

Research Article

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Identifying social class differences through speech style analysis in 'Kingsman: The Secret Service'

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing the relationship between speech style and social class in the film *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (2014). This study employs a qualitative method to analyze the language style of the main characters Eggsy and Harry, who are from the lower social class and upper class, respectively. Through note-taking as the research method and thematic analysis as the method of analysis, the writer gathered 489 total utterances from both characters. Harry's speech consists of 226 utterances, and primarily consists of the Consultative style (124 utterances), and all employ standard grammar emblematic of his upper social class. However, Eggsy's 263 utterances consist of the Casual speech style (153 utterances) the most and include speech that contains non-standard grammar (11 utterances), reflecting his lower social class. Additionally, the study finds that the Function social factor significantly influences both characters' speech; Harry prioritizes message conveyance and sincerity, while Eggsy's speech emphasizes self-expression and defense. The study discovers that the difference in the dominant speech styles is indicative of their social class in the way they employ the speech styles in places and contexts that do not require it.

Keywords: Speech styles; social class; social factors; *Kingsman: The Secret Service*

1. Introduction

Kingsman: The Secret Service (2014) has sociolinguistic elements that could be analyzed. However, there are few studies found by the writer that consider the main character's diction (Yuspianti, 2017; Lancerianda, 2016), but none that compare his speech style with the supporting characters through a social class perspective. With the main character coming from a social background so strikingly different from the supporting characters, there is bound to be a thick barrier that divides them linguistically. The stark difference between characters Eggsy Unwin and Harry Hart's linguistic characteristics lies in the way they communicate. The two characters originate from different social classes. Eggsy was born and raised in a lower social caste, while Harry was born into wealth; this is seen in their way of speaking. Noticing this, the writer implements Joos' (1967) theory which divides types of speech styles into most formal to most informal to categorize Eggsy and Harry's utterances.

According to Joos (1967), a speech style can be determined through how formal one speaks. Utama & Abdullah (2022) point out that speech styles are separate forms of language that speakers use to convey ideas through spoken words and tone of voice. Additionally, Giles's theory (1973) on communication emphasizes how speakers adjust their speech to influence how others view their social identity. Those five language styles are 1) frozen; 2) formal; 3) consultative; 4) casual; 5) intimate.

Frozen style is commonly used for print and declamation. Grammar is highly concerned in this style, and the participation and intonation of the speakers are absent. However, it can also be said that this style is used for only very formal settings such as speech for diplomacy, palaces, or other occasions.

In formal style the speaker of this style avoids using personal pronouns like 'I', 'me,' and 'mine' and leans more to the formal code label 'one' or even 'myself' in some rare situations. Because it is designed to inform (Joos, 1967), intimacy is also frequently avoided to inform the opposing speaker. Additionally, the formal style could be used in formal situations in which the speakers have only met for the first time or when one of the parties is of a higher position (Joos, as cited in Broderick, 1976).

Consultative style is considered the 'good mature style', often occurring in semiformal interactions. It is normally spoken in situations where two speakers are of equal social setting but lack an intimate relationship. According to Joos (1967), consultative code labels involve oral and non-vocal reactions from the hearer to signal the other speaker of his/her attentive listening. In addition, this style is grammatically complete.

Casual style is marked by an arbitrary list of formulas which are learned individually and used to identify the style for the hearer's convenience (Joos, 1967). People use this style for daily conversations with others who are close to them, platonically and romantically. Some ellipses are turned into the casual (Joos, 1967). Similar to ellipses, slang is also utilized by speakers using this style of speech.

Intimate style is used between speakers who are very close and have known each other intimately i.e., family members, couples, close friends, etc. The point of the intimate style is to remind the addressee of some feeling (usually unspecified) instead of informing. Extraction which is commonly used is not ellipsis; it involves the speaker's extraction of a minimum pattern from some casual sentence. Additionally, Mulya & Mahmud's (2023) explains that this style contains intimate expressions, e.g., "dear", "darling", "honey", "hon", "babe", etc. (Simamora & Sherina, 2022).

The use of different style may reflect the use of language by different people from different social class. Fraser (1998) mentions the significance of the features of non-standard style commonly found in the working class, among others:

- 1) Multiple negation: "I didn't go nowhere."
- 2) Subject/verb noncord: "We was the only ones.", "I were there yesterday."
- 3) Conjugation regularization: "She done it.", "I were there yesterday."
- 4) *Them* used as a demonstrative: "I've seen them students."
- 5) *Ain't* for *be not* or *have not*: "How come that ain't working?" " "
- 6) *Never* for general negation: "*I never went to school today.*"
- 7) Comparison: "She's more better than him.", "He's the most toughest."
- 8) Adjective form for adverb use: "They done it very nice."

