

THE DECLAMATORY, FAMILIAR, AND PUBLICISTIC STYLES

Thesis

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Introduction

Stylistics, as a branch of linguistics, examines how language choices vary depending on communicative goals, audience, and context. Among the many functional styles recognized in English, the declamatory, familiar, and publicistic styles represent three distinct modes of expressing ideas, emotions, and social intentions. Each style carries its own linguistic markers, pragmatic purposes, and cultural significance. This thesis explores the defining features, communicative functions, and contemporary relevance of these styles, as well as the differences and intersections among them. Understanding these stylistic varieties is particularly essential for students of linguistics, translators, orators, journalists, and teachers of English as a foreign language, who must navigate a wide range of communicative situations.

1. The Declamatory Style

The declamatory (or oratorical) style is traditionally associated with public speaking, ceremonial speeches, dramatic readings, and persuasive oral communication. Its primary goal is emotional impact and expressive performance. Unlike conversational communication, declamatory speech is designed for a broad audience and emphasizes clarity, rhythm, and intensity.

Key features of the declamatory style include:

Elevated vocabulary and rhetorical devices (metaphors, parallelism, antithesis).

Carefully structured sentences to guide the listener's attention.

Strong emotional coloring, often achieved through exclamations or emphatic words.

Phonetic expressiveness, such as intonation, pauses, tempo, and volume changes.

Public orientation, meaning the speech is crafted to influence, inspire, or provoke thought.

Declamatory style is widely used in political speeches, motivational talks, religious sermons, theatrical monologues, and graduation ceremonies. In modern English discourse, this style continues to be important because of its ability to mobilize audiences and highlight the speaker's authority.

A declamator is an outdated term for someone who gives public speeches or recitations, a "declaimer". The word is derived from the Latin declamator, meaning "one who declaims" or practices public speaking. The adjective form, declamatory, describes a style of speaking or writing that is dramatic, forceful, loud, and often highly emotional or rhetorical.

Declamator: A person who declaims or gives public speeches.

Declamatory: Adjective describing something said or written in a loud, forceful, and dramatic way.

Declamation: The act of making a public speech, especially one that is a practice or a performance.

In phonetics, “declamatory” describes a style of speaking or singing that is dramatic, rhetorical, and often loud, with strong emphasis on the sounds to convey forceful emotions.

Examples of Declamatory Pieces (Interesting Materials)

Here are a few great short texts and excerpts perfect for declamation — emotional, dramatic, and inspiring:

1. “I Have a Dream” – Martin Luther King Jr.

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.””

Why good: Inspiring, rhythmic, powerful for voice control and emotion.

2. From Shakespeare – “Julius Caesar” (Marc Antony’s speech)

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.”

Why good: Great for dramatic delivery, tone change, and expression.

3. “Invictus” – William Ernest Henley (Poem)

“I am the master of my fate,

I am the captain of my soul.”

Why good: Short but powerful — great for confident, strong declamation.

4. Motivational Speech (Original Short Piece)

“You may fall a thousand times,

But the world only remembers when you stand up again.

Be brave — not because life is easy,

But because you are stronger than your fears.”

Why good: Easy English, emotional, perfect for school declamation.

Tips for Declamation:

1. Understand the meaning — feel the emotion behind the words.
2. Use your voice — loud, soft, slow, fast — show emotion through tone.
3. Use gestures naturally.
4. Make eye contact — connect with your audience.
5. Practice — declamation is a performance!

2. **The Familiar Style**

The familiar style represents the opposite end of the stylistic spectrum. It is used in informal, private, and intimate communication, typically between close friends, family members, or individuals sharing a high degree of familiarity. This style aims to maintain emotional closeness, spontaneity, and naturalness.

Typical features of the familiar style include:

Colloquial vocabulary, slang, idioms, and contractions.

Short, loosely connected sentences or fragments.

Incomplete structures, pauses, hesitations, and overlaps.

Personal pronouns, interjections, and emotionally loaded exclamations.

Simplified grammar and reduced forms in speech (“gonna,” “wanna”).

Topic shifts and minimal formal organization.

This style is closely connected with a speaker’s identity, social background, and emotional state. In contemporary communication, especially on social media, messaging apps, and everyday conversations, the familiar style reflects the dynamics of modern interpersonal relationships.

A “familiar style” is a writing style that closely mimics natural, everyday speech, prioritizing clarity, directness, and accessibility over ornate language. It requires great precision to use common words correctly and effectively, avoiding both vulgarity and pretentious, over-the-top phrasing. The goal is to sound effortless, like a conversation, while still conveying ideas with force and clarity, which is a difficult task that demands careful word choice.

