

## **A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Act of Requests Expressed by the Characters in *Office Space***

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### **Abstract**

The research is a pragmatic study which focuses on the analysis of speech act of requests. The objectives are: (1) to investigate the types of request and (2) to identify the strategies of request employed by the characters in *Office Space* movie. The type of the research was qualitative-quantitative. The main and secondary instruments of this research were the researcher himself and the data sheets. The technique used to collect the data was visual analysis. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher applied triangulations by conducting peer discussions with friends majoring in linguistics and routine consultations with his supervisors. The result shows that the characters perform all types of request, they including conventionally indirect request (hearer-oriented condition), conventionally indirect request (speaker-oriented condition), unconventionally indirect request, and direct request. In applying the strategies of request, the characters use seven strategies including hints, questioning hearer`s ability and willingness, suggestory formulae, statements of speaker`s wishes and desires, statements of speaker`s needs and demands, statements of obligations and necessities, and imperatives.

Keywords: pragmatics, speech act, request, *Office Space*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Human beings and language cannot be separated from each other in society. Created as social beings, people need a language to communicate and to build a relationship with others. In this interaction, language becomes the primary means of communication. By using language, they reveal their ideas, express their feelings, make a joke with others, give information, command someone to do something, influence someone and etc.

In achieving goals, people do not only say something but also insert an action embedded in their utterances. For this reason, speech acts cannot be separated from conversation. Austin via Cutting (2002:16) states that speech act is the action performed in saying something.

Request is one of the topics of discussions in speech act. According to Trosborg (1995:187), request is an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a

hearer (requestee) that he or she wants the requestee performs an act which is very beneficial for them.

The objectives of this research are; (1) to describe the types of request uttered by the character in *Office Space* and (2) to explain the strategies applied by the characters in *Office Space* when making a request. This research is beneficial both theoretically and practically for some people. Theoretically, the research findings are expected to enrich the comprehension and understanding of pragmatics, especially about speech act of request. Practically, this research is expected to give contribution to the study of linguistics, especially pragmatics and to give references in conducting research related to pragmatics.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research was categorized as descriptive qualitative research. According to Bodgan and Taylor (1993:4), human being`s written of spoken words and their observable behaviors are the example of descriptive data. This research was also supported by a quantitative analysis in which the researcher used

numbers and percentages measuring the occurrences of the request types and request strategies. The primary instrument was the researcher himself. Meanwhile, the secondary instrument in this research was data sheet.

The data were in the form of words, phrases, clauses and sentences. The context of the data was dialogues which have speech act of requests. The source of the data was *Office Space* movie and the transcript of the movie downloaded from the Internet. The technique of collecting data was visual analysis. First, the researcher watched the movie. Then, he retrieved the script from the Internet. Next, he checked the suitability between the movie and the script. The movie was watched all over again by him to get the relevant data. He then identified the scene with a support of the script which is based on the objectives of the study. Finally, he recorded the data which are in accordance with the objectives of the study into data sheets.

In analyzing the data, the researcher applied referential

analysis technique, in which the data were analyzed referring to the employed techniques. First, the researcher categorized the data. Second, the data was classified into data sheets based on the objectives. Third, he interpreted the data. Fourth, the trustworthiness of the data was applied during the process of data analysis. Lastly, the researcher concluded the data.

#### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The characters of the movie perform all types of requests. They are conventionally indirect request (hearer-oriented condition), conventionally indirect request (speaker-oriented condition), unconventionally indirect request, and direct request. The most prominent type is conventionally indirect request (hearer-based condition) with 19 times out of the total of 39 data (48.71%), followed by unconventionally indirect request and conventionally indirect request (speaker-based condition) which the same amount of data with 7 data (17.94%). Lastly, there is direct request with 6 data (15.38%).

In terms of strategies of request, there are seven strategies used in the movie. They are, applying the strategies of request, the characters use seven strategies, they are; They are hints, questioning hearer`s ability and willingness, suggestory formulae, statements of speaker`s wishes and desires, statements of speaker`s needs and demands, statements of obligations and necessities, and imperatives. The most dominant type is questioning hearer`s ability and willingness since it has 16 data out of 39 utterances (41.02%). Then, it is followed by hints with 7 data (17.94%). After that, there is statements of speaker`s needs and demands which has 6 data (15.38%). Next, there are suggestory formulae, statements of obligations and necessities, and imperatives which share the fourth place with 3 data (7.69%). The last place is taken by statements of speaker`s wishes and desires with 1 data (2.56%).

The following conversations contain the examples of request.

Bill : Hello, Peter. What's happening? Uh... We have sort of a problem here. Yeah. **You**

**apparently didn't put one of the new coversheets on your TPS.**

Peter : Oh, yeah. I'm sorry about that. I, I forgot.

(1/UCV/Hi)

The participants of the conversation above are between Peter and his superior, Bill Lumberg. It occurs in the morning in Peter's cubicle. This dialogues happen when Peter is designing a software. Suddenly, he sees Bill Lumberg coming at him. Peter feels uncomfortable as Bill disturbs him when he is working. Apparently, everyday Peter has to submit a document which describes the step-by-step process in which an engineer tests software or simply named Test Program Set (TPS) report. The problem is that he has not finished the document at all. Peter knows that Bill will ask him about the report.

