

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE STYLE USED BY BARRACK OBAMA AND MICHELLE OBAMA IN *OPRAH WINFREY SHOW*

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Abstract : Language is the tool of people to communicate effectively. Every language has a style, which is a form of communication system. As a part of language, style has important meaning on spoken language. Language style is part of language variation that is used by speaker in formal and informal situation. In this study, the writer intended to find out the kinds of language style and the most dominant language style used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show*.

In conducting this study, the writer uses qualitative research design, because this study focuses on understanding social phenomena of language style. The object of this study is document dialogue used by the guests in the Oprah Winfrey Show. The writer makes document analysis as the key instrument that collected the data from the official website of Oprah Winfrey Show. Data analysis of this study are analyzing and classifying the form of kinds of language style used by Barack and Michelle Obama, and identifying the most dominant form of language style.

This study showed that Barack and Michelle Obama used three kinds of language style; those are casual, consultative and formal styles. The writer found that casual style consists of 79 utterances, consultative style consists of 6 utterances, and formal style consists of 9 utterances in Oprah Winfrey show. It can be concluded that the most dominant kinds of language style used by Barack and Michelle Obama was use of casual style.

Key words: *Language Style, Barack and Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey Show*

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Introduction

Language is the most important thing to interact with others. In the journal of *Celtic*, Heriyanti and Elfana (2014) stated that the people as social beings are never separated from others. People used language as a tool for communication. Besides, people also used language to have relationship in the society. Without language, people cannot interact and communicate with each other.

Every language has style, including English itself. Style refers to ways of speaking, how speakers use the resource of language variation to make meaning in social encounters. As a part of language, style has important meaning on spoken language. In common, it is called language style. Based on Jacobson (in Coupland 2007: 11), "language style refers to ways of speaking can involve a meaning, making in different but simultaneously relevant dimensions of a communicative act or event." It can be concluded that language style is part of language variation that is used by speaker in formal and informal situation. Furthermore, Joos (in Mesthrie, 2000) outlined five styles, varying on a scale of formality from least to most formal; they are Frozen style or Oratorical style, Formal style or Deliberative style, Consultative style, Casual style and Intimate style. The kinds of language style have different variation can be seen from different characteristic each other.

The phenomenon of language style can happen in the situation where conversation takes place and the language is used. The

differences of situation and topic may cause the kinds of language itself; for example, the kinds of language style that is used by people who converse with another, such as family members, addressing a public gathering, or discussing science with professional colleagues. These variations can occur based on the user.

Moreover, the study of language style had been conducted by Nafsiyah (2011) who investigated language style used by English Club debaters at International Language Forum of University of Muhammadiyah Malang. She found out that there were two kinds of language style used by the English Club debaters. They are formal and consultative style. Then, Nadia (2012) who analyzed the casual language style used by the main characters of *The Sisterhood of Travelling Pants 2* movie found the most dominant of language style was used casual style especially in formal conversation.

The kinds of language style can be indicated by every people when he or she perform in a speech and people use different kinds of language style based on the certain situation, function and of norm of social context. This study focuses on kinds of language style and the most dominant kinds of language style that is used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show*. The *Oprah Winfrey Show* is a popular talk show program in the United States and the world hosted by Oprah Winfrey. It also records the highest rated talk show in American television history which has run nationally since 1986 and has

received 47 Daytime Emmy Award. The guests were the current President of the United States Barack Obama and his wife Michelle. They become the first African-American people who are very popular in the United States.

The writer was interested in analyzing this program because language in talk show is produced in different styles reflected on social contexts. Social contexts can be formal, casual, consultative, frozen, and intimate. In addition, the use of language style in talk show program can make the listener easier to understand about the topic. Thus, the writer was interested in studying the language style used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show*.

Based on the background of study presented above, this study is undertaken to answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of language style are used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in the *Oprah Winfrey Show*?
2. What is the most dominant language style used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in the show?

In line with the statement of the problem, this study is intended to find:

1. Kinds of language style used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in the *Oprah Winfrey Show*.
2. The most dominant language style used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in the show.

