

## **Politeness Strategies, Cooperative Principle, and Speech act in Mean Girls Movie**

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to investigate politeness strategy, cooperative principle, and speech act in Mean Girls movie. This study involves the conversation between characters of Mean Girls movie. The data are analyzed by using qualitative descriptive. Results show that bald on record becomes the strategy of politeness which dominantly used. Furthermore, the conversations are mostly according to Grice's theory without violating the four maxims, and directive becomes the most type of speech act which is used in the conversations. It is recommended for future researcher to investigate this issue in other areas and give deeper explanations about reasons in using politeness strategies, speech act, and also cooperative principle.*

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### **I. Introduction**

People communicate with each other using language as medium of communication. To achieve a successful conversation, participants should be clear and cooperative with each other. Olutayo (2015) argues for a conversation to run smoothly and achieve the desired goal participants must have a shared understanding of the discourse and they must agree to cooperate with one another by respecting each other's view and allowing interlocutors to take their turns in the conversation. In communication, there are strategies in communication which are used by speakers and hearers, one of which is politeness strategies. According to Yule (1996) Politeness is defined as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face, the public self- image of a person. In other words, it is satisfying the face wants of other people. Politeness strategies are divided into 4 types, namely positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald on record.

Positive politeness strategies are used to reduce the threat to the hearer's positive face. Fifteen strategies can be used to indicate positive politeness as is expressed by the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). These strategies include noticing and attending to the hearer, exaggerating by giving different intonation, tone and other prosodic features or exaggerating by using intensifying modifiers, intensifying interest to hearer, using in-group identity markers, seeking agreement by the addressee's statements through using specific statements or repetition, avoiding disagreement by using false agreement, by expressing pseudo-agreement, by using hedge or by making white lies, showing common ground, joking, showing the speaker's concern for the hearer's wants, offering and promising, being optimistic, including both the speaker and the hearer in the activity, telling or asking the reason, assuming reciprocity, giving gift to the hearer in the form of sympathy, and understanding and cooperation in the conversation. Negative politeness strategies refer to the avoidance of imposition on the hearer and can be considered as is the desire to remain autonomous using distancing styles like using modal verbs or hesitation, apologizing for imposition, asking questions or asking for permission to ask a question. Off-record strategy was explained by Brown and Levinson (1987) as the use of indirect language to remove the speaker from the potential to be imposing. There are fifteen strategies indicating off-record politeness, they are giving hints, giving association clues, presupposing, understating or saying less than is required, overstating or giving information more than what is needed, using tautologies, using contradictions, being ironic, using metaphor, using rhetorical questions that do not require any answer, being ambiguous, being vague, overgeneralizing and not naming the hearer or addressing him directly, displacing, and being incomplete by using ellipsis. The last politeness is bald on-record strategies. Using imperative forms is an example of bald on-record as it can be seen in the phrase give me the pen. Using mitigating devices such as 'please' in the phrase please give me the pen can soften the command. It should also be added that in an emergency situation, for instance, a command such as don't touch the bottle has no politeness function.

Furthermore, Lakoff (1973) proposes politeness strategies in terms of adopting Grice's conversational maxims, which were characterised by their universal constructs. In her attempt to expand on Grice's view, two basic rules were proposed: 1) be clear, and 2) be polite. Moreover, cooperative principle, Grice (1975) proposed that participants in a communicative exchange are guided by a principle that determines the way in which language is used with maximum efficiency and effect to achieve rational communication called the Cooperative Principle (CP). Grice comes up with a list of four rules of the maxims namely; quality, quantity, relevance, and

manner that specify what participants have to do in order to satisfy this principle. Grice (1975) argues that in conversation, there have to be four kinds of maxim that have to be included. First is maxim of quality, it means that the participants of the conversation have to be informative, do not say too much or too little. Second is maxim of quantity, this type of maxim requires the participants to be truthful and do not say what you believe to be false. Third is maxim of relation, in this case the conversations have to be relevant or do not go out of topic. The last is maxim of manner, it means that the conversations should not be ambiguous, unnecessary prolixity, and it has to be in order.