From the conversation above, Bill does not exactly state his real intention behind his statement to Peter. He performs his request very implicitly by saying **"You apparently didn't put one of the**

**new coversheets on your TPS."** It implies that he is in the state he does not want to. He then asks Peter to immediately put the cover on his TPS report because the report soon will be submitted to the director. To figure out Bill's intention, Peters possesses an intimate relationship with Bill and he has an awareness of specific situational features.

The following example contains direct request.

Peter : **You should come over and watch Kung Fu tonight.**

Joanna : OK.

Peter : Great.

(24/DR/Ob)

The dialogues above occur between Peter and Joanna, in a restaurant. Joanna has admitted her surprise when she knows that Peter has a reservation booked seat at a luxurious restaurant in a hotel. Joanna never meets someone who wants to go so far out of his way just for him. After Peter invites Joanna to take a seat, Peter introduces himself, he tries to make some small talk and Joanna responds it enthusiastically.

To get know about Joanna, Peter starts talking about all of the

things he has in common, from his families to his favorite movie, Kung Fu. Later, Peter finds out that Joanna loves Kung Fu too. He wants their relationship to the next level and mentally he is ready. Therefore, he asks Joanna to go out and watch his favorite movie.

By stating **“You should come over and watch Kung Fu tonight”**, Peter directly states his request to Joanna to come over his place and watch Kung Fu together in the form statement of obligations. To support his request and get Joanna’s agreement, Peter gives a promise that he will pick her up.

An example questioning hearer’s ability and willingness is presented below.

**Bill: So if you could go ahead and pack your stuff and move it down there that would be terrific.**

**Milton: I can’t...Excuse me. I believe you have my stapler?**

**(33/HB/Ab)**

The conversation above occurs in the office between Bill and his co-worker, Milton. Bill meets Milton in Milton’s cubicle because he wants him to relocate his workplace. In fact,

they are rumored to not get along since the beginning. For this reason, Bill strives for getting rid of Milton from the company. He plans to relocate Milton’s workplace to an inappropriate place. In order to persuade Milton, Bill flatters Milton by giving him praise.

Bill states his request as polite as possible to Milton by saying **“So if you could go ahead and pack your stuff and move it down there that would be terrific.”** The request is phrased as an implicit wish that Bill wants Milton to move his workplace away. With this type of request, he anticipates his risk of losing face when his request is not fulfilled by not directly mentioning his real intention because compliance is totally on Peter’s right. Unfortunately, Milton rejects the request since he really loves his current workplace.

An example of imperatives is given below.

**Bob: Aha! All right. We were just talking about you. You must be Peter Gibbons. Uh huh. Terrific. I’m Bob Slydell and this is my associate, Bob Porter.**

**Peter: Hi, Bob. Bob.**

Bob : **Grab a seat and join us for a minute.**

Peter : All right, Bob.

(25/DR/Im)

## CONCLUSIONS

In terms of types of request, all types used by the characters in the movie. The dominant type is conventionally indirect request (speaker-oriented condition). It is because the hearer is in the position of controlling whether he/she will comply the request or not. The characters employ this type of request by using modal verbs such as 'can' in the form of question to exhibit a protective orientation toward their own faces so that they do not take compliance for granted. This strategy often occurs in a formal setting between people who have a distant relationship. Therefore, conventionally indirect request (hearer-based condition) has the easiest pattern compared to other types. On the other hand, direct request becomes the lowest rank while performing request. The reason is that the strategy has a high degree of imposition and therefore makes the characters reluctant to use it.

In terms of strategies of request, there are seven strategies employed by the characters. The most prominent strategy is questioning hearer's ability and willingness. It occurs since the characters often make their request indirectly in the form of question since the condition of this strategy refers to the hearer's capacity to perform the desired act. Therefore, the relationship among the employees will be better. On contrary, performatives has the lowest number of data since performatives are usually very authoritative and formal. Therefore, it can harm the relationship between employees.

To sum up, it can be noticed that the types and strategies of requests are closely related. Every type of requests may have one strategy or some strategies in it. For instance, unconventionally indirect request contains request strategy of hints. Besides, conventionally indirect request (hearer-oriented condition) contains request strategy of questioning hearer's ability and willingness and request strategy of

suggestory formulae. Meanwhile, statement of speaker's wishes and desires, statements of speaker's needs and demands are created by conventionally indirect request (speaker-based conditions). At last, there are three strategies of requests created by direct request. They are statement of obligations and necessities, performatives, and imperatives.

In relation to the correlation between types of request and strategies of request, it also can be assumed that the characters prefer to use indirect requests than direct requests. The reason is that higher levels of indirectness may result in higher levels of politeness. Therefore, direct requests appear to be impolite and face-threatening because they intrude in the addressee's territory. Direct request strategies can be considered as the most efficiently and easily expressed utterances yet sometimes the strategies can make

people feel offended. Hence, the characters are likely to use indirect request in order to exploit the hearers' capacity while carrying out the implicitly requested act. Therefore, the relationship among the employees does not break.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

It is suggested for other linguistic students to learn pragmatics, since they need to know the intended meaning in communication. They also can learn that performing act via language can be conducted in various ways. Meanwhile, lecturers can use a movie as a medium to learn about pragmatics especially speech act of requests. Other researchers are suggested to conduct research on requests analyzed from different perspectives.

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