

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF FACE THREATENING DISAGREEMENT ACTS IN PONSLODT'S *THE SPECTACULAR NOW*

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Abstract

This research aims at describing how the face threatening disagreement acts are realized by the characters in Ponslodt's *The Spectacular Now*, and at identifying the type of responses shown to the face threatening disagreement acts in the movie. This study applies descriptive qualitative method to analyse the data. Furthermore, the form of the data are utterances spoken by the characters of *The Spectacular Now*. The context of this research are dialogues of the movie, and the main source of the data is the movie itself. The primary instrument of this research is the researcher herself while the secondary instrument is the data sheet used to help the researcher collect and analyse the data. Trustworthiness of this study is gained through triangulation by the supervisor, other researchers, and by theories. The result of the research are as follows. First, the characters in the movie realize their face threatening disagreement acts in three ways: 1) using a short direct opposite orientation, 2) employing a sarcastic remark, and 3) asking a short rude question. A short direct opposite orientation comes out as the most dominant one. This is because it is more direct and simple, and it has denotative meaning which reveals the opinion of the speaker immediately. Second, there are three types of responses employed by the characters: 1) accepting the face threatening disagreement act, 2) countering the face threatening disagreement act: a) offensive strategy, and b) defensive strategy, and 3) choosing not to respond. Countering the face threatening disagreement acts is revealed as the most dominant type of response employed. This is influenced mainly by the type of disagreement they encounter. Encountering a face threatening disagreement act, the characters in the movie choose to respond with another face threatening act.

Keywords: face threatening disagreement act, realizations, response, *The Spectacular Now*

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most essential mean of communication. People use language to express their feelings, opinion, argument, assessment, etc. However, in expressing their argument, people might hold a different value or belief which then lead to a disagreement.

Disagreement is considered as a dispreferred response which threaten other people's face. Furthermore, there are two types of disagreement act: mitigated disagreement act and unmitigated or face

threatening disagreement act. This paper focuses to investigate face threatening disagreement act using a pragmatic approach. Edstrom (2004: 1505) defines disagreement as voicing out opposite propositions or statements expressed by the previous speaker. Similar to this, Sifianou (2012: 1554) defines disagreement as expressing a different perspective from what is expressed by another speaker.

Following Locher (2003: 113), there are two types of disagreement act: mitigated disagreement act and unmitigated disagreement act. A mitigated disagreement,

or some scholars called it as a weak disagreement, is a disagreement that has been softened or mitigated (Panic Kavgic, 2013: 449). Unmitigated disagreement act, or sometimes called as strong disagreement, is the opposite of mitigated disagreement act. This kind of disagreement occurs when people do not use any kind of mitigation tools in their disagreement (Ramadhani, 2015: 17). It makes this kind of disagreement considered as a face threatening act which is why it is also called as a face threatening disagreement act.

Based on Locher (2004), there are three ways to express face threatening disagreement act. First, people can use a short direct opposite orientation of the first speaker's statement where the speaker expresses his/her disagreement immediately using a short sentence consisting of only three to four words.

Second, people can employ sarcastic remarks where the speaker voices out his/her disagreement sarcastically. Last is asking a short rude questions where the speaker use a question which repeats the initial statement of the first speaker, but in a question form, and it is short since it does not employ any mitigation tools (Panic- Kavgic, 2013: 455).

In addition, Culpeper et al (2003: 1562-1563) argues that there are three types of responses to face threatening disagreement act namely accepting the face threatening disagreement act, countering the face

threatening disagreement act which consists of two strategies: offensive and defensive strategy, and giving no response.

