Request Strategies Employed by Male and Female Characters in *The Devil Wears Prada*

(Strategi Meminta Tolong yang dipakai oleh Karakter-karakter Pria dan Wanita dalam Film The Devil Wears Prada)

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Abstrak

Meminta tolong adalah meminta seseorang untuk melakukan atau tidak melakukan sesuatu atau menyatakan keperluan atau keinginan akan sesuatu. Meminta tolong adalah tindakan yang mengancam wajah ('Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)') (Brown and Levinson 1987: 70–71) karena meminta tolong membuat lawan bicara keberatan. Oleh karena itu, strategi khusus diperlukan untuk mencegah keberatan lawan bicara. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengungkapkan strategi meminta tolong yang dilakukan oleh enam karakter di film The Devil Wears Prada dan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara strategi meminta tolong yang dilakukan oleh ke enam karakter tersebut dengan jender dan status sosial. Kajian ini menganalisa ungkapan permintaan tolong yang dipakai oleh tiga karakter pria dan tiga karakter wanita dalam film tersebut dengan meanggunakan teori Blum Kulka (1989). Permintaan tolong yang terpilih diklasifikasi berdasarkan jender dan status sosial. Hasil dari kajian menunjukkan bahwastrategi meminta tolong secara langsung paling banyak dilakukan oleh kedua karakter yang memiliki status yang berbeda-beda, kecuali karakter pria yang memiliki status subordinate menggunakan strategi meminta tolong secara langsung dan strategi meminta tolong secara tidak langsung sebanding.

Kata kunci: pragmatik, meminta tolong, jenis kelamin, status sosial.

Abstract

Request is to ask someone to do/not do something or to express the need or desire for something. Requests are 'Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 70–71 as cited in Rue and Zhang, 2008: 1) because it entails an imposition on the addressee, therefore, a certain strategy is needed to prevent an imposition on the addressee. The purpose of this study is to reveal the request strategies of six characters in *The Devil Wears Prada* and to investigate the correlations between the different request strategies employed by six characters in the movie with gender and social status. This study analyzes the utterances that consist of requests, used by the three male and female characters in the movie by using Blum Kulka's (1989) theory. Selection of request was classified based on gender and social status. The result of this study shows that direct request strategy is used mostly by male and female character with different status, except the male subordinate used direct request strategy as equal as indirect request strategy.

Keywords: Pragmatics, request, gender, social status.

Introduction

Request is one of the classifications of speech act that concerns with the act of asking for something or getting someone to do something. The speech act of request is a prominent action in daily interaction. Requests are often uttered at school, workplace, home, and everywhere. A request has been considered a noteworthy subject for the research of speech acts, and the writer is interested in doing this study because requests are 'Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 70–71 as cited in Rue and Zhang, 2008: 1) because it entails an imposition on the addressee, therefore, a certain strategy is needed to prevent an imposition on the addressee.

According to Reiter (2000: 33) there are a number of social factors, such as gender, age, familiarity, the social status of the participants and the weight of a particular imposition, which will determine the kind of politeness strategy employed in performing the speech act. By knowing those factors, a speaker can produce appropriate strategy of request. In this study, the writer focuses on the two factors that closely related in the occurence of request strategy, they are gender and social status. As Holmes (1995: 19) stated that women are regarded as subordinate or less powerful group than men in many communities, but in this emancipation era women appear to be leaders. They have more power than men or have higher status than men.

The writer chooses to analyze movie entitled *The Devil Wears Prada* because most of this movie setting took place in the workplace and the request is a particularly important speech acts in a workplace where workers must give directions to each other. Besides, social status can be found easier in a workplace. The writer focuses on the three male and three female characters in this movie because the status amongst characters are very explicit. For example, Miranda is the chief editor whereas Andrea is Miranda's co-assistant. From the two characters above, the status can be seen explicitly. Miranda's status is higher than Andrea, which means Miranda is superior whereas Andrea is subordinate. The writer limits the subject to verbal expression of the use of request between three male and three female characters whose status is superior, equal and subordinate in *The Devil Wears Prada.*

The main problem of this study is the relation of gender and social status with the occurence of request strategy. From this problem, three research question are raised:

1. What types of request strategies are mostly used by the male characters whose status is superior, equal and subordinate in this movie?

2. What types of request strategies are mostly used by female characters whose status is superior, equal and subordinate in this movie?

3. What are the relation between request strategies employed by each character with gender and social status?

Based on those problems, the purpose of doing this study is to reveal the request strategies employed by male and female characters mostly in *The Devil Wears Prada*. Moreover, the correlations between the different request strategies employed by six characters in the movie with gender and social status are investigated.