The use of different style is also influenced by social factors that appear at the time of the utterances occur. Holmes (2013) explains that the concept of speech factors affects particular uses of speech style. She claims that there are four of these factors, which involve a) the participant (who is speaking and who are they speaking to?); b) the setting or the social context of the interaction (where are they speaking?); c) the topic (what are they talking about?); and d) the function (why are they speaking?).

Many studies (Ghafanzar, et.al., 2024; Mulya & Mahmud, 2023; Rini, 2022) have studied the use of different styles along with the social factors that accompany them. However, none has mentioned about the reflection of such speech style with their social class background. Hence, this study seeks to identify the language variation proposed by Joos that is most frequently used by each character and examine

whether it corresponds with their social class. In addition, this study investigates the factors that influence the characters' use of specific speech styles.

2. Methods

The research employs a qualitative method to conduct this study, and descriptive technique to analyze the sentences uttered by Eggsy Unwin and Harry Hart and connect them with their respective social classes. This research used observation as the method to obtain the data. Here, the writer watched the movie repeatedly and noted down every utterance spoken by the characters. The writer also checked the accuracy of the data by using transcript of the subtitle provided. This is followed by the method of analyzing data by employing these steps. First, the writer picked only scenes that contain utterances by Eggsy Unwin and Harry Hart, which were then followed by note-taking of those scenes. Second, the writer labels each utterance according to Joos' theory. Following the step, those occurrences will be related to the contrast of how each character acts according to their social class.

3. Results

Table 1. Speech Style and Affecting Social Factors

Characters	Speech styles	Total speech style	Social factors			
			Participants	Settings	Topics	Functions
Harry	Frozen	-	-	-	-	-
	Formal	31	4	9	8	30
	Consultative	129	7	15	5	121
	Casual	65	33	2	-	64
	Intimate	1	1	-	-	1
			45	26	13	215
Eggy	Frozen	-	-	-	-	-
	Formal	2	-	-	-	2
	Consultative	97	21	7	-	88
	Casual	153	78	4	-	140
	intimate	11	7	-	-	3
			106	11	0	238

Table 2. Harry and Eggsy Class-Distinctive Style

Class-Distinctive Style			
Harry		Eggy	
Standard	Non-Standard	Standard	Non-Standard
226	0	252	11

In Table 1, Social Factors refer to Holmes' (2013) theory of social factors that affect speech styles. The numbers written below each category refer to the number of utterances in a particular speech style that are affected by the factors, including utterances that were affected by more than one factor. The inconsistency of the total number of social factors compared to the total number of speech styles should not matter, as different social factors appeared simultaneously in one utterance and are considered separate entities during the tallying process, and they were totaled as such to display clearly which social factors have the most influence.

The research revealed that both characters use the same types of speech styles: Formal, Consultative, Casual, and Intimate. Shown in Table 2, based on Fraser's (1998) categorization of style according to class differences reveals that all of Harry's utterances are Standard, signifying his speech as more upper-class than lower-class while Eggsy has 11 utterances that are classified as non-standard style as per Fraser's theory, making his speech less upper-class and more lower-class.

4. Discussion

4.1 Harry Hart's Utterance Analysis

4.1.1 Formal

Of the various speech styles, only 31 of Harry's utterances are categorized as this style. This is noteworthy as it contrasts with the character's gentlemanly persona. Harry Hart is an individual born into wealth who pursues a high-level career as a Kingsman agent; thus, his main speech style not being Formal signifies that he is not overly strict with his speech. Social factors that influence Harry's need to use the Formal style include the Setting/Context (during a mission), Participant (speaking to his colleagues and superior), Topic (when explaining the Kingsman history), and Function (to express amusement).

52. "Listen, boys. I've had a rather emotional day, so whatever your *beef* with Eggsy is, and I'm sure it's well-founded, *I'd appreciate it enormously* if you could just leave us in peace until I finish this lovely pint of Guinness."

Something interesting to note is how Harry occasionally uses the formal style to express sarcasm. According to Holmes (2013), one's speaking style can be affected by the function of their speech – why and for what are they speaking. In a couple of scenes similar to this one, Harry uses the formal style not to express politeness or speak to a more revered person (Joos, 1976), but for sarcasm.

Additionally, an interesting thing to note is his use of the slang 'beef', which refers to an issue someone faces. His use of slang, while it is a characteristic of the Casual style, is overlooked by his formal style. He uses the slang to quip the gang members' lower-class speech style while keeping his polite style.