Language has a very important role in human life and also has many advantages

that can be seen from various aspects of life. According to Sapir (in Mesthrie 2000), language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols is used for human communication to interact each other. The basic of languages is spoken words which combine sounds with meanings. Besides, Agha (2007: 14), states that "In every human society certain uses of language make palpable highly specific kinds of social effect such as the indication of one's relationship between persons spoken to or spoken of people about".

From various definitions above, the writer can concluded that language is the way people who will communicate with each other and for expressing thought, feeling, idea and emotion of human beings to get some response from others. In a social group like conversation, we can indicate that a language behavior in which the function of language in establishing social relationships is reflected.

Sociolinguistics

People as social beings have needs to constantly interact to others by using the language. Sociolinguistics is a term that refers to the study of the relationship between language and society, and how language is used in multilingual speech communities. According to Gumperz (in Wardhaugh, 2007), sociolinguistics is an attempt to find correlations between social structure and linguistic structure and to observe any changes that occur. The similar idea is also found in Wardhaugh (2007) who says that sociolinguistics is concerned with

investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and how languages function in communication; the equivalent goal in the sociology of language is trying to discover how social structure can be better understood through the study of language.

Based on the previous idea, the writer concludes that sociolinguistics is study language in society in order to find out what kinds of thing in language. Social structure influences the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlate with social attributes such as class, sex, and age.

Language Style

When a person interacts with others, it must occur a communication. Their communication will be influence by the circumstance or the social context in which they may have different styles of language depend on the situation and condition of social context. According to Wardhaugh (2007), said that we can speak very formally or very informally, our choice being governed by circumstance. Furthermore, Jacobson (in Coupland 2007) says that language style refers to ways of speaking can involve meaning and making in different situation but simultaneously relevant dimensions of a communicative act or event.

Wardhaugh and Jacobson' statements are clear enough that when we talk to others, the selection of words should be careful to

the circumstances surrounding environment, both in formal and informal situations. Then, language style is part of language variation that was used by speaker in formal and informal situation. It explains how speakers project different social identities and create different social relationship's through their style choices, and how speech style.

Having discussed about language style, it is important to know about kinds of language style. According to Joos' theory (in Mesthrie 2000) there are five levels of formality in language use. They are frozen style or oratorical style, formal style or deliberative, consultative, casual and intimate style.

A talk show is a television programming or radio programming genre in which one person (or group of people) discusses various topics put forth by a talk show host (Stelter, 2010). Talk show is a show to deliver some information, discussion with a specific the theme and usually interspersed some interesting theme such as music, jokes, quizzes, and others.

In this study, the writer will investigation talk show program *Oprah Winfrey Show*. This program has many audiences from all part on the world such as Canada, China, Indonesia, and etc. Besides, the presenter used kinds of language style to interact with audiences who come from different country who have the different background and status social as well.

Oprah Winfrey Show is one of the longest daytime talk shows in history of

television. The show received 47 Daytime Emmy Awards before Oprah Winfrey decided to stop submitting it for consideration in 2000. However, Oprah Winfrey as a presenter on November 20 2009, Oprah Winfrey announced that the 25th season would be the show's last. The final episode at May 2011, Oprah Winfrey is interviewed U.S. President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. They talked about the challenges of parenting at the White House, the strength of their relationship, and their concern for the country's future.

Research Method

Ary (2010) stated that research design is the researcher's plan of how to proceed to gain an understanding of some groups or some phenomenon in natural setting. Individuals, families, and a variety of groups, organizations, industries, and more can be examined using qualitative research.

This study is used qualitative research design because the writer only focuses to analyse the kinds of language style and the most dominant that was produced by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama as guests in *Oprah Winfrey Show*. This method is flexible to answer the statement of the problems offered in the first chapter. Besides, the data are interpreted and displayed descriptively and systematically based on the supporting theory.

In conducting literary research, the object of the study is needed. The object of this study was document dialogue used by

Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. The episode of this show entitled "**The Farewell Season**", the episode being the last episode of the *Oprah Winfrey Show*.

The data collection itself is done through the processes that will be conducted in the study as follows:

1. Selecting the best episode in *Oprah Winfrey Show* according to the writer.
2. Downloading video and making transcripts from the video.
3. Categorizing the transcripts of *Oprah Winfrey Show* based on the kinds of language style.

