Interactional Styles used by Male Characters
when Gossiping at Workplace in *The Intern* Movie

Vannia Liebnis
English Department, Faculty of Languages and Literature, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, INDONESIA
E-mail : a11170069@john.petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The writer conducted this study to investigate the interactional styles used by the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis in *The Intern* movie. This study was done by the writer to find the interactional styles used by the male characters when gossiping at the workplace. In conducting this study, the writer used the theory of interactional style by Holmes (2006) and Baxter (2010). Furthermore, this study used a qualitative approach. The result of this study showed that the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, used all of feminine interactional style when they were gossiping at the workplace. The male characters used facilitative features to increase other speakers' participations, to show their supportiveness and other-orienteers by using supportive feedback, collaborative, person/process oriented and affectively oriented, and to avoid conflicts by softening the statements using conciliatory features. However, the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis used only five out of seven features of the masculine interactional style. They used competitive, aggressive interruption, confrontational, and direct features to make them straightforward. The male characters also wanted to be credible toward each other, they tended to use referentially oriented features by giving facts. Therefore, the male characters used both feminine interactional styles and masculine interactional styles based on the aims of the gossiping.

Keywords: interactional styles, feminine, masculine, gossip, movie

INTRODUCTION

Language is indeed an effective way to express people's thoughts or opinions because it may reflect people's personality traits. People use language in every context on day-by-day interactions. Men and women have different ways of expressing their language towards each other. Both of them have different styles when communicating based on gender. The separation in communication makes society construct a language perspective. However, a social constructionist states a discourse approach theory which represents whether men or women are not born or socialised into a particular gender, but they are gendered by their interactions (Butler, Cameron & Crawford, as cited in Baxter, 2010). Thus, Holmes (2006) and Baxter (2010) propose their thoughts on sets of gender-based linguistic characteristics which are known as interactional styles.

This study focuses on analyzing the interactional styles from a movie. The writer chooses a movie to be analyzed because a movie is a motion-picture art which represents a person's real imagination or experience in an interesting way. Fiorelli (2016) states that movie or film has a straightforward correlation to reality due to various aspects of its audiovisual communication of ideas which the other forms of art cannot do. Therefore, the writer believes that the movie is suitable for this analysis because it portrays the actual situation in daily existence.

The writer chooses to investigate the interactional styles of 4 male characters, i.e. Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis and Lewis. IMDb (n.d.) states that there are 18 main casts which contribute to the movie. However, the writer only chose Ben Whittaker with his three colleagues: Jason, Davis and Lewis. Ben is a 70-year-old widower and a retiree who applies to a senior citizen intern program at *About the Fits* company. He is very cheerful, surrounded by positive energy and full of wisdom. He has some colleagues who are younger than him which he had assumed as his own nephews. They are Jason, the melancholic one, Davis, the goofy one, and Lewis, the chill

one (IMDb, n.d.). They become a positive work teammate and also friends with each other. As they work as colleagues, they interact and communicate with each other frequently in the workplace. The writer wants to know the interactional styles which tend to influence these four male characters' utterances whenever they interact at the workplace.

The writer also wants to investigate the interactions among Ben Whittaker and his colleagues, Jason, David and Lewis, when they are gossiping at the workplace. Gossiping has been known as casual women's talk for a long time. Coates (2004) states that the term "gossip" focuses on the concept of the language used among women when talking to each other has not culturally been classified as significant linguistic scientific proof. Male talk is seen as 'true' talk and has always been taken seriously (Coates, 2004). Sometimes, gossip can enhance the level of mistrust and increase the conflict (Converge International. n.d.). However, gossip can also be an interaction which "construct a solidarity value" (Cameron,as cited in Coates, 2004, p.104). Thus, the writer wants to know the kinds of feminine interactional style and masculine interactional style which may appear when they are gossiping at the workplace.

