

## **A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF REQUESTS EXPRESSED BY THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN NANCY MEYERS'S *THE INTERN* MOVIE**

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### **Abstract**

This research examines speech act of requests aspects presented in *The Intern* movie using pragmatic approach. The objectives of this research are to find out the types of requests used by the main characters, to examine the strategies of requests used by the main characters, and to explain the purposes of requests expressed by the main characters in *The Intern* movie. This research employed descriptive qualitative method and was supported by quantitative method in presenting the occurrence of the data in frequency. The data were utterances, in the form of sentences, clauses or words spoken by the main characters in *The Intern* movie, while the contexts of the data were dialogues. The results of this research are described as follows. First, there are four types of requests occur by the main characters; unconventionally indirect request, conventionally indirect request (hearer based), conventionally indirect request (speaker based), and direct request. Second, there are seven strategies of requests which expressed by the main characters; hints, questioning hearer's ability/willingness, suggestory formulae, statements of speaker's wishes/desires, statements of speaker's needs/demands, statement of obligation/necessity, and imperatives. Third, there are four purposes of request which applied by the main characters; request for goods, request for the initiation of action, request for the cessation of action, and request for joint activity.

Keywords: request, types, strategies, purposes, *The Intern* movie

### **INTRODUCTION**

Conversation is a real form of language use. It is part of communication which involves few people who are doing an interaction in one situation with one topic. A related concept of language that used as

intended meaning of conversation is known as speech acts.

According to Yule (1996:47), an action is performed through saying something in a certain language known as a speech act. It implies that when a speaker utters something, he/she

actually wants to deliver the meaning of the utterances, the action, and the effect of the utterances. Based on the speaker who produces an utterance, it consists of three kinds of acts. 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).

There is one thing that 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. Trosborg (1994:187) states that a request is an illocutionary act in which the speaker wants the hearer to carry out an action that has advantages for the speaker and, sometimes, for the hearer. It can be expressed in two ways; they are 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 addition, request is an action that is used to communicate with people in society (Wang, 2007:11). In fact, request is usually used by people to conduct a conversation such as someone who asks for help. People 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. By the definitions, it can be concluded that request happens in daily life. It is to fulfill the requester's desires which need to be done by the requestee. Request should be performed in appropriate 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.

The speech act of requests is an interesting problem to be discussed because it can be found in daily conversation. In this research, the researcher uses a movie entitled *The Intern*. Movie is one of the media that shows the real life of human in the society. There are some reasons for

choosing this movie as the object. First, the researcher is interested in Jules, one of the main characters, which portrays woman's struggle. It is shown by Jules who becomes a successful woman to grow up a company which has 220 coworkers. However, her husband chooses to be a house husband. Therefore, Jules works overtime to support the finance of her family. Second, the main characters are employees and boss who have different positions in the office. The researcher assumes that the speech acts of requests occur in the movie. Third, the movie won an award in AARP Movies for Grownup Awards 2016 and some nominations for the best actor and actress. Hence, this movie is considered as a great movie to be analyzed.

This research has three objectives that are (1) to find out the types of request used by the main characters in *The Intern* movie, (2) to examine the strategies used by the main characters to express their requests in *The Intern* movie, and (3) to explain the purposes of requests used by the main

characters toward the requestee in *The Intern* movie.

To find out 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 examine 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 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. Also, it is expected that this research will give more information about speech act of requests to the readers.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was conducted by using mixed method, a combination of qualitative and quantitative method. This research was included as descriptive qualitative research in which the researcher described the phenomena of request in *The Intern* movie by interpreting the data.

According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:7), qualitative research explains the description of textual phenomena. It refers to a research design which produces descriptive data. The researcher described the data by explaining it deeply. According to Denscombe (2007:286), the words or images are the data which are analyzed or produced in qualitative research. In

this research, the data were utterances, in the form of sentences, clauses or words spoken by the main characters in *The Intern* movie, while the contexts of the data were dialogues.

Meanwhile, this research also used quantitative method to convey the frequency of occurrences of each characteristic in the movie. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 7) state that quantitative research focuses on statistical or numeral assignment in certain phenomena. By using quantitative research, the researcher could obtain the number of frequency of data in order to support the researcher's interpretation to the highest or lowest frequency.

There were two kinds of sources namely primary source and secondary source. The primary data source was the movie itself. Meanwhile, data sheet and the script of the movie were the secondary data sources. In this research, the script was taken from an internet source, i.e. <http://www.ivanachubbuck.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/The-Intern-Ben-Patty-Entire-Screenplay.pdf>.