According to Ary (2010), there are several instruments used in qualitative research such as observation, interview, document analysis and other kinds such as questioner, survey and personality, attitude and cognitive test. The writer can conclude that the most appropriate instrument for gathering data in this study was document analysis. document analysis focuses on analyzing and interpreting recorded material to learn about human behavior.

After all the data were collected, the next step was the data analysis. The following steps of analyzing the data are:

1. Identifying all utterances of the dialogue that has found into each kinds of language style based on Martin Joos's theory in Mesthrie.
2. Classifying the data based on the kinds of language style.
3. Analyzing the result or findings of the analysis based on the existing theory.

4. Listing all the kinds of language style from conversation.
5. Discussing the data.
6. Giving conclusion based on the findings.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the research problems in Chapter I and the findings presented above, there are two point discussions. First of all, the kinds of language style are used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show*. According to Joos' theory (in Mesthrie 2000) there are five levels of formality in language use. They are frozen style or oratorical style, formal style or deliberative, consultative, casual and intimate style. Then, the writer analyses the data use of transcript based on the theory.

Kinds of Language Style Used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in Oprah Winfrey Show

Concerning on the kinds of language style, there are five kinds of language style based on Martin Joos theory of Mesthrie. They are frozen style or Oratorical style, Formal style or Deliberative style, Consultative style, Casual style and Intimate style. However, from the result of the data analyses that is generated from the talk show, the writer only found three kinds of language style that is used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show*. They are casual, consultative, and formal language styles.

The guests used casual style during the show as it is a style used for conversation in

non formal situation. Casual style that used by the guests were consists of some characteristics such as contraction, use of slang, use of ellipsis or omission and use of nickname. For examples, the utterance "I **don't** think I'm all that different, actually.". This utterance use of contraction since it consists of word that was contracted. Besides casual language style, the writer also found some utterances used consultative language style. Consultative style used in the most orally conducted every day, such as business transaction, doctor-patient conversation. In other words, this style is at the operational level which is usually consultative in nature. For instance, the utterance use of consultative in nature "I'm sorry. Malia turned me on to her. I love that song. [To the president] **What about you?**". This utterance was produced by Michelle Obama to ask Barack Obama about kinds of song that Barack like.

Furthermore, formal style is also found in this conversation between Barack Obama and Michele Obama. They using of formal style is in the serious situation. It appropriates the conversation used of the president and his wife. For instance, the utterance of Barack Obama when answers Oprah's question "**He's a very smart**, very capable person. I have to say, I always was optimistic". This utterance was categorized into formal style because the sentence of "He's a very smart "is showing his serious opinion about his friend John Robert.

The writer did not find other kinds of language style such as frozen and intimate

styles. The guests does not use frozen language style because make the show boring and not interesting for audiences. Actually, frozen style is used in very formal condition which the sentence cannot change from original text, such as in church ritual, palace and speech for state ceremony. Moreover, intimate style is not used by the guests in show because this style not appropriate to be used in the situation in which there is a lot of people who are involved in certain occasion. This style only is used within families, lovers or between close partners or spouse as this style is a private language.

The Dominant Kinds of Language Style used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in Oprah Winfrey Show

From the result of the findings to answer the first research problem, the writer found that the language style used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show* are using casual, consultative, and formal language styles.

From 94 utterances use of language style used Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show*, the researcher found that Barack and Michelle Obama used casual style, which consists of 79 utterances (see Appendix), consultative style consists of 6 utterances, and formal style consists of 9 utterances. It can be concluded that the most dominant kinds of language style used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show* is of casual language style, which have several

characteristics such as the use of slang, ellipsis or omission, slurred pronunciation, and the use of nickname.

Conclusion and Suggestion

From the analysis of the *Oprah Winfrey Show* script dialogue, the writer makes an attempt to find out the kinds of language style and the most dominant language style are used by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama in *Oprah Winfrey Show*. The study found that there are three kinds of language style. Those are casual, consultative and formal language styles. Moreover, the researcher found that the most dominant language style was casual language style which are casual style consists of 79 utterances, consultative style consists of 6 utterances, and formal style consists of 9 utterances. Therefore, the using of casual, consultative and formal language styles are in the formal and informal situation. It is appropriate with the conversation used of the president and his wife. In addition of the function of language style, it can be conclude that different styles of language depending on situation and condition of social context. All of utterances in the dialogue are identified from the context.

