

# Unearthing Positive Politeness Strategy in Commissive Illocutionary Acts

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**Abstract**— *This research aims at investigating the factors influencing the use of positive politeness strategy, identifying types of commissive illocutionary acts and analyzing the strategy used in delivering commissive illocutionary acts employed by the characters in a novel entitled Wildwood. The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive analysis, where the data is collected, then sorted and categorized and finally analyzed based on the theory. The results show that 1) the factors influencing to conduct positive politeness strategy is the payoff and size of imposition factors, 2) Types of commissive illocutionary acts found are promise, threat, contract, swear, dan pledge, and 3) Both strategies are employed in delivering the commissive illocutionary acts; direct strategies is more dominant than the indirect one.*

**Keywords**— *young learners, cartoons, learning characteristic.*

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## A. INTRODUCTION

In daily conversation people may conduct three types speech acts, namely locutionary act (literal function of an utterance), illocutionary act (social function that the utterance has) and perlocutionary act (the result or effect that is produced by the utterance) Austin (1962) in Levinson (1997:236). Locutionary act is basic acts of uttering or producing meaningful linguistics expressions. For example, the utterance “*The earth is not flat*”, is an expression merely informing that the earth is not flat; there is no other intention of saying the expression. Secondly, illocutionary act is an act of speech that one is said to do something; an act of doing something of saying something, like promising, stating, denying or asking (Yule: 1995:48). It is also defined as statements which give the impression on the face of it to be endowed with cognitive meaning turn out to be used in fact to perform expressive or directive illocutionary acts. Perlocutionary is a contributory response to an already fully delivered linguistics act, and so it is not strictly speaking a part of that act. It is what results from speaking (Searle: 2000:22). The utterance, “*Would you like a cup of coffee*”, in a locutionary act is expressed to give an offer. It is just offering a cup of coffee. On the other hand, in perlocutionary act, the utterance is delivered to impress hearer that the speaker is a friendly and warm person.

### **Illocutionary Acts**

Illocutionary acts are classified into five classes. Searle (1975) elaborates the five categories as the following:

1. Assertive is an illocutionary act that denotes a state of affairs, such as stating, suggesting, hypothesizing, asserting, telling, insisting, claiming, describing, or swearing.
2. Directive is an illocutionary act for getting the addressee to do something, such as ordering, defying, daring, commanding, challenging.
3. Commissive is an illocutionary act for getting the speaker (i.e. the one performing the speech act) to do something, like promising, intending, vowing, threatening to do or to refrain from doing something.
4. Expressive is an illocutionary act that expresses the mental state of the speaker about an event presumed to be true, for instance thanking, welcoming, apologizing, congratulating, deploring, or condoling.
5. Declarative is an illocutionary act that brings into existence the state of affairs to which it refers, like blessing, baptizing, firing, excommunicating, passing sentence, or bidding.

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**Commissive Illocutionary Acts**

As mentioned earlier, commissive illocutionary acts are utterances that obligate the speaker to some future course of action. Commissives are the types of speech acts in which the speaker conveys his intention regarding some future actions. Sometimes, someone wants to do something in the future times by saying something such as refusing, promising, warning, or threatening. Austin (1962) in Searle (1979) affirms that commissive is to oblige the speaker to a certain course of action, such as swear, vow, pledge, covenant, embrace, guarantee, contract, and promise. The expressive speech acts entail a speech act that necessitate the speaker to do an action in the future; it means that the speaker binds him or herself to do something in the future.