Although movies are scripted conversations, it uses a real life setting where the utterances employed are based on real life conversations. Ponslodt's *The Spectacular Now* (2013) is one of the movies where the characters employ many disagreement acts during their conversations. The story talks about Sutter who is a popular boy at school, and Aimee who is a not-popular-and-shy girl. Sutter was dumped by his girlfriend, and one day meets Aimee when he wakes up in the middle of a yard. At first, Sutter takes pity on Aimee, and wants to help her gain self-confidence, but he ends up falling in love. Beside their love story, conflicts also happen between Sutter and his family and also Aimee with her family. Other conflicts later arouses after they graduate when they have to think about their future.

The objectives of the research are to describe how the face threatening disagreement act are realized by the characters of *The Spectacular Now*, and to identify the type of responses shown to the face threatening disagreement acts.

This research is expected to be beneficial for many parties. Theoretically, it is expected to enrich the reader's knowledge on face threatening disagreement act. Practically, this research will be able to show how face threatening disagreement act

is realized and how to respond to it to be used in everyday life.

RESEARCH METHOD

As the aim of this research is to describe how the characters in the movie realize the face threatening disagreement acts and how their partner in the conversations responds to it, the type of this research is descriptive qualitative. Kothari in Nur Pratiknyo (2016: 40) explains that in a descriptive research, the researcher analyses the data only by observing the data itself without having a right to control it. In line with this, the researcher of this study observe the data in data source and analyse it without trying to control how the data are presented as well as the result of the data analysis. In their book, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2006:167) claim that qualitative research aims to give a deeper analysis and a broader understanding about the topic under the study.

The data in this research are presented in the form of utterances uttered by the characters of *The Spectacular Now*. In addition, the context of the data is dialogues and conversations that occurred in the movie. Furthermore, there are two primary sources used in gathering the data in this research. They were collected by watching Ponslodt's *The Spectacular Now*, and reading the transcript of the same movie.

The technique to collect data for this research will be visual analysis or

observation by watching the movie and reading the transcript of the same movie. Both techniques were done simultaneously in order to obtain appropriate and accurate data.

Lincoln and Guba in Vanderstoep and D. Jhonston (2009: 188) claim that the most appropriate instrument in analysing a qualitative research is 'the human' itself. In line with this, this research used the researcher as the primary instrument. To support the researcher as the primary instrument, other nonhuman instruments are used as secondary instruments. In this research, the researcher used data sheets to help her classify and analyse the data.

In analysing the data, the researcher followed several steps, i. e:

1. The researcher classified the data in the data sheet into expressions of face threatening disagreement acts and the responses to it.
2. The researcher interpreted and gave explanation to each data collected in the data sheet.
3. The researcher triangulated the data and checked it again to avoid any error and mistake.
4. The researcher drew conclusion based on the findings and the result of data analysis.

Jensen and Jakowski (2005: 63) claim that triangulation can ensure the trustworthiness of the data, and therefore can give more 'confidence' to the researcher in analysing and concluding their study. This

research conduct triangulation using theories and researchers. To verify the credibility of the study, the researcher employed various theories related to pragmatics in general, or more specifically, theories related to face threatening disagreement acts. In addition, the researcher also consulted to other researchers and her supervisor.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the findings, the characters in Ponslodt's *The Spectacular Now* realize their face threatening disagreement act in three ways: 1) using a short direct opposite orientation, 2) employing a sarcastic remark, and 3) asking a short rude question. In addition, the table also reveals that using a short direct opposite orientation is the most dominant one in which it occurs 22 times out of 31 occurrence. A short direct opposite orientation is frequently used by the characters in the movie since it is more direct and simple. Moreover, a short direct opposite orientation has denotative meaning, and it reveals the opinion or argument of the speaker immediately.

An example of using a short direct opposite orientation in expressing face threatening disagreement act can be seen in datum 7. In this datum, Sutter is trying to convince Aimee to rebel against his mother.

Sutter : You have to do the
'motherfucking' part.

Aimee : I can't

Sutter : **Yes, you can.**

Aimee : "Mom, get off of my fucking back"

(Datum 7)

Encountering her refusal, Sutter directly disagrees with her statement by saying "Yes, you can." His sentence only consists of three words which is considered very short. Furthermore, while Aimee says she cannot do it, Sutter disagrees using the opposite of it saying that she can, she is capable of doing that.