Here, the researcher would like to give suggestion for the Sociolinguistics lectures, student of English Department and the further researchers as well.

For the Lectures, especially Sociolinguistics lectures to get more knowledge are very important in

teaching sociolinguistics. The result of this study is to give students the authentic materials, hopefully this study can be used as additional information for sociolinguistics subject especially in teaching kinds of language style.

For the Students, the researcher suggests to the students in order to get knowledge in understanding kinds of language style, especially in the frozen style, formal style, consultative style, casual style and intimate style. It will be able to help them to avoid having wrong interpretation. Furthermore, the students get more knowledge from other sources such as from internet, previous research, journal and books.

Further Researcher, the researcher expects that the next researchers who will conduct the similar research could complete this research not only about the kinds of language style used, but also the function of language style used in other talk show programs.

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APPENDIX

Although we have seen each other on several occasions since, the last time I interviewed the president for Obama was all the way back in 2004. Back then, Barack Obama was just a state senator from Illinois, but he'd lit up that year's Democratic National Convention with a brilliant, galvanizing speech that really put him on the political map. Suddenly, the hot topic was whether he might be presidential material. Cut to July 2012 and I'm walking into the stately Green Room at the White House for a

sit-down interview with the president and First Lady of the United States. You could almost see the weight of the job resting on his shoulders as he strolled past the silk-covered walls and gilt-framed oil paintings, yet he still had that easy positivity and casual flair, with his suit jacket hooked on his index finger, over his shoulder. (He may be the leader of the free world, but Barack Obama was down-to-earth enough to help move a White House coffee table for the photographer.) Michelle Obama, meanwhile, had poise and a bearing that emanated "First Lady"—until the president jokingly told her she had a little something stuck in her teeth.

Before the interview, we got caught up; I told the president about the wonderful book I was reading (Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*) and he told me about the best movie he'd seen in three years (*Beasts of the Southern Wild*). There was a plate of chocolate chip cookies between us, but with healthy eating never far from her mind, Michelle suggested to an aide that it be replaced with a bowl of apples. That accomplished, we dove in.

Oprah Winfrey (1.1) : Okay, so other than being grayer, how is the man sitting before me different from four years ago?

Barrack Obama (1.2) : I don't think I'm all that different, actually (CS). The things that led me to run for office—trying to figure out how we create an economy

(CS), where everybody's got a fair shot and if you work hard, you can achieve your dreams—I'm still passionate about (CS). That's still what drives me every single day (CS). My abiding faith in the American people is undiminished. I think that being in this office has made me even more appreciative of my family in ways that I didn't think I could be (CS). I already loved them so much, but when you're under all these pressures, to come home every single night—at least when I'm in town—and have Michelle and the girls there, and draw joy from them (CS). They are my balance and they keep me grounded, and that's truer now than it's ever been.

Oprah Winfrey (1.3): The moment you see them, does everything change and lift?

Barrack Obama (1.4): They just give me perspective. We have dinner at 6:30 every night (FR), especially during the school year; although they're getting old enough now where during the summers they're (CS), like, "See ya." They give me the long view, and whatever fussing I've been dealing with Congress, suddenly Malia's breaking it down, telling me kids are thinking about this issue or that issue (CS).

Michelle Obama (1.5): Sometimes I don't even know what he's gone through over the course of the day until after dinner, after Bo's been walked and we sit down and I listen and I think (CS), "Man, he's been dealing with all that." Because when he walks in the door every night, it's like the

light goes on in him and he is all focused on us.

Oprah Winfrey (1.6): So you can compartmentalize?

Michelle Obama (1.7): Oh, he's very good at that. (CS)

Oprah Winfrey (1.8): Other changes since four years ago?

Barrack Obama (1.9): There's no doubt that I'm a better president now than when I first took office (CS). This is not a job where there's a manual, and over time you get a better sense of what's important, what's not, how to see around corners and anticipate problems, as opposed to just managing problems once they've arrived. (CS)

Oprah Winfrey (1.10): So what have the past four years taught you about yourself that you didn't know?