4.1.2 Consultative

Harry leans more towards the Consultative style to preserve politeness. This style is commonly used in semi-formal occasions (Joos, 1967), but he uses it regardless of whether the situation is formal. Therefore, this style being Harry's most employed signifies that Harry habitually speaks in a manner that is considered semi-formal, including in places that do not ask for any type of formality (i.e., at the pub, his house, his inpatient room, etc.). Social factors that affect his use of this style are mostly Function and Topic, as he implements it when he wants to be genuine, as well as when the Topic of a conversation changes from casual to important matters as shown in datum below.

Context: After Harry introduces himself to Eggsy, the two enter Eggsy's frequented pub to discuss his late father and his current life.

38. "And if it weren't for his courage, my mistake would have cost the lives of every man present."

3.1.3 Casual

The Casual style is reserved for between friends or close relationships to show solidarity. This style is characterized by the presence of slang, ellipses, and use of swear words. Despite being a gentleman, Harry has a good number of Casual style, with 65 utterances, making it his second most-used speech style. Harry does not use the casual style as second nature; throughout the movie, there are certain times when he deems it necessary to use it. In most instances, he does so with Eggsy so that his speech matches Eggsy on an equal level. Because Eggsy is a lower-class individual who implements more of the Casual style; to speak similarly to him to either relate to him, directly get his message across, or as an act of comfort. Additionally, he employs this style to be more expressive, e.g., informal speech elements such as swear words are used by him to express anger clearly, as in data below where Harry uses slang ‘tits up’ to show his anger.

Context: Harry interrogates Eggsy about his current life.

42. “Huge IQ, great performance at primary school... and it all went *tits up*.”

4.1.3.1 Harry’s Use of Slang

Harry only has 4 utterances that use slang. He employs slang when he deems it necessary or fitting to do so. Therefore, Harry uses only a few slangs throughout the movie, and only in selected situations, rather than out of habit.

4.1.3.2 Harry’s Use of Swear Words

Another characteristic of the Casual style that is unmissable is the use of swear words. Swear words are widely considered disrespectful and very informal language (Schippers, 2013). Moreover, swear words are considered a characteristic of the casual style because they do not occur in the other speech styles, including intimate, as the intimate style refers more to personal codes. Swear words count as they are employed to show either closeness between friends or break barriers of politeness with their disrespect (Wulandari, et.al., 2023). While Harry rarely uses swear words, this rarity makes utterances where he uses them much more effective.

4.1.4 Intimate

There is only one circumstance where Harry employs the intimate style. The Intimate style includes terms of affection to refer to close friends or family (Mulya & Mahmud, 2023). This only happens once in the movie, when Harry first encounters Eggsy when he is still a child as shown below

Context: After his colleague’s death, Harry pays a visit to the Unwin household to deliver the news to the man’s wife, and speaks with a younger Eggsy.

16. “What’s your name, *young man*?”

4.2 Eggsy Unwin’s Utterance Analysis

4.2.1 Formal

Despite Eggsy’s stance on the lower side of the social caste, this style still makes an appearance, albeit only 2 times. There is an occasion in which he employs this style to express sarcasm. Therefore, his formal speech style is affected by the Participants in the conversation. Datum below shows how Eggsy uses the word Sir to show his respects to the interlocutor.

Context: Eggsy and Roxy have just landed after experiencing a parachute test where he thought he was the person who wasn't given a parachute. Angry, he approaches Merlin to confront the man.

112. "Sorry, *Sir*."

4.2.2 Consultative

Of the speech styles Eggsy employs, Consultative is his second-to-least used, gathering at 97 data. It is commonly used in semi-formal occasions or situations where speakers do not recognize each other. Although this style does not come to him as naturally as the Casual style, he is seen implementing it in moments where he wants to convey his message clearly. The social factor that affects this the most is Function, as Eggsy mostly uses this style to convey clear messages and emotions, rather than preserve politeness with strangers as shown in datum below.

(*Harry no. 42: "Huge IQ, great performance at primary school, and it all went tits up. Drugs, petty crime, never had a job."*)

25. "Oh, you think there's a lot of jobs going around here, do you?"

4.2.3 Casual

Because he is from the lower class, Eggsy's primary speech style falls on the Casual style with a significant 153 data. Characteristics of this speech style include non-standard grammar and vocabulary, contractions, ellipsis of unstressed words, and use of slang (Joos, 1967); all of which appear in this part of Eggsy's utterances.

Context: In the pub, Eggsy and his friends are getting in a fight with one of the gangsters, and Eggsy suggests that they go out and eventually decide to ruin the gangster's car and recklessly drive it. Eventually, the police get to them, but Eggsy urges his friends to leave the car before they get caught.

10. "Yeah. Now we're *gonna nick* his car."