An example of using a sarcastic remark to express face threatening disagreement found in Ponslodt's *The Spectacular Now* is performed by Sutter in datum 13. In this scene, Krystal tries to make Sutter leaves Aimee. She believes that Sutter is a bad influence to Aimee

Krystal : No. It's not good for her. Aimee is not like you Sutter. She's a nice girl. She doesn't need you causing problem in her life.

Sutter : **What Aimee doesn't need is you bossing her around like she's your personal assistant.**

Krystal : You shouldn't treat her this way.

(Datum 13)

Sutter employs a sarcastic remark to perform a face threatening disagreement act as he says "What Aimee doesn't need is you bossing her around like she's your personal assistant." In the dialogue, Sutter sarcastically says that what Aimee does not need is her bossing Aimee around. It implies that instead of accusing him causing problems in Aimee's live, she should stop acting like a boss, and interfering Aimee's business. Sutter's sentence is highly face threatening as he accuse Krystal of being bossy and annoying.

An example of asking a short rude question as a way to express a face threatening disagreement act is seen in datum 5. In this datum, Sutter is trying to convince Aimee that her mother cannot be the reason for her to not go to college.

Aimee : I mean my mom,
 Sutter : What's your mom has to do with this?
 Aimee : I have to help her with the route.
 Sutter : **The route? The paper route?**
 Aimee : Yeah, she's alone.
 Sutter : Aimee, she's a grown woman.
 (Datum 5)

Sutter voices out his disagreement by asking a short rude question as he says "The route? The paper route?" Here, he uses parts of Aimee's initial statement as the question without adding any mitigation tools. Sutter's question does not really need an answer nor confirmation, but it shows his disagreement toward Aimee's statement. Moreover, the absence of mitigation tools, added by a high intonation are enough to make the question sounds rude and face threatening.

Furthermore, there are three types of responses employed by the characters when they encounter a face threatening disagreement act: 1) accepting the face threatening disagreement act, 2) countering the face threatening disagreement act: a) offensive strategy, and b) defensive strategy, and 3) giving no response. In the table above, countering the face threatening disagreement act is revealed as the most dominant one with 21 out of 31 occurrences. These 21 data

consist of 14 offensive strategy and 7 defensive strategy. The dominance of this type of response is influenced mainly by the type of disagreement they encounter. Encountering a face threatening disagreement act, the characters in the movie choose to respond with another face threatening act.

An example of accepting a face threatening disagreement act can be seen in datum 7. Sutter tells Aimee to say: "Mom, get off my motherfucking back" so that her mother will stop getting in her way. However, for Aimee, that sentence is too harsh and extremely rude. She think she cannot manage to say that to her mother. However, tries to convince her that she can do that, and she has to try. The conversation is as follows:

Sutter : You have to do the 'motherfucking' part.
 Aimee : I can't
 Sutter : Yes, you can.
 Aimee : **"Mom, get off of my fucking back"**
 (Datum 7)

Hearing Sutter's disagreement, Aimee responds by saying the sentence Sutter told her to say. Even if she omits the word 'mother' from the word 'motherfucking', she still manage to say that out loud. By following Sutter's instruction and suggestion, she indirectly agrees to Sutter's disagreement previously.

An example of offensive strategy is performed by Sutter in datum 4. In this

scene, Mr Aster asks why Sutter did not finish his homework. Sutter argues that he finished it, but forgot to bring it. He makes an excuse by saying that the problem was not in the homework. Mr Aster knows exactly that the problem he gave to Sutter is there in the homework, so he voices out his disagreement by using a short direct opposite orientation of Sutter's argument.