Research Methodology

This research applies qualitative research. Qualitative research is applied to find out the types of request strategies and describe them by using Blum Kulka's (1989) classification of requests also classify by the scale of social status (Holmes: 1992) and gender. Then explain the correlation between gender and social status with the occurance of making request. In this research the data which are used to be analyzed are acquired from http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/devil_wears_prada.pdf. The data which are taken are only the utterances that consist of requests used by the three selected male and female characters in this movie. Next, signs are given on the utterances that contain request which is uttered by three male and female characters chosen. After that, the utterances that contain request in every scene are noted down and then they are separated based on the types of request strategies. Next, counting the percentage is used to reveal the request strategies are mostlu used. As a result, content analysis is applied to relate the finding to the goal of the study.

Result

The result shows that Male characters applied 23,08% of type of request which consist of 14,1% of direct request and total 8,98% of indirect request. Whereas female characters applied 76,92% of type of request which consist of 56,41% of direct request and total 20,51% of indirect request. Male superior employed the type of request about 9,62%, which consist of 7,05% of direct request and total 2,57% of indirect request. Meanwhile, female superior employed the type of request about 39,1%, which consist of 25% of direct request and 14,1% of indirect request. There are 12,18% of the types of request used by male which consist of 6,41% of direct request and 5,77% of indirect request. Meanwhile 35,9% of the types of request are used by female which consist of 29,49% of direct request and 6,41% of indirect request. The total frequencies are twice (1,28%) for the male subordinate used request strategies and three times (1,92%) for the female.

Discussion

4.2.1 The Male and Female Characters' Request

The result shows that both male and female characters apply direct request mostly. The frequency of female characters in making request is more often than male characters, because the main character of this movie is female. Therefore, the focus of this movie is on the female character and female character talked mostly.

The most strategy both male and female characters applied is mood derivable, then the second both of them applied strong hints frequently. After strong hints, in the third position the male characters applied suggestory formulae while the female characters applied obligation statements. The other types of request, such as obligation statements, query preparatory and mild hints only sometimes applied by male character. Similar to the male, the female character only several times applied hedged performatives, want statements, suggestory formulae, query preparatory, strong hints and mild hints.

Mood derivable is applied mostly both male and female characters because almost all of the movie setting took place in a workplace. Requests are needed in a workplace to give direction to do something among workers and they must give a direction clearly in order to prevent misinterpretation. e.g:

– *Tell Richard I saw the pictures that he sent for that feature on the female paratroopers and*

they're all so deeply unattractive. (Miranda to Emily)

– *Get him on the phone.* (Miranda to Andrea)

– *You do coat. Do the coat!* (Emily to Andrea)

– *Give me a full ballerina skirt and a hint of saloon and I'm on board.* (Nigel to Miranda)

– *And tell her I switched in the Dior for the Rocha.* (Nigel to Andrea)

Besides the relation among characters is close in this movie. They know each other very well. "People who are close friends or intimates use more imperatives or direct request" (Holmes, 1992:290). Mood derivable is included into direct requests, therefore mood derivable is mostly used by them. E.g:

– *Easy there, tiger.* (Nate to Andrea)

– *Wake up, sweetheart.* (Nigel to Andrea)

– *Give my best to the boyfriend.* (Thompson to Andrea)

– *Miranda. Miranda.Wait.* (Andrea to Miranda)

– *Hey, Emily, it's Andy. Don't hang up.* (Andrea to Emily)

After mood derivable they applied strong hints mostly. For female characters strong hints are applied to get the other people to do something by satirize them. E.g:

– Miranda said to Emily "details of your incompetence do not interest me" instead to request her to shut up, because Miranda do not need Emily's reason.

– Miranda said to Andrea "Please bore someone else with your questions" instead to request her do not ask me that question.

Besides, strong hints are applied to show what they want and what they need indirectly so the hearer can respond it by doing something. e.g:

– Miranda said to Andrea "I need 10 or 15 skirts from Calvin Klein" instead to request Andre to take her that skirt.

– Miranda said to Andrea "I would like my steak here in 15 minutes" instead to request her to prepare for her steak.

Similar to the female, the male characters applied strong hints to show what they want and need therefore the hearer can respond it by doing something. E.g:

– Nigel said to Andrea "I need Miranda's itinerary for tomorrow" instead to request her to take him Miranda's itinerary.

Besides, strong hints are applied by male characters to soften their request. e.g:

– Nate said to Andrea "You coming to bed anytime soon?" instead to request her to go to be soon.

