

## **REQUEST IN SPIELBERG'S BRIDGE OF SPIES: A PRAGMATIC STUDY**

Irsyadi Nafis (13211144013@student.uny.ac.id)

English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Yogyakarta State University

### **Abstract**

This research examines the deployment of the speech acts of request in Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies* using pragmatic approach. This study aims at identifying and explaining the types, strategies, and purposes of request. This research used a qualitative method. The data were utterances spoken by the characters in *Bridge of Spies* which were analyzed within the dialogue as the context. The data source was the script of the dialogues spoken by the characters. The data sheet was the instrument of this research. To check the credibility of the analysis, investigator triangulation was applied. The results of this research are described as follows. First, there are four request types found in the movie, i.e. unconventionally indirect request, conventionally indirect request based on the speaker, conventionally indirect request based on the hearer, and direct request. Second, there are eight request strategies revealed: hint, questioning hearer's ability/willingness, suggestory formulae, statement of speaker's wishes/desires, statement of speaker's needs/demands, and statement of obligation/necessity, performatives, and imperatives. Third, four request purposes are found in the movie, i.e. request for goods, request for initiation of action, request for cessation of action, and request for a joint activity. In conclusion, the results demonstrate how the types of request may affect requestees' linguistic behaviour and request purposes may be related significantly to the choice of request strategies. Thus, the developmental pattern of the request strategies may differ according to the request. As a result, the request types, strategies and purposes are associated to each other.

**Keywords:** request, types, strategies, purposes, Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies*.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Conversation is a form of language use. It is communication part which involves people interact in a situation with a topic. This situation is related to the concept of language that used as intended meaning of conversation which is known as speech acts.

Speech act is concerned as unique where an utterance is considered as an action, particularly with regard to its intention or purpose. According to Yule (1996:47), speech act deals with an action performed via utterances in a particular context. Further, Austin (1975) adds that

an action performed by producing an utterance will consist of three related acts. This means that a speaker performs three acts at the same time by producing an utterance. They are locutionary act (basic of utterances by saying something), illocutionary act (the intention via saying something), and perlocutionary act (the result of saying something).

A simple action often happened in a conversation between one person and another in a certain situation, when a person expresses the need or demand for hearer to fulfill it. This case is called as speech act of request. According to Trosborg (1994:187), a

request is an illocutionary act whereby the speaker wants the hearer to perform an action that has advantages for the speaker and, sometimes, for the hearer. It can be expressed in two ways, i.e. verbal and non-verbal goods and services. The purpose of requests is the hearer performs a future action which is an order from the speaker that has advantages for the speaker and sometimes for the hearer.

In fact, people usually use request in a conversation where someone asks for help. They often use some verbs to indicate a request such as ask, order, command, request, beg, plead, pray, entreat, invite, permit, and advise (Sofwan, 2011:69). A person uses request as a way to ask help when he/she needs a particular thing. In brief, request happens in daily life. It is to fulfill the requester's desires which need to be done by the requestee in circumstances. The circumstances of speech acts are known as felicity conditions. Felicity conditions are the conditions that need to apply in performing speech acts in order to be appropriate (Cruse, 2006:62). Moreover, Searle (in Trosborg, 1995:191) explains the conditions are participant roles and propositional contents. Participant roles are actors that participate in a conversation, i.e. the requester and the requestee. A propositional content in request means the future acts performed by the requestee. There are four assumptions of performing request. First, the requester

wants the requestee to perform an action. Second, the requester assumes the requestee can perform an action. Third, the requester assumes the requestee is willing to perform an action. Last, the requester assumes the requestee will not perform an action in the absence of the request. By these conditions, it conveys the illocutionary forces of a request. In line with Searle, Labov – Fanshel (in Trosborg, 1995:191) add the requester has the capacity to tell the requestee to perform the desired act and the requestee has the responsibility to realize it.

One representation of the use of request is movie. In this research, the researcher chooses a biographical drama movie, namely *Bridge of Spies* as the object of the research because people sometime find it is difficult to understand request. They need explicit utterances like direct command, order, or request in order to understand them as request. However, in a particular context, people cannot understand request implicitly. They need to escort the meaning of request by referring or bringing the contexts or situations that happen at that time to show request. The analysis of this movie serves as a model for an analysis of speech acts of requests in the real world. In short, this movie can be deployed as a representation of the real communication in the real life.