Characteristics of a familiar style

Clarity and directness: The writing focuses on getting the message across clearly and honestly, rather than using flowery language to impress the reader.

Mimics speech: It strives to be as if one is speaking in a common conversation, but with a thorough command of words.

Precision over pomp: It rejects both unmeaning pomp and vulgarity. Instead, it requires the “best common words” and precise constructions to convey meaning accurately.

Effortless appearance: While difficult to achieve, it should feel effortless to the reader, like a casual, easy-to-understand discourse.

Rejects affectation: It avoids both overly formal language and loose, “slipshod” phrasing, aiming for a natural, unvarnished quality.

Why it’s challenging to write in a familiar style?

Difficulty of simplicity: Achieving true simplicity and propriety in language is hard. It’s a challenge to select the exact right common words to be precise.

Misconceptions: Many people mistakenly believe that writing without affectation is the same as writing at random or vulgarly, which is incorrect.

Careful word choice: Writers must avoid the “first word that offers” and instead carefully consider and select the best available words from the common lexicon.

In phonetics, a “familiar style” refers to a colloquial and informal manner of speaking or writing that mimics natural conversation. Phonetically, this style is characterized by reduced or contracted sounds (like “gonna” for “going to”), informal vocabulary, and a greater emphasis on intonation over precise pronunciation. It is distinct from more formal styles and is achieved through features like the natural elision of sounds and the use of common, everyday speech patterns, notes Scribd and Scribd.

3. The Publicistic Style

The publicistic style, sometimes referred to as the journalistic or media style, bridges the gap between artistic expressiveness and factual communication. Its main purpose is to influence public opinion, inform, and persuade through logical argumentation and emotional appeal. It is widely used in newspapers, magazines, blogs, political commentary, and media broadcasts.

Distinguishing characteristics include:

A combination of logical reasoning and emotional appeal.

Clear structure, with headlines, leads, thematic paragraphs, and conclusions.

Precise vocabulary, often mixed with expressive or evaluative words.

Rhetorical questions, quotations, and inclusive pronouns to engage readers.

Stylistic diversity, ranging from neutral reporting to expressive commentary.

In modern English discourse, the publicistic style plays a critical role in shaping public consciousness. With the rise of digital media, this style has become even more influential, adapting to fast-paced information flow while maintaining persuasive and engaging qualities.

Publicistic style is a functional style of language used primarily in mass media to inform, influence public opinion, and persuade an audience about current events. It achieves this by blending logical argumentation with emotional appeal and can be found in various forms, including newspaper articles, essays, speeches, and broadcasts like radio and TV commentary. Key features include a focus on current issues, a persuasive intent, and the use of rhetorical devices to connect with the audience.

Characteristics of publicistic style

Purpose: To inform about current events and influence public opinion through persuasion and appeal. **Content:** Focuses on social, political, and economic issues, as well as moral and philosophical topics.

Tone: Balances logical reasoning with emotional expression.

Linguistic features: Employs rhetorical devices like emotive language, and sometimes, humor or hyperbole, to engage the audience.

Common genres and forms

Print: Newspaper articles (political, social, economic), essays, and magazine features.

Spoken: Oratory, speeches, public addresses, and radio and television commentary and interviews.

Other: Advertising and press conferences.

Sub-styles

Journalistic: Deals with current events in news articles and reports.

Oratorical: Spoken style, often political or ceremonial, designed to persuade and inspire an audience through direct address and emotional language.

Essay: Written or spoken, it is a literary form that explores a subject with a personal, though often analytical, tone

4. Comparison of the Three Styles

While all three styles serve communicative purposes, their goals and linguistic features differ significantly:

Style	Purpose	Vocabulary	Structure	Emotionality	Context
Declamatory high	Persuasion, inspiration Ceremonial/public speaking		Elevated, rhetorical	Balanced, rhythmic	Very
Familiar personal	Personal interaction Everyday conversation	Colloquial, slang	Loose, spontaneous	High	but
Publicistic	Influence, inform Moderate to high	Mixed neutral + evaluative Media, journalism	Clear,		organized

Their differences highlight how English adapts to different social roles. The declamatory style carries authority and dramatic power; the familiar style supports emotional intimacy; and the publicistic style shapes public opinion through accessible, persuasive language.

Conclusion

The declamatory, familiar, and publicistic styles represent essential components of modern English communication. Each style fulfills unique social and linguistic functions that reflect the speaker's intention, the relationship between interlocutors, and the broader communicative context. Understanding these styles not only enriches linguistic competence but also enhances practical skills in public speaking, writing, translation, and effective communication. As English continues to evolve in both traditional and digital spaces, the interplay between these styles demonstrates the language's flexibility and expressive depth.