In conducting the study, there were two following research questions: 1) What kinds of feminine interactional styles are used by the male characters when gossiping in the workplace in *The Intern* movie? and 2) What kinds of masculine interactional styles are used by the male characters when gossiping in the workplace in *The Intern* movie?

For the theoretical framework, I used the theory of interactional style by Holmes (2006) and Baxter (2010). Interactional styles are speech patterns which are already relevant to a particular role, attitude, response or behavioral patterns, and to the extent that they are "ethnically categorized as gender based" (Holmes, 2006, p.6). The interactional styles are divided into two: feminine interactional style and masculine interactional style. The tables below provide summaries about the characteristics of feminine interactional style and masculine interactional style by Holmes (2006) and Baxter (2010):

Table 2.1. Summary of the Feminine Interactional Style

No.	Features of Feminine Interactional Style	Characteristics	Functions of Characteristics
1.	Facilitative	• Tag questions • Pragmatic particles	• To push the involvement of the speakers in a conversation • To boost others' self-esteem by giving credits or praise for good works
2.	Supportive Feedback	Minimal response	To build up a helpful and compassionate image
3.	Conciliatory	• Modals • Particles	To cope with hospitality and avoid conflicts
4.	Indirect	• Interrogative form • Modals • Hedges • Hesitation • Pause	• To soften and attenuate the directives • To include less straightforward discourse strategies

5.	Collaborative	● Overlaps ● Minimal response ● Personal and inclusive pronouns	● To agree with the previous speakers ● To include senses of openness
6.	Person/process-oriented	● Open-ended questions ● Indirect forms	● To show self-interest ● To give an impression as other-oriented and empathic person
7.	Affectively-oriented	● Fillers ● Hedges ● Hesitation ● Pause ● Personal features	To fulfill the need of the interlocutor to feel important and to feel that their autonomy is valued, does occur in relation practice

Table 2.2. Summary of the Masculine Interactional Style

No.	Features of Masculine Interactional Style	Characteristics	Functions of Characteristics
1.	Competitive	● Taboo words ● Swearing ● Insults ● Threats ● Name calling ● Verbs of action, force, and violation.	● To compete with each other ● To enhance their authority ● To impress both males and females
2.	Aggressive Interruptions	Interruptions	To compete with the interlocutors
3.	Confrontational	● Aggravated phrases ● Declarative sentences	To frontally argue the interlocutors
4.	Direct	● Imperative statements ● "Need" statements	To explicitly giving directions to the interlocutors
5.	Autonomous	Authoritative statements	To show the authority

| 6. | Task/result-oriented | Taking-control acts | To give a direct focus on the task and its result |
| 7. | Referentially Oriented | Informative speeches | To inform the factual information and avoid interpersonal interest |

METHOD

In this study, the writer used the qualitative approach. The data was all dialog lines spoken by the male characters when gossiping at the workplace in *The Intern* movie. In the beginning, the writer downloaded *The Intern* movie from *D21.PRESS*. The writer downloaded the script of the movie from Ivana Chubbuck Studio (https://www.ivanachubbuck.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/The-Intern-Ben-Patty-Entire-Screenplay.pdf). After getting the script, the writer edited the script into an accurate transcript. The proper transcript that she mentions was the transcript which consisted of narrative explanation of the scenes and the dialog lines. The writer rewatched the movie in the first week of March 2021 until the last week of March 2021 to find the scenes which showed the male characters were gossiping at the workplace.

The writer applied a three-digit numbering system to mark the dialog lines produced by Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis when gossiping at the workplace. The first digit represented the number of the scene. The second digit was for the speaker of the utterance. Number 1 (one) was for Ben Whittaker, number 2 (two) was for Jason, number 3 (three) was for Davis and number 4 (four) was for Lewis. The last digit represented the number of utterances produced by the speakers. For instance, the writer put 1.2.3, which means the data was taken from the first scene and the speaker was Jason on his third utterances.

