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The Linguistic Representation of Working-class Glaswegians in James Kelman's Short Stories: A Corpus-based Analysis

التمثيل اللغوي لسكان غلاسكو من الطبقة العاملة في قصص جيمس كيلمان القصيرة: تحليل مستند على مدونة

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Abstract: Representing reality in literary writings has always been of perennial interest to literary authors. Among them is James Kelman, who himself claims on many occasions to realistically represent his community, the working-class Glaswegians, in Scotland. By mapping his writings on a proposed model inspired by Macaulay's (2002, 2005) findings, this article argues, based on a corpus-based analysis of two short story collections written in 1990s, that Kelman linguistically represents working-class Glaswegians but not to the edge of extremity to consider his writings a speech transcription. From the two collections that constitute the corpus under study, *The Burn* (1991) and *The Good Times* (1998), the article concludes that Kelman's linguistic representation to his own community is realistic; however, his realism is stylistically inventive and aesthetically peculiar to him.

Keywords*:* realism, representativeness, social class markers, Glasgow, working class, middle class.

الملخص: لطالما شكل تمثيل الواقع في الكتابات الأدبية، موضع اهتمام متواصل لدى المؤلفين الأدباء؛ من بينهم جيمس كيلمان الذي ادعى بنفسه في مناسبات عديدة أنه يمثل مجتمعه – من الطبقة العاملة لسكان غلاسكو في اسكتلندا – بكل واقعية. إذ و من خلال موازنة كتاباته مع نموذج لغوي مقترح و مستوحى من النتائج التي توصل اليها ماكولاي (2002، 2005)، تسائل هذه المقالة، باستخدام منهج تحليل المدونة و بناءً على تحليل مجموعتين من القصص القصيرة التى كُتبت في التسعينيات، قضية أن كيلمان يمثل من منطلق لغوي الطبقة العاملة في غلاسكو، ولكن ليس إلى حد التطرف حتى تعتبر كتاباته على انها نسخ للكلام. و من المجموعتين اللتين تشكلان المدونة قيد الدراسة – *الغدير* (1991) و *الاوقات الطيبة* (1998) – تخلص الورقة البحثية إلى أن تمثيل كيلمان اللغوي لمجتمعه يعد تمثيلا واقعيا، غير أن واقعيته ابتكارية في الأسلوب، ومتميزة من الناحية الجمالية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الواقعية ، التمثيلية ، علامات الطبقات الاجتماعية ، غلاسكو ، الطبقة العاملة ، الطبقة الوسطى

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1. INTRODUCTION

James Kelman has an interest in language and how it is used; this is apparent in his works in which he playfully employed linguistic features to render reality in his literary world. Kelman himself has written a variety of essays to show how Glaswegians are misrepresented in English literature (Kelman, 1992, 2003). The latter usually depicts the Glaswegian as a violent drunk character who is unable to have abstract thoughts. Kelman (2003) blames the educational system for suppressing the language of Glaswegian working-class. Kelman states that the English literature taught in schools does not mention working-class communities. Even if some English literary works mention working-class characters, they would be "categorised as servants, peasants, criminal 'elements', semi-literate drunken louts, and so on" (p. 17). He disparaged the majority of nineteenth and twentieth century English literature because they neglect individual lives of working-class communities such as his. For Kalman, such representation is a kind of literary cultural colonization that could be freed by using the demotic language in the literary writings. Kelman took it upon him to represent his community by focusing his literary works on working-class characters who are capable of abstract thoughts and articulate in their own terms (Turner, 1997).

Since Kelman's writings are claimed to be realistic and represent working-class Glaswegians, the overall objective of this paper is to investigate Kelman's linguistic representativeness. In this regard, the paper is set out to show how the language used in his community, the working-class Glaswegians, informs James Kelman's lexico-grammatical choice in his short stories. The focus is mainly on the use of minimal responses "yes/aye" and some adverbs. This can be gained through a reading of sociolinguistic findings about Kelman's community and in particular the findings of Macaulay (2002, 2005). Macaulay shows the linguistic similarities and the differences between working-class and middle-class speakers that are existent in the 1990s Glasgow, Scotland. However, before making a comparison of Macaulay's findings with those found in Kelman's short stories, it is necessary to explore the angles of representation attributed to Kelman's writings.

2. Background

Kelman represents his community socially in his content and linguistically in his style. Craig (1993) contends that "Kelman's fiction sets out to resist becoming 'literature' by a fundamental commitment to realism in content and style" (p. 100).

