

# REQUEST STRATEGIES USED BY FIVE STREET DANCE GROUPS LEADERS TO MALE AND FEMALE MEMBERS IN THE MEETING

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## Abstract

This study entitled “Request Strategies Used by Five Street Dance Group Leaders to Their Male and Female Members in the Meetings” was conducted to know the influence of gender toward the request made by the leaders in the street dance groups’ meetings. The writer observed five young male leaders of five different street dance groups in making request to the male and female members in the meeting. The writer used the theory from Trosborg (1995) to classify the request uttered by the leaders. He found that the leaders mostly used the same request strategy, which is direct strategy to both male and female members in the meetings. The result also showed that the leaders used more indirect strategies, such as mild hints to the female than the male members probably because the leaders tried to be more polite to the female members.

Keywords: Request, Request Strategies, Gender

In conversation, people usually tell something, suggest, refuse, give advice, ask or request something. People make request in order to ask information about something they want to know, ask help from others, ask permission, and ask an addressee to do something for them. Request is something common used by the people every day, but each of them uses different strategies to make the request. In this study, the writer focuses on strategies of making request or usually called request strategies.

Request strategies can also be found in meeting, especially by the leader of the meeting. The leader of the meeting usually uses request strategies to the members of the meeting in order to ask for their comment or suggestion about how to solve the problem and make decisions. The writer finds out that this phenomenon is an interesting fact to observe since many leaders of the meeting use different request strategies to different groups of gender.

The writer chooses to do research on street dance group, because there have been many journals or linguistic research about communication in business, culture, school, family, and etc, but there is no research about groups in real entertainment world. According to the Linguistics Journal website, there are around 80 percent of the researches about communication in business or culture and the other 20 percent are researches in school or families (Robertson, 2012). This research would be interesting, because the street dance groups are informal group that comes from entertainment world, so the language choice and request strategies might be different from those of more formal ones.

The writer chooses five leaders from five different street dance groups in Surabaya. The five leaders are male Chinese Indonesians aged around twenty years old and the members of the street dance groups are slightly younger than them. In addition, the writer chose another social factor which is gender because the informal conversation with the leaders implies that leaders tend to be more polite to female members as they are more diligent than the males. Besides, the writer also uses the result of related study conducted by Xinjian (2008) as a reference to show that both male and female are sensitive to the gender of their requestees and vary their request strategies according to whom they make the request.

In this study the writer uses the theory of Request Strategies by Trosborg (1995). The following is the ten request strategies proposed by Trosborg (1995, pp. 192-204):

### a. Indirect Request

In this category, a speaker makes a request in indirect way to convey what his or her means or wants. Indirect request consist of Mild Hints and Strong Hints. In Mild Hints strategy, the requester can leave out the desired action clearly, but the requester's wish can't be partially mentioned, For example: "I have to write this task in eight minutes" (the speaker wants to borrow the pen). In Strong hint, the requester's wish can be partially mentioned (Trosborg, 1995, p. 192). The example of this sub-strategy is: "I have to write this task in eight minutes and my pen has lost" (the speaker wants to borrow the pen).

#### b. Conventionally Indirect (Hearer-Oriented Conditions)

This category consists of two strategies, which are Conventionally Indirect (hearer-oriented conditions). Requests that are hearer-oriented show that the hearer is in a position of control to decide whether or not to comply with the request. For this reason, hearer-oriented requests are generally more polite than requests formulated on speaker-based conditions (Trosborg, 1995, p. 197). Ability Statements, Willingness Statements, and Permission Statements are included in the first strategy, while Suggestory Formulae is included in the second strategy. The examples of first strategy are:

- Ability Statements: "Can you cut it up?"
- Willingness Statements: "Will you hear my new song?"
- Permission Statements: "Would you pick me up in her birthday party?"

Suggestory Formulae is an utterance which contains a suggestion to do something (Blum-Kulka, 1989, p. 18). The example is given below:

- Suggestory Formulae: "How about if you come to the hospital right now?"

