Ray Kroc's Interactional Styles Features in Business Conversation in *The Founder*

Cindy Melani Pratikno

English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Petra Christian University,
Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, INDONESIA
Email: A11180001@john.petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the features of interactional styles used by Ray Kroc, the male main character, when in a business conversation with others in *The Founder* biographical movie. The writer used Holmes' (2006) theory of features of interactional styles and Holmes' (2006), Kuntjara's (2012), and Paltridge's (2006) theory of gender to support her in conducting this research. The writer transcribed and analyzed Ray Kroc's utterances during business conversations with others for this study, which took a qualitative approach. Facilitative, supportive feedback, conciliatory, indirect, collaborative, person/process-oriented, and affectively oriented are all features of feminine interactional styles used by Ray Kroc. He also demonstrated all masculine interactional styles features, including competitive, aggressive interruptions, confrontational, direct, autonomous, task/outcome-oriented, and referentially oriented. The findings of this study support Holmes' (2006) observation that men and women can use both feminine and masculine interactional styles depending on the situation in the workplace. Ray Kroc, a competitive and masculine man, used feminine and masculine interactional styles to keep his relationships with his partners strong and achieve his business conversation goals at the same time. Moreover, further research for the film *The Founder* or other movie that focuses on other characters, situations, and theories is recommended.

Keywords: interactional styles features; gender; business conversation

INTRODUCTION

The Founder is an American biographical film released in January 2016. It was produced by Don Handfield, Jeremy Renner, and Aaron Ryder. Ray Kroc, the main character, is played by Michael Keaton. The movie was written by Robert Siegel and directed by John Lee Hancock. The duration of the movie is an hour and fifty-five minutes (Devi, 2021). Business conversation is clearly shown in *The Founder* movie since *The Founder* is a biographical film that tells a story about the effort of Ray Kroc in developing his Food and Beverage business to be a global food-chain restaurant (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012; as cited in Dartmouth Library, 2016).

There are several reasons why the writer specifically chooses to analyze *The Founder* movie in her study. The first reason is that it is a biographical film of a successful American businessman who is the founder of the number one fried chicken fast food *McDonald's* (Devi, 2021). A biographical film is based on true events, and there are many lessons to be learned. This film can inspire students majoring in business and people working in the business field to be bolder in making decisions to develop a business. Secondly, this film consists of many lessons related to Sociolinguistics in a business context. This movie is about how Ray Kroc, as the main character, develops his business. In developing his business, he ought to do a lot of business conversations to discuss and help him to reach his goals. In this case, interactional styles may play an important role to someone when in business conversation in business contexts.

Through this study, the writer hopes that the result can give more insights to the readers about interactional styles features by Holmes (2006) that are used by a person when talking in business conversation related to business contexts. The writer hopes that the readers also have knowledge about the features of feminine and masculine interactional styles.

Moreover, the readers have more insight into the features of interactional styles that support the main character in business conversations with others. Hopefully, the readers can choose the best interactional style when talking to colleagues, bosses, or relatives regarding a business or cooperation. In addition, the author hopes that this study provides helpful or new information to other researchers on a similar topic or those who wish to continue this study.

According to Holmes (2006, p.6) interactional styles is "ways of talking which are associated with particular roles, stances (e.g., authoritative, consultative, deferential, polite), activities, or behaviors, and to the extent that these are 'culturally coded as gendered'". The feminine interactional styles are interactional styles based on feminine features of interactional styles such as facilitative, supportive feedback, conciliatory, indirect, collaborative, person/process-oriented, and affectively oriented (Holmes, 2006). Moreover, masculine interactional styles are interactional styles that are based on masculine features of interactional styles such as competitive, aggressive interruptions, confrontational, direct, autonomous, task/result-oriented, and referentially oriented (Holmes, 2006).

Thus, the writer intended to find out the feminine and masculine interactional styles features used by Ray Kroc as the main character in *The Founder* when he is in a business conversation with other characters. The writer also wants to find out the support of the features of feminine and masculine interactional styles in business conversation towards others in the movie.

METHODS

The writer used a descriptive qualitative approach for her current study. The utterances, as the data, were taken from *The Founder* movie. Utterance is "Complete communicative units, which may consist of words, phrases, and clauses whereby pauses and silence also existed" (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 92). The writer analyzed the data using Holmes's (2006) theory of interactional styles when the subject is in business conversation with others related to a business topic. Moreover, Holmes' (2006), Kuntjara's (2012), and Paltridge's (2006) theory of gender are used to support her in conducting this research. The writer also used previous studies to assist her in analyzing the data, she used Cinantya's (2013) and Liebnis' (2021) studies.