4.2.3.1 Eggsy's Use of Slang

Furthermore, Eggsy uses many slang terms in his utterances. This signifies that Eggsy is expressive in a way that he uses multiple slang terms to express various emotions, ranging from anger to happiness. Aside from this, Eggsy's frequency of using slang signifies that he is a casual individual who chooses to express himself freely without the rules of semi-formal occasions (in which he needs to keep a polite impression). Additionally, slang is a prominent speech element in the Casual style. Furthermore, according to Joos (1967), employing this style to an 'outsider' is an invitation for that individual to become part of the insiders.

4.2.3.2 Eggsy's Use of Swear Words

Another common trait in Eggsy's speech is the presence of swear words. Through most of the scenes, he mostly does so to express emotions out of habit (Haya & Wulandari, 2004). Moreover, according to Shippers (2013), swearing is often associated with lower-class speakers, and swearing, to a great extent, is regarded as negative and linked with low prestige. Therefore, the large presence of swearing by Eggsy alludes to his origin from the lower social class. In addition to implementing swear words for mere expressions, Eggsy also conveys genuineness by being vulgar. One of these genuinenesses is the combination of panic and anger, which are emotions.

4.2.4 Intimate

Intimacy is expressed by Eggsy to only a select number of people. This consists of family members and close platonic relationships. In scenes where Eggsy interacts with Roxy, there are occasions where he calls her the term of affection, “Good girl”.

Context: Roxy faces her fear of heights and skydives with the others during the recruitment test after Eggsy convinces and reassures her to do so.

98. “*Good girl, Rox, I’m glad you made it!*”

4.3 Harry vs Eggsy’s Standard and Non-Standard Style

Based on Fraser’s (1998) categorization, the presence of non-standard grammar is able to signify a lower-class characteristic. None of Harry’s utterances contains grammatical deviation, even if he occasionally employs the Casual style. His grammar does not deviate from the standard form, and his vocabulary stays clear and consistent. However, Eggsy is the opposite. Although 95,8% of Eggsy’s utterances have standard grammar, 4,20% of them contain grammar deviations. Recalling what Chambers mentioned (as quoted in Coupland, 2007), the social significance of linguistic variants relies rather on the frequency of said variant compared to another’s. It can be said that Eggsy’s habit of implementing such non-standard grammar is affected by his social background of the lower social class.

4.4 Harry and Eggsy’s Class-Distinctive Speech Style

Harry is characterized as an individual from the upper social class. Around 57,1% of his speech style is Consultative. The remaining are 28,8% of Casual style, 13,7% of the Formal style, and 0,4% of the Intimate style. That Harry employs a semi-formal speech style to Eggsy signifies that he likely employs the style regardless of his closeness with the other person (as Eggsy is the only individual he is close enough with in the movie). Furthermore, he employs this style even in situations that do not call for formality, such as at the pub or his inpatient room. This signifies that Harry has the habit of speaking in the slightest bit of formality, regardless of the situation.

Eggsy is portrayed as an individual from the lower social class. Around 58,2% of his speech style is Casual, with 36,9% in the Consultative style, 4,2% in the Intimate style, and only 0,8% in the Formal style. Being the opposite of Harry linguistically, Eggsy employs the Casual style as his primary style. Eggsy implements this style even to those not a part of his social group, such as strangers (e.g., the lady in the pub, the clerk at the phone, and the stranger who held the train tracks test) and his superior. Given that Eggsy has a more Casual style than Consultative is evidence of his background as a low social class individual.

5. Conclusion

The research resulted in the presence of only Formal, Consultative, Casual, and Intimate speech styles in both characters. Based on Joos’ theory, Eggsy’s prevalent use of the Casual style corresponds with his social class through the way he implements the informal style to everyone, regardless of the person’s status or the situation. Eggsy swears plenty of times in the movie, most of which are blurted out for filler. Based on Fraser’s theory, Eggsy contains 11 utterances that are conveyed in a Non-Standard way. The quantity of non-standard grammar acts as another clear sign of his lower social class. It signifies that Eggsy’s speech habitually contains such non-standard language, which adds to the deduction of Eggsy’s lower-class identity. The results also show that Eggsy’s use of speech styles is influenced the most by the Function factor, which totals 233 times throughout all four speech styles. He

does not pay much attention to the status of the person he is speaking to and prioritizes the conveyance of his message rather than controlling his speech style according to the interlocutor.

Harry's dominant use of the Consultative style aligns with his social class in a way that he employs formality even in situations that lack the need for. Furthermore, he applies this style regardless of his closeness with a person. Based on Fraser's theory, the absence of Non-Standard grammar signifies that Harry, despite his use of the Casual grammar, lacks any characteristics that would otherwise label him as low-class, which is another detail of his social class. Similar to Eggsy, the social factor that influences Harry's speech style is the Function factor, which appears 216 times throughout all four speech styles. Most of his speech styles rely on the reason he needs to employ the speech styles, such as being defensive, genuine, and to convey a message.

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