#### a. Conventionally Indirect (Speaker-Based Conditions)

The next category is Conventionally Indirect (speaker-based conditions). A speaker can choose to focus on speaker-based conditions, rather than querying hearer-oriented conditions, thereby making his or her own desires the focal point of the interaction. This category has two strategies, namely Wishes or Desires Statements and Needs or Demands Statements. The examples are:

- Wishes or Desires Statements: "I think I would be right if you stop talking"
- Needs or Demands Statements: "I want to invite her in the stage"

#### b. Direct Request

The last category is Direct Requests. It means that a speaker makes his or her request in explicit way. Direct requests have three strategies, they are: Obligation Statements (first category), Hedged Performatives and Unhedged Performatives (second category), Imperatives and Elliptical Phrases (third category). The examples from obligation and performative strategy are:

- Obligation Statements: "You must be careful on the way"
- Hedged Performatives: "I would like to ask you to submit your research this week"
- Unhedged Performatives: "I am asking you to wash my car"

Trosborg (1995) says that imperatives are the grammatical form directly signaling that the utterance is an order (p. 204). While in Elliptical Phrases, a speaker only mentions the desired object that his or her means or wants. The examples are:

- Imperatives: "Don't talk anymore"
- Elliptical Phrases: "Thirteen pieces of paper, please"

Based on the explanation above, the writer intends to find the request strategies used by the leaders of the street dance group to the male and female members as well as their similarities and differences. For that purpose, the writer composes the following research questions:

- What are the frequencies of request strategies used by the leaders to the male members of the street dance groups?
- What are the frequencies of request strategies used by the leaders to the female members of the street dance groups?
- What are the differences and the similarities between the request strategies used by leaders to male and female members?

## METHODS

The key instrument of this research was the writer himself. He was the one who collected the data, conducted, and analyzed the data based on the theories mentioned in the previous section.

The source of data of his study was the utterances of five leaders from five different street dance groups in the meetings. There was only one leader per meeting, so in total there were five meetings led by five different leaders. Each meeting's duration was around thirty to fifty minutes. The meeting was held within September and October 2012. The data of this research were request strategies used by the leaders of five street dance groups to the male and female members.

The writer applied several steps in collecting the data. They are:

1. Pre-recording: the writer asked the permission from the leader of the street dance group to recorded the whole utterances that produced by him only in the meeting. After that the writer turned on the recorder and put it on the leader's table in the meeting room.
2. Recording: The writer joined the meeting but the writer did not participate and only observed the meeting. The writer joined the meeting in order to ensure that the recording went well.
3. Post recording: the writer transcribed the recording, put a tick and classified every request strategies produced by the leader of the street dance group. Then, the writer began analyzing the data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Type of Request Strategies Used by the Leaders to the Male Members

| Category                                               | Strategy                         | Frequency |       | Total |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|------|
|                                                        |                                  | N         | %     | N     | %    |
| Indirect Request                                       | Mild Hints                       | 0         | 0%    | 1     | 2.5% |
|                                                        | Strong Hints                     | 1         | 2.5%  |       |      |
| Conventionally Indirect<br>(Hearer Oriented Condition) | Ability Statements               | 2         | 5%    | 6     | 15%  |
|                                                        | Willingness Statements           | 2         | 5%    |       |      |
|                                                        | Permission Statements            | 0         | 0%    |       |      |
|                                                        | Suggestory Formulae              | 2         | 5%    |       |      |
| Conventionally Indirect<br>(Speaker Based Condition)   | Wishes or Desire Statements      | 0         | 0%    | 3     | 7.5% |
|                                                        | Needs or Demands Statements      | 3         | 7.5%  |       |      |
| Direct Request                                         | Obligation Statements            | 9         | 22.5% | 30    | 75%  |
|                                                        | Hedged & Unhedged Performatives  | 1         | 2.5%  |       |      |
|                                                        | Imperatives & Elliptical Phrases | 20        | 50%   |       |      |

The writer finds that the request strategy level mostly used by the leaders is Direct Request (75%). This kind of level consists of obligation statements, hedged or unhedged performatives, and imperatives or elliptical phrases. The leaders uttered 22,5% of obligation statements, 2,5% of hedged or unhedged performatives, and 50% of imperatives or elliptical phrases. The leaders use imperative or elliptical phrases so often toward the male members maybe because they wanted to give an order or obligation directly to one of the male members, so the male member understood it easily and directly obeyed it.