Austin (1962) categorized commissive into:

1. Promise is a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified. A promise is also a legally binding declaration that provides the person to whom it is made a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act. Promise is a declaration made, as to another person, with respect to the future, giving assurance that one will do or not to do something. It is a verbal commitment by one person to another agreeing to do. For example: *"She promised to return the book tomorrow."* The word promise indicates a certain action to be done in the future that is returning the book. However, when *"I'll be there in an hour"*. This expression show promise, that the speaker will fulfil what he stated.
2. Threat, is an expression of an intention to perpetrate injury, pain, punishment or evil. It is a statement in which the speaker tells the hearer that punishment or harm will be carried out is an action is not committed. For example: *"You will be sorry for what you have done"*. The utterance carries threat from the speaker to the hearer.
3. Contract is a binding agreement between two or more persons or parties, especially one legally enforceable. Generally, this relate to business. The utterance, *"The company has signed a contract with a new business counterpart"*,
4. Swear is to utter or take solemnly (an oath), to assert or promise emphatically or earnestly. For example, in *"I swear I will finish my study this year."* The speaker utters the strong promise to himself and the hearer that he will finish his study this year.
5. Pledge is to promise performed in a formal way with high degree of fulfilling the promise.
6. Guarantee, is a promise that something will be done or happened especially a written promise by company to repair or change a product that develops a fault within a particular period of time. In this utterance, *"The store guarantees that this bag is a genuine designer's product"*, shows that the store promise that something will be taken into action if the bag is not an original one.

The realizations of speech act are classified into two dimensions according to Parker (1986:17-20). The first, direct speech act has direct relationship between a structure and the function (Yule, 1996:55). Direct speech can be performed by using:

1) the typical association between sentence forms and speech acts. The table below show the structure and the function of the utterance.

	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative
Assertion	<i>He washed the dishes.</i>		
Question		<i>Who washed the dishes?</i>	
Order/Request			<i>Do the dishes.</i>

2) by using the performative verbs performatively.

Speech act	verb that names the speech act	example
assertion	assert	<i>I assert that he washes the dishes.</i>
question	ask	<i>I ask who will wash the dishes.</i>
order	order	<i>I order you to wash the dishes.</i>

request	request	I request that you wash the dishes.
promise	promise	I promise that I'll wash the dishes.
advice	advise	I advise you to wash the dishes.

The second is indirect, there is no direct relationship between a structure and a form but rather an indirect one. Following is utterances of indirect strategy.

	declarative	interrogative	imperative
assertion		1. <i>Is the pope Catholic?</i> 2. <i>Is ice old?</i>	
question	1. <i>I want to know who washed the dishes.</i> 2. <i>I do not know who washed the dishes.</i>		1. <i>Why don't you leave?</i>
request	1. <i>The dishes are not washed yet.</i> 2. <i>I would like for you to wash the dishes.</i>	1. <i>Can you wash the dishes?</i> 2. <i>Would you mind washing the dishes?</i>	

### **Factors Influencing Positif Politeness Strategies**

There are factors determining speakers using positive politeness strategy. Brown dan Levinson (1987) states that:

*"...any coherent agent will be disposed to select the same group of strategy under the same conditions — that is, take the same moves as any other would take under the circumstances. This is by quality of the fact that the particular strategies intrinsically meet certain payoffs or advantages, and the apropos circumstances are those in which one of these payoffs would be more beneficial than any other. We consider these in turn — first the intrinsic payoffs and then the relevant circumstances - and then relate the two."*

It is obvious that people employ positive politeness strategy to position themselves on the hearer's feeling, situation or circumstance. Basically, speaker employ positive politeness strategies to give benefits both to the speaker and the hearer, by saving hearer's positive face from certain situation. Two factors influencing speakers in employing positive politeness:

#### 1. Pay off

Brown dan Levinson (1987) asserts that to realize record with positive politeness, a speaker can minimize the face-threatening aspects of an act by assuring the addressee that S considers himself to be 'of the same kind', that he likes him and wants his wants. In other words, the speaker uses positive politeness strategy to get advantage by minimizing the face threatening act to convince the hearer that the speaker wants to fulfill the hearer's wants. Therefore, the hearer positive face is not threatened or safe. This utterance, "*Let's get on for dinner*" shows that the speaker minimizes the face threatening acts by involving the hearer by using the object pronoun *us* as in the phrase *let's* to indicate the speaker and the hearer are on the same position and are involved in the speaker's circle.

