

Interactional Style Features Used by Mark Baum In The Film *The Big Short*

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on analyzing the features of interactional style used by Mark Baum when talking to his interlocutor with different statuses on business related topics. In conducting this study, the writer used the theory of Interactional styles by Holmes (2006). This study was done using a qualitative approach. The result of this study showed that Mark Baum used both feminine and masculine features of interactional style when talking to his interlocutors with different statuses. The writer also found out that the use of features of interactional style, such as aggressive interruption, direct, and autonomous, can be affected by the difference of status. Moreover, Mark Baum also uses masculine features of interactional style more than feminine features of interactional style when talking to his subordinates.

Keywords: interactional style; social status; feminine interactional style; masculine interactional style

INTRODUCTION

Communication is used to build relationships with other people, express feelings, share information, and many others. Communication plays an important role in our life, especially in business. Communication is used in business for a variety of purposes, including negotiation, meetings, discussions, customer service, and so on. Holmes (2006) states that people's way of speaking tends to be affected greatly by specific characteristics of their places of work and the specific type of contact they engage in.

Holmes (2006) divided interactional style into feminine interactional style and masculine interactional style. The seven features of feminine interactional style are facilitative, conciliatory, collaborative, indirect, supportive feedback, person/process-oriented, affectively-oriented. The seven features of masculine interactional style are competitive, confrontational, autonomous, direct, task/outcome-oriented, referentially-oriented, and aggressive interruption. Feminine interactional style is usually used by females while masculine interactional style is usually used by males. Interactional style also can be found in the workplace especially during business communication to show authority, cooperation, politeness, encouragement, etc. Holmes (2006) also states that people may use masculine and feminine interactional styles.

Only a few studies have been done to find out more about the features of interactional style in film. James et al. (2011) said that videos and films, as well as music, photographs, and movement, can provide new, creative, and analytical methods of perceiving and reacting to the world around us, as well as a number of teaching opportunities. Therefore, an analysis of features of interactional styles in a film is worth doing. Among many films available, *The Big Short*, which is based on true stories about the financial crisis that hit the United States in 2007-2008 and also awarded for the Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar, Best Director, and Best Supporting Actor (Lincoln, 2016), was chosen. Mark Baum is one of the four main protagonists. Compared to the other three main characters, he has more screen time, interacts with his subordinate and superior, and the story also revolves around him. To know the difference of the

features of masculine and feminine interactional styles in the interaction with the superior and subordinates, Mark Baum was chosen.

METHODS

In this study, a qualitative approach was used. The data were taken from the utterances of the film, *The Big Short* analyzed using the theory of interactional style by Holmes (2006). The script of the film was obtained from scriptslug.com. It was checked and corrected by comparing it with the film. After that, each utterance of business related topics produced by Mark Baum when talking to his subordinates and superior was given numbers of a two-digit numbering system. The first digit represents the interlocutor, number 1 (one) for Mark Baum's boss, Kathy Tao; number 2 (two) for Mark Baum's subordinate, Vinny, Danny, and Porter. The second digit represents the number of Mark Baum utterances.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the finding of this study. There are three parts in this section which answers the research question of this study.

Features of Interactional Style Used by Mark Baum When Talking to His Subordinate

Mark Baum used both feminine and masculine interactional styles. The feminine features of interactional style that Mark Baum used cover supportive feedback and conciliatory. While the masculine features of interactional style that Mark Baum used cover aggressive interruption, confrontational, direct, autonomous, and referentially oriented.

Supportive Feedback

There are some utterances produced by Mark Baum that are identified as supportive feedback. The example are:

Example 1

Utterance 2.3 "Yes, I do." This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate after having a meeting with Jared Vennett. Vinny, one of Mark Baum's subordinates, asks Mark that he wants Jared to be right, and Mark Baum agrees by uttering this utterance. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces a supporting feedback feature to respond to one of his subordinates, Vinny, with minimal response, 'Yes, I do', which gives a signal to the target that Mark Baum is paying attention to what Vinny said. Moreover, Mark Baum also shows his intention by agreeing to what Vinny has said before by saying 'Yes, I do'.

