

# Language Realizations of Dispreferred Social Acts in Intimate Relationship: a conversation analysis on the Lion King Movie

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the language realizations of dispreferred social acts from an animation movie called the Lion King (1994) used a model how English was used to express dispreferred social acts naturally. Descriptive-qualitative research design was used to describe the phenomena about dispreferred social acts. This research qualitatively generates the narrative data about the realizations of dispreferred social acts in the movie that were performed in mitigated and unmitigated forms. The research findings showed that the movie characters mitigated the form of the language realizations of dispreferred social acts to maintain social relationship. Unless their relationship was established, they sometimes express their intimate expressions directly without mitigation. Therefore, teachers should use the mitigated form of English to appear polite.

**Keywords:** Dispreferred Social Acts, Language Realizations, Conversation Analysis

In real life, foreign language learners experience difficulties in using English in a conversation. Robertson *et al.* (in Sawir, 2005) investigate the difficulties experienced by the international EFL learners studying at one Australian university. The learners showed lack of confidence with English. They did not fully understand their lecturers' spoken English and felt unhappy with their oral performance when having a conversation with their classmates. They also concerned problems of interpretation. The difficulties mentioned before happened because in doing a conversation using English, they not only used the language to deliver the information but also needed to understand the context and meaning in order to maintain social relationship, and establish the conversation. When doing a conversation, they needed to consider what the sender of a message intended to

achieve and understand its function. They also needed to consider the context on how to use the language in interaction and its function, to whom, and in what situation. This is in line with the idea that language in interaction is not a simple transmitter of information, but is a means of accomplishing social action (Wooffitt, 2005).

Such problems might happen even in a less formal situation, like outside the lecture session. Students might be afraid of making mistakes or even feeling embarrassed if they cannot respond properly or give the response to something that is not expected. They are also afraid of giving an unexpected response to the first speaker's utterance. This happens as giving the unexpected response to the utterance from the first speaker is not as simple as just saying the word "No". That is why, one of the difficulties that Indonesian EFL learners usually find is how to express their feeling in responding the utterance from the first speaker in English, especially when it comes to the unexpected response. That kind of thing happens as Indonesian and English culture have different way in expressing the dispreferred response as it contains more complex structures, like delaying/ hesitating, saying preface, expressing doubt, saying token yes, apologizing, mentioning obligation, appealing for understanding, making it non personal, giving an account, using mitigators, hedging the negative, and directly declining. (Yule, 1996:81).

In adjacency pairs, the responses to the first utterances are differed into two responses, they are preferred and dispreferred responses. Dispreferred response is a kind of response that is unexpected by the first speaker. It is in the same line as Yule's (1996:79) idea that dispreferred response is the structurally unexpected next act. Although it is not being expected by the first speaker, the second speaker cannot just avoid saying their dispreferred because they want to. The concept of preference deals with what the possible ways that can be happened are, when some

conversational actions are accomplished. It does not refer to the personal desires of the speakers, but rather to the recurrent patterns of talk in which actions are carried out (Liddicoat, 2007). In real life conversation, we would like to find that the responses that are given to the first speaker's utterance will not always be like what the first speaker would expect. For example, a recipient of an offer or an invitation may accept it or even decline it. Request can be granted or rejected. Then, the language realizations of dispreferred social acts can be divided into mitigated form and unmitigated form. The mitigated form means that the way to do dispreferred response is explicitly declining. It also can be said that in giving the response the word "No" is vanished (Schegloff, 2007). It is used to reduce the possibility in directly saying "No". However, it still can be interpreted as a 'no-like' response. Then, for the unmitigated form, it means that the way to do dispreferred response is directly declining. The action which is routinely performed is unremarkable because it is given immediately (Liddicoat, 2007).

EFL learners in Indonesia are likely afraid of having conversation in English, and this research is important to be conducted as it is important to make the interaction sensible. In this research, the researcher used conversational analysis. The reason of using conversational analysis is to understand and get deeper meaning of human language behavior. It is hard to do a conversation with others without having a misunderstanding, especially if students do not make sense what other parties' intentions are. That is why to know the meaning of the language; they depend so much on the theory of discourse analysis and conversational analysis.

