Style Shifting In A Workplace: A Case Study of Interactions between Employees of Superiors and Subordinates Position in a Private Corporation Company in Bandung

Euis Rina Mulyani[a*], Iwa Lukmana[b]

[a]IKIP Siliwangi
[b]Indonesia University of Education

Article Info

Abstract

In Indonesian culture, people vary their way of communicating according to whom they speak to. The addressee's social attribute, such as age, position, social status, and power, commonly lead the speakers to choose a certain variation of utterances. In other words, style shifting often happens during communication with people of different social factors. The present study concerns style shifting in a workplace between employees of superiors and subordinates position in a private corporation company. This study is aimed at (1) investigating whether the employees at a private corporation company shift their style of speech when communicating with their superiors and subordinates, and (2) the characteristics of their style shifting (if they do). The respondents of this study were 20 workers of the company. They were selected purposefully, male and female workers who had both superiors and subordinates. Questionnaire was employed for the data collection. Both qualitative and quantitative procedures were used to analyze the data. The conclusion of this study is that style shifting is principally influenced by power relation, as shown in use of address terms, apologetic words, length of utterances, directness/indirectness, and formality of expression.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the notable aspects of societies is a *hierarchy*, in which some members have higher status than others. Likewise, in language there are *stylistic* as well as social stratifications (Labov in Giglioli, 1972). Social structures affect a speaker's linguistic choice in face to face interaction (Satyanath, 2015). Therefore, in daily conversation a speaker often shifts the way s/he speaks according among others

to the addressee's back ground, a social distance between speaker and addressee, and situation in which the communication takes place (Alwasilah, 1993). It is because cultures have rules of social behavior that strictly govern style (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993). A speech style is closely related to social structure, including cultural norms and expectations of the speech community (Satyanath, 2015). People talk to different people or different audience in different ways, different word choices, phrases, and sentence structures. The choice of style is determined by the speakers' judgment about their relative social relationship with their listener (McLean 1999). In short, style shifting can happen when the addressee or conversation partner is changed (Ervin-Tripp, 2001). This language variations use is seen as a means of negotiating and maintaining harmonious relationship between the interactants (Mesthrie et al, 2009)

The existence of language variations and style shifting in many communities have been found and studied by many researchers since more than 50 years ago. For instance, asymmetrical use of *Tu-Vous* (TV) (Brown and Gilman, 1960), the analysis of speech variations of a disc jockey in a radio in Wales (Coupland, 1980; Coupland, 2001), reference to a third person in Sundanese (Lukmana, 2002), style of dominating others in interaction by higher-social positions people (LoCastro, 2012), Korean speech style shifting between "polite" -*yo* and "deferential" -*supnita* (Brown, 2015) . In terms of language variation use and style shifting, there is nothing new in this research. However, in terms of site-type of the interaction, the language, and the pattern of the style shifting, this study is new and more comprehensive. It is because this study investigates the linguistic phenomenon related to style shifting which is focused on status relation (superior-subordinate) at a workplace that may influence the speaker's language behavior. Specifically, it investigates style shifting in a workplace, in Indonesia, which uses Indonesian language, and analyses five aspects (more comprehensive than previous studies) of the speakers' utterances: the use of address terms, apologetic words as alerter, length of utterance, formality of expression, and directness.

To sum up, it is clear that style shifting is one of linguistic phenomena which exists in Indonesian culture which is affected by various social factors. It may happen in various contexts including at a workplace. It may affect the speakers' choices of utterance aspects such as words choices, phrases, structures, etc. The use of proper language style may maintain good relationship between the

speakers and the listeners. Hence, studying this topic is important.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the broadest sense, style can be applied to both spoken and written varieties of language (Leech and Short, 1981). In a narrower sense, a style is a range of variation within the speech of an individual speaker (Bell, 1997). Style shifting means variation within an individual speech which relates to the addresses differences, social context, personal goals, or externally imposed tasks (Meyerhoff, 2006).