Example 2

Utterance 2.53 "Okay." This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a call with Vinny, one of his subordinates. Vinny asks Mark Baum whether they sell their MBS now or never, and Mark Baum agrees by uttering this utterance. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces a supporting feedback feature to respond to one of his subordinates, Vinny, with a minimal response, 'Okay', which gives a signal to the target that Mark Baum is paying attention to what Vinny said. Moreover, Mark Baum also shows his intention by agreeing to what Vinny suggests by saying 'Okay'

Conciliatory

There are some utterances produced by Mark Baum that are identified as conciliatory. The example are:

**Wijaya & Rini: Interactional Style Feature Used by Mark Baum In
the Film *The Big Short***

Example 1

Utterance 2.2 “What if he’s right?” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate after having a meeting with Jared Vennett. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces a conciliatory feature using mitigating epistemic modal, ‘if’, to soften his statement and deliver the message in a non-pushy way in order to reduce hostility. In this utterance, Mark Baum is trying to soften his message by implying that Jared might be right and Vinny might be wrong. By reducing the hostility in his utterance Mark Baum can avoid conflict with his subordinate during the discussion.

Example 2

Utterance 2.28 “Kathy thinks that it would be a good idea if we sold our shorts.” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate after Mark Baum having a meeting with Kathy Tao. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces a conciliatory feature using pragmatic particles, ‘would’, to soften his statement and deliver the message in a non-pushy way in order to reduce hostility.

Aggressive Interruption

There is an utterance produced by Mark Baum that is identified as aggressive interruption, for example: Utterance 2.42 “Hey! hey! I say when we sell!” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate with his subordinate regarding the decision to sell their MBS. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces an aggressive interruption feature, ‘Hey! hey!’ by interrupting Vinny, one of Mark Baum's subordinates, when he is speaking to Mark Baum. By doing this, Mark Baum successfully takes control of the discussion while Vinny loses the authority to control the discussion.

Confrontational

There are some utterances produced by Mark Baum that are identified as confrontational. The example are:

Example 1

Utterance 2.7 “I can't hate him, he is so transparent in his self-interest that I kind of respect him.” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate after having a meeting with Jared Vennett. Mark Baum challenges Vinny, one of his subordinates, by uttering this utterance which shows disagreement. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces a confrontational feature, ‘I can't hate him’ by showing disagreement with Vinny's statement regarding how Mark Baum doesn't hate Jared Vennett. Furthermore, Mark Baum also elaborated his reason for not hating Jared Vennett to get his argument accepted.

Example 2

Utterance 2.11 “Look it's two very simple questions is there a housing bubble? and if there is how exposed are the banks?” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate after having a meeting with Jared Vennett. Mark Baum challenges Vinny, one of his subordinates, by uttering this utterance which shows disagreement. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces a confrontational feature after Vinny disagrees with what Jared said during the meeting by elaborating his reason for wanting to find out whether what Jared said is true or not. By doing so, Mark Baum gets his argument accepted by Vinny.

Direct

There are some utterances produced by Mark Baum that are identified as Direct. The example are:

Example 1

Utterance 2.32 “Short the bank stocks, then we wait.” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate regarding the decision to sell their MBS. Mark Baum gives an order to his subordinate. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces a direct feature by giving an order to his subordinate to short the stock and wait until further information. Mark Baum goes right to the point without considering the subordinate feeling and the subordinate has to obey it.

Example 2

Utterance 2.54 “Sell it all.” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a call with Vinny, one of his subordinates, regarding the the decision to sell their MBS. Mark Baum gives an order to his subordinate. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces a direct feature by giving an order to his subordinate to sell their MBS immediately. Mark Baum goes right to the point without considering the subordinate feeling and the subordinate has to obey it.

Autonomous

There are some utterances produced by Mark Baum that are identified as autonomous. The example are:

Example 1

Utterance 2.16 “Trust me, call Vennett, buy \$50 million in swaps on the MBS.” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a call with Vinny, one of his subordinates, that there is a bubble and Jared is right. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces an autonomous feature by using his authority as a superior, ‘Trust me’, to give an absolute order to his subordinate. Since Mark Baum is Vinny's superior, Vinny agrees to his order.

Example 2

Utterance 2.41 “I say when we sell” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate regarding the decision to sell their MBS. In this utterance, Mark Baum produces an autonomous feature by using his authority as a superior that he will be the one who gets to decide whether to sell their MBS or not. Since Mark Baum holds more authority than his subordinate, his subordinate agrees to his statement.

Referentially Oriented

There are some utterances produced by Mark Baum that is identified as referentially oriented. The example are:

Example 1

Utterance 2.4 “The banks have given us 25% interest rates on credit cards.” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate after having a meeting with Jared. Vinny, one of Mark Baum's subordinates, asks Mark if he wants Jared to be right. Mark Baum then elaborated his reason for wanting Jared to be right. In this utterance, Mark Baum uses a referentially oriented feature to remind his subordinate about something that happened to the company in the past. By doing this, Mark Baum Successfully makes the subordinate to be able to relate to his argument about wanting Jared to be right.