The conventionally indirect (hearer oriented condition) request strategies gets the second place in the total result. The conventionally indirect strategy consists of four sub-types, such as: ability statements, willingness statements, permission statements, and suggestory formulae. However, not all kinds of conventionally indirect strategies are uttered by the leaders of the street dance groups in the meeting. The writer noticed that the leaders only use ability statements for 5%, willingness statements for 5%, and the last is suggestory formulae for 5%. The leaders used those strategies probably because they wanted to make the members more active in the meeting

Table 2. Type of Request Strategies Used by the Leaders to the Female Members

| Category                                               | Strategy                         | Frequency |        | Total |        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|--------|-------|--------|
|                                                        |                                  | N         | %      | N     | %      |
| Indirect Request                                       | Mild Hints                       | 0         | 0%     | 10    | 23.25% |
|                                                        | Strong Hints                     | 10        | 23.25% |       |        |
| Conventionally Indirect<br>(Hearer Oriented Condition) | Ability Statements               | 1         | 2.32%  | 6     | 13.95% |
|                                                        | Willingness Statements           | 3         | 6.97%  |       |        |
|                                                        | Permission Statements            | 0         | 0%     |       |        |
|                                                        | Suggestory Formulae              | 2         | 4.65%  |       |        |
| Conventionally Indirect<br>(Speaker Based Condition)   | Wishes or Desire Statements      | 0         | 0%     | 1     | 2.32%  |
|                                                        | Needs or Demands Statements      | 1         | 2.32%  |       |        |
| Direct Request                                         | Obligation Statements            | 15        | 34.88% | 26    | 60.46% |
|                                                        | Hedged & Unhedged Performatives  | 0         | 0%     |       |        |
|                                                        | Imperatives & Elliptical Phrases | 11        | 25.58% |       |        |

The writer finds that the Direct Request (60.46%) strategy was mostly used by the leaders to the male members. This kind of level consists of obligation statements, hedged or unhedged performatives, and imperatives or elliptical phrases. The leaders uttered 34.88% of obligation statements and 25.28% of imperatives or elliptical phrases, while hedged and unhedged performative is not used (0%). The informal conversation with the leaders indicates that they used obligation statements so often toward the female members because they trust the female members more than the male members.

The indirect request strategies get the second place in the total result. The conventionally indirect strategy consists of two sub-types, such as: mild hints and strong hints. However, not all kinds of indirect strategies are uttered by the leaders of the street dance groups in the meeting. Based on the results, the leaders did not use mild hints strategies, permission statements, and hedged/unhedged performatives in their utterances toward the female members. The leaders do not use this request probably because mild hint strategy is usually used by the members who have lower level than by the leaders who have higher level in position.

Table 3. The Differences and the Similarities between the Request Strategies Used by Leaders to Male and Female Members

|                                                        |                                  | To Male (%) |                | To Female (%)                    |             |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Indirect Strategies                                    | Mild Hints                       | 0           | 1<br>(1.2%)    | Mild Hints                       | 0           | 10<br>(12.04%) |
|                                                        | Strong Hints                     | 1 (1.2%)    |                | Strong Hints                     | 10 (12.04%) |                |
| Conventionally Indirect<br>(Hearer Oriented Condition) | Ability Statements               | 2 (2.4%)    | 6<br>(7.2%)    | Ability Statements               | 1 (1.2%)    | 6<br>(7.2%)    |
|                                                        | Willingness Statements           | 2 (2.4%)    |                | Willingness Statements           | 3 (3.61%)   |                |
|                                                        | Permission Statements            | 0           |                | Permission Statements            | 0           |                |
|                                                        | Suggestory Formulae              | 2 (2.4%)    |                | Suggestory Formulae              | 2 (2.4%)    |                |
| Conventionally Indirect<br>(Speaker Based Condition)   | Wishes or Desire Statements      | 0           | 3 (3.61%)      | Wishes or Desire Statements      | 0           | 1<br>(1.2%)    |
|                                                        | Needs or Demands Statements      | 3 (3.61%)   |                | Needs or Demands Statements      | 1 (1.2%)    |                |
| Direct Request                                         | Obligation Statements            | 9 (10.84%)  | 30<br>(36.13%) | Obligation Statements            | 15 (18.07%) | 26<br>(31.32%) |
|                                                        | Hedged & Unhedged Performativ    | 1 (1.2%)    |                | Hedged & Unhedged Performatives  | 0           |                |
|                                                        | Imperatives & Elliptical Phrases | 20 (24.09%) |                | Imperatives & Elliptical Phrases | 11 (13.25%) |                |