Then, the writer analyzed the data using the main theories by Holmes' (2006) and Baxter's (2010) about interactional styles.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following parts of this chapter discuss the writer's analysis of the findings. There are three parts. Two of them are analysing the research questions, while the last is showing the interpretation of the findings.

The Feminine Interactional Styles Used by The Male Characters When They Are Gossiping in The Workplace in *The Intern* Movie

From the data analysis, the writer comes to a result that male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis and Lewis, used all features of feminine interactional style in 20 scenes of gossiping at the workplace in *The Intern* movie.

1. **Facilitative**

There are some dialog lines which reflected the facilitative feature on the male characters' dialog lines, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. Here is an example:

a. Data 71.2.6 (Scene: 71, Speaker: Jason, Statement Number 6)

Jason   : "*Well, first of all, nothing on purpose. We were going out for a minute. I thought she was cool. I really liked her. But then, I sort of accidentally slept with her roommate. That doesn't help. I didn't know she was her roommate. I met her out. How would I know that?*"

The statement is categorized as a facilitative statement which reflects on the usage of "*well, first of all...*", "*but then...*", and *"sort of..."*. Those phrases are pragmatic particles, which are used to begin and to expand the conversation into the further parts.

2. **Supportive Feedback**

There are some sentences which use supporting feedback that appeared on the male characters' dialog lines, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. An example is presented below.

    a.   Data 51.2.2 (Scene: 51, Speaker: Jason, Statement Number 2)

        Jason   : "*Hang in there.*"

The statement above is indicated as supporting feedback. Jason gave Ben a minimal response right after he knew that Ben would be Jules Ostin's personal intern by saying "*hang in there*". This response aims to show his supportiveness towards Ben's condition.

3. Conciliatory

There is a conciliatory statement that was found in the dialog line of the male character, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. The statement is:

    a.   Data 102.2.12 (Scene: 102, Speaker: Jason, Statement Number 12)

        Jason   : "*Okay. Then, I am out of ideas.*"

This statement is classified as a conciliatory statement. It is proven by a particle "*then*" that is found in the statement. Using particles is one of the characteristics of conciliatory features. The use of "*then*" in this statement is to avoid any conflicts that may appear because Jason cannot give any other websites that can be useful to get the prospective apartment for Davis.

4. Indirect

There are some indirect statements that were appeared by the male characters' dialog lines, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. Below is an example:

    a.   Data 45.3.2 (Scene: 45, Speaker: Davis, Statement Number 2)

        Davis   : "*Oh my God, they had one opening for a regular age intern. No offense and I got it. I'm so psyched.*"

Data 45.3.2 is considered as an indirect statement. It is possible because Davis added the phrase "*no offense*" in his statement. The use of "*no offense*" in Davis' statement was to soften his utterance so that it made the utterance less narcissistic because Davis got the only regular intern position.

5. Collaborative

There are some collaborative features that are found in the dialog line of the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. An example is:

    a.   Data 162.2.12 (Scene: 162, Speaker: Jason, Statement Number 12)

        Jason   : "*(joining) Benjamin. We made some progress.*"

Because Ben was taken part of Jason's mission to reconcile with Becky, Jason showed his sense of openness toward Ben. Jason used an inclusive pronoun "*we*" in order to show his openness. On account of the inclusive pronoun and the purpose of using the pronoun, this statement above is considered as a collaborative statement.

6. Person/Process Oriented

There are some statements that use person/process oriented features that are found in the dialog line of the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. An example is presented below.

    a.   Data 49.3.5 (Scene: 49, Speaker: Davis, Statement Number 5)

        Davis   : "*Floater. Love!!! Hey, Ben, what'd you get?*"

The statement above appeared in a scene which showed the situation of the intern desks after getting the placement. Davis expressed his excitement after getting the floater by saying it out. Then, Davis asked Ben by using an open-ended question "*what'd you get?*" to fulfill his curiosity and concern about Ben's actual condition. By looking at the characteristics of the features and the usage of the features, this statement is considered as a person/process oriented statement.