This research has three objectives that are (1) to reveal the types of request used

by the characters in the movie, (2) to disclose the strategies used by the characters to express their requests and (3) to divulge the purposes of requests used by the characters toward the requestee.

To reveal the types of request, this research uses a theory proposed by Trosborg (1995). She divides four types of request. They are unconventionally indirect request, conventionally indirect request based on the speaker, conventionally indirect request based on the hearer, and direct request.

To disclose the strategies of request, this research uses a theory classified by Trosborg (1995). She mentions eight strategies of request; hints, questioning hearer's ability/willingness, suggestory formulae, statements of speaker's wishes/desires, statements of speaker's needs/demands, statements of speaker's obligations/necessities, performatives, and imperatives.

The last problem is to divulge the purposes of request. There are four purposes offered by Achiba (2003). They are request for goods, request for the initiation of action, request for the cessation of action, and request for joint activity.

This research is expected to be a valuable source of reference in Pragmatics especially in the speech act of requests. The student of English literature study program can enrich their knowledge related to the types, strategies, and the purposes of

requests. Additionally, it is expected that this research will give more information about speech act of requests to the readers.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research design was adopted to achieve the two research objectives because this study was intended to explain the swearing practices in a narrative manner without quantifying. This type of research was utilized because it enables the researcher to examine and explain a social phenomenon with its context descriptively (Berg, 2001: 6). Furthermore, since this study only involves data in a small number, the researcher can produce in-depth analysis on the object under study (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009: 7). Additionally, sociolinguistics was chosen as the approach of this study as it could show a link between language and society.

Because this study was concerned with language as the main object, the linguistic units were in the form of utterances indicating request while the context of data was in the form of dialogue taken from *Bridge of Spies*.

Moreover in terms of data collection technique, the data were taken from the movie version of *Bridge of Spies* and its transcript as the secondary source which was obtained from a web annotator, [dreamworksawards.com/download/BOS\\_screnpl ay.pdf](http://dreamworksawards.com/download/BOS_screnpl ay.pdf). Data was collected through careful note-taking technique. It is a way

of gathering data manually by writing down the utterances which are considered to be data (Thomas, 2003: 185). To do such collecting technique, a data sheet was deployed.

Data which were collected were examined through qualitative content analysis. It is a systematic method for examining meaning of textual data according to categories (Marying and Schreier in Schreier, 2014: 170).

To gain credibility of the analysis, investigator triangulation method was deployed. This kind of triangulation is a strategy for checking the credibility by using several perspectives from other investigators (Flick, 2004: 178). The researcher realized the triangulation by utilizing some investigators outside this study whom are experts in swearing and sociolinguistics to check the validity of the research.

## DISCUSSION

### Types and Strategies of Request

Extract (1) represents how requester request unconventionally indirect request by using hint strategy.

- (1) (Peggy reaches for a dinner roll)  
 MARY : Wait till we say grace!  
 PEGGY : **I'm hungry!**  
 (Datum 16)

At the dinner, Mary says *wait till we say grace*, thus, Mary's daughter answers it by saying **I'm hungry**. Such utterance indicates a hint for request where it shows

the reasonableness condition. Although Peggy states her situation and makes her request indirectly conveying an intent which is she wants to eat soon, Mary has acknowledged the explicit request that Peggy performs.

The phenomenon of conventionally indirect request (based on hearer) which has its own strategies, i.e. questioning hearer's ability/willingness and suggestory formulae can be demonstrated by Extract (2), (3), and (4).

- (2) DONOVAN : **Can you work tonight ?**  
 DOUG : Well, I have a dinner date, sir...  
 (Donovan gives him a hard look.)  
 DOUG : It's Tuesday, right? No I can cancel. No problem.  
 (Datum 13)

Donovan has been mandated to defend Abel who has been charged three counts and nineteen over acts. The accused, Abel, does not know any lawyers; therefore, the Federal Court tosses it into the Bar Committee and Donovan is the chosen one. Thus, Donovan performs questioning hearer's ability. He uses the modal *can* as asking hearer's ability for help. His intent is to request Doug's beneficiary to work at night.