Example 2

Utterance 2.5 “They have screwed us on student loans that we can never get out from under.” This utterance is produced by Mark Baum when he is having a discussion with his subordinate after having a meeting with Jared. Vinny, one of Mark Baum's subordinates, asks Mark if he wants Jared to be right. Mark Baum then elaborated his reason for wanting Jared to be right. In this utterance, Mark Baum uses a referentially oriented feature to remind his subordinate about something that happened to the company in the past. By doing this, Mark Baum successfully makes the subordinate to be able to relate to his argument about wanting Jared to be right.

Features of Interactional Style used by Mark Baum When Talking to His Superior

Mark Baum used both feminine and masculine interactional style. The feminine features of interactional style that Mark Baum used cover person/process-oriented and affectively oriented. While the masculine features of interactional style that Mark Baum used cover confrontational and referentially oriented.

Person/Process-Oriented

There is an utterance produced by Mark Baum that is identified as person/process-oriented. for example: Utterance 1.5 “Kathy, come on, we know each other, what's going on?” This utterance is produced when Mark Baum was called by his superior, Kathy Tao, to go to her office. Mark Baum was called because there is something that Kathy needs to say to Mark Baum. However, Kathy cannot tell the truth to Mark Baum which then makes Mark Baum utter this utterance. Mark Baum utilized a person/process-oriented feature by not directly going to the main point, but trying to get the face-need. He starts talking about irrelevant things before going to the specific part. By doing this, Mark Baum can avoid face-threatening situations and conflict while improving their relationship. By utilizing this feature, Mark Baum achieved his goal which is getting Kathy to speak the truth. He starts by talking about how close both of them are and there is no need to lie to him.

Affectively Oriented

There are some utterances produced by Mark Baum that are identified as affectively oriented. The example are:

Example 1

Utterance 1.1 “Congratulations.” This utterance is produced when Mark Baum was called by his superior, Kathy Tao, to go to her office. Mark Baum was called because there is something that Kathy needs to say to Mark Baum. Mark Baum uttered this utterance before the two of them started talking about the reason for Mark Baum being called to her office. Mark Baum uses an affectively oriented feature by focusing on the relational practice to get other face-needs, by concerning Kathy Tao circumstances. Mark Baum congratulates Kathy for being a mother which can be seen from a baby bottle behind her desk. By doing this, Mark Baum can maintain the relationship that has been established.

Example 2

Utterance 1.2 “Having fun?” This utterance is produced when Mark Baum was called by his superior, Kathy Tao, to go to her office. Mark Baum was called because there is something that Kathy needs to say to Mark Baum. Mark Baum uttered this utterance before the two of them started talking about the reason for Mark Baum being called to her office. Mark Baum uses an affectively oriented feature by focusing on the relational practice to get other face-needs, by concerning Kathy Tao circumstances. Mark Baum asks Kathy whether she is having fun or not to maintain their relationship.

Confrontational

There is an utterance produced by Mark Baum that is identified as confrontational. Here is an example: Utterance 1.14 “Yes, you can answer that, because ...” This utterance is produced when Mark Baum was called by his superior, Kathy Tao, to go to her office. Mark Baum was called because there is something that Kathy needs to say to Mark Baum. However, Kathy refuses to tell Mark Baum which then makes Mark Baum utter this utterance. In this utterance, Mark Baum produced a confrontational feature by challenging Kathy Tao. Mark Baum challenges Kathy by saying ‘yes, you can answer that’ to make Kathy speak and tell Mark

Baum about Morgan Stanley exposure, because Kathy didn't want to speak about that. Moreover, Mark Baum also elaborated his reason to make Kathy tell him the truth.

Referentially Oriented

There are some utterances produced by Mark Baum that is identified as referentially oriented. The example are:

Example 1

Utterance 1.4 "Because word on the street is that he took some pretty heavy losses." This utterance is produced when Mark Baum was called by his superior, KATHY Tao, to go to her office. Mark Baum was called because there is something that Kathy needs to say to Mark Baum. In this utterance, Mark Baum uses a referentially oriented feature to support his question. Mark Baum asks Kathy whether Bennie Cleager is concerned about Morgan Stanley losses. By using referentially oriented feature, Mark Baum can support his question with an argument to help make Kathy answer his question.