#### 2. Circumstance

The degree of face threatening act is determined by situation or circumstance, sociological variable and degree of politeness. According to Brown dan Levinson (1987) in Rahardi (2005: 68) there are three dimension that determine politeness level; relative power (P), social distance (D) dan size of imposition (R). Relative Power, people tend to use high level of politeness to those who have power and authority rather than to those who are not with power or have authority. This kind of hierarchical environment can be seen in a court, military, and workplace. For an example, people will greet their supervisor more politely than to their siblings. This is so, because the supervisor may determine their career in positively (reward power) or negatively (coercive way).

Secondly, *Social distance* (D) is determined by psychological factors such as, status, age, sex, intimacy). This relationship is based on the symmetrical relationship of the speaker and the hearer. For example, people may feel close with other people who share things in common, such age; the social gap may be little. As the result, people may not use polite addressee or choice of words. On the other hand, people will utter more politely to those who are not close or whose age are older than them.

Thirdly, *size of imposition* (R), is a circumstance where relative status between one act of utterance to another may be different even in the same context. For example, borrowing a car for a casual situation would be different from borrowing a car for an emergency situation. Borrowing a car for casual needs may carry reluctance, so the delivery of borrowing will be in a polite manner. On the contrary, in the case of borrowing a car for emergency situation, the speaker does not need to employ high polite manner.

## **B. METHODS**

### *A. Research Questions*

This research aims at seeking answers for the following questions:

- 1) What factors influence the use of positive politeness strategy?
- 2) What types of commissive illocutionary acts employed by characters in the novel?
- 3) What strategy is used in delivering the commissive illocutionary acts?

### *B. Purpose of the Research*

- 1) to investigate factors influence the use of positive politeness strategy.
- 2) to identify types of commissive illocutionary acts employed.
- 3) to analyze strategy is used in delivering the commissive illocutionary acts.

### *C. Object of the Research and Source of Data*

The object of the research is positive politeness factors in employing commissive illocutionary act with its dimension of employing it. The data is taken from a novel entitled *Wildwood* by Collin Meloy.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data investigated show that the factors that influence the speaker to employ positive politeness is pay off. For examples in the following data:

Sample data 1:

Governor: *"I will personally see to it that a battalion is devoted to search and rescue your friend Curtis"*  
(*Wildwood*:93)

The speaker, Governor, employs pay off positive politeness strategy because he put himself in the hearer's position. He feels what the hearer, Prue, feels about the situation that is worried about her friend who is missing. When the governor utters, *"I will personally see to it that a battalion is devoted to search and rescue your friend Curtis"*, he considers himself of the same kind; he wants what the hearer wants, her friend's Curtis is found and rescued.

The type of commissive illocutionary act of utterance: *"I will personally see to it that a battalion is devoted to search and rescue your friend Curtis"*, is the promise type. The modal auxiliary *will*, indicates that a future action will be done, which is *see to it that a battalion is devoted to search and rescue your friend Curtis"*. There is indication of serious effort for committing to the promise when the Governor uses the word *personally*.

The strategy employed by the speaker in delivering the commissive illocutionary act is direct strategy. The utterance' *"I will personally see to it that a battalion is devoted to search and rescue your friend Curtis"*, is a declarative sentence or a statement. The utterance is delivered without any needs of direct response from the hearer. It is an assertion.

Sample data 2

Curtis: *“Mac, I’m getting you out of here”*. (Wildwood:202)

In the above data, the speaker, Curtis, employs pay off positive politeness strategy because he put himself in the hearer’s position. He feels what the hearer, Mac, feels about the situation that is feeling endangered surrounded by wild birds. When Curtis says, *I’m getting you out of here”*, he considers himself of the same kind; he wants what the hearer wants, that he wants to be saved from the wild birds crowd. (Wildwood:192)

The type of commissive illocutionary act of assertion *I’m getting you out of here”*, is the promise type. The structure of be and presents participle show present continuous tense, indicates that a future action will be done, which is, *getting you out of here*. There is indication of serious effort for fulfilling to the promise when Curtis employs the present continuous form.