Obligation statement is the other types of request that mostly used by female characters, because the relation of female characters in this movie is only as a colleague and they only interact in a workplace. Therefore, their requests signified the obligation of hearer to do an act. E.g:

– Emily requested to Andrea "The phone must be answered every single time it rings".

– Emily requested to Andrea "The Book is assembled by 10:00, 10:30 and you must wait around for it until then".

Suggestory formulae is the other types of requests that mostly used by male characters to soften their requests to the hearer by giving suggestion. E.g:

– Thompson requested to Andrea "Look, you want this thing, you better hurry".

– Nate requested to Andrea "I think we better get out of here before my girlfriend sees me".

Men language style is heard as evincing their toughness, control (Ginnet, 2011: 94), brief and get-to-the-point (Tingley, 2001: 41-42). On the other hand, women's language has been said to reflect their conservatism, deference, sensitivity to others, solidarity (Ginnet, 2011: 94), polite and genteel (Tingley, 2001: 41-42). In short they stated that women are more polite than men. Ginnet and Tingley opinions are supported by Lakoff (1975), Holmes (1992) and Coates (1998). They stated that women are more polite than men. In making requests women also more polite than men, therefore, women are less direct than men. But in fact, as explained above women are as direct as men in making request. From the frequency of the type of request they applied, female characters is more direct than male. Female characters applied two types of direct request mostly, whereas male characters applied two types of indirect request mostly. But totally both of them applied more direct request than indirect.

From the discussion above the theories that stated about men language holds true, but it does not to the women language. It is because the male characters are proven employing direct request mostly. On the other hand the female characters employed direct request mostly, it means that the theories which stated that women are less direct than men does not hold true.

4.2.2 The Male and Female Superiors' Request

The characters included into superior status are Miranda and Nigel. Miranda is in the superior status because she is as a chief editor of Runway which means she has a higher position to the other in that workplace. While Nigel is an art director for Runway which means he has a higher position after Miranda in this movie. In this movie

request only occurred among female superior to female subordinate and male superior to female subordinate. Request among superior and subordinate characters in this movie is done by Miranda to her two assistants they are Emily and Andrea, then Nigel to Andrea.

Nigel only employed three types of requests; those are mood derivable, query preparatory and strong hints to Andrea. Nigel employed one type of direct request and two types of indirect request. It is different from Miranda, she employed six types of requests those are mood derivable, hedged performatives, obligation statements, want statements, strong hints and mild hints. Miranda employed four types of direct request and two types of indirect request. Both of them employed mood derivable mostly.

Mood derivable are mostly employed both of them because most of the movie setting took place in a workplace. Therefore, mood derivable employed mostly in order to give a direction to do something among workers clearly in order to prevent misinterpretation. e.g.:

- *Tell Simone I'm not going to approve that girl that she sent me for the Brazilian layout. (*Miranda to Emily)

- *Call Natalie at Glorious Foods, tell her no for the 40th time.* (Miranda to Emily)

- *Remind Jocelyn I need to see a few of those satchels that Marc is doing in the pony* .(Miranda to Andrea)

- *Stand, watch and listen* .(Nigel to Andrea)

- *Make sure Miranda gets these as soon as possible.* (Nigel to Andrea)

Strong hint is in the second position of the most types of request that they applied. Strong hints employed by Miranda to get her two assistants to do something by satirize them. e.g.:

- *Details of your incompetence do not interest me* means you do not need to talk it, I do not want to listen it.(Miranda to Emily)

- *Clearly I'm going to have to do that myself because the last two you sent me were completely inadequate* means I want to do that myself. (Miranda to Emily)

- *No, no. That wasn't a question* means you do not need to answer it.(Miranda to Andrea)

- *That's all* means enough, stop it.(Miranda to Andrea)

- *Please bore someone else with your questions* means do not ask me that question (Miranda to Andrea)

- *I don't see my breakfast here. Are my eggs here? Where are my eggs?* Means prepare my breakfast. (Miranda to Andrea)

- *Where's that piece of paper I had in my hand yesterday morning?* Means take that piece of paper for me. (Miranda to Andrea)

- *By all means, move at a glacial pace* means faster.(Miranda to Andrea)

Strong hints are also employed by Miranda to show what she wants and she needs indirectly so her two assistants can respond it by doing something. e.g:

- *Also, I need to see all the things that Nigel has pulled for Gwyneth's second cover try* means take the things that Nigel has pulled for Gwyneth's second cover try for me.(Miranda to Emily)