It is in line with Levinson's (1983:206) idea that there are two major approaches that can be considered as the approach to the analysis of conversation that are discourse analysis and conversational analysis. Both approaches concern with giving an account of how coherence and sequential organization in discourse is

produced and understood. In this research, the researcher used conversational analysis as this approach does not too technical like discourse analysis. Besides, it is also a useful approach to analyze the order of conversation happened in everyday linguistics experience.

This research analyzed some cases related to the dispreferred response. Some selected utterances performed by the characters in the Lion King (1994) movie were analyzed based on dispreferred response theory proposed by Stephen C. Levinson (1983) and George Yule (1996). The research was intended to analyze the types of dispreferred responses, such as refusal of offer, refusal of invitation, disagreement of assessment, unexpected answer of question, and admission of blame. The researcher also analyzed the language realizations of the dispreferred responses performed by the characters in the movie.

However, the focus of this research was just to the dispreferred responses performed by the characters that have intimate relationship in the Lion King (1994) movie by using the theory of conversational analysis. The characters that have intimate relationship are those who are connected as families, couples or close friends in the movie. The conversation between the characters that have intimate relationship happens in private or non-professional settings. It is important to study about intimate relationship in interaction as the students need to use the language to get closer and establish the relationship with each other. It means that the function of the language that is used by the students is interactional.

The purpose of analyzing the dispreferred response in this movie is because in the curriculum that is used in school, the students need to learn about many English expressions like offer, assessment, and request. While learning about those

expressions mentioned before, the students also need to learn about giving appropriate responses to the expressions according to their own intention without causing misunderstanding with others.

There is a research with the theme of conversational analysis of dispreferred response conducted by Sholicha Wati (2015) who focuses on the dispreferred social acts performed by the character and notes on 6 types of dispreferred social acts and 12 functions of dispreferred social acts. Other study about dispreferred response is conducted by Alireza Jalilifar (2013) who investigates the strategies applied in dispreferred responses by Iranian university students of English. His research findings show that a sizeable number of the learners have delivered responsibility to other sources using accounts and discourse markers and that solidarity is the dominant aspect among the learners.

This topic about dispreferred response encourages the writer's curiosity to carry out a research to analyze the realizations or the ways in doing dispreferred response in intimate relationship using conversational analysis performed by the characters in the Lion King movie. Therefore, a research entitled "Conversational Analysis of Language Realizations of Dispreferred Social Acts in Intimate Relationship in the Lion King (1994) Movie" was conducted.

## **Research Method**

Descriptive-qualitative research design was used to describe the phenomena about dispreferred social acts. Qualitative research generates narrative data. It means that the data is described in words instead of in numbers (Monsen & Van Horn, 2008). That is why, this research emphasized in describing the dispreferred response in the movie, then, analyzing the utterance in narrative way. Then, this research used

conversational analysis approach. It studies about the talk that happens in our everyday interaction as Psathas (1995:1) sees that conversational analysis represents a methodological approach to the study of talk-in-interaction. It means that conversational analysis is an approach that is effective to analyze how people do their actions in everyday social life. In this research, the researcher described and analyzed the social action that happens in an everyday interaction that is dispreferred social acts or response. This research was intended to analyze the realizations on how the characters in the movie did their dispreferred response in an interaction.

The researcher used the data from an American popular animation that tells about a story of a circle of life that portrays a lion cub's journey to adulthood and royal throne, called *The Lion King* (1994). The type of the data was qualitative data as this research is included as a qualitative research. For this research, the researcher used utterances performed by the characters in the *Lion King* (1994) movie as primary data. The data was in the form of dialogue. There were 46 dialogues indicated dispreferred social acts from the movie that the researcher used to find the language realizations of dispreferred social acts.

