and towards the end of the movie, Roz uses casual and intimate language style.

The implication of the findings of the dominant language style, namely casual, is influenced by the acceptance of the surrounding social community and the adaptation that occurred in the social environment. However, over time, the main character began to interact well with the social community on the island. During this process, the main character start to shift of language style began to change to be more relaxed and humanistic. The use of casual language style is more dominant than other language styles and this casual style marks that the main character has not only adjusted style shifting of language style, but also emotionally, she becomes part of the community not only as function of being a

robot helper but because her ability to empathize, respond well and be able to build relationship.

In this movie, the main character experiences significant developments in the way she communicates. The style shifting that she experiences does not happen randomly but is heavily influenced by “addressee” and “speech condition”. The experience of rejection from the social community, being avoided by the surrounding social community, made the main character start learning their language by using activating the “activating mode” as tool for style-shifting in language style want to show that AI, which was originally a robotic figure that experienced adaptation of a humanist attitude, influenced by the social environment of living being which made it potentially experience adjesment and acceptance in the social community. In the theme of the futuristic film *The Wild Robot*, to imply the ability of AI to adapt to the social community of living beings, the language traces created by the social community have an influence on changing perceptions that build emotionally on AI robots.

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