- *I need 10 or 15 skirts from Calvin Klein* means take 10 or 15 skirts from Calvin Klein for me. (Miranda to Andrea)

- *The girls need new surfboards or boogie boards or something for spring break* means buy new surfboards or boogie boards or something for spring break for the girls.(Miranda to Andrea)

- *The twins also need flip-flops* means buy flip-flops for the twins.(Miranda to Andrea)

- *I need to get home tonight. The twins have a recital tomorrow morning at school* means get me home tonight. (Miranda to Andrea)

- *And I'll need a change of clothes* means prepare a change of clothes for me.(Miranda to Andrea)

- *I need the new Harry Potter book for the twins* means get the new Harry Potter for the twins. (Miranda to Andrea)

- *And I would like my steak here in 15 minutes* means prepare my steak here in 15 minutes. (Miranda to Andrea)

- *I'll be back at 3:00. I'd like my Starbucks waiting* means prepare my Starbucks before 3:00. (Miranda to Andrea)

- *Before the benefit tonight, I need to make sure that you're both fully prepped on the guest list* mean you both have to be well prepared.(Miranda to Andrea)

- *I need the best possible team with me. That no longer includes Emily* means I do not want Emily as my team, I want you Andrea. (Miranda to Andrea)

- *We need to go over the seating, uh, chart for the luncheon* means prepare the seating chart for the luncheon.(Miranda to Andrea)

- *And then when we get back to New York, we need to contact Leslie to see what she can do to minimize the press on all this* means call Leslie when we get back to New york.(Miranda to Andrea)

Similar to Miranda, Nigel employed strong hints to show what he wants and he needs indirectly so Andrea can respond it by doing something. For example, *I need Miranda's itinerary for tomorrow* means take Miranda's itinerary for tomorrow for me. Besides, strong hints are employed by Nigel to soften their request. For example *I guessed an eight and a half* means wear this shoes and *she means you* means get in, she calls you.

Miranda employed strong hints to satirize her two assistants in order to make them know that she disagreed with them or disliked the work of her two assistants. Meanwhile Nigel employed strong hints to soften his request. Besides, both of them employed strong hints to show their wants and needs indirectly. In short, Nigel and Miranda employed strong hints to soften their request but with different purposes.

As Holmes (1992:291) stated that superior tends to use imperatives or direct request to the subordinate, in this movie this statement is proven. Both Miranda and Nigel, whose status is superior, employed direct request mostly to their subordinate. No matter the superior status is male or female, superior employed direct request mostly to their subordinates. However strong hints, which are included into indirect request, are also employed mostly by them but totally direct request employed more often than indirect request.

4.2.2 The Male and Female Subordinates Request to Subordinates

There are four characters that include into the same subordinate status in this movie; they are Emily, Andrea, Nate and Thompson. Emily and Andrea is Miranda's assistant, therefore their status is subordinates. Likewise Nate and Thompson, Nate is Andrea's boyfriend, while Thompson is Andrea's friend. In this movie request among subordinates to subordinates is done by male to female and vice versa, also female to female. Request among male and male did not occurred. The characters that did the request among subordinates are Thompson request to Andrea, Andrea request to Emily and Nate and vice versa.

The result shows that both male and female characters used mood derivable mostly. Both of them used more direct requests than indirect ones. However, the male characters used direct request more but they have only 0,64% difference of the used direct request than indirect request. It means that they used between direct and indirect request almost equal. It is different from the female characters, they have 23,08% difference of the used direct request than indirect.

Mood derivable was used mostly both male and female characters. Male characters used mood derivable mostly because Nate as Andrea's boyfriend had an intimate relation with Andrea. Likewise Thompson, he was Andrea's friend, he also had an intimate relation with Andrea. e.g:

–   *Give me that.* (Nate to Andrea)

–   *Just tell her it can't be done.* (Thompson to Andrea)

–   Give *my best to the boyfriend.* (Thompson to Andrea)

–   *Just own up to it.* (Nate to Andrea)

–   *Just admit it to me.* (Thompson to Andrea)

Meanwhile female characters used mood derivable mostly besides they had an intimate relation as a friend and a boyfriend, Emily and Andrea are colleague. Most of their conversation took place in a workplace, therefore, they used mood derivable mostly to give direction to do something among workers and they must give direction clearly in order to prevent misinterpretation.