Sutter : That was not on the homework.
Mr Aster : That was the homework.
Sutter : **No, it wasn't.**

(Datum 4)

In the conversation above, Sutter still tries to defend his argument by using a short direct opposite orientation as he says "No, it wasn't". This is one of the three ways to realize face threatening disagreement act where it is expressed immediately without any mitigation tool. In addition, his sentence is considered short as it only consists of three words. Therefore, his response to Mr Aster's disagreement belongs to the offensive strategy.

One of some examples that employ defensive strategies can be seen in datum 15. In this scene, Aimee tries to lighten up the mood by telling her optimistic plan for her future. She believes that she can make it happen. However, Holly's husband expresses his disagreement by using a sarcastic remark.

Aimee : I know it's gonna work.
Holly's Husband: It sounds like a dream.
Aimee : **I think it's good to have a dream, aren't you?**

(Datum 15)

Encountering his disagreement, Aimee tries to defend her argument by employing a defensive strategy as she says "I think it's good to have a dream, aren't you?" Aimee employs a mitigation tool by using hedges: "I think" to avoid doing a face attack toward Holly's husband. The use of hedges in a disagreement makes it considered as a mitigated disagreement act. Therefore, the response in this datum is categorized into defensive strategy.

An example of choosing not to respond is seen in datum 1 which is performed by Marcus. In the example below, Marcus is trying to find a better way to talk to Sutter since he thinks the situation at the moment is very awkward. However, Cassidy immediately disagrees saying that it is not awkward at all.

Marcus: Look man, I know this is awkward.

Maybe we should...

Cassidy: No. It's really not awkward. At all.

Marcus: (**No response**)

(Datum 1)

Facing Cassidy's strong disagreement, Marcus chooses to give no response. It is most likely because he does not want to worsen the situation, and he accepts the face attack performed by Cassidy. This is due to the fact that he has to maintain his relationship with Cassidy, and intends to avoid a possible face threatening act.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This research investigates face

threatening disagreement act in Ponslodt's *The Spectacular Now*. Following the findings and discussions in chapter IV, there are several conclusions drawn by the researcher. First, following the first objective, there are three ways used by the characters in the movie to realize face threatening disagreement act which are: 1) using a short direct opposite orientation, 2) employing a sarcastic remark, and 3) asking a short rude question. However, the frequency of each ways is different. A short direct opposite orientation is the most frequently used by the characters. This is because using a short direct opposite orientation is more direct and simple in making the disagreement more explicit, so the listener can get the message immediately.

Second, there are three types of response performed by the characters in the movie, i.e., 1) accepting the face threatening disagreement acts, 2) countering the face threatening disagreement acts which consists of offensive strategy and defensive strategy, and 3) giving no response. From these three types of responses, the most dominant type is countering the face threatening disagreement with 21 out of 31 data where 14 of them are categorized as an offensive strategy. This is due to the fact that the previous speakers employ a face threatening disagreement act which then leads to them using another face attack to respond.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions above, the

researcher proposes some suggestions for several parties related to the research. Students majoring in linguistics who are interested in pragmatics are suggested to learn about disagreements. The students can learn many things since there are many topics besides face threatening disagreement act. Moreover, they can use their own theory in analysing the responses or the types to get a better insight and understanding. In addition, the students can refer to this research as a reference related to pragmatics and disagreement during their study.

There are still very few researchers who are interested in studying disagreement deeper, so it is hard to find a detailed reference for disagreement especially face threatening disagreement act. Therefore, it will be very challenging for other researchers to conduct a study on disagreement. However, it will be very beneficial since it will give a significant contribution to the field of study. Furthermore, the future researchers can employ different theories and approaches in order to enrich the analysis.

Expressing and encountering disagreements are inevitable in the society. Therefore, after reading this research, the readers are suggested to learn and get a deeper understanding about disagreement. Furthermore, the readers are also expected to apply their knowledge in their everyday activities when they want to voice out disagreements, and when they want to respond to a disagreement.

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