- (3) ABEL : Visitors... Would you mind If I fetch my teeth?  
 BLASCO : Colonel, **Would you turn around please.**  
 (Datum 2)

Performing such utterance, **would you turn around please**, indicates questioning hearer's willingness. Blasco asks Abel to do such request which serves as compliance-

gaining strategies by conveying it to Abel. Blasco does not take compliance for granted. In other words, Blasco's intent is to request Abel's willingness. Furthermore, such request helps Blasco and other agents to do the inspection which Federal Government mandates. Therefore, Abel gives no resistance while the CIA agents check him and his things in his hotel room.

(4) (The man stops nodding and just looks at Donovan appraising him. Donovan smiles and gets up from the table, gathers his things.)

MAN : **Do we need to worry about you?**

DONOVAN : Not if I am left alone to do my job.

(Datum 21)

Previously, a CIA man, Hoffman asks Donovan to give information about Abel. He assumes that Donovan has talked to his client about his involvement in espionage as accused. However, Donovan refuses to give it and speaks on behalf of the Constitution as American person not to violate attorney-client privilege. Thus, Hoffman says **do we need to worry about you?** This utterance indicates suggestory formulae for request. His intent is not only to give a help, but also to ask Donovan's cooperativeness. However, although they both know that there is a consequence concerning the case where Donovan's life may be threaten, Donovan stands still on his statement

The practice of two strategies under conventionally indirect request (based on speaker) i.e. statement of speaker's

wishes/desires and statement of speaker's needs/demands can be seen in these extracts.

(5) SCHISCHKIN : Armenian brandy. Good bracer for your cold.

DONOVAN : Thank you. **Would you mind – it's not part of our business but I'd like to ask a couple of questions.** You do not have to answer.

SCHISCHKIN : I shall answer at know.

DONOVAN : I like this guy. Your guy. What happens to your guy...when he gets home?

SCHISCHKIN : Well. We have to make determination whether our guy is now...your guy.

DONOVAN : As I said to you before, he's acted very honorably. He's still your guy, believe me.

SCHISCHKIN : Of course: you would say this if it were true, and if it were not true.

(Datum 40)

After dealing with the exchange and they have made the exchange point for exchanging Abel for two Americans, Donovan says **would you mind... but I'd like to ask a couple of questions.** This utterance indicates statement of speaker's wishes where Donovan makes the point of his request become a sincere request. He questions Abel's situation to Schischkin. In his request through the questions, Donovan worries about Abel's situation and wants to know whether he is fine or not after exchanging.

(6)SCHISCHKIN: He was making photograph from seventy thousand feet when he was shot from the sky. People in my country consider

this an act of war.

DONOVAN : We have to get off this merry go round, sir. The next mistake our countries make could be the last one. **We need to have the conversation our governments can't.**

(Datum 33)

Linguistic aspects found in this requestive utterance **we need to have the conversation our governments can't** indicate a statement of speaker's need/demand. First, *need* shows that something must be done. In this context, the exchange must be done because the hectic and complicated situation in Berlin is very dangerous. In addition, Donovan focuses on both side situation, Donovan's and Schischkin's situation whereby both spies are captured because what the spies have done is considered as an act of war, therefore, his point of the statement is to ask Schischkin not to give more oppositional statement further against the situation they have faced.

These extracts represent three request strategies under direct request, i.e. statement of obligation/necessity, performatives, and imperatives.

(7) ABEL : I've missed music.

DONOVAN : They checked the radio to make sure there was no transmitter.

(Abel smiles)

ABEL : I'm sure they did. (*A beat as he smiles, both men listen, Abel's gaze drifts up*)...Shostakovitch.

(They listen)

ABEL : A very great artist, Shostakovitch.

(Donovan is deep in thought.)

DONOVAN: I think our strongest grounds for a reversal, are Constitutional. Our best chance is if the Supreme Court agrees to review our case.

(Abel switches off the radio, removes his glasses.)

ABEL : Jim. **You should be careful.**

(Donovan smiles, but uneasily)

ABEL : Careful.

(Datum 24)

As in this scene, Abel's utterance shows some aspects that indicate statement of obligation/necessity for request. In his structure, the modal, *should*, show a moral obligation. The moral obligation is a duty which one owes, and which Donovan ought to perform, but which he is not legally bound to fulfill. Furthermore, his intent is to give an advice regarding the case that Donovan handles.

(8) DONOVAN : What's up?

