

## THE SPEECH ACT OF REQUEST AND POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ELIZABETH ALLEN'S *RAMOONA AND BEEZUS*

Farida Nailul Husna (faridanailulhusna@gmail.com)  
English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Yogyakarta State University

### Abstract

This research aims (1) to reveal the types of request strategies and (2) to describe the politeness strategies used by the characters in making request in *Ramona and Beezus* movie. This research used descriptive qualitative approach. However, quantitative method was also employed in this research to obtain the frequency of the data occurrences in order to support the qualitative interpretation. The data were in the form of utterances containing request uttered by the characters in *Ramona and Beezus* movie. The context of the data was the dialogues between the characters in *Ramona and Beezus* movie. The sources of the data were a movie entitled *Ramona and Beezus* and its dialogue transcript. The researcher was the main instrument of this research, and she was supported by the data sheet as the secondary instrument. The data were collected and analyzed by categorizing the utterances containing request into the data sheet based on the classification of the objectives of the research. The trustworthiness of the data was gained through triangulation. The results of the research show two points. First, there are eight types of request strategies in *Ramona and Beezus* movie. The strategies are hints strategy, hearer's ability willingness strategy, suggestory formulae strategy, speaker's wishes and desire, speaker's need and demands, obligation and necessity strategy, performatives strategy, and imperatives strategy. The most dominant type is imperative request strategy. It shows intimacy and closeness between the characters which allow them to express their request imperatively. Second, there are four types of politeness strategies; they are bald on strategy, off record strategy, positive politeness strategy, and negative politeness strategy. Bald on record strategy places the highest rank because the characters prefer to choose direct way in delivering their request and to make clear what they want and need from each other.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, request, politeness strategies, *Ramona and Beezus*

### INTRODUCTION

Communication is essential and necessary in human's life. In doing communication, people employ language as a means of communication to make it possible to exchange opinions, thoughts and meanings. Without communication, people will not be able to socialize and interact with each other. Therefore, the role of communication is important for people to be able to express themselves and convey their own points of view.

In every day human interaction, requests are one of the speech act used quite frequently. It refers to an utterance that is intended to indicate the speaker's desire to get the hearer to do something. The process of request becomes pleasant and respectful if the hearer understands the speaker's intention and she or he does the act as what the speaker wants. However, the way people express their utterance influences the responses of the hearer. Thus, to be successful in interaction, people need to

show awareness of the hearer's face and self-image. By this way, they need appropriate politeness strategy. As stated by Yule (1969:60), politeness is an interaction means employed to show awareness of another person's face. There are four main strategies for performing Face Threatening Acts (FTA) are as follows: Bald on Record, Positive Politeness, Off Record, and Negative Politeness.

The speech act of request does not only happen in daily communication but it also happens in a movie. A movie is a story recorded as a set of moving pictures to be shown on television or at cinema Hornby (1995: 434). Since movie becomes one representative of the phenomena of daily life, the researcher is interested in using movie as the object of this research. In this regard, the researcher chose *Ramona and Beezus* movie as the object of the research because the story of this movie is possible to represent things that may also happen in real life as the characters are supposed to act on their social roles as if they are in the society. In addition, the main story line is about a family who struggle in life, thus it has a big possibility that the characters in this movie will employ many requests and politeness. This research has two objectives: (1) what are the types of request strategies used by the characters in *Ramona and Beezus* movie? (2) What are the of

politeness strategies used by the characters in making request in *Ramona and Beezus* movie?

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Type**

This research used descriptive qualitative approach. It applied in this research aimed to present the research in the form of words description. However, quantitative method was also employed to measure the data occurrences.