Example 2

Utterance 1.14 "Yes, you can answer that, because I walk in here and people are crying in your hallway" This utterance is produced when Mark Baum was called by his superior, Kathy Tao, to go to her office. Mark Baum was called because there is something that Kathy needs to say to Mark Baum. However, Kathy refuses to tell Mark Baum which then makes Mark Baum utter this utterance. In this utterance, Mark Baum uses a referentially oriented feature to support his argument in making Kathy talk the truth. Mark talks about what he sees in the hallway before entering Kathy's office. He sees a lot of people crying and packing their stuff which is weird because Kathy said that everything is fine but actually it is not.

The Difference and Similarities of Mark Baum Features of Interactional Style

There are three similarities and two differences in Mark Baum's features of interactional style when talking to his subordinates and superior. First of all, Mark Baum utilizes both feminine and masculine interactional styles when talking to his subordinate and superior. By utilizing both feminine and masculine interactional style, Mark Baum can achieve or convey what he wants to the interlocutors. For example, data 1.14 and 2.7 show the use of confrontational features by challenging the interlocutor statement and explain his point of view. By doing so, Mark Baum can assert his point of view to his interlocutor. Another example, data 1.1 show the use of affectively oriented features to maintain relationship between the speaker and interlocutors, and data 2.2 show the use of conciliatory features to reduce hostility and avoid further conflict between the speaker and interlocutors. These findings show that a person can utilize both feminine and masculine interactional style as stated by Holmes.

The second similarity was that Mark Baum uses confrontational and referentially oriented from masculine features of interactional style, for example, data 1.14. Mark Baum utilized confrontational features when he needed to show disagreement to his interlocutor. Moreover, Mark Baum also utilizes referentially oriented features to get his statement accepted. By combining both features, Mark Baum successfully asserts his point of view while challenging his interlocutor statement.

The last similarity was that Mark Baum does not use facilitative, indirect, collaborative, competitive, and task/outcome-oriented features. A possible explanation for this might be that there were no conversations between Mark Baum and his interlocutors in which he needs to utilize these features. However, there is also another possible explanation of why Mark Baum does not use facilitative and competitive features; the person he is talking to always participates in the conversation. In the business world, one is required to be able to express the opinion and

participate in the conversation or discussion. Another possible reason is because he does not have a rival or he does not consider other people as his rivals.

The first of the two differences is the use of feminine interactional style. Mark Baum uses supportive feedback and conciliatory features when talking with his subordinate while he uses people/process-oriented and affectively oriented when talking to his superior. A possible explanation for this might be that there are no conversations between Mark Baum and his interlocutors in which he needs to utilize these features. It is stated above that Mark Baum utilizes both feminine and masculine interactional style when talking to his interlocutors. When talking to his superior, Mark Baum uses person/process-oriented and affectively oriented to maintain the relationship they have built and show politeness. While talking to his subordinate, Mark Baum uses supportive feedback and conciliatory to maintain the relationship and gain respect. He utilizes the features of interactional style based on the situation and what he needs or wants to convey to the interlocutors. Thus, the writer believes that status could affect the use of some feminine features of interactional style.

The second difference is the use of masculine interactional style. The finding shows that Mark Baum uses aggressive interruption, confrontational, direct, autonomous, and referentially oriented when talking with his subordinates while he uses only confrontational and referentially oriented when talking to his superior. The reason why Mark Baum does not use aggressive interruption, direct and autonomous features when talking to his superior is because he speaks with a person whose authority is higher than him. When speaking with people who hold more authority, people tend to speak more politely and avoid conflict with the interlocutors. Some features like aggressive interruption and direct could create conflict with the interlocutors. Mark Baum does not use autonomous features not because it could create conflict, but because his authority is lower compared to his superior. Thus, the writer believes that status could affect the use of some masculine features of interactional style.

CONCLUSION

In short, Holmes's statement (2006) is true regarding that a person can utilize both feminine and masculine interactional style. Mark Baum uses masculine features of interactional style more than feminine features of interactional style when talking to his subordinate to show disagreement, authority, and make people with lower status obey him. When talking to his subordinates, he utilizes feminine features of interactional style to gain respect and maintain relationships. While talking to his superior, Mark Baum utilizes feminine features of interactional style to show politeness and maintain relationship with his superior. The use of features of interactional style can also be influenced by the status of the interlocutors. Further research should be done on a broader scale in real life context with additional social factors or social dimensions to investigate the factors that influence how people choose and use their interactional styles.

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