

Illocution and Perlocution Indicating Politeness and Impoliteness in *The Ron Clark Story*

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the speech acts that are present within Shameika's polite and impolite utterances as responses to Mr. Clark in the movie "The Ron Clark Story". It is aimed to understand how the compatibility between illocutionary act and intended perlocutionary effect can indicate the degree of politeness in educational settings by students and teachers. This research addresses a gap in the relation between speech act and politeness degree within educational