In terms of Kelman's social representation, Kirk (1999) notes that Kelman's fiction has two main concerns: "representations of the (male) working class, and the nature and condition of urban life" (p. 101). The social representation resides in the challenges and the themes Kelman chooses to address in his writings. For him, Scottish working classes have been colonized culturally and have been denied their voice in British literature. Thus, the primary subject matter of his stories is the life of the working class and their challenges. His themes are a variation of alienation, hopelessness, unemployment, anxiety, and other dark modes of life in which characters seem unable to address, let alone to resolve. In this vein, Kirk (1999) claims that Kelman's work is "a new kind of working-class writing, focusing on the dilemma of the male proletarian seen often to be negotiating with the painful consequences of economic and political 'exile'" (p. 101). One should mention that Kelman has taken this societal realism to the edge of extremity where he even does not allow himself to write short stories with well-defined plots. Kelman rejects convoluted plots and extravagant events because they do not lead to the existence of everyday realism. Writing a story that gravitates towards a closed clear ending and surrounded by neat events is unrealistic. "Life, while it is being lived, is simply not like that, for life contains unexplained events, chance happenings, unknown and unforeseen repercussions" (Nicoll, 2005, p. 62).

On the other hand, the linguistic representation resides in Kelman's linguistic choices. He uses the vernacular because he believes that writing in a standard English literary form is a kind of imposition that kills the reality of the fictional stories: "The imposition of […] this so-called 'literary language' would have killed our stories stone-dead" (Kelman, 2019, p. 5). Kelman infuses Glasgow speech forms into his literary texts where he deliberately chooses to break literary norms. He represents the working-class Glaswegians by revolting against the distinction made between speech and writing, i.e., between dialogue and narration. For him, "an author who represents the reality of a character needs to also recognise the language used to express that character's experiences" (Müller, 2011, p.7).

From these two angles of representation, the paper focuses on the linguistic part of Kelman's representation to his community.

3. Analysis of social class in literature

For more than 60 years now, investigating the correlation between

language and other extralinguistic factors have been the focus of many scholars. Research studies on the topic of social class as one extralinguistic factor have been conducted on different periods of time ranging from the most classic studies to the modern ones (Coupland, 1988; Eckert, 2000; Fischer, 1958; Labov, 1966, 2001; Macaulay, 1977, 1991, 2002, 2005; McCafferty, 2001; Rampton, 2006, 2010; Stuart-Smith, 1999; Trudgill, 1974, 1997; Wolfram, 1969). The paper took Macaulay's findings to be the comparing source. On first impressions, it may appear inappropriate to use Macaulay's findings as a model to analyze Kelman's linguistic choices to represent his community; nonetheless, mapping such findings on Kelman's short stories has proved the most appropriate since both Kelman's writings of the corpus under study and Macaulay' s research are synchronous and both are Glasgow-located.

The suggested model to analyze Kelman's literary works depends only on what have been found to be of significant difference between middle-class and working-class Glaswegians. Macaulay (2002, 2005) who himself is a Glaswegian has found that middle-class speakers use passive forms, nonrestrictive relative clauses, and the relative pronoun "who" much more than working class while the latter use dislocated syntax more frequently. Macaulay concludes that there are more similarities, rather than differences, between the Glaswegians of the two classes; however, he contends that the difference between the two Glaswegian classes is settle when it comes to employing the minimal responses "yes/aye", the use of evaluative adjectives, the use of derived adverbs in "-ly", and the frequent use of both "very" and "quite". Thus, these sociolinguistic differences can be seen as markers of social class and investigating them in a given literary piece of writing may reveal social class membership of characters. Using them in a given frequency may prove as an evidence to representing a given community. Therefore, this paper analyzes Kelman's use of the following:

1) minimal responses: "yes" and "aye"
2) derived adverbs in "-ly"
3) the two adverbs "very" and "quite"

4. Methods

4.1 Approach

This study uses corpus linguistic techniques to facilitate the analysis of Kelman's writings. Corpus linguistics is "perceived as a methodology" (Szudarski, 2018, p. 4). Because this research is guided by previous sociolinguistic findings, the approach employed is a corpus-based one

(Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). The corpus linguistic approach provides absolute and relative frequencies for the comparison made between Kelman's writings and the proposed model. Nonetheless, the provided quantitative data are supported by qualitative methods like providing interpretations to the findings and arguments of the paper.