–   *Follow me.* (Emily to Andrea)

–   *Don't be a jerk.* (Andrea to Nate)

–   *Pick up her coffee order on the way.* (Emily to Andrea)

–   *Now, get a pen and write this down.* (Emily to Andrea)

–   *Now, hang that up.* (Emily to Andrea)

–   *Now, stay here. I'm going to the art department to give them the Book.* (Emily to Andrea)

–   *Now, be prepared. The run through is at 12:30.* (Emily to Andrea)

–   *Give me the phone.* (Andrea to Nate)

–   *Face it, you sold your soul the day you put on that first pair of Jimmy Choo's.* (Emily to Andrea)

–   *Hey, Emily, it's Andy. Don't hang up.* (Andrea to Emily)

In the second position suggestory formulae are used frequently by male subordinates in making request to other subordinates. They used suggestory formulae frequently because they want to ask the addressee to do something politely by giving suggestion. E.g:

–   *I think we better get out of here before my girlfriend sees me.* (Nate to Andrea)

–   *I should read your stuff. Why don't you send it over?* (Thompson to Andrea)

–   *Look, you want this thing, you better hurry.* (Thompson to Andrea)

–   *Why don't you come in? Just for one drink.* (Thompson to Andrea)

Meanwhile female subordinates used obligation statement frequently in making request to other subordinates because the relation among female subordinates in this movie besides as a friend, they are colleague. They only interact in a workplace to give a direction to do something among

workers, therefore, their requests signified the obligation of hearer to do an act. e.g:

- *You need to come into the office right this second.* (Emily to Andrea)

- *The phone must be answered every single time it rings.* (Emily to Andrea)

- *I will deal with all of this, and you will go to Calvin Klein.* (Emily to Andrea)

- *The Book is assembled by 10:00, 10:30 and you must wait around for it until then.* (Emily to Andrea)

- *You have got to calm down.* (Emily to Andrea)

- *We have to make sure that they all think she knows exactly who they are.* (Emily to Andrea)

Request among subordinates to subordinates are determined not only by power but also social distance (Holmes, 1995:18). As explain before that the relationship among subordinate status in this movie was friend, therefore their social distance was close. "People who are close friends or intimates use more imperatives or direct request" (Holmes, 1992:290). This statement holds true in this movie, because both male and female characters used direct requests mostly.

4.2.2 The Male and Female Subordinates' Request

The male and female subordinates are only two characters in this movie, they are Nigel and Andrea. The request of subordinates to their superior occurred among Nigel to Miranda and Andrea to Miranda. Requests among subordinate to superior are rarely appeared. Nigel request to Miranda only twice, he employed mood derivable and strong hints. Meanwhile Andrea request to Miranda three times, she employed mood derivable once and want statements twice. The result shows that Nigel employed direct request as equal as indirect request, whereas Andrea employed only direct request. Nigel has known Miranda very well, because he has work together with Miranda for many years, so that they have intimate relation. Their relation influence the way they speak each other, because if they have close relation there will be no unwillingness. It is also happen in making request, as Miranda and Nigel done. Likewise Andrea, in this movie she was making request to Miranda at the end of the movie when she had a close relation to Miranda.

According to Holmes (2001), subordinate will probably use indirect strategies when request to the superior, but in fact in this movie male subordinate employed direct request as equal as indirect and female subordinate employed only direct request. Therefore Holmes' (2001) opinion does not hold true in this movie. Similar to the request among subordinates, request of subordinate to superior not only determined by power but also social distance (Holmes, 1995:18). As explain above

the male and female subordinate had a close relation with the superior in this movie. "People who are close friends or intimates use more imperatives or direct request" (Holmes, 1992:290). This statement holds true for the female subordinate but it does not hold true for the male subordinate, because female subordinate used direct request mostly whereas the male subordinate employed direct request as equal as indirect.

Conclusion and Suggestion

In short, gender and social status are not only factors that relate to the occurrence of making request but also the other factors such as social distance or the intimacy between speakers, the place and the situation (formal and informal). The research concludes that only some of theories are hold true in this study. The first theory which holds true is the theory that stated men language is brief and get-to-the-point (Tingley, 2001: 41-42). The second theory which holds true is superior tends to use imperatives or direct request to the subordinate (Holmes, 1992:291). The third theory which holds true is the theory that stated request among subordinates to subordinates determined not only by power but also social distance (Holmes, 1995:18). The last theory which holds true is the theory that stated "People who are close friends or intimates use more imperatives or direct request" (Holmes, 1992:290).

Conclusively, after doing this research, it is expected to give contribution to better understanding of the relation of some factors such as gender, social status, social distance, place and situation with the occurrence of making request. Hopefully this study is useful for others as the reference of their study in speech act of request which deals with gender and social status and also can help the further analysis in the same study.

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