Furthermore, in using politeness strategies and being cooperative in interaction, there is always intended meaning proposed by speakers to make hearers do something. This term is called illocutionary act. It is utterance which has social function in mind. Illocutionary act is part of speech act. Austin (1962), stated that illocutionary act is the act of doing something. According to Searle (1979), illocutionary act is divided into five categories. They are representatives, directives, commissives, declarative, and expressive. Representatives are types of illocutionary act that commit the speaker believe about something the truth or not. In performing this type of illocutionary act, it can be noted by some performative verbs, such as: state, tell, assert, correct, predict, report, remind, described, inform, assure, agree, guess, claim, believe, conclude, etc. Directives are illocutionary act that attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. It is commonly appear with some performative verbs such as: requesting, demanding, questioning, asking, proposing, advising, suggesting, interrogating, urging, encouraging, inviting, begging, ordering, and etc. Commissives are kind of illocutionary act that is commit the speaker to some future course of action. In performing this type of illocutionary act, commonly using performative verbs such as: ask, order, command, request, beg, plead, pray, entreat, invite, permit, advise, dare, defy, and challenge. Declaratives are kind of illocutionary acts that change the world via their utterances. The words that can be indicated into this type are curse, announce, declare, define, appoint, call, bless, nominate, and authorized. Expressives are kind of illocutionary act that state what the speaker feels. They express psychological states and can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy or sorrow, surprise, apologize, and gratitude.

There are several studies related to politeness and cooperation have been conducted. Some studies related to politeness in movies have been conducted (Safitri, Mujiono, and Herawati, 2015; Norra, 2015; Septyaningsih, 2007; Setiawan, 2015; Septyani 2016; and Aryani, 2017), Politeness with speech act (Hastari, 2013 and Aslikhatulmilah, 2015), Politeness and cooperative principles (Winarsih, 2009; Whardani, 2013; Olotuyo, 2015; Nanda, 2015; and Karim, 2016). However, the research analyzing politeness strategy, cooperation principles and speech act in a movie has not been conducted yet. Thus, this research intends to analyze politeness strategies, cooperation principles, and speech act in Mean Girls Movie.

## **II. Methodology**

The study was designed by using qualitative descriptive approach. According to Krogmann, Stapleton, and Cville (2017), qualitative Descriptive Analysis refers to a set of methods that aim to summarize the sensory characteristics of products using technical language. This study discussed the description of politeness and cooperation that occurs in Mean Girls movie conversation. It is obtained to find out politeness strategy, cooperative principle, and speech act in Mean Girls movie. The data has been analyzed by using these following steps:

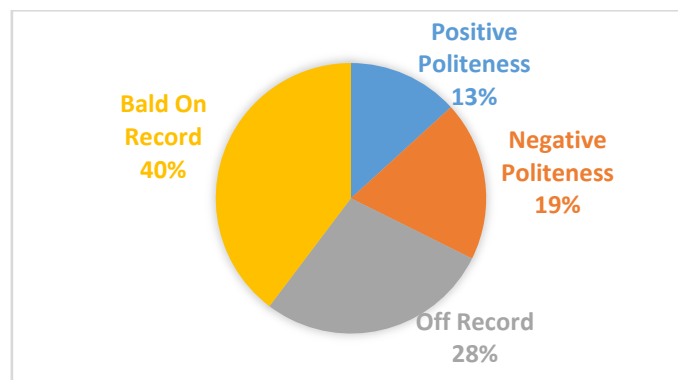
1. Reading the movie script
2. Identifying and highlighting the politeness strategies from the movie script.
3. Identifying the cooperation and speech act from the conversation which includes politeness strategies
2. Classifying the politeness strategies, cooperative principles, and speech act into their types.
3. Counting the total of each of them
4. Finding out the dominant types of three of them.
5. Analyzing the results by using qualitative descriptive.

## **III. Results and Discussions**

In this results and discussions, will discuss about politeness strategies, cooperative principle, and speech act which are found in Mean Girls movie.

### **3.1. Politeness Strategies in Mean Girls Movie**

There are 4 politeness strategies used in Mean Girls movie, they are shown in the diagram below.



There are 68 politeness strategies found in Mean Girls movie. From the diagram above, it shows that bald on-record becomes politeness strategy which is dominantly used with 27 utterances (39%). It is followed by off-record with 19 utterances (28%) and negative politeness strategy with 13 utterances (19%). Positive politeness strategy becomes the least dominantly used strategy in the movie with only 9 utterances (14%). Bald on record becomes the most used strategy in the movie, it means that most of the characters in Mean Girls movie express their needs directly without avoiding imposition, for example:

Janis: No. Cady, **you gotta steal that book.**

Cady: No way!

In this case, Janis directly asks Cady to steal the book, but Cady refuses it. From the example above, Janis uses **bald on record** because she thinks that she has close relationship with Cady. Besides, Janis has a power to demand Cady, since Cady is a new student. It is in line with Culpeper (1996), bald on-record politeness strategy is used when threat to the hearer's face is very small or in a situation when the speaker is more powerful than the hearer. Bald on record becomes politeness strategy which is dominantly used because most characters in Mean Girls movie feel close to each other. However they also feel dominant and underestimate others. Moreover, off-record becomes the second politeness which is dominantly used in Mean Girls movie. It is shown in the box below:

Ms. Norbury: **My T-shirt stuck to my sweater, isn't it?**

Cady: yeah.