Lincoln and Guba (in Vanderstoep, 2009:188) say that the major instrument for qualitative research is a human. Therefore, the major instrument of this research was the researcher herself. Meanwhile, the secondary instrument of this research was a data sheet of requests expressed by the main characters in *The Intern* movie.

The techniques of collecting data employed by the researcher in this research were explained in the following steps; (1) the researcher watched *The Intern* movie, (2) the researcher retrieved the script and checked the conformity between the script and the dialogues in the movie, (3) the researcher took notes of the main characters' utterances from the dialogues of the movie which were classified based on the objectives of the study, (4) the researcher recorded and transferred the data into the data sheet. After collecting all data, the researcher analyzed them through some processes; (1) the researcher classified the data based on the three objectives of the research, (2) the researcher applied data

trustworthiness which was checked by consulting to the linguistics students and lecturers, (3) the researcher analyzed, described, and interpreted the data, (4) the researcher obtained the conclusions from the result of the research.

According to Given (2008: 895) trustworthiness is a substantial construct to describe the outside of qualitative terms. To gain data trustworthiness, the researcher employed triangulation. In this research, the triangulation was done by checking data source, the method, and the theories employed in this research. The researcher used theory of types and strategies of requests proposed by Trosborg. Meanwhile, the theory of purposes of request was proposed by Achiba. Furthermore, the researcher involved two experts and some of her peer reviewers to check the triangulation of the data in this research.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. FINDINGS**

There are 35 data of request which occurs by the main characters in *The Intern*. The most prominent type of request is conventionally indirect request based on the hearer. Related to this type, questioning ability/willingness becomes dominant out of 7 strategies which occur in *The Intern*. Meanwhile, performative does not occur in the movie. From both types and strategies, the most conspicuous purpose is request for the initiation of action which occurs 20 times.

### **B. DISCUSSION**

#### **1. Types of Request Used by The Main Characters in *The Intern***

##### **a. Unconventionally Indirect Request**

An example of unconventionally indirect request is in the conversation that happens between Jules and her mom. When Ben drives the car, Jules's mother calls her. Actually, she does not like a phone call from her mom because her mom always talks about her research of sleeping habits. However, she should hang the telephone in order to respect her mom. She says *Can I call you when I get home?* This utterance employs

unconventionally indirect request to make another call to her mom. Jules makes her request by asking a question to her mom with the word *Can*. Before she asks a question, she states the reason why she needs to call her later. She rushes into the city for a meeting and she needs to prepare it. Actually, she wants to stop the conversation between her and her mom. She avoids to have conversation with her mom in order to ignore the suggestion which given by her mom. Thus, she uses unconventionally indirect request to hang up the phone.

b. Conventionally Indirect Request based on the hearer

The following is an example of conventionally indirect request based on the hearer. The conversation is between Ben and Kiko, a coworker, which takes place in the office. It occurs in the morning when Ben enters the office. He sees Kiko has problem in delivering the paper. The huge dolly stacks with reams of paper down a row of cubicles. She tries to push the huge dolly in order to move it. This problem disturbs Ben when he enters the office

in the morning. Thus, he comes to help her by pushing the huge dolly.

Ben says *How about I'll push, you deliver?* This type belongs to conventionally indirect request based on the hearer. It is because Ben indirectly questions Kiko and gives the opportunity to perform the request to Kiko whether she wants to deliver the paper or not. This request can be categorized into direct request by saying I help you instead of saying *How about I'll push, you deliver?* It has similar intention between both utterances. Ben intends to help Kiko by pushing the huge dolly and requests her to deliver the paper. Therefore, she responds it very nice and she also says thank you.

c. Conventionally Indirect Request based on the speaker

An example of conventionally indirect requests based on the speaker is held in the conversation between Jules and Ben. It occurs when they are heading to the road. In the way to the office, Jules remembers something that comes up from her brain. She should go to the warehouse. In the car, they are

debating the road that should they choose in order to make it faster to arrive at the warehouse. Ben responds it with changing the direction to the left lane. However, Jules does not want to cross the road that is chosen by Ben. She replies that they should turn right and cross the 9th to Hamilton to the Expressway. Thus, Ben's decision is right and it does not take longer time to arrive at the warehouse.

Jules says *I want to stop at the warehouse. 480 Greenpoint* to Ben. This utterance is expressed in conventionally indirect request. It can be seen by the phrase *I want you*. The use of *I* means that the requester can manage the request. The intention of Jules's utterance is that Ben should change the route to the warehouse because Jules needs to go there. This request cannot be refused by Ben because it seems like an order to Ben. This request can be reformulated by saying *stop at the warehouse* than the utterance in the example.