To begin, by the first week of March 2022, the writer was watching the movie. Next, the writer re-watched the entire movie from beginning to end several times and paid close attention to Ray Kroc's utterances. She looked for the transcript of the movie in which she transcribed it by herself by taking it from the English subtitle provided in the movie. After the writer finished writing the transcript, she assigned numbers to the utterances made by Ray Kroc related to business topics while in business conversation with others. The writer used a table to assist her in analyzing the data through several steps. To begin the analysis, the writer transcribed all of Ray Kroc's utterances. Next, she selected Ray Kroc's utterances when in business conversation with others. The writer wrote the column and gave a short reason for the collected data checked in the previous columns and analyzed the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the writer showed some of the findings and discussion of the features of interactional styles implemented by Ray Kroc in *The Founder* when in business conversation with others.

Feminine interactional styles features

In the following sections, the author discusses some examples of Ray's feminine interactional styles features when in business conversation with others which are facilitative, supportive feedback, conciliatory, indirect, collaborative, person/process-oriented, and affectively oriented.

The first feature is facilitative is a feminine feature of interactional styles that includes tag questions such as "isn't it? haven't they?", pragmatic particles like "you see, you know" which might invite cooperation of the recipient to join in the conversation, used to avoid a conflict during a conversation by involving others and boosts others' self-esteem by giving credit or praise for their great works (Holmes, 2006).

The writer found out Ray Kroc, in business conversation with male, applied facilitative features. Below is one of the examples.

Data 67
*"You should be getting more too then, **shouldn't you**?"*

Ray said "shouldn't you" to refer to the brothers who can make them think whether Ray's statement is true or not. The tag question and pragmatic particle are feminine characteristics in interactional styles featured in this context. This can happen when a man is talking to the same gender or different gender to help them lessen their utterance to avoid conflict.

The second feature is supportive feedback, it is the form of a minimal response to a conversation for instance "mm, yeah" is used by the speakers to encourage supportive feedback (Holmes, 2006). The supportive feedback feature is typically used by females to give attention and support the listener.

The writer found out Ray Kroc, in business conversation with female and male partners, applied supportive feedback features. Below is one of the examples that was found during the analysis.

Data 39
*"**Yeah**, that was a long time ago."*

Ray Kroc applied supportive feedback that was identified using minimal response to the loan officer as a sign that he gave attention to the loan officer's statement. In this context, Ray also uses the minimal response that can be seen from the word in bold "yeah" to justify the loan officer's statement.

The conciliatory feature is used to soften and hedge requests and statements. The conciliatory feature characteristic includes reducing cognitive models like "might, could" and lessening pragmatic particles like "probably, sort of" (Holmes, 2006).

The writer found out that Ray Kroc used a conciliatory feature when he was in business conversation with others in the movie. Below is the only example of the use of conciliatory when Ray Kroc in business conversation with a male interlocutor.

Data 2
*"I mention it because, **well, I think** it applies here."*

From the utterance above, Ray indicates that he uses a conciliatory feature of feminine interactional style. His words "well I think" are used to lessen his statement since he does not really know the owner. Ray put those words to avoid conflict during his speech since he wants to sell a product and reach his goal to make the owner buy his product. Ray does not mention directly that his previous statement is perfectly fit to the owner's business, but he uses "well I think" to make it less direct.

Indirect features which include the form of interrogative statements like "could you reach that file?" to ask the listener indirectly instead of an imperative way like "pass that file" as stated by Holmes (2006). Moreover, indirect feature frequently involves sub-features like modal verbs (e.g., "might, would"), hedges (e.g., "sort of, possibly"), and paralinguistic features (like hesitations and pauses) that are used to soften and attenuate directives is another feminine feature of interactional styles (Holmes, 2006). More examples of hedges are "something like, quite a lot, just, I mean, a little bit" (Holmes, 2006, p.192).

The writer found out there are some utterances produced by Ray Kroc in business conversation with male that apply indirect features. Below is the only example of the use of indirect features.

Data 29
*"Driving around, I **just** cannot stop thinking about this tremendous restaurant."*

Ray Kroc uses an indirect feature of feminine interactional styles since he put "just" which is one of the hedges that indicates indirect feature. He makes it more indirect by saying "I just cannot stop thinking" so that it focuses on him and makes it his personal statement. The implied meaning from his utterance is that he wants to show that he took a long time alone thinking about what should be done with the amazing restaurant. He wants to avoid conflict by saying "just" to lessen his statement.