### **Forms, Contexts, and Source of Data**

The data were in the form of utterances containing request and politeness uttered by the characters in *Ramona and Beezus* movie. The context of the data was the dialogues between the characters in *Ramona and Beezus* movie. The source of the data was divided into two, i.e. primary and secondary sources. The primary source of the data was a movie entitled *Ramona and Beezus*. The secondary source of the data was the dialogue transcript of *Ramona and Beezus* movie downloaded from [https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie\\_script.php?movie=ramona-and-beezus](https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=ramona-and-beezus)

### **Research Instrument**

The researcher was the main instrument of this research, and she was supported by the data sheet as the secondary instrument.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

In this research, in collecting the data, the researcher used note-taking

technique.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

The steps of data analysis technique are illustrated as follows.

First, the data were categorized into the data sheet after the researcher had found the utterances containing request and politeness. Second, the researcher classified the data into data sheet based on the classification of the two objectives of the study through the characters dialogues in the transcript of the movie. Third, the data were interpreted in order to answer the objectives of the research. Fourth, the trustworthiness of the data was applied during the process of data analysis. Last, the conclusion of the research was made based on the result of the research.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Findings**

**Table 1. Findings**

		Occurances	Total
Request Strategies	Hints strategy	15	55
	Ability/willingness Strategy	4	
	Suggestory formulae Strategy	4	
	Wishes and desire Strategy	3	
	Needs and demands strategy	2	
	Obligation/necessity strategy	3	
	Performatives strategy	6	
	Imperatives strategy	18	
Politeness Strategies	Positive politeness strategy	12	55
	Negative politeness strategy	10	
	Bald-on record strategy	24	
	Off record strategy	9	

**Discussion**

**The Speech Act of Request**

The findings of the research show

that there are eight types of request found in the research.

**Hints**

In this strategy, the speaker does not want to state his/her intent explicitly. In other word, the speaker hides his request and does not mention the request directly. The conversation written below is example of hints performed by the characters.

- (1) Ramona : This is the best day ever!
- Hewie : Whoo-hoo!
- Ramona : Yeah. I wish we had a hole in our house.
- Dorothy : **Hey, Ramona let's make a deal. If you can settle down for a few hours I'd see if dad can take us out to dinner.**
- Ramona : Really? Can we go to Macaroni Joe's?
- Dorothy : There is an inch of dust covering my whole kitchen.

(Datum 12/Hi/OR)

The conversation in the extract (1) takes place at Ramona's house. The house is under renovation. Ramona plays with her classmates who are also her next door neighbors. When her mother is cooking in the kitchen, her mother is disturbed by Ramona and her friend.

The bold utterance in the extract (1) is categorized as mild hints strategy. This involves condition of reasonableness. Dorothy applied hints strategy, by stating

her reason in making an implicit request. She does not say her request directly instead she asks her daughter by making a deal. She also provides a motivation and justification to motivate Ramona to comply with the request.

### Ability and Willingness

This strategy is used to ask about the hearer's ability in performing the desired act. The one below is the example of the ability and willingness.

(2) Dorothy : **Could you set the table,**

**please,** Ramona? And add another plate for Aunt Bea. She's coming by later for dessert.

Ramona : So five altogether?

Dorothy : Yep.

Ramona : I was about to do that.

(Datum 02/AW/PP)

The dialogue (2) happens when they are preparing for a dinner. Dorothy performs a request to Ramona to set the table.

Based on the request strategy, Dorothy's utterance "could you set the table, please, Ramona?" belongs to questioning hearer's willingness strategy. In this context, Ramona must infer by herself the intention behind the question. In addition, Dorothy's utterance 'could you' is the lexical marker used to emphasize request while making it more polite. Dorothy knows well that Ramona is capable of doing it.

However, she still makes the request in the question form.

### Suggestory Formulae

Suggestory formulae is a request strategy which contains a suggestion to do something. The example of suggestory formulae is shown in the following dialogue.

(3) Dorothy : **Ramona, Mrs. Meacham is your teacher. You need to listen to her. And she's not that bad.**

Beezus : She was fair with me when I was your age.

Ramona : Yeah, well- Everybody loves Beezus... and everybody hates me! Okay.