To collect the data, the researcher used documentary (bibliographical) method. In collecting the data, the researcher collected the data by considering the utterances which had dispreferred responses. However, the researcher did not collect all dispreferred responses found in the movie. Instead, the researcher only grouped the dispreferred response performed by the characters that have intimate relationship. Then, the data collected was not based on the number of the utterances that was found in the movie but it was based on the needs for finding the generalization to the ways or the realizations of the characters that have intimate

relationship perform their dispreferred social acts within the scope of the Lion King (1994) movie.

Data analysis was needed to be done by using descriptive analysis. In this research, the researcher described the data by using the dispreferred social acts theory proposed by George Yule (1996) and Stephen C. Levinson (1983). To make an easy analysis, excerpts were taken from the scene. In every excerpt, there might be more than one realization of dispreferred social acts. The characters did not use just one realization in responding the utterance from the first speaker. It could be more than one. For example, in one excerpt, there might be found 3 realizations of dispreferred social acts. Numbering system was applied for excerpts and realizations of dispreferred social acts.

### **Research results**

There were 46 excerpts of dispreferred social acts found in the movie. The excerpts were taken from the scene. The selected excerpts found were performed by the characters that have intimate relationship in the Lion King (1994) movie. In certain excerpts, there was more than one realization of dispreferred social acts as the characters did not use just one realization in responding the first speaker's utterances.

There were five types of dispreferred social acts found in the Lion King (1994) movie. The types of dispreferred social acts found were Request-Refusal (A); Offer-Refusal (B); Assessment-Disagreement (C); Question-Unexpected Answer (D); Blame-Admission (E). From all five types of dispreferred social acts, the dispreferred social acts of request (A) had 23 language realizations. It was the most

type of dispreferred social acts which was regularly performed by the characters that have intimate relationship in the *Lion King* (1994) movie.

The language realizations occurred in mitigated and un-mitigated forms. The mitigated forms of dispreferred social acts were performed by Delaying/ hesitating (I); Saying Preface (II); Expressing doubt (III); Saying Token Yes (IV); Apologizing (V); Mentioning Obligation (VI); Appealing for understanding (VII); Making it non personal (VIII); Giving an account (IX); Using mitigators (X); Hedging the negative (XI). The characters used the mitigated forms to reduce the possibility to directly say the word 'No'. Then, for the unmitigated form was performed by Directly Declining (XII). The characters used the unmitigated form to reduce the language that was used and to immediately say the word 'No'.

Next, each type had been mostly realized using certain language realizations. For type A (Request-Refusal), it had been mostly realized by Giving an Account (IX) and Directly Declining (XII). Type B (Offer-Refusal) had been mostly realized by Saying Preface (II). Type C (Assessment-Disagreement) had been mostly realized by Saying Preface (II). Type D (Question-Unexpected Answer) had been mostly realized by Expressing Doubt (III). Last, type E (Blame-Admission) had been mostly realized by Saying Token Yes (IV).

## **Discussion**

The dispreferred social acts of request have 23 language realizations out of 66 language realizations found in the movie. It is the most type of dispreferred social acts which is regularly performed by the characters that have intimate relationship in the *Lion King* (1994) movie. A dispreferred social act of request is also the most regularly performed type in a research conducted by Wati (2015). According to

Becker (in Wati, 2015), a request is an action that is used to ask the other speakers to perform something.

Although they have intimate relationship, it does not mean that they do not have any problems surrounding their life. The characters that have intimate relationship in the movie often drop their mask to show their true character. It is in line with Goffman's (in Clancy, 2016) idea that people with intimate relationship can relax, drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of the character. The relationship that is not good can be seen from the relationship between the characters of Simba and Scar. Although they have nephew-uncle relationship, they are having dispute long before the conversation happens since Scar does many bad things to Simba which makes Simba hates his uncle. As the characters have intimate relationship, they can easily refuse the request because they are not afraid of dropping their mask and show their true characters.

The analysis was done by using the dispreferred social acts theory proposed by Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996). The realizations of dispreferred social acts by the characters that have intimate relationship in the movie are performed in two ways. The first way is by using the mitigated forms of realizations of dispreferred social acts or by trying to completely making the word "No" vanished and reducing the possibility to directly saying "No". The second way is by using the unmitigated form of realizations of dispreferred social acts or by giving an overt "No" and directly declining the utterance from the first speaker.