The strategy employed by the speaker in delivering the commissive illocutionary act is direct strategy. The utterance’ *“I’m getting you out of here”*, is a declarative sentence or a statement. The utterance is delivered does not needs of direct response from the hearer.

Sample data 3

The driver: *“Make one move, missy, and I’ll fill you full of holes”*. (Wildwood:62)

In the above data, the speaker, the driver, employs size of imposition positive politeness strategy because he put himself superior than the hearer’s position. He thinks that he is has authority to control the situation when he says, *“Make one move, missy, and I’ll fill you full of holes”*.

The type of commissive illocutionary act of utterance: *“Make one move, missy, and I’ll fill you full of holes”*, is the threat type. The utterance suggests that something unpleasant or violent will happen, especially if a particular action or order is not followed.

The strategy employed by the speaker in delivering the commissive illocutionary act is direct strategy. The utterance’ *“Make one move, missy, and I’ll fill you full of holes”*, is a declarative sentence or a statement. The utterance is conveyed without any needs of direct reply from the hearer.

Sample data 4

Owl : *“The North Wood has little dealing with the South\_– they are a reclusive people. But they may have an insight into your problem. They are responsible for the Periphery Blind – the protective spell woven into trees on the edge of the wood that protects and separates us from the outside”*. (Wildwood:192)

In the above data, the speaker, Owl, employs pay off positive politeness strategy because he put himself in the hearer’s position. He anticipates the feeling of the hearer. When he conveys, *“The North Wood has little dealing with the South”*, he considers himself of the same kind; he wants what the hearer wants, the deal will result good things to them.

The type of commissive illocutionary act of utterance: *“The North Wood has little dealing with the South”*, is the contract type. It is a binding agreement between two or more persons or parties. The dealing is in the form of legal paper contract between the North Wood and the South.

The strategy employed by the speaker in delivering the commissive illocutionary act is direct strategy. The utterance’ *“The North Wood has little dealing with the South”*, is a statement or declarative sentence. The utterance is delivered as a piece of information.

Sample data 5

Prue : *“I swear to you, Richard,” she said. “one of the coyotes said he was going to report another to the Dowager Governess. I heard it very clearly. And I don’t even know what that title means”*. (Wildwood:86)

In the above data, the speaker, Prue, employs pay off positive politeness strategy because he put himself in the hearer’s position. He feels what the hearer, Richard, feels about the situation that is concerned about the report. When

She utters: *"I swear to you, Richard," she said. "one of the coyotes said he was going to report another to the Dowager Governess. I heard it very clearly. And I don't even know what that title means"*, she considers herself of the same kind; he wants what the hearer wants.

The type of commissive illocutionary act of utterance *"I swear to you, Richard," she said. "one of the coyotes said he was going to report another to the Dowager Governess. I heard it very clearly. And I don't even know what that title means"*, is the promise type. The modal auxiliary *will*, indicates that a future action will be done, which is *see to it that a battalion is devoted to search and rescue your friend Curtis*". There is indication that Prue will put serious effort for committing by saying the word or verb swear which by the dictionary defined as to assert or promise emphatically or earnestly.

The strategy employed by the speaker in delivering the commissive illocutionary act is direct strategy. The utterance' *"I swear to you, Richard," she said. "one of the coyotes said he was going to report another to the Dowager Governess. I heard it very clearly. And I don't even know what that title means"* is an assertion in a form of declarative sentence. The utterance is conveyed without any needs of reply from the hearer.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

To summarize, this research shows that firstly, the factors employed in influencing to conduct positive politeness strategy is the payoff and size of imposition factors, secondly, the types of commissive illocutionary acts found are promise, threat, contract, swear, dan pledge, and thirdly, Both strategies are employed in delivering the commissive illocutionary acts; direct strategies is more dominant than the indirect one.

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