From the conversation above, Ms. Norbury uses **off record** strategy by saying "my t-shirt stuck to my sweater, isn't it?" Ms. Norbury intends to ask Cady to help her fix her t-shirt which stuck to her sweater. However, Ms. Norbury is a teacher and Cady is her student, so that Ms. Norbury uses off record strategy to save her face without imposing Cady. It is in line with Brown and Levinson (1987), they argue off record strategy is the use of indirect language to remove the speaker from the potential to be imposing. Furthermore, negative politeness becomes the third strategy which is dominantly used. The conversation is shown below:

Cady : **Can I have the lavatory pass?**

Cady's teacher: Nice try. Have a seat.

From the conversation above, Cady wants to go to toilet and asks the lavatory pass to her teacher. In this case, Cady use **negative politeness strategy** to avoid the imposition on the teacher by using "can I" because she asks permission from her teacher. It is in line with Brown and Levinson (1987), negative politeness strategy refer to the avoidance of imposition on the hearer. The last, positive politeness strategy becomes the least used in Mean Girls movie. The conversation is shown below:

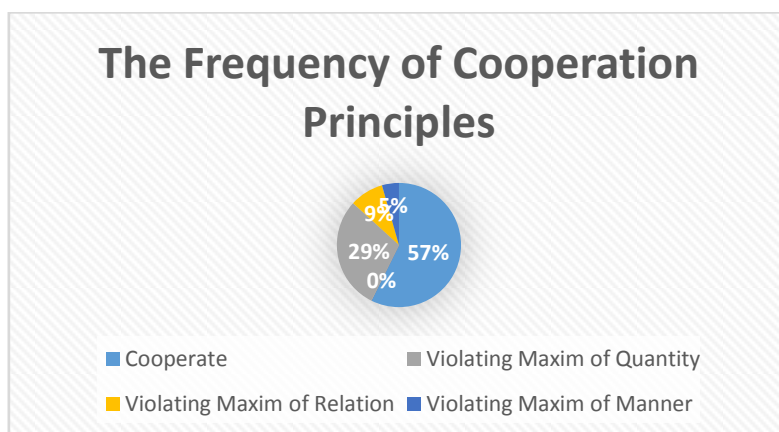
Kevin: Let me give you my card. OK, so **think it over.** Because **we'd** like to get jackets.

Cady: OK.

From the conversation above, it shows that Kevin is the captain of the North Shore Mathletes. As the captain, he tries to persuade Cady to join mathletes. He use **positive politeness strategy** to seem friendly. From the conversation, Kevin gives his card and also use the word “we” to show the closeness without threatening Cady. It is line with Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness strategies are used to reduce the threat to the hearer’s positive face. Positive politeness becomes the least strategy used because the characters mostly close to one another so that they do not need to use utterance which describes closeness between them.

### 3.2. Cooperative Principle in Mean Girls Movie

Besides being polite in conversation, the participants also have to be clear, it is based on Grice (1975), in which in the conversation, between speakers and hearers have to be cooperative without violating the four maxims. The frequency of cooperation is shown in the diagram below:



From the diagram above, it shows that the conversations using politeness are mostly cooperative, without violating the 4 maxims with total 39 conversations (57%). It is followed by violating maxim of quantity with 19 conversations (29%), Violating maxim of relation with 6 conversations (9%), and violating maxim of manner with 3 conversations (5%). The conversations in Mean Girls movie are mostly cooperative. It means that the speakers and hearers do no violate the maxims and the conversations are informative, true, relevant, and clear. The conversation below shows that the conversation between the 2 characters in the movie is cooperative.

Cady: No, shut up. Not her property.

Aaron: **No, don't tell me to shut up.**

From the conversation above, it shows the conversation is cooperative according to Grice (1975). In which, Cady asks Aaron to shut up but Aaron rejects it by saying “no, don't tell me to shut up”. It means that Aaron does not want to shut up as what Cady asks. Aaron gives informative, clear, relevant and true reply. Moreover, there are also maxim violations in the movie. The conversation below shows maxim of quantity violation.

Janis: Hey, I'm having an art show. So why don't you take a night off from your double life. I want you to see it.

Cady: **Coolness.**

From the conversation above, it shows that Cady violates maxim of quantity, since she is being less informative by saying “coolness”. By looking at Cady's answer, it is less informative whether or not Cady wants to come to the art show. Besides violating maxim of quantity, violating maxim of relation is also found in the movie. The conversation is shown in the box below.