Next is the collaborative feature, which is characterized using the openness of feeling, a supportive social relationship, and the integration of private and work-life (Holmes, 2006). Collaborative is marked by more democratic and non-hierarchical structures, and by orientation towards collaborative styles and processes of interaction, together with great attention to the interpersonal dimension (Holmes, 2006).

The writer found out there are some utterances produced by Ray Kroc in business conversation with others that apply collaborative features. Below is one of the examples of the use of collaborative features.

Data 15
*"Hey, you know I… (pause) **I got a confession I want to make to you boys**."*

Holmes (2006) states that collaborative features are characterized using the openness of feeling. Ray Kroc says to the brothers that he wants to confess his story. The word "confess" can be categorized as an openness of feeling since it states what the speaker wants to say. Ray uses a collaborative feature by giving an openness of feeling to make the brothers feel valued since it

can make the brothers think that they are important so that Ray wants to share about his story or make confession. Ray Kroc wants to build a good relationship with the brothers. He wants to make it soft and make the brothers feel comfortable. Ray wants to make the brothers feel valued by his honesty. Thus, he uses a feminine interactional style while having business conversations with the brothers to open the franchise to the public.

According to Holmes (2006), people/person-oriented feature is a type of relational practice that unconsciously boosts interpersonal relationships in a community while also facilitating communal goal achievement. "It also can be signified by the use of addressee-oriented pragmatic particles like "you know"" (Holmes, 2006, p.192).

During the analysis, the writer found out there are some utterances produced by Ray Kroc in business conversation that implies person-oriented features of feminine interactional styles. Below is one of the examples of the use of person-oriented features by Ray Kroc during business conversation.

Data 8
*"**You** increase the supply, and the demand will follow."*

Ray Kroc used a person-oriented feature to boost interpersonal relationships. Ray directly stated "you" in his utterance to build intimacy and focus on the person he talked to. The word "you" can be categorized as addressee-oriented pragmatic particle. Ray used this feature since he and the owner were not friends. Thus, to make it softer and intimate he uses person-oriented in feminine way to build interpersonal relationships to make it polite.

Last but not least, an affectively oriented feature, this feature is considered more or less the same as the person-oriented, which is recognized in a single meaning called relational practice (Holmes, 2006). The relational practice in affectively oriented features offers users the feeling of being valued and having their autonomy acknowledged by the listener or partner using personal features (Holmes, 2006).

The findings of this study show that Ray Kroc used affectively oriented features of feminine interactional styles when in business conversation. Following is one of the examples of the findings.

Data 9
"I know you do, because you're a bright forward-thinking guy who knows a good idea when he hears one."

Ray used an affectively oriented feature with personal pragmatic words which were "you" and "I". He wanted to be valued as a nice person and who had a good attitude by praising the owner. Moreover, Ray used this feminine feature to help him make the owner have the same thought as Ray. The words "I" and "you" can acknowledge both the speaker and listener. It also helps the listener being valued and shows that the speaker gives attention to the listener.

Masculine interactional styles features

In the following section, the writer discusses some examples of the masculine features of interactional styles used by Ray Kroc when in business conversation with others which are competitive, aggressive interruptions, confrontational, direct, autonomous, task/outcome-oriented, referentially oriented.

The first feature of masculine interactional styles is competitive. A competitive manner has been linked to masculine rather than feminine characteristics. It states that males want to argue, stay at their arguments, and using a brief quippy comment can be considered as competitive (Holmes, 2006).

The findings of this study show that Ray Kroc used competitive features of masculine interactional styles to talk to others in business conversation. Below is one of the examples taken from Ray Kroc's utterances in conversation with others.

Data 22
*"Yeah, yeah, yeah. I **still think if you hire the right guy**."*

Ray gave his idea to hire a trusted guy to handle it. The brothers refused his idea since they wanted to focus on one place. Ray competitively kept his idea by arguing and staying at his arguments. The words "still think if you hire the right guy" indicates that he believed that his idea was the best answer to solve the problem of the untrusted manager of the franchise. He did not care about the brothers' feelings and kept going with his argument to win the conversation to get his goal to open the franchise.