4.2 Corpus

James Kelman has written several novels and short stories; the corpus under study has been built from his short story collections and not from his novels in order to avoid topic bias. Hence, what qualifies as constituents of the corpus is two collections of short stories that introduce a time variable which is desirable: *The Burn* (1991) and *The Good Times* (1998). These two collections depict the life of working-class Glaswegians, and they are written in a range of time that is not far away from the time Macaulay's data were collected. Topic variance is a characteristic of short story collections; thus, including all of the short stories of the two collections ensures a variety of topics and a variety of language items. Therefore, the corpus is constructed from a total of 46 short stories: 26 short stories in *The Burn (1991)* and 20 in *The Good Times (1998)*. Henceforth, this corpus is referred to as Kelman's corpus.

When a corpus is designed not to capture the language in general but limits itself to a specific type of language or only segments of it, the corpus is a specialized one (Adolphs, 2006; Lee, 2010; Szudarski, 2018). Hence, Kelman's corpus is to be seen as a specialized corpus in the sense that it does not aim to represent Kelman's use of language throughout his whole literary career as a writer. Although this can be argued, the paper considers the data findings not generalizable to all Kelman's writings because it has been mentioned many times that Kelman has deviated from choosing Glasgow as the setting of his stories (Manfredi, 2015; Müller, 2011).

4.3 Research Questions

As it has been mentioned earlier in the introduction, the aim is to investigate Kelman's linguistic representation to his own community, the Glaswegian working-class, based on what could be seen as a sociolinguistic evidence. Thus, answers to the following questions have been sought in Kelman's corpus:

1) Does Kelman use "aye" more than "yes" in order to mimic the

working-class use of "aye" as it has been found in Macaulay (2005)?

2) Does he only use adverbs reported by Macaulay as working-class adverbs, or does he use also middle-class adverbs?

3) Does he use "very" and "quite" less frequently in his writings as it has been found to be used less by working-class Glaswegians in Macaulay's study?

To address these questions, it was necessary to obtain frequency counts and to gather data in order to be compared to the sociolinguistic findings of Macaulay (2002, 2005). The comparison would help in determining Kelman's use of what has been considered as social class markers to his community. To compare datasets, relative frequencies are always randomized per 1000 words.

4.4 Extracting data from Kelman's corpus

Data have been extracted by using #LancsBox (v. 5.1). This is a new-generation software package for the analysis of language data and corpora which was developed at Lancaster University by Brezina et al. (2020).

5. Reporting findings

Kelman' corpus is reported to have 148567 tokens distributed between the two collections as Table 1 shows.

Table 1
Words in Kelman's corpus

The collection	Tokens
The Burn	76899
The Good Times	71668
The whole corpus	148567

5.1 "Aye" or "yes"

Starting with the first question concerning the minimal responses "aye" or "yes", it has been found that Kelman used "aye" more than "yes" with a significant difference ($p < 0.05$).

Kelman used "yes" 36 times. He also used the following variants of it: "yeh" (239 times), "yea" (7 times), "yep" (twice), "yip" (only once), and he never used "yeah". Table 2 displays Kelman's use of "aye" in comparison to "yes" (including its variants "yeh", "yea", "yep" and "yip")

Table 2
Kelman's Use of "yes" and "aye"

	No.	Freq.
yes (and its variants)	285	1.92
aye	335	2.25

Note. Freq is randomized by 1000 words

5.2 Derived adverbs ending in "-ly"

Because Macaulay (2005) gave a list of derived adverbs in "-ly" suggesting that working-class speakers use adverbs that are not used by middle-class speakers and vice versa, the employment of these adverbs in Kelman's corpus has been checked. In this regard, three choices are available to Kelman based on Macaulay (2005):

1) Adverbs which are reported to be used only by working-class Glaswegians

2) Adverbs which are reported to be used only by middle-class Glaswegians

3) Adverbs which are reported to be used by both

A count to all derived "-ly" adverbs in Kelman's corpus has resulted in a total of 1059. A number of these adverbs are used only by Kelman and do not fall under the three categories mentioned above. Kelman used all adverbs that are considered by Macaulay to be adverbs of both middle and working class except three (wrongly, constantly, roughly).

From the 50 adverbs provided by Macaulay to be used only by middle-class Glaswegians, Kelman used 27 adverbs of them.

From the 13 adverbs provided by Macaulay to be used only by working-class, Kelman used 7 adverbs.

The data seems to suggest nothing of significance concerning the three social-class-based categories of "-ly" adverbs. It does not align with the three categories of adverbs based on social-class division in Glasgow provided by Macaulay (2005). However, it seems that it tilts towards Macaulay's general finding that working-class Glaswegians use less "-ly" adverbs than middle-class Glaswegians as Table 3 shows.