From the table above, the writer analyzes the difference first and then the similarities of the request strategies that are used by the leaders. The first difference is that the leaders used less indirect strategies to male than to female members. The leaders used strong hints only for 1 time (1.2%) to the male, while to the females, the leaders used it for 10 times (12.04%). This difference could happen possibly because the leaders wanted to be more polite in giving the request to the female members.

The next difference is that in conventionally indirect strategies (hearer oriented condition), the leaders used ability statement strategy for 2 times to males (2.4%) and only 1 time to females (1.2%). From the informal conversation with the leaders, the writer found out that males are less disciplined than the females. Because of that reason, probably the leader doubted the males' ability and it affects their request strategies. For example, in willingness statements strategy, the leaders used it less often to males, only 2 times (2.4%) if compared to that of females, which is 3 times (7.2%). In addition, in conventionally indirect strategies (speaker based conditions), the leaders used need or demands statement strategy for 3 times (3.61%) to male and only 1 time (1.2%) to the female.

The last differences are in direct strategies. The leaders tend to use obligations statements strategy more often to the female, which is 15 times (18.07%) than to the male members, which is 9 times (10.84%). This difference occurred maybe because the leaders trust the female members more than the male members in doing the obligation. The leaders also used hedged & unhedged performative to the male for only 1 time (1.2%); but they did not use it to the female at all. Imperatives and elliptical phrases used by the leaders for 20 times (24.09%) to the male and only 11 times (13.25%) for the female. This difference occurred probably because the leaders tried to be firmer to the male members, because the male members tend to be lazy and reckless.

There are also similarities between the request strategies used by the leaders to male and to female members. The similarities are that, the first, the leaders did not use any mild hints strategy maybe because this strategy is usually used by the members who have lower position than by the leaders who has higher position. The second, the leaders used suggestory formulae to males (2.4%) as many as to the female members (2.4%) probably because the leaders wanted to give an additional idea or correction to both male and female members. The third, the leaders did not use permission statements either, probably because this kind of strategy is used for asking permission and the one who usually uses it is the member, not the leader. The fourth, the leaders did not use wishes or desire statements strategy possibly because the leaders are males and males tend to speak to the point and show their request through other strategies rather than tell their wishes or desire.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

As the result has come up, it shows that the leaders mostly used direct strategies to both male and female members in the meeting, such as obligation statements and imperative phrases. The obligation statements are used mostly to the females, probably because the leaders trusted them more to do the task, while the imperatives phrases are used mostly to the males, possibly because the leaders tried to be firmer to the males.

On the other hand, there are also some differences and similarities between the request strategies used by the leaders to male and female members. The differences are the leaders tend to use more direct request strategies, such as imperatives phrases, to the male than to the female members and used more indirect request strategies, such as mild hints, to the female than to the male members. The similarities are the leader did not use some strategies at all, such as mild hints, permission statements, and wishes or desire statements. It happens maybe because some strategies like permission and wishes or desire statements are usually used by the members that have lower position than the leaders. Compared to the previous study by Xinjian (2008), the present study has similar results that the leaders tend to use more direct request strategies to the male than to the female members.

Lastly, the writer hopes this study will be useful for those who want to enrich their knowledge about request strategies. In addition, the writer also recommends other researchers to do further studies with other social factors that might affect the use of request strategy, such as ethnicity, education background, or economic status.

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