GOODNOUGH : Okay. Here's the thing. The Soviet spy they caught. **We want you to defend him.** Here's the indictment.

(dropping a thick document onto the coffee table.)

(Datum 11)

As seen in the dialogue, Goodnough says **we want you to defend him** which indicates performative strategy of direct request. The inclusion of performative verb expressed by Goodnough explicitly marks the illocutionary point of the utterance as an order. In addition, the utterance is expressed directly and authoritative. In other words, such request shows direct request as Goodnough's intent

whereby Donovan is given a mandate to handle the case.

(9) (the doorbell)

MARY : **Roger, get that.**

ROGER : Why do I have to do all the work around here?

(Datum 14)

As seen in Extract (9), Mary says **Roger, get that** which explicitly expresses illocutionary point of the utterance as an order. Furthermore, in terms of the imperative definition shows that such utterance is expressed because she has power over Roger. Also, expressing such request explicitly mark the utterance that must be obeyed immediately.

### Types of Request Purposes

First, request for goods which drives the requester to ask for goods from the requestee appears in Extract (10).

(10) ABEL : **I'd like materials. To draw with.**

DONOVAN : That's not possible.

ABEL : A pencil. A piece of paper. And cigarette. Please.

(the show of manners surprises Donovan. Abel watches him)

ABEL : Mr. Donovan, you have men like me doing the same for your country. If they were caught, I'm sure you'd wish them to be treated well.

(Datum 17)

In this scene, request for goods is manifested in Abel's utterance. Since he has been charged three counts, he is sent to prison, and all his stuff is confiscated by government. Abel asks Donovan's permission to give some drawing materials.

(11) HOFFMAN : "Schischkin"? He's not an embassy secretary.

Ivan Schischkin is the KGB's chief in Western Europe.

DONOVAN : Well – okay. Whatever he is. He's relaying the proposal to Moscow and they'll decide – **could I borrow your coat?** I lost mine.

(Hoffman stares at him, thrown by the veer off-course.)

HOFFMAN : How did you lose your coat?

DONOVAN : You know. Spy stuff.

HOFFMAN : I'll get you another coat.  
(Datum 34)

As seen in Extract (11), Donovan's request indicates request for goods. In Berlin, the weather is bad and he has lost his own coat during the way to visit Mr. Vogel because some teenagers insist to take his coat instead of showing the way to KGB embassy building. Therefore, he asks Hoffman to provide a new one

Second, Extract (12) demonstrates that requester deploys request for initiation of action because he aims at anticipating non-verbal action from requestee.

(12) (In the car)

(The agents drive past Abel)

GAMBER : (to Driver, Blasco) **Go ahead and park around the corner.**

(Datum 1)

As seen in Extract (12), the CIA agents attempt to investigate Abel who is involved in espionage. Gamber expresses a request for initiation of action to anticipate non-verbal action from Blasco, the driver. Furthermore, compliance is shown in the requestee's action as his response to Gamber's request.

- (13) DONOVAN : CIA  
 HOFFMAN : Yeah. Just wanted to chat. How's the case going?  
 DONOVAN : The case is going great. Couldn't be better.  
 HOFFMAN : Uh-huh. Has your guy talked?  
 DONOVAN : ...Excuse me?  
 HOFFMAN : **You met him, has he talked? Has he said anything yet?**  
 (Donovan stares at him. Then:)  
 DONOVAN : We're not having this conversation.  
 (Datum 19)

Hoffman wants to know information about Abel. He insists to ask it regarding his involvement in espionage. Further, he has seen the indictment which is overwhelming and it can be the reason for Judge to sentence him a dead penalty. Therefore, he performs such utterance that indicates the request for initiation of action to ask for verbal action from Donovan in order to ask Donovan's cooperativeness.

Third, Extract (14) displays how request for cessation of action is done by requester to stop on-going action.

- (14) (Peggy reaches for a dinner roll.)  
 MARY : **Wait till we say grace!**  
 PEGGY : I'm hungry!  
 (Datum 15)

As illustrated in Extract (14), this conversation happens at a dinner time. Marry performs this request because Peggy who feels hungry and cannot be patient to eat soon tries to reach one of dinner rolls. Compliance is achieved by restraint on the part of the requestee, in this case, Peggy.