Table 3
Derivative Adverbs in "-ly" in Kelman's Corpus and Macaulay (2005)

Kelman's corpus		Macaulay's findings			
		Working-class		Middle-class	
No.	Freq.	No.	Freq.	No.	Freq
1059	7.12	250	4.97	408	11.89

Note. Freq is randomized by 1000 words

This research also confirms Macaulay's finding of the two most used adverbs by both middle- and working-class: "really" and "actually". Although the adverb "actually" is ranked third in Kelman's corpus, he used these two adverbs in a frequency that is more similar to working-class Glaswegian than to middle class as Table 4 demonstrates.

Table 4
Relative Frequencies of "really" and "actually"

Adverb	Kelman's corpus	Macaulay's findings	
		Working-class	Middle-class
Really	1.04	1.85	3.03
Actually	0.44	0.74	2.8

Note. Freq is randomized by 1000 words

5.3 The adverbs "very" and "quite"

Macaulay has found that the difference between Glaswegian working class and the middle-class in using "very" and "quite" is significant. In Kelman's corpus, a frequency count has reported Kelman's use of these two adverbs to be in line with Macaulay's findings of working-class Glaswegians rather than with middle class as the relative frequencies show in Table 5.

Table 5

"Very" and "quite" in Kelman's Corpus and Macaulay (2005)

	Kelman's corpus		Macaulay's findings			
			Working-class		Middle-class	
	No.	Freq	No.	Freq	No.	Freq
Very	92	0.62	16	0.32	147	4.28
Quite	103	0.69	60	1.19	125	3.64

Note. Freq is randomized by 1000 words

6. Discussions and Interpretations

Kelman's employment of "aye" more than "yes" in his literary works seems to be a deliberate choice. As reported above, this is clearly higher than random probability. In this regard, it should be mentioned that Kelman uses "yes" in this exact spelling only 36 times (with a rel freq 0.24 per 1000 words) throughout the whole corpus. This can be seen as a reaction to how Glasgow speech was perceived at the time Kelman was writing. As mentioned by Müller (2011), "[i]n an interview with Sarah Lyall, Kelman remembers the time when his two daughters were reprimanded in school for using the Scots *aye* instead of the English *yes*" (p. 3). Kelman gave voice to his community in his literary writings at the time "when Glasgow speech was officially denigrated" (Müller, 2011, p. 3).

According to McGlynn (2002), some lexical items are used by Kelman to challenge class system in literature, and she found that the use of some words such as "cannay" and "aye" are what made Kelman projects his identity. Murphy (2006) contends that Kelman's distinctive style lies in abandoning "a standard lexicon in favour of more obviously working-class speech forms" (p.197). This paper aligns its findings to that of McGlynn (2002) and Macaulay (2002, 2005) for that Kelman in this corpus uses "aye" more than "yes" to linguistically represents his community and to give voice to the working-class speakers of Glasgow.

Concerning the employment of adverbs in the corpus under study, Kelman did not adhere to the three categories of derived adverbs in "-ly" provided by Macaulay (2005), but it is obvious that Kelman does not employ too much derived adverbs in "-ly", "very", and "quite". This is attributed to his attempt to represent the linguistic reality of the working-class Glaswegians. According to Powel (1992), adverbs are used to signal

the speaker's evaluation. The latter is a general term "for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (Hunston & Thompson, 2000, p. 5). In this regard, middle-class speakers' employment of adverbs show that they use emotive language higher than working-class speakers who tend to use adverbs less frequently.

Kelman's tendency of using less adverbs could be justified with a Bourdieusian interpretation. Working-class habitus is different from middle-class habitus because they have been socialized and raised differently. Working-class speakers are not as comfortable as middle class to share their attitudes (through using emotive language). Perhaps it could be explained by what Bourdieu (1986) called *embodied cultural capital* which refers to body or mind qualities and skills that a given community of people use to distinguish themselves from other communities. Thus, Kelman whether consciously or subconsciously chooses not to use emotive language to distinguish his writings from that of middle-class Glaswegians. Doing this makes his writing to be realistic. Kelman clearly states to Elliott (1997, as cited in Müller, 2011), "I write exactly as I hear people speak". Such realism has made some critics to believe that Kelman's writing is no more than speech transcription. They even described his writing as being devoid of literary aesthetics. Müller (2011, p.19) mentions that one of Kelman's aims in his literary creation is to achieve "speech-realism (not speech transcription)". Therefore, using demotic language as he hears it around him does not mean that he did not undergo the process of literary creativity when writing his stories. It means that using language as he does is an example of the linguistic realism Kelman craves to achieve. Because of the language used in literature, according to Kelman (1992), most of literature has to do with unrealistic world, a linguistic world that is not real for ordinary people. Denying the "literary status" to Kelman's language is "absurd" (Hames, 2010, p. 86). Hames (2010) argues that Kelman is "a language artist: a writer highly conscious of his methods and techniques, who makes rather than reproduces the verbal forms we encounter in his fiction" (p. 87).