(Datum 06/SF/NP)

Dorothy's utterance in the conversation (3) belongs to suggestory formulae. She gives advice and suggestion for Ramona to be obedient to her teacher, shown by the expression 'you need to'. The conversation happens at the house when Bob is asking Ramona about her report. Bob supposes that Ramona also gets the report, but Ramona hides it from him. Ramona then starts defending herself by explaining the reason. Then, Dorothy asks Ramona to obey her teacher.

### Wishes and Desires

In this strategy, the speaker makes a statement of request based on his or her wishes or desires. The example of the wishes and desires can be seen in the

following dialogue.

(4) Ramona: Ooh! Customer! Customer!

Beezus: **Ramona, please, please, please, don't call him over-**

Ramona: Hey, Henry, you look thirsty!  
(Datum 30/WD/PP)

The extract (4) occurs when Ramona and Beezus are trying to help their parents who are financially struggling by selling Lemonade in front of their house. One day, one of Beezus' classmates, Henry, passes by in front of the Lemonade stand and Ramona calls him. Beezus, who knows that he is Henry, begs Ramona not to call him over. She makes a request by using the words "Please, please....." to make it acceptable to Ramona. She makes a request to Ramona by showing her desire. Therefore, her utterance is categorized as wish and desires strategy.

### Needs and Demands

In this strategy, the speaker directly gives request to the hearer. The example of needs and demands strategy is written below.

(5) Bob: Listen up, ladies. I got a two-hour drive to get to this interview... **So I need you to be responsible till your mom gets home.** You have her number at the office if there's a problem... but remember, she's under a lot of stress, so no fighting, okay? Beezus, you're in charge. Baby monitor.

Ramona & Beezus: Okay daddy.  
(Datum 48/ND/BO)

The extract (5) takes place in the house. Bob is telling his children that he is going to a job interview. He asks his daughters to help him handle things in the house while he and his wife are away. He utters "...So, I need you to be responsible till your mom gets home". Here, Bob's request is uttered by means of the word 'need' followed by the specific act to show that his need is very important. Thus, it needs more attention. Bob states need and demand clearly by saying that he needs her daughters to be responsible till her mom gets home. Ramona and Beezus response father's request by said "okay".

### Statements of Obligation and Necessity

Statement of obligation and necessity is the strategy of request to make the hearer obligate to the speaker wants or request. The example of statements of obligation and necessity is written in the following conversation below.

(6) Bea : I 'miss you guys!  
Dorothy : **Sweetie, you should come and celebrate with us.**

Ramona : What am I celebrating?  
(Datum 36/ON/PP)

The conversation (6) happens in the Ramona's house. All the family members including Aunt Bea and Hobart are gathering in the living room. They are discussing about Bea and Hobart who are getting married. Each of the family members has participated in that party

except Ramona. Then, Dorothy asks her to join the wedding party but Ramona does not want to get involved with them since she does not understand what she is celebrating. The word 'should come' that Aunt Bea used is an indication that her request employs obligation and necessity strategy.

### **Performatives**

Performatives strategy is very direct and usually authoritative. The conversation below is the example of performatives.

(7) Bea : You know what? I bet it would be nice... to have something of your own for once.

Ramona: Like my own room?

Bea : Maybe just something small... you could always have with you. Go ahead. Open it. I found that picture the other day... and I realized I was exactly your age, so **I wanted you to have it.**

(Datum 17/P/PP)

This conversation (7) Bea utters a request in which she wants Ramona to have the necklace by saying it using performative 'want' in her utterance. Therefore, it is categorized as performative request

### **Imperatives**

This strategy states that imperatives are the grammatical form directly signaling that the utterance is an order. In this strategy, the speaker has power over the hearer. The example of imperatives is provided below.

(8) Ramona: Beezus, did you hear that growling?

Beezus : It's probably just your stomach, doofus. Unless... Unless it's something... else.

Ramona: Beezus, stop it.

(Datum 19/I/BO)

The conversation (8) takes place in Beezus and Ramona's room at night. Unable to sleep, Ramona is still imagining things and it disturbs Beezus. She asks whether or not Beezus hears the growling sound. Beezus responds by saying that it is probably something else inside their house. Being annoyed, Ramona then says, "Beezus, stop it!" which contains imperative force to ask Beezus to stop scaring her. Ramona's utterance employs imperative request since she directly asks her sister to stop.

### **The Types of Politeness Strategies**

#### **Bald On Record Strategy**

The following example is a conversation that happens in in the kitchen. The bald on record itself is employed by Beezus.

(9) Ramona: My hot dog souffle!

**Beezus : Stop! Ramona! move! Stop! Stop that! Drop it!**

Ramona: No!

(Datum 53/I/BO)

The dialogue (9) happens during the fire accident at the kitchen when Ramona and Beezus are cooking together. The accident begins when Henry calls in the phone. Ramona who is still cooking picks up the phone and forgets about the hotdog. The fire suddenly burns out. Ramona then tries to stop the flame. However, she only makes the fire worse. In that situation,

Beezus then performs imperative request by saying “Stop! Ramona, move! Stop that! Drop it!” which belongs to bald-on record strategy. The example is a case of urgency. When Ramona is in the urgent situation, Beezus who witnesses it all becomes frightened and tries to help her little sister immediately. In the urgent situation, this strategy is correctly used, because the hearer can immediately understand what the speaker wants. Beezus also stresses her voice on her desire and strengthens her request to stop Ramona.

### Negative Politeness Strategy

Negative politeness is a kind of strategy which focuses on softening any actions which attacks or threatens the hearer’s negative face. The example of negative politeness strategy is provided below.

- (10) Ramona : I’m gonna say a bad word  
 Bob : You are  
 Ramona : Mm-hmm. A really bad one  
 Bob : **Well, if you feel the need to get one out of your system, then go ahead**  
 (Datum 07/HI/NP)

The conversation (10) takes place when Ramona and her family are having dinner. Ramona is annoyed and she wants to release her anger by saying bad things. Bob, who knows her trait well, lets her do whatever she wants to release her anger. Bob’s utterance “Well, if you feel the need to get one out of your system, then go

ahead” is categorized as a request which is said indirectly to reduce the threat on Ramona’s face. Therefore, it belongs to negative politeness since he doesn’t want to offend his daughter. Thus, he saves Ramona’s face from the threat.

### Positive Politeness

This strategy shows that the speaker recognizes the hearer has desire to be respected. The example of positive politeness is provided in the following conversation.

- (11) Dorothy : **Sweetie, you should come and celebrate with us.**  
 Ramona : What am I celebrating?  
 (Datum 36/ON/PP)

In the conversation (11), all of the family members including aunt Bea and Hobart are gathering in the living room. They are discussing about Bea and Hobart who are getting married. Each of the family members has participated in that party except Ramona. Then, Dorothy asks her to join the wedding party. However, she refuses to join since she does not understand what she is celebrating. The address term ‘sweetie’ in the beginning of her request indicates the positive politeness strategy. It shows that Dorothy wants to soften the FTA by addressing Ramona as ‘sweetie’. She wants to get closer to her by using group identity marker to make their relationship look more intimate and the hearer’s positive want is fulfilled and satisfied.

## Off Record

Off record strategy is the most indirect strategy as the interpretation of what the speaker's means is given to the hearer. The example of off record is shown the following dialogue below.

- (12) Hobart : **Hey, Ramona! That Jeep of mine could sure use a wash, don't you think? The poor thing's been sitting in the garage for 15 years now, Bea? How much to hose her off?**

Ramona : Fifty dollars.

(Datum 33/HI/OR)

This dialogue happens at Ramona's neighborhood. Ramona is doing car wash service to help financing their family. They meet Hobart, their neighbor, there. Seeing the sisters doing car wash service, Hobart wants to try their service. However he doesn't directly utter the request. Instead, he uses hints by saying the fact that the car has been in the garage for 15 years unwashed. In this situation, Hobart uses off record of politeness strategy to make the request to Ramona. He chooses to do it indirectly by giving hints. He supposes that Ramona can interpret it by herself. Hobart asserts a statement to Ramona "The poor thing's been sitting in the garage for 15 years now" which actually contains a request to Ramona to wash it. Therefore, his utterance is categorized as a request which employs off record politeness strategy.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

Request and politeness are applied by the characters in *Ramona and Beezus* movie. For the first objective of this research, the findings show that there are eight types of requests strategy that occur in *Ramona and Beezus* Movie. They are hints, ability and willingness, suggestory formulae, wishes and desires, needs and demands, obligation and necessity, performatives, and imperatives. In reference to the first objective of the research, of the eight types, imperative request strategy ranks first. This means that the main characters like to express their request directly using imperatives. This cannot be separated from the fact that the characters are family who are close to each other. The intimacy and closeness between them make them freely express their requests imperatively to make it clear what they want the others to do. On the other hand, needs and demands are performed with the least occurrences. The characters tend to use imperative requests rather than including needs and demands in their requests. In this strategy, the speaker imposes the hearer, so that, the hearer feels burdened. Therefore, this strategy is highly potential to create conflict among the characters if the request is not fulfilled. As a family, the characters try their best to convey requests without burdening each



other, let alone creating conflict that will loosen their family bond. They only employ when the situation coerces them to do so. Therefore, this type of request strategy does not occur frequently in the movie.

The second objective of this research is to identify the type of politeness strategies used by the characters in *Ramona and Beezus* in making the request. All of the four types of politeness strategies are found performed by the characters in the movie. Of the four functions, bald on record politeness strategy is the most dominant strategy used by the characters. They choose to employ bald on record strategies in order to make it clear what they want and need from each other. This happens because, in the movie, all of the characters have close relationship with each other. Bald on record is commonly used by the speakers who closely know each other. The characters in the movie are close to each other and very comfortable to each other.

Meanwhile, off record strategies are the least employed strategy by the characters since the strategy uses indirect language and is not directly addressed to the hearer. For a family whose members are close to each other, the use of off record politeness is not effective to convey intention and request. Using off record could also mean that the speakers are distant to each other. In this movie, the

characters are portrayed to have strong bond within the family. Therefore, off record strategies are not frequently performed by the characters.

The research of request act and politeness strategies in this movie shows that the use of request act politeness strategies is closely related to the relationship between the speakers. The more intimate and close the relationship between the speaker is, the more direct the language they use. Respectively, the more distant the relationship is, the more indirect they become in communicating to each other

### **Suggestion**

Based on the conclusion of the research, then there are some points that can be suggested for some parties. First, to linguistics students should pay more attention to the concept of pragmatics especially request and politeness because it requires a really deep understanding. There are strategies of politeness which helps people conduct a harmonious communication. Thus, it is expected that Linguistics students be more sensitive toward this phenomenon. Therefore, they can explore more information related to this problem. Second, to other researchers, there are still many problems related to this study. This research does not cover all of the aspects of request act and politeness strategy. Other researchers may conduct

deeper investigations, especially on the concept of request and politeness strategies.

## **REFERENCES**

### **Printed Sources**

- Brown, P. and S. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goody, E. N. 1978. *Question and Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trosborg, A. 1994. *Interlanguage Pragmatics*. New York.: Mouton de Gruyter
- Yule, G. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Yule, G. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### **Electronic Sources**

- Anonymous. Ramona and Beezus (2010) movie script. Retrieved from [https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie\\_script.php?movie=ramona-and-beezus](https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=ramona-and-beezus) on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.