By looking at the conversation above, Regina's answer is not relevant with Gretchen's statement. Gretchen asks Regina to talk to her but Regina says “nobody understands me” in reply, in which irrelevant. Furthermore, there is also violating maxim of manner in Mean Girls movie. The conversation is shown in the box below.

Gretchen: Regina, wait. Talk to me.

Regina: **Nobody understands me.**

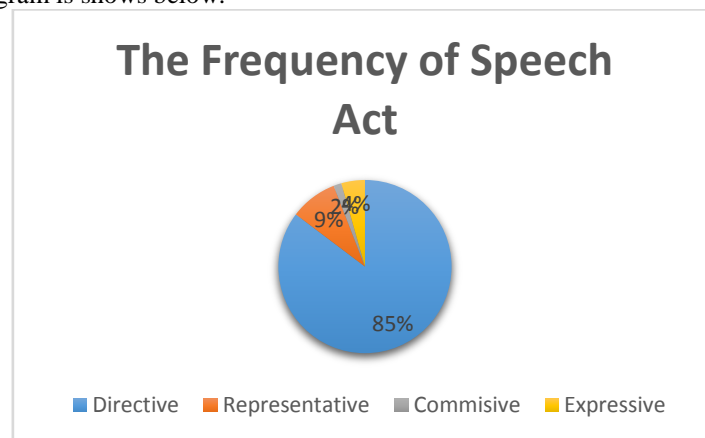
Gretchen: So, what are we doing this weekend?

Cady: **Oh, I have to go to Madison with my parents.**

From the conversation above, Cady's answer to Gretchen's question is ambiguous. By asking "what are we doing this weekend?" it means that Gretchen wishes they could do something on weekend but Cady answers by saying she has to go Madison with her parents. By looking at Cady's answer, there are 3 possibilities: Cady rejects Gretchen's invitation, Cady invites Gretchen to go with her to Madison, or she cancels her plan to go to Madison and go somewhere with Gretchen.

### 3.3. Speech Act in Mean Girls Movie

There are 4 kinds of illocutionary act found in the movie, which are directive, representative, expressive, and commissives. The diagram is shows below.



The diagram above shows that directive is the most speech act which is used in the conversations with 58 conversations (85%), followed by representative with 6 conversations (9%), expressive with 3 conversations (4%), and commissives with only 1 conversation (2%). Directive becomes the most type which is dominantly used in conversations. It means that the speakers directly ask the hearer to do something. The intention of the speakers are mostly to request, advise, propose, question, ask, invite, suggest, demand, and urge. It is in line with Searle (1979), in directive, speakers express about what they want directly to the hearer. It is commonly appear with some performative verbs such as: requesting, demanding, questioning, asking, proposing, advising, suggesting, interrogating, urging, encouraging, inviting, begging, ordering, and etc. For example:

Regina: **Could you give us some privacy for, like, one second?**

Cady: Yeah, sure.

From the example above, it shows that Regina intends to ask Cady to give Regina and friends times to talk. Regina uses directive speech act because she wants Cady to not include in their group talk for a while, like Cady should go for a while, since they want to talk about something they don't want Cady to know. Furthermore, there are also conversations which use representative. It is shown in the conversation below.

Cady: Hey. **I'm having a small get-together at my house tomorrow night.**

Aaron: Fine, I'll go.

From the conversation above, Cady states the fact that she throws a small get-together party in her house. Moreover, besides directive and representative, the characters of the movie also use expressive. The conversation is shown below.

Cady: **Anyway...I'm sorry.**

Ms. Norbury: I forgive you.

By saying "I'm sorry", Cady feels bad and regret for what has happened between Ms. Norbury and her. Another speech act used in Mean Girls movie is commissives,

Regina: **Promise me, you won't make fun of her.**

Aaron: Of course I'm not gonna make fun of her.

From the conversation above, Regina asks Aaron to promise he will not make fun of Cady and Aaron does. In short, in Mean Girls movie, the characters mostly use bald on record as the politeness strategy, directive as the intention of the speakers, and the conversations are mostly according to Grice's theory, which are informative, true, relevant, and clear. It indicates that the characters in the movie are mostly being close to each other so that they directly say what they intend to say.

#### IV. Conclusions

In movies, especially teenage movies, the characters mostly show their intention and express their feeling or needs directly. Since, the characters mostly interact with their friends so they communicate informally. Furthermore, in a conversation, speech act represents the intention of the speakers, politeness strategy is as the strategy to express speakers' intention / needs, and cooperative principle is the cooperation of the conversation (between speaker and hearer) without violating 4 maxims. It is recommended for future researcher to investigate this issue in other areas and give deeper explanations about reasons in using politeness strategies, speech act, and also cooperative principle.

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