Another analysis to why Kelman does not use too many adverbs in his short stories could be interpreted from the view of the writer himself: using too much adverbs are perhaps seen among the "extraneous words" that may carry the judgmental values of the writer; they are avoided because using them may interfere in the flow of the narrative. In this light, Kelman (2003) mentions that "[p]art of the basic craft of writing is telling a story with as

few extraneous words as possible. An author who inserts too many *he thoughts* into the tale is obstructing the flow of the narrative" (p. 281). By this logic, Kelman does not use much adverbs in order to avoid judging as he mentions to McLean (1985), "there's only facts being stated, there's no [. . .] value judgement" (79). Thus, he focuses on concreteness rather than abstractness as he states to McLean (1985) in an interview:

> It's only through the concrete that you actually get the terror… Just state the thing, don't think in terms of ideas; if you get the thing properly, then you've got it. If you state those terrible things that go on in a factory, if you just put them down, then you'll get the horror of it, you don't have to say 'This is horrible.' Just state it properly, and it's there. (p.79)

As for the shortage of "very" and "quite" in Kelman's corpus, this can be related to Labov's (1984) notion of the difference between middle-class and working-class in using adverbs to express intensity. Middle-class speakers usually emphasize the emotive-ness of their speech by using "very" and "quite". However, this is not the case with Kelman who uses them far less in the corpus under study. Nonetheless, one should mention that Kelman did not exactly mirror the use of "very" and "quite" to that of Glaswegian working-class speech for he is not "a speech recorder". Kelman's generic mimesis to working-class Glaswegians in using "very" and "quite" as well as his use of "-ly" adverbs without adhering to the three categories provided by Macaulay (2005) could be perceived as an evidence to Hames' (2010) argument that "Kelman's work cannot be reduced to mimesis (imitation); it is quite as much the product of poiesis (making, shaping), and it engenders a certain aesthetic distance from 'real' or 'natural' language" (87).

A final interpretation of this paper concerning the shortage of "very", "quite", and derived adverbs in Kelman's corpus is that Kelman is linguistically realistic in his writings to the extent that he scarifies the use of literary emotive language because in reality working-class Glaswegians do not use such evaluative language. In his study, Macaulay (2005) gave examples about middle-class speakers using evaluative language and many examples where working-class speakers could have used the evaluative language, but they did not. In this regard, it has been found that working-class speakers in Glasgow avoid employing adverbs in order not to impose

on their listeners by giving them their interpretations of a given situation. However, they let listeners decipher their evaluation and interpret the situations themselves. This is crystal clear in some of Kelman's short stories. In fact, in the corpus under study there is a sad short story entitled "the Hon" where he never used "-ly" adverbs, "very", and "quite". Although this short story is sad and Kelman could have used emotive language, but he did not. There are no "-ly" adverbs, not even evaluative adjectives except one. Without using such emotive language, he let readers to feel the sadness by themselves without any kind of linguistic imposition.

7. CONCLUSION

Macaulay's emphasis was not on the representation of social class within literature and the written form of language. Nonetheless, comparing the relative frequencies reveal that Kelman's use of "aye/yes", derived adverbs in "-ly", "very", and "quite" tilts more towards being in line with Macaulay's working-class of Glasgow but without a total adherence; for instance, he did not comply with the three categories of "-ly" adverbs provided by Macaulay (2005). This non-compliance can be attributed to manipulation of language in order to create a distinctive literary style. In this regard, one can conclude that Kelman's representation of the linguistic reality of his community is not a speech transcription but a creative representation that plays on using the literary language to achieve a linguistic realism. Klaus (2004) states that Kelman's language is inventive and goes "beyond a replication of real speech" (p.7). Kelman represents his community socially and linguistically aiming at depicting a realism of day-to-day experience; however, his realism is not conventional. His stories can be perceived as the epitome of a peculiar realism, a realism that revolts against literary conventions. Klaus (2004) succeeded to argue that Kelman's realism does not go in line with conventional realism but it is a distinctive one located under Brecht's call for open-ended sense of realism.

To use Hames' dictum (2019), James Kelman is "widely known for championing the artistic validity of working-class language" (para. 1). He is, no doubt, a major short-story writer who makes sure that working-class speech prevails in his writings. Kelman's linguistic representation of his community is realistically inventive and his short stories of the 1990s are examples of how the working-class Glaswegians are truly represented in later twentieth-century literary works.

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