7. Affectively Oriented

There are statements of affectively oriented that are found in the dialog line of the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. One of the examples is:

a. Data 87.4.3 (Scene: 87, Speaker: Lewis, Statement Number 3)

Lewis   : "*I'm a little in love with it.*"

The statement above reflects the characteristics of affectively oriented. Lewis used a personal feature by stating "*I'm a little in love…,*". The personal feature is one of the characteristics that can be found in affectively oriented. Moreover, the purpose of Lewis here was to show his interest with the classic briefcase of Ben and the story behind it.

The Masculine Interactional Styles Used by The Male Characters When They Are Gossiping in The Workplace in *The Intern* Movie

According to the data analysis, the writer comes to a result that male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis and Lewis, used five out of seven of masculine interactional style in 20 scenes of gossiping at the workplace in *The Intern* movie.

1. Competitive

There are statements that use competitive features that are found in the dialog lines of the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. An example is as follows.

a. Data 187.1.32 (Scene: 187, Speaker: Ben, Statement Number 32)

Ben   : "*Because I'm going to save your ass, and I'm gonna put you up for a few weeks, obviously.*"

The statement above reflects a competitive feature. Ben puts an insult word "*your ass*" in his utterance. The insult word is one of the characteristics of the competitive feature. Moreover, the use of "*your ass*" in this utterance is to show his authority by getting Davis' full attention.

2. Aggressive Interruption

There is a statement that uses aggressive interruptions that is found in the dialog line of the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. The statement is:

a. Data 162.1.24 (Data 162, Speaker: Ben, Statement Number 24)

Ben   : "*She yells at me all the time, too.*"

Ben's statement above meets the characteristics of the aggressive interruption. Before Jason is done with his words, Ben interrupts Jason's utterance foremost because of his excitement toward Jason's story.

3. Confrontational

There are some statements that use confrontational features that are found in the dialog lines of the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. One of the statements is:

a. Data 72.3.9 (Scene: 72, Speaker: Davis, Statement Number 9)

Davis   : "*Jay, I have zero experience and I can tell you there's no coming back from this one.*"

Davis' statement, as shown by data 72.3.9, reflects the use of the confrontational feature. The statement is straightforwardly arguing Jason's opinion that sleeping with his girlfriend bestfriend is not a major problem. Moreover, "*...and I can tell you there's no coming back from this one*" is a declarative statement by Davis due to Jason's problem.

4. Direct

There are statements that use direct features that are found in the dialog lines of the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. Below is an example:

a. Data 162.1.22 (Scene: 162, Speaker: Ben, Statement Number 22)

> Ben   : *"Dress to impress, Lewis. Go to the rack. Find a boyfriend shirt that fits. Bring the hair down if you can. Tuck in the shirt. Why doesn't anybody tuck anything in anymore? I'm asking you."*

Ben's statement above is considered as a direct statement. This statement states some directives, i.e. *"go to the rack", "find a boyfriend shirt that fits", "bring the hair down if you can",* and *"tuck in the shirt"*. These directives aim to directly tell Lewis to do what Ben wants them to do.

5. **Referentially Oriented**

There are statements that use referentially oriented characteristics that are found in the dialog lines of the male character, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace. An example is presented below.

a. Data 87.1.12 (Scene: 87, Speaker: Ben, Statement Number 12)

> Ben   : *"It's a 1973 Executive Ashburn attached. They don't make this one anymore."*

Ben's statement on data 87.1.12 reflects the use of the referentially oriented. Ben states the actual facts by saying "*it's a 1973 Executive Ashburn attached*" and "*they don't make this one anymore*". These two sentences are used to give factual information for the interlocutor, Lewis.

The Interpretation of The Findings

This section discusses the interpretation of Interactional styles used by male characters when gossiping at the workplace in *The Intern* movie. The writer comes to the conclusion that male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis and Lewis, used both feminine interactional styles and masculine interactional styles in 20 scenes of gossiping at the workplace in *The Intern* movie.