During the analysis, the writer found out there are some utterances produced by Ray Kroc in business conversation with male that apply aggressive interruptions as well. Aggressive interruptions feature is used by aggressive interrupts and gives a longer explanation towards something in the conversation (Holmes, 2006).

Following is one of the examples of the findings.

Data 22
*"Yeah, yeah, yeah. I **still think if you hire the right guy**."*

Ray aggressively interrupts and stays at his arguments to make the brothers still want to open a franchise and again with a brief quippy solution that he already stated in his previous utterance. In a business conversation Ray used aggressive features of masculine interactional styles to raise his pride and make the brothers feel the same thought as him. He said "still think that you hire" means that he did not change his mind. He said aggressively after the brothers said their answer.

Third is the confrontational feature of feminine interactional styles. According to Holmes (2006), direct answers to a question are always related to a male that is defined as a confrontational style to build a powerful talk. Holmes (2006) explains that when people debate a lot and utilize 'blatant on record' disagreement on little topics or information is an example of a confrontation method in more substantial and severe matters.

During the analysis, the writer found out that there were some Ray Kroc's utterances that showed that he used confrontational features in a conversation. Below is one of the examples of the use of confrontational by Ray Kroc.

Data 7
*"**Mark my words, dollars to donuts, you'll be selling more of those sons-a-bitches than you can shake a stick at**."*

The utterance shows that Ray Kroc confrontationally gave hope to brighter tomorrow to the owner if he bought the multi-mixer machine. Ray declared that the owner would be selling more with his product to make the owner have a second thought that the product was profitable

for business occasions. He used "mark my words" and personal particle "you" to stress his statement and make it more promising.

Next feature is direct. Holmes (2006) states that directive feature characteristic is the use of imperative statements like "pass that file".

The writer found out there are some utterances produced by Ray Kroc in business conversation to male partners that apply direct features. Below is one of the examples of direct features used by Ray Kroc.

Data 21
*"So, **you hire** somebody else, get somebody better."*

Ray stays at his arguments to make the brothers still want to open a franchise and with a brief quippy solution. He states again the solution he already gave previously. He used a direct feature that indicated him as a masculine person. He said "you hire" to directly order the brothers to do the same as what he thought.

During the analysis, the writer also found out that there are two Ray Kroc's utterances that showed that he used autonomous features in his business conversation with male partner. Holmes (2006) states that authoritative leaders use direct and conventionally masculine discourse strategies using authoritative statements.

Below is one of the examples of the use of autonomous by Ray Kroc.

Data 100
"You've got my word on that."

Ray felt that he had high authority and already had power because he was able to buy restaurants (including land) and had ownership rights to the brothers' restaurant. From the authority he had, he felt that he could do anything. He then directly stated and calmed the brothers to worry less and trust him. From his direct statement "you've got my word" it can be classified as an authoritative feature applied in his utterance during a conversation.

Another feature that the writer found out is that Ray Kroc applied task/outcome-oriented in conversation about business with female and male interlocutors. According to Holmes (2006) in task-oriented features or transactional perspective, there is a tension to achieve the desired goal, which leads to the use of direct, authoritarian, or normatively masculine ways of handling conflict.

Below is one of the examples of the utterances.

Data 62
"**Wait a minute. How can we be almost out of capital?**"

Ray indicates that he used a task-oriented feature when in conversation with his secretary June (female character). He gives direct statements to her secretary about the outcome or related to tasks about the company. Ray wanted to focus on the task so that he could fix the problem immediately. He used this feature because he didn't want any loss to his company and June, who was his secretary, was expected to know what he meant because he had worked with him for a long time.

Last but not least, the masculine feature of interactional styles that the writer found during the analysis is referentially oriented. Man speaks in factual and transactional informative speech styles. Power, position, and formal authority are all transactional characteristics in this feature. Males are unwilling to express emotions or disclose personal information (Holmes, 2006).

The findings of this analysis shows that Ray Kroc also used referentially oriented features in masculine interactional styles when in business conversation with male partners. Following is one of the examples of the utterances that indicate Ray Kroc applied referentially oriented.

Data 50
"Loads of restaurants do it!"

He said that "loads of restaurants do it" to make his arguments more powerful since it was supported with the facts of their surroundings. He used referentially oriented arguments to support his arguments. It indicates that Ray Kroc used the information to build a transactional goal which was to make the brothers agree with his new concept of the branch's building.