The research found that giving a dispreferred social act is not simple because it is a part of social culture that could not be avoided as the speakers wanted to. It is like what Liddicoat (2007) also says that dispreferred does not refer to the personal

desires of the speakers, but rather to the recurrent patterns of talk in which actions are carried out. Then, performing a dispreferred needs more effort to know how the English native speakers express their dispreferred response naturally. Indonesian EFL learners for example, they need to know that English and Indonesia have different way in doing dispreferred as the culture is also different.

In Indonesia, a directly declining expression from the first speaker to the second speaker that they are not close enough is not considered being rude as the culture does not categorize it as rude realization of dispreferred social acts. A study conducted by Chojimah (2015) found that Indonesian people are quite likely to directly refuse by saying *tidak* or 'no'. The study suggested that in Indonesia, direct strategies in refusal whose main characteristic is the use of negating particle 'no' are by no means less polite. It means that direct refusal in Indonesian can also be polite. Direct refusal among Indonesians is not prohibited especially if it is followed with some mitigating devices.

In other words, saying a direct refusal in English is considered less polite or rude. In this research, we can find that the characters as English native speaker do not give direct rejection to the utterances from the first speaker unless they want to avoid the criticism from the first speaker. When they want to talk about the topic further and receive more feedback from the first speaker, they give more complex elaboration by using the mitigated form of realizations of dispreferred social acts in order to avoid being seen as rude person. In the movie, the second speaker uses more language to perform the dispreferred social acts in order to be seen as polite like what Yule (1996) proposed that in doing a dispreferred, it needs more time and language to be polite. The number of data of language realizations found from this

research was 66. The 66 language realizations were collected from the analysis of excerpts.

The characters that have intimate relationship in the movie choose to realize their dispreferred by elaborating their language as they do not want to be seen as rude to someone that they are close to. However, it does not mean that they do not realize their dispreferred social acts by using the unmitigated form of dispreferred social acts that is directly declining. They usually say the direct dispreferred which has less elaboration if they have a very intimate relationship, like couple or family relationship.

Although Schegloff (2007) states that the nature of dispreferred social acts is mitigated, the characters that have intimate relationship in the movie choose to make the response unmitigated by directly declining according to who says the expression, to whom they are talking to, and in what situation. The characters choose to say a direct dispreferred response if they are talking about something private to another character who has the closest intimate relationship with them. Moreover, the conversation commonly happens in an informal situation. Next, based on Liddicoat's (2007) theory, the nature of dispreferred social acts is delayed and complex.

However, the characters that have intimate relationship choose to give immediate and simple dispreferred response in order to avoid further criticism from the first speaker and avoid in talking and giving further elaboration about the topic. As they already have an establish relationship, they can express their intimate expression like rejection by using less elaboration or using direct rejection. Yule (1996) also says the same thing. He says that when having a conversation happens in an informal situation between those who are close familiars will tend to have fewer

elaborate dispreferred as they do not in a stage of working on the relationship anymore.

## **Conclusion**

It can be found from the discussion that the dispreferred social act of request is the most type of dispreferred social acts found in the movie. Although the characters have intimate relationship, it does not mean that they did not have any problems. They had conflict even long before the conversation happened. The characters that had intimate relationship in the movie also often dropped their mask to show their true character. As they had intimate relationship, they could easily refuse the request because they were not afraid of dropping their mask and showed their true characters.

In other words, English speaking people such as the characters in the above movie might choose to say a direct dispreferred response if they talk about something private to others who have the closest intimate relationship with them. Moreover, the conversation commonly happens in an informal situation. As they have an established relationship, they can express their intimate expression like rejection by using less elaboration or using direct rejection. The people with intimate relationship might realize their dispreferred social acts by choosing the mitigated form of the language realizations of dispreferred social acts to maintain the social relationship with others. It is better to use the mitigated forms because they sound polite.

Therefore, English teachers should use and teach their students how to say the dispreferred response by using the mitigated form. They should also realize some words that might belong to the unmitigated response which usually sound impolite.

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