- (15) GAMBER : Look at me! We are agents from the federal government.  
 (Abel scans the Agents who surround him.)  
 GAMBER : **Look at me! I'm talking to you.** We have received information concerning your involvement in espionage. You can either cooperate with us right now or you'll be under arrest. Do you understand, Colonel?  
 ABEL : Not really. Why do you keep calling me "Colonel"?  
 (Datum 4)

As seen in Extract (15), an ambush is conducted to seize Abel who is accused as a Soviet spy. When Abel tries to scan the agents, Gamber performs the request for cessation of action to stop Abel's action. Furthermore, his intent of performing such request is to ask his cooperation not to move any stuff in his hotel room.

The last, request for a joint activity occurs in Extract (16).

- (16) BLASCO : You need to get dressed.  
 GAMBER : We have to search your apartment.  
 (Abel points at the art materials on the table.)  
 ABEL : Would you mind if I cleaned my palette? The paints will get ruined otherwise. Just behind you there. I have a cloth, myself...  
 (Abel stands. Blasco hands him his palette.)  
 ABEL : Thank you  
 BLASCO : **Start searching, please.**  
 (Datum 8)

As demonstrated in Extract (16), Blasco performs the request for a joint activity because the agent wants to search some

information regarding Abel's involvement in espionage. This request invites other agents to search it in Abel's stuff. Compliance is achieved by the agent's joining in the activity.

- (17) MAN : Sir... **could you come with me please?** We need to move, could you come with me?  
 ABEL : What time is it?  
 MA : It's late. But we need to talk, and then get on a plane.

(Datum 39)

As seen in Extract (17), an activity that the man asks to join is the process of exchange. Further, Donovan's attempts to arrange the exchange involve federal government agents including Abel himself. Therefore, this kind of request indicates the request for a joint activity.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

There are four categories of request act found in the motion picture, i.e. unconventionally indirect request, conventionally indirect request based on hearer, conventionally indirect request based on speaker, and direct request. Unconventionally indirect request is deployed to request without mentioning the requestive utterance and requestee as the role of agent. Meanwhile, conventionally indirect request based on hearer is realized through question forms of ability/willingness as a request. Then, conventionally indirect request

based on speaker appears as authoritative request which speakers utilize to express the request due to demands. Last, direct request appearing in the object under the study is performed by the use of order between requesters and requestees.

In addition, the research shows that each type can be articulated through various strategies such as hint, questioning hearer's ability/willingness, suggestory formulae, statement of speaker's wishes/desires, statement of speaker's needs/demands, statement of obligation/necessities, performatives, and imperatives. Hint is applied to give requestive intent without mentioning the requestee. Next, questioning hearer's ability/willingness is expressed by showing some auxiliaries such as *would*, *could*, *can*. Afterwards, suggestory formulae is done by giving a suggestion to the requestee. Additionally, statement of speaker's wishes/desires is deployed to show the requesters' hope. Furthermore, statement of speaker's needs/demands is expressed by showing the requestee's interest above others. In addition, statement of obligations/necessities is done with structures; *should*, *have to*, and *must*. Further, performatives is deployed by attaching performative verbs such as *ask*, *command*, *request*, and *demand*. Last, imperative is applied because requesters have power over the requestee.

Furthermore, the study reveals that there are four purposes of request found in

the characters" utterances. They are request for goods, request for initiation of action, request for cessation of action, and request for joint activity. Request for goods is indicated as the actual of delivering the goods, request for initiation of action is shown in performances of non-verbal and verbal action, request for cessation of action is emerged by stopping an on-going action or anticipated occurrence of action, and request for a joint activity is manifested in the form of proposal.

In conclusion, the results demonstrate how the types of request may affect requestees' linguistic behaviour. In addition, request purposes may be related significantly to the choice of request strategies. Thus, the developmental pattern of the request strategies may differ according to the request. As a result, the request types, strategies and purposes are associated to each other.

### **Suggestions**

The research can help the readers understand knowledge and information about the types, strategies, and purposes of request which are expressed by the characters in the movie. It is expected that the readers can learn more about the aspect of request. When the readers know how the request worked, they can apply the request in the right way. The researcher also suggests other researchers who are interested in researching request. It would be better to find another data source which represents request topic.

In addition, there are many aspects which can be analyzed other than the types, strategies, and purposes of request. There are responses, request modifications, or women/men,,s language, or social factors which can influence the request.

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