The support of feminine and masculine features of interactional styles in the use of interactional styles features

In this section, the writer discusses the use of both interactional styles that can help Ray Kroc do business conversation. The writer found out that Ray used both feminine and masculine interactional styles with all features. The feminine interactional styles support Ray in building a good relationship. Because even though the interlocutor is of the same sex, namely men, they still have a sense of wanting to be appreciated. Facilitative features can be one of the good examples, it can allow Ray to encourage his partner to join in his conversation through pragmatic particle and tag questions. Ray is supported by the feminine feature, which can reduce tension at the beginning of meetings and conversation. From the findings, interestingly, Ray Kroc indicates that he also used supportive feedback for instance "yeah" to both female and male interlocutors. The purpose of the use of this feature is to give a sign that he pays attention to the interlocutor which is in line with Holmes' (2006) statement and as an agreement in a feminine way to make it more informal.

Feminine features also help Ray establish good relationships with customers and franchisees because feminine features contain more polite words than masculine features. Building trust is also easier with this feminine feature to minimize or avoid conflict after a conversation or meeting. Conciliatory features that used to avoid conflicts using particle and indirect features that used to soften the utterances to make it less direct, help Ray to build a good relationship with rare conflict. Ray always used feminine interactions to avoid conflict and after a long time of acquaintance he returned to using masculine interactions with his fellow genders. It all still happens according to the context and the situation at hand.

Feminine interactions are constructive in achieving the speaker's goals more gently and politely. Following that, feminine features can be applied to the opposite gender and same gender to support the speakers achieve their goals and reduce conflict. Thus, men can still use feminine features to help them communicate with other people.

On the other hand, all masculine features of interactional styles were also used by Ray Kroc when in business conversation with female and male interlocutors. Many uses can be obtained by interacting in a masculine manner, especially in business. Masculine features can

help users look more assertive, responsive, and not long-winded. When convincing others, this masculine interaction also supports its users in achieving their targets.

In this analysis, the writer found many uses of masculine interactional features to make quick and precise decisions. For example, using competitive features to defend the user's argument, Ray Kroc, can help achieve goals. In addition, Ray, the male lead character who is very competitive, shows his success in interacting with others, especially in a business context. Ray Kroc when in business conversation with females also applied masculine interactional style which is task/outcome-oriented. In this context he talked to his secretary about the problem their company was facing. He used this to focus on the task and keep his professionalism as a boss.

Last but not least, Ray used a referentially oriented feature in business conversation with male partners to give information based on the facts toward each other. He wanted to be trusted by them, for instance, his buyers and franchisees.

Based on Holmes (2006), masculinity is always related to men. The result of this analysis shows that successful male character in business conversation follows Holmes' (2006) that male tend to use masculine interaction to both female and male partner conversation. Holmes (2006) also states that both women and men can use both feminine and masculine interactional styles in their conversation with others. In addition to that, based on Kuntjara (2012) identification that men are more likely focus on the information about task rather than the affective function of the interaction itself, it is clearly shown that Ray Kroc used masculine interactional styles more often than feminine to both female and male in business conversation in the movie. He used the feminine interactional styles to show solidarity and intimacy to build good relationships with the business partners. As a result, the author concluded that the male character tended to use both feminine and masculine interactional styles to both female and male interlocutors depending on the situation and context, which in this case in business conversations.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, Ray constantly interacts masculine. The feature styles that are most often found are task-oriented because he always focuses on his business affairs and pursues profitable results. Moreover, the feminine style used by Ray is also very supportive of the masculine interaction to maintain a good relationship in achieving its goals in business conversations. Person-oriented is most often used to focus on the other person, which can help attract attention and provide value to the interlocutors. So that the other person feels considered and still wants to talk about business openly to Ray. Ray seems very good at communicating with his partner because he knows and considers whom he is talking to. In addition, he used all the features of feminine and masculine interactional styles based on the context and situation.

These findings are in line with Holmes (2006) that men and women can imply both features of feminine and masculine interactional styles based on the situation, which is in business conversation.

Thus, the writer concluded that in business conversations, whether the interlocutor is male or female, it is still possible to find interactions applied the same way by looking at the existing context and situation. The writer also concluded that an utterance in this situation also can consist of two different features of interactional styles at the same time based on the situation and context to support Ray, the speaker, reach his goals through his utterance.

Since this current study has limitations to the situation, theory, and scopes, extensive

research for the film *The Founder* that focuses on other characters, situations, and theories is recommended. Despite the limitations of this study, the author hopes that the findings will contribute to the growing number of studies on male interactional styles features during business conversations with interlocutors of the same and different gender.

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