Based on the findings presented in section 4.1, the writer found that male characters used all of the feminine interactional style when they were gossiping at the workplace. On the other hand, the findings presented in section 4.2 showed that male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis and Lewis used five out seven masculine features of masculine interactional style when gossiping at the workplace. The features were competitive, aggressive interruption, confrontational, direct and referentially oriented. The male characters tended to use more features of feminine interactional style instead of masculine interactional style which only had five used features when gossiping at the workplace. It was possible because the male characters had their own goals in gossiping with each other. Cameron, as cited in Coates (2004) stated that gossiping could "construct a solidarity value" (p.104). Because of this reason, in some dialog lines, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis and Lewis seemed like they cared about one another's conditions and gave their support by using feminine interactional styles. On the contrary, gossiping might enhance mistrusts and conflicts among the working team (Converge International. n.d.). These were reflected in the usage of the competitive, aggressive interruption, confrontational, and direct features of masculine interactional style. Moreover, gossiping among males might be taken seriously. Thus, when the male characters wanted to be credible toward each other, they tended to use a referentially oriented feature by giving facts. As a result, the writer came to the conclusion that the male characters had the tendency to use both feminine interactional styles and masculine interactional styles based on the goals of the gossiping.

CONCLUSION

The writer conducted a Sociolinguistic study about the interactional styles of the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis, when gossiping at the workplace in *The Intern* movie. This study focused on how Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis and Lewis in the movie used both feminine interactional style and masculine interactional style at their workplace when they gossip along the 20 gossiping at the workplace scenes in the movie. The writer conducted

the data analysis of this study by applying the theory of interactional styles by Holmes (2006) and Baxter (2010).

Based on the findings, the writer found out that the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis used all features of feminine interactional style when gossiping at the workplace. The male characters used facilitative features to encourage the participation of other speakers. They also showed their supportiveness and other-orienteers by using supportive feedback, collaborative, person/process oriented and affectively oriented, and avoided conflicts by softening the statements using conciliatory features. Because of these reasons, the male characters tended to care about and to support one another's conditions using feminine interactional styles. On the contrary, the male characters, Ben Whittaker, Jason, Davis, and Lewis used only five out of seven features of the masculine interactional style. They used competitive, aggressive interruption, confrontational, and direct features to make them straightforward about their opinions. These features might cause conflicts among them. Moreover, the male characters wanted to be credible toward each other, they tended to use referentially oriented features by giving facts. Thus, the writer concluded that the male characters used both feminine interactional styles and masculine interactional styles based on the aims of the gossiping.

The writer emphasizes that this was a small case study, completed in a short period of time with limited data. The writer's data was based on a scripted movie. As a result, the writer concluded that future researchers could conduct larger-scale research involving more movies or other media-based data. Future researchers, according to the author, shall investigate the impact of other language factors that can be combined with the use of interactional styles. Hopefully, the writer's study will provide useful information and insight to other researchers who want to conduct research on interactional styles and their relationship with specific sex on other language-related factors.

REFERENCES

Baxter. J. (2010). *The language of female leadership*. London: Palgrave Marcmillan.

Coates. J. (2004). *Women, men and language*. New York: Longman

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Fiorelli, L. (2016). What Movies Show: Realism, Perception and Truth in Film. *Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations.* 1-176.
http://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/1715.

Holmes. J. (2006). *Gender talk at work*. Oxford: Blackwell.

IMDb. (n.d.). *The Intern 2015 Plot*. IMDb.
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2361509/plotsummary

Ivana Chubbuck Studio. (2012). *The Intern*. Ivana Chubbuck Studio.
https://www.ivanachubbuck.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/The-Intern-Ben-Patty-Entire-Screenplay.pdf

Meyers, N. (Director). (2015). *The Intern* [Film]. Warner Bros. Pictures.

Smith, S.G. (1992). *Gender Thinking*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.