#### d. Direct Request

An example of direct request is held in the conversation that occurs

between Jules and her assistant, Becky. The conversation happens when Jules finishes her job to have a service phone call to her customer service, Becky comes to inform her schedule. Furthermore, Jules reaches her bike and Becky tells her schedule. She always rides her bike in the office in order to make everything fast and she calls it as an exercise.

Jules says *Make it less of an alone thing. E-mail me that idea, will ya?* Direct request is used by Jules when she hardly remembers all the things. By saying this, Jules requests Becky in order to demand her to send an email about the idea. She straightly says the request by stating what she wants. By adding *will ya?* marker, the request is soft although the example belongs to direct request. Jules's utterance is easy to be understood by Becky since it is a direct request.

## 2. Strategies of Request Expressed by The Main Characters in *The Intern*

### a. Hints

An example of hint is in the dialogue that happens between Matt



and Jules. The setting takes place in the house. Jules is very tired because she went to San Francisco with Ben. She arrives at home with a pale face because she knew about the problem of her marriage. She should face the situation that Matt is cheating behind her. Jules does not know why Matt cheats on her. Matt opens the door and greets her by asking about the CEO. He tries to chit chat with his wife. Jules sits on the stairs and Matt follows her.

Jules asks her husband by saying *Do we have any, like, real booze, like vodka or something?* She asks the availability of a glass of liquor in her house by saying *Do we have any..?* This expression is a hint for the request. There are two intentions behind Jules's utterance. First, Jules only asks about liquor in her house. Second, Jules wants liquor to calm her after a long trip from San Francisco. Then, Jules's utterance is responded by Matt by taking liquor because Matt knows the condition of his wife.

#### b. Questioning ability/willingness

An example of questioning hearer's ability/willingness is in the

conversation that occurs after Jules has a meeting with her coworkers. She asks Robby to fix the picture of women in the homepage by changing the color into red. However, Robby has a limited time to fix that and he says to Jules that she should sign off the picture then he will use the picture to be a homepage in "About the Fit" website. Therefore, Jules still wants to change the color.

Jules requests Robby by saying *but can you try?* This utterance is questioning ability/willingness which is shown in the expression *can you try?* Jules uses the modal *can* to question Robby, whether he is eager to grant her wants or not. Thus, Robby complies Jules's desire about changing the color of picture into red. Moreover, Robby carries out Jules's desire in order to reach the deadline and makes Jules to sign off the task quickly.

#### c. Suggestory formulae

An example of suggestory formulae happens in the conversation between the main characters, Jules and Ben. It happens in Jules's room. Ben meets Jules for the very first time. Ben as an intern tries to perform a good act

in front of his boss. He suggests to close the door or to let it to be opened.

In Jules's room, Ben suggests Jules by saying *Would you like the door open or closed?* This utterance is a suggestory formulae strategy because Ben suggests to close the door or to let it be opened. A Suggestory formula is expressed at the first phrase of Ben's utterance *Would you like..?* Then, Jules responds it by saying *Open*, thus, Ben decides to let the door be opened.

d. Statements of speaker's wish/desire

In the example of statements of speaker's wishes/desires below, there is a conversation between Jules and Ben which takes place in the coffee shop. Jules feels guilty about what she did to Ben. Ben is moved into a different position by Cameron. He becomes a server who brings some cups of coffee to the office. Meanwhile, Jules looks for him to explain what is going on in this situation. She feels that Ben is too observant when he asked about her life. Therefore, she thinks that Ben should move to a different position. Then, she apologizes about the mistake that she did. She wishes Ben to start working for

her again and going back to his previous position.

Jules says *I hope you'll accept my apology and come back to work. For me. If you would.* It implies that she wishes Ben to go back to work with her. She needs him to help her running about the business. Jules feels that Ben has a lot of advice for her. By saying *I hope*, Jules wants that her wish is complied by Ben, thus, the phrase is asserting the strategy of statements of speaker's wishes/desires which is used in Jules's utterance. The additional phrase, *For me*, means that Jules emphasizes Ben to work with her for accompanying her. Moreover, the use of *If you would*, indicates that Jules states this utterance in order to give the decision to Ben whether he complies or refuse the request.

e. Statements of speaker's needs/demands

The example of statements of speaker's needs/demands is in the office which involves Jules and Becky. The conversation is about the movement of Ben's desk. In the morning, Jules moves Ben's desk to

assist Becky doing her tasks. Ben arranges the desk and organizes it. After Ben leaves, Becky organizes some papers on her desk. Suddenly, Jules comes to Becky's desk.