Many people change/shift their style of speaking because many cultures have rules of social behavior that strictly govern style (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993). When they are having a conversation, they are generally aware of their own status in relation to that of their interlocutor and will choose the appropriate language quite unconsciously. Therefore, they talk to different people or different audience in different ways, different word choices, phrases, and sentence structures Wilkins (1972). The choice of style is determined by the speaker's judgment about their relative social relationship with their listener (McLean,, 1999; Hudson, 1983). From the choice of words that a speaker uses, it can be predicted to whom the speaker is speaking or what kind of relation that the speaker and the addressee have (Bernstein, 1972). The choice of different words or sentences or styles is generally influenced by social factors such as social class, formality of speech situation, age, position, gender, degree of intimacy and dyad relation.

First, language varies according to social class. Javanese people, for example, will talk to a person of higher social status using the *Javanese krama inggil* (the most refined variety). Meanwhile, to a lower social-status person, they may say in another way (*see* Rahardi, 2003). Let's see the following examples. Both utterances [1a] and [1b] are of inviting a guest to have a meal.

[1a]   Bapak-Ibu kaaturan kerso ngedhapi ndaharan langkung rumiyin!
         Sir - madam please want   eat   meal   more   ahead!
         'Sir-Madam could you please have a meal first!'
[1b]   Kono mangano dhisik !
         There   eat   ahead
         'Have a meal first!'

In [1a] the speaker uses the *Javanese krama inggil* (the most refined variety) variety which is used to speak to a higher social-status person, whereas [1b] is used

to speak to a lower social-status person.

Second, style is also described in terms of the formality of the speech situation (Edwards, 1979). An example of it is when a student shifted his code, from one variety of English to another: He asked the instructor for a recommendation in European-American Standard English, but he spoke to other students in African-American Vernacular English due to different situations. (Gumperz in Schiffrin, 1983).

Third, because of age, speakers may shift their style of speaking. Old people speak differently from young people, and linguistic generation gaps exist. In addition, accepted patterns exist for communication between and within the generation: people of different ages (old to young, young to old) and people of the same age (Wardhaugh, 1977).

Fourth, language also varies according to gender. The language of man differs from that of women. Usually, men do not use expressions such as *It's darling*, and women tend not to use profanity as far as men do (Wardhaugh, 1997). Similarly, the language used in addressing men and women is different subtly. A speaker can compliment a man on a new necktie with the words *What a pretty tie that is!*. But when the addressee is a woman, the speaker says *How pretty you look today!* (Wardhaugh, 1997).

Fifth, language use varies with regard to position. Within an organization or institution, communication can pass in three directions: downward, upward, and horizontal. Downward communication occurs when a superior communicates to one or more subordinates. Upward communication happens when subordinates communicate to their superior. Horizontal communication exists when in communication among workers/people with the same/equal power takes place (Addler and Rodman, 1985). The way people communicate with their friends (horizontal communication) is different from the way they speak to their superiors (upward communication). On the other hand, the manner they speak to their subordinates (downward communication) is different from the manner they use language with their friends (horizontal communication) (McLean and Snyder, 1999). When a subordinate speaks to his/her superior, the language will become more formal; while among colleagues, the language is usually informal (Wilkins, 1972).

Sixth, dyadic relation may also stimulate style shifting. A dyad is the simplest

social interaction that involves only two parties. It often happens that two individuals have more than one identity relationship. For instance, a Korean sergeant worked for a captain who had had the same high school with him. In front of the military people, the sergeant addressed the captain by his military title, but when the third parties were absent he used the term *elder brother* (Howell and Vetter ,1976).

Seventh, performance of an interlocutor also may affect a speaker to choose a certain variety of language. An example can be shown in the case of the Indian language. Urdu pronunciation and lexicon will be associated with Muslim dress and gestures. Thus, within a conversation, he or she may use the Urdu *tashriif rakhiyee!* in asking a Muslim to sit down., and turn to a non-muslim Indian with the Hindi expression *padhaariyee!* for the same message (Gumperz, 1971).

Finally, the way one uses language in an interaction can be influenced by degrees of familiarity. In Paraguay, Guarani is used when a speaker speaks to people who are familiar with him. On the other hand, Spanish is used when the speaker is less familiar with the addressees (Rubin, 1968 cited in Alwasilah, 1993).

Many previous works relate to this study. Some of which are outlined below. First, Bloom and Gumperz (1972; Downes, 1984) made an important study of *code switching*. It is about speakers switching between one variety of language to another. Second, the use of pronouns *tu* and *vous* had been investigated by Brown and Gilman (1960, in Hudson, 1983; Yatim, 1983). It is about the use of the pronouns *tu* and *vous* as a symbol of a status difference. Superior people receive *vous*, while the inferiors receive *tu*. Third, the use of *terms of address* in American English was found by Brown and Ford (1961 in Howel and Vetter, 1976). Fourth *Levels of polite speech in Java* were found by Clifford Geertz (1960). Fifth, Ayatrohaedi (1982) examined Sundanese speech levels, classifying an expression as very coarse, coarse, moderate, refined, and very refined. Sixth, Si (2010) found that today's Hindi-English code switching by Indian people is accomplished through syntactic and morphological strategies. Seventh, Qadha (2007) found that style shifting is a manifestation of the existence of social power. Eighth, Cutillas-Espinosa and Hernandez-Campoy's (2012) analysis on speeches and interviews of the former female president of the local Government of Murcia (Spain). Ninth, Hall-Lew, Starr, and Coppock's (2012) analysis on style-shifting in the U.S Congress which focusing on the pronunciation of the second vowel of "Iraq(I)". Tenth, Rickford

(2014) found that Guyana people did style shifting when the addressee or situation changed. Finally, Gnevsheva (2015) found that nonnative speakers of New Zealand English did situational style shifting in their production of English vowels.

The studies above concern style shifting, which is also the main concern of the present study. It has been revealed that language use shifts according to a variety of social factors such as position, social status, power, and social distance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study investigates the linguistic phenomenon related to style shifting. Specifically, it focuses on status relation (superior-subordinate) at a workplace that may influence the speaker's language behavior. Therefore, the writer formulates the research problems in the following questions Do the workers at a private corporation company shift their style of speech when communicating with their superiors and subordinates? If they do, what are the characteristics?

This research employed qualitative design, especially case study (Woodside, 2010; Lodico et. al, 2010; Silverman, 2005). It involved 20 respondents: 16 male and 4 female. They were chosen purposefully. The chosen employees were those who had both superiors and subordinates in their workplace. This is because the respondents' ways of speaking when communicating with both their superiors and their subordinates would be investigated. In addition, all the respondents who took part in this study were not given any reward. They participated voluntarily.

A questionnaire was used as an instrument in collecting data. The questionnaire was in Indonesian language and was designed to be responded in expressions which are presumably going to be used in real situations. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to elicit the respondents' identity, i.e. name, sex, age, position at work, and the company where they work. The second part of the questionnaire was the main part, which was designed to record the respondents' way of communicating in the workplace with regard to the relative status of the speakers and the addressees. In the main part of the questionnaire, the respondents were given 12 short descriptions of situations. The setting of the questionnaire consists of two elements. First, the setting is determined by question type. In the present study, 'where' and 'why' questions are elicited from respondent to put forward their response to the given situations. The second element is the addressee. Within the present study, the addressee is divided into

two people: the speaker's superiors and the speaker's subordinates. Furthermore, the weakness of the questionnaire usage was hopefully reduced by the content of the questionnaire which was made 'sticks to the reality' as much as possible. In this case, the respondents were real people in their real role/position, talking to real superiors and subordinates, and in a real work setting. In addition, even though the situations given were imaginary, the situations of communication were designed based on reality.

The questionnaire was given to the HRD (Human Research Development) officer of each affiliated companies of the Corporation. Then, s/he distributed the questionnaire to the respondents. The questionnaires were collected approximately a week after they had been distributed.

In data Analysis, stile shifting is identified with regard to the use of address terms, apologetic words as alerter, length of utterance, formality of expression, and directness. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses of data. The quantitative strategy employed in the present study involving frequency and percentage. The qualitative dimension of the analysis constitutes an extension of its quantitative counterpart. It relates the results of the quantification with social concerns.

DISCUSSION

This section compares the language behavior performed by speakers when communicating with superior and subordinate, with regard to the use of address terms, apologetic words, length of utterances, formality/informality of utterances, and directness/indirectness.

Terms of address

One of the linguistic elements that signals power relation between the speaker and the addressee is the terms used by the speaker to refer to the addressee (address terms) (Hudson 1983:122). This section focuses on the three most frequently used terms, when they together reach 75% occurrences.

As can be observed in Table 1, there are clear differences in the use of address terms due to relative status between the speaker and the addressee. In other words, they change the choice of address terms because of the power ownership of the speaker.

Table 1: Terms of address used by respondents when communicating with superiors and subordinates

Address Terms	Speaking to Superior			Speaking to Subordinate		
	Count	%	Rank	Count	%	Rank
a. Bapak/Ibu	96	70	1	8	9.4	3
b. Akang/Teteh	22	16	2	20	24	2
c. Mas/Mbak	1	0.7	6	1	1.2	5
d. Bapak/Ibu+Name	5	3.6	4	1	1.2	5
e. Akang/Teteh+Name	11	8	3	6	7.1	4
Kinship Terms	**135**	**98**		**36**	**42**	
f. Name	1	0.7	6	49	58	1
g.Bos	2	1.4	5	0	0	
Total (%)	138	100		85	100	

When the respondents spoke to superior, they most frequently use the kinship term *Bapak/Ibu* (70%). In contrast, when respondents spoke to subordinate they mostly used *name* (58%) as the address term. In the second rank, the preference of the address terms is for *Akang/Teteh*, either to superior (16%) or to subordinate (24%).The respondents' third preference, when speaking to superior is, for *Akang/Teteh+Name* (8%); however, when speaking to subordinate, the respondents' third preference is for *Bapak/ibu* (9.4%).

'Kinship terms' are generally used to bring closeness with the addressee (Depdikbud 1993). Lukmana (2002) described the meaning of the following address terms. The term *Pak/Bapak* is used to refer to a father, and *Bu/Ibu* to a mother. Within current work-related contexts, *Bapak-Ibu* are more approximately regarded as titles that correspond to the English *Mr-Ms/Mrs/Miss* or *Sir-Madam*. In a workplace, one may refer to a younger person with the titles *Bapak/Ibu*. The term *'Bapak/Ibu'* is generally said to imply a higher level of respect, formality, and distance compared with other kinship terms. The terms *Akang/Teteh* are used in family circle to refer to older sibling; *Akang* is for male, while *Teteh* for female. Outside family circles, the use of the term *Akang* is commonly used to refer to a male person whose age is comparable to the speaker's own older brothers, and the term *Teteh* to refer to a female person whose age is comparable to the speaker's own older sister. The use of the terms *Akang/Teteh* implies that the speaker is trying to be polite to the addressee. However, these terms imply less

respect, formality, and/or distance than *Bapak/Ibu*. Then Akang/*Teteh+Name* commonly suggest less respect, formality, and on distant compared with *Bapak/Ibu*. On the other hand, the term '*Akang/Teteh+Name'* can be interpreted as more respectful and distance than '*Name'*. And the *name* itself is generally associated with closeness and informality, and is used when respect is not in focus.

Furthermore, the term '*bos*' is borrowed from the English word 'boss', commonly associated with informality. Finally, the Javanese terms *Mas/Mbak* roughly have the same meaning with the Sundanese terms *Akang/Teteh*.

In conclusion, when speaking to superior, speakers (respondents) tend to suggest high respect since the address term *Bapak/Ibu* becomes the most frequently address term used by respondents (70%). On the contrary, when speaking to subordinates, the respondents tend to pay less respect since *name* becomes the most popular address term (58%).

In other words, the above findings suggest that speakers (respondents) shift their style in the use of address terms when communicating with superior and subordinate. When speaking to their superiors, they tend to have higher respect than speaking to their subordinates. The above findings also indicate that power ownership of the speaker influences the use of address terms. This is in line with Brown and Gilman's (1960) and Brown and Ford's (1961) (*see* Wardhaugh 2006) studies relating to the nonreciprocal use of address term due to superiority.

Apologetic words

In the present study, the apologetic words acted as 'alerter' (borrowing from Blum-Kulka's coding strategies of DCT). It functions to alert the addressee's attention. In Indonesian culture, apologetic words usage as alerter is part of Indonesian *tatakrama* 'etiquette'. The word *tataktama* itself is generally associated with politeness, respect, and refinement (Lukmana 2002). Therefore, speakers who use the apologetic words are said to pay respect to the addressee.

Table 2: Apologetic words used by respondents when communicating with superiors and subordinates

Apologetic words	Speaking to Superior			Speaking to Subordinate		
	Count	%	Rank	Count	%	Rank
Mohon Maaf	9	15.3	2	1	6.7	3
Maaf	44	74.5	1	10	66.7	1
Punten	6	10.2	3	2	13.3	2
Sori	0	0.0		2	13.3	2
Total (%)	59	100		15	100	

It is found that the respondents used four types of apologetic words: *mohon maaf, maaf, punten* and *sori*. These four apologetic words originally mean 'sorry'. However, in this case, these words mean 'excuse me'. The apologetic words *mohon maaf* and *maaf* come from Indonesian language. According to Depdikbud (1990), *mohon* means 'to request respectfully'; whereas the word *maaf* means 'to apologize'. Hence, the apologetic word *mohon maaf* roughly means 'to apologize respectfully'. On the other hand, the word *punten* comes from Sundanese language which also means 'to apologize'; while *sori* comes from the English 'sorry' and in Indonesia is associated with informality and respect is not in focus.

The finding illustrated in Table 2 showed that the word *maaf* is the most popular apologetic word performed by respondents, either when speaking with superior or subordinate. However, the second and the third preference of apologetic words used by respondents when in contact with superiors are different from the apologetic words used by the respondents when in contact with subordinates. When the respondents were in contact with superior the second place is occupied by the word *mohon maaf* (15.3%); and *punten* (10.2%) is in the third rank. On the other hand, when speaking to subordinate, the second place occupied by *punten* and *sori* (both of them are 13.3%); then, *mohon maaf* (6.7%) is on the third rank.

From those findings, it is clear that the respondents shift the order and frequency of apologetic words due to the difference of status relation between the speakers (respondents) and the addressees. It is logical since in Indonesian culture, apologetic words usage as alerter is viewed as part of Indonesian

tatakrama 'etiquette' which is generally associated with politeness, respect, and refinement (Lukmana 2002). Therefore, speakers who use the apologetic words are said to pay respect to the addressee. Following is a possible explanation. When speaking to subordinate, there are only 15 occurrences of apologetic expressions; while when speaking to superior, there are 59 occurrences, 4,7 times more frequently than when speaking to their subordinates. It can, therefore, be interpreted that the speakers tend to shift their speech. When speaking to superior, the speakers perform the behavior that implies more respect compared to speaking to subordinate.

Length of utterances

Within this category, the average lengths of utterances performed by respondents are measured. It is gained by calculating the numbers of words used by respondents then the number of words is divided by respondents' utterances (120 utterances).

Table 3: The average length of utterances used by respondents when speaking with superiors and subordinates

Situation	Speaking to Superior		Speaking to Subordinate	
	Number of words	Number of utterances	Number of words	Number of utterances
1	170	20	127	20
2	157	20	199	20
3	207	20	138	20
4	232	20	174	20
5	199	20	150	20
6	239	20	216	20
Total	1204	120	1004	120
Average	10.03		8.36	

Based on the findings listed in Table 3, it can be seen that respondents used more words when speaking to superiors than the words they used to their subordinates. The average number of words used by respondents when speaking to superior is 10 words (1204 words within 120 utterances), whereas speaking to subordinate result is only 8 words (1004 words constitutes 120 utterances). The number of words used by the respondents has a correlation with direct/indirect way of speaking (*see* subsection Directness/Indirectness). Speaking indirectly commonly need more words than speaking directly.

Directness/Indirectness

Indonesian people (especially Sundanese and Javanese people) tend to speak indirectly (Mulyana 2000). Directness is speaking straight to the main point, whereas indirectness is speaking 'beating about the bush' (borrowing from English idiom), meaning that speakers speak around and not saying the main point. For them, speaking indirectly is one of the etiquettes in communication (Mulyana 2000). And etiquette *(tata krama)* is generally associated with politeness, respect, and refinement (Lukmana 2002). Speaking indirectly commonly need more words than speaking directly. Table 4 describes the number of direct and indirect speech uttered by the respondents.

Table 4: Number on directness/Indirectness used by respondents when in contact with superior and subordinate

Directness/ Indirectness	Speaking to Superior			Speaking to Subordinate		
	Count	%	Rank	Count	%	Rank
Directness	74	61.7	1	87	72.5	1
Indirectness	46	38.3	2	33	27.5	2
Total (%)	120	100		120	100	

It appears in Table 4 that most respondents from both positions (when respondents were as superior and as subordinate) largely used direct style. However, the percentage of directness used by respondents when speaking to superior (61.7%) was lower than the percentage of directness they used to their subordinate (72.5%). On the contrary, the occurrences of indirectness used by the respondents when speaking to superior (38.3%) are higher than the occurrences of indirectness used by the respondents when speaking to their subordinate (27.5%). Based on findings in Table 4, it can be inferred that the respondents tend to be more indirect when speaking to superiors. This can also be proved by the fact that they used more words when they communicating with superior than communicating with subordinates. When speaking to superiors, the average length of utterances was 10 words while to subordinates was 8 words. (*see* previous section!).

In other words, in the use of directness/indirectness, the respondents shift their

style due to relative status between the speakers and the addressee. The respondents tend to speak more indirectly when speaking to superior than speaking to subordinate; and speak more directly when communicating with subordinates than communicating with superior. These means that the respondents tend to pay more respect to their superior since indirectness is as a politeness norm in Indonesia (Mulyana, 2000).

Formality of utterances

Formal style is generally used in formal situation like formal speech, official meeting and formal meeting, while casual style is used in informal situation, for example when talking with friends, families, etc. Depdikbud (1993) gives some specific characteristics of formal/informal speech style. The first concerns the use of affixes. In Indonesian formal style, verbs emerge with affixes (*me-kan; me-i; di-kan; di-i*, etc.), while the informal form commonly occurs without affixes.

Table 5: Formality expression used by respondents when speaking with superior and subordinate

Formality	Speaking to superior			Speaking to subordinate		
	Count	%	Rank	Count	%	Rank
Formal	52	43.3	2	23	19	2
Informal	68	56.7	1	97	81	1
Total	120	100		120	100	

Table 5 showed that most respondents, either as superiors or subordinates, use informal way of speaking when communicating with the addressees. However, the use of informal style by the respondents when communicating with subordinate (81%) is higher than the informal style they used to superior (56.7%). On the other hand, the use of formal style by the respondents when speaking to superior (43.3%) is higher than the use of formal style by respondents when speaking to subordinates (19%).

It can, therefore, be interpreted that in the use of formality of expressions, the respondents shift their style due to the relative status of the speaker and the addressee. This is proved by the fact that the percentage of informal expressions used by respondents when speaking to subordinate is higher than the percentage of informal utterances the respondents used to superiors. This is supported by

McLean and Snyder (1999), that way people communicate with their friends (horizontal communication) is different from the way they speak to their superiors (upward communication). On the other hand, the manner they speak to their subordinates (downward communication) is different from the manner they use language with their friends (horizontal communication). When a subordinate speak to his/her superior, the language will become more formal; while among colleagues, the language is usually informal (Wilkins 1972).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This paper has examined style shifting in a workplace, especially in the use of address terms, apologetic words, length of utterance, formal/informal expression, and directness/indirectness. This study focuses on relative status (superior-subordinate) between the speaker and the addressee.

The following conclusions are drawn with regard to the above research questions. First, in terms of patterns of communication with superiors, the respondents most frequently use the address terms *Bapak/Ibu*. They are also found to use the words *maaf* and *mohon maaf* as their first and second apologetic words, to express their meaning in approximately 10 words per utterance (longer utterance than the utterance used when speaking to subordinate), to speak in indirect way (the percentage is higher than when speaking to subordinate), and to demonstrate what they want to say in informal style (the percentage is lower than when speaking to subordinate).

Second, in terms of patterns of communication with subordinates, the respondents are that they most frequently use 'name' as their address term, and use the words *maaf* and *sori/punten* as their first and second apologetic words. They also found to express their meaning in approximately average 8 words per utterance, to speak indirectly (but the percentage is lower than when speaking to superior), and to demonstrate what they want to say mostly in informal style (the percentage is higher than when speaking to superior).

Third, the speakers (respondents) shift their style when communicating with superiors and subordinates. When communicating with superior, they tend to be more formal, more indirect, more lengthy, more 'apologetic' and use more respectful terms of address. This suggests that superiority or power relation affects style shifting.

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