Jules says to Becky, *I want you to let Ben give you a hand, okay? And cc him on all my e-mails.* This utterance is included into the statement of speaker needs/demands which is shown by the clause *I want you*. Jules has a power to manage the request to ask Becky doing something. By adding the marker *okay?* at the end of Jules's utterance, Jules ensures that Becky really understands what she wanted. It also forces Becky to perform Jules's desire. The intention behind Jules's utterance is that Becky should help Ben and attach the email address of Ben into Jules's email.

f. Statements of speaker's obligations/necessities

An example of statements of speaker's obligation/necessities is in the conversation that takes place in the office when Jules is in a meeting with the coworkers. She opens the meeting by requesting the coworker. Jules says

*Guys, you have to remember, the home page has to read in a glance.* The obligation of coworkers is to obey what the boss wants. Jules says *have to*, to indicate the statement of obligation. It means that everyone under her position should note his/himself to remember the home page. The home page in the company's website should serve interesting ads about fashion which aims to make the reader understand the meaning of the ads quickly.

g. Imperatives

An example of imperatives is found in the conversation below that begins in San Francisco. In the morning, Jules has an interview with CEO's candidate. She is not stunned by the candidate because they do not blink. She goes out from the building and comes near to Ben who waits for her. She and Ben should go back to the office. Then, they go to the airport.

By saying *Airport, please*, that utterance contains imperative strategy because Jules directly states her destination to the driver. Jules intends to ask the driver to escort them to the airport. It is because the job of a driver

is to take people to their destination, then he should comply the customer's request. By adding the marker please, the request becomes soft and polite.

### 3. The Purposes of Request Applied by The Main Characters in *The Intern*

#### a. Request for Goods

An example of request for goods happens to Jules and Ben. She asks Matt by saying *Do we have any, like, real booze, like vodka or something?* Jules formulates her utterance to ask Matt to take a drink for her before telling about the CEO. Matt responds the request by giving her a glass of liquor. Then, they are talking about CEO and diverting the topic to the marriage. This request belongs to request for goods since it refers to a glass of liquor which is requested by Jules. A drink represents something which is taken by Matt.

#### b. Request for Initiation of Action

An example of request for initiation of action is in the conversation which happens between Jules and Ben. She says *we're gonna drop Paige at school, okay?* Jules

requests Ben to take Paige to school. The purpose of this request is to ask Ben performs an action which is taking Paige to her school. Therefore, this utterance applies request for initiation of action's purpose. The word okay? in the last utterance shows that Jules wants Ben to follow what she wanted. Then, Ben responds it by saying *Let's do it* which means Ben agrees to drop Paige at her school.

#### c. Request for Cessation of Action

An example of request for cessation of action Ben directly says *Becky! Don't screw around.* It is because Becky does not interrupt her boss. Meanwhile, Ben and his coworkers want to report the situation in Jules's mom to Jules. Thus, Ben is forced to say louder to Becky. Finally, she gives the cell phone to Jules. This utterance is included as a request for cessation of action because Ben stops Becky's action in disturbing him when he calls Jules.

#### d. Request for Joint Activity

The following is an example of request for joint activity. The dialogue occurs between Jules and Matt. She

says *Do you want to come? Maybe we could stay for the weekend?*, Jules really wants Matt to accompany her. However, Matt has schedule that cannot to be left. In the utterance, Jules applies request for joint activity's purpose. It is shown that Jules wants Matt to follow what she wants in order to go to San Francisco. At the end of conversation, Matt does not want to go there because of several reasons.

### CONCLUSION

From the analysis and findings on request utterances made by the main characters in *The Intern* movie, they are influenced by several factors such as types, strategies, and purposes of request. Conventionally indirect request based on the hearer becomes the most dominant type which is used by the main characters. It is because they want to express their request politely. Moreover, they want to give the control of request to the requestee whether he/she wants to comply or refuse the request.

From the findings, questioning hearer's ability/willingness gets the highest frequency out of 35 total data.

Questioning hearer ability/willingness is expressed by the main characters because they do not force the request to the requestee. Therefore, they are not seemed as authoritative persons. In addition, the main characters use this strategy to ask the possibility of the requestee to perform the request.

Meanwhile, request for initiation of action becomes the highest frequency in this research. The main characters apply request for initiation of action to convey what they need in order to make the request is achieved. The main characters mostly use request for initiation of action to ask the requestee performs an action what he/she wants. The main characters often use this type because most of the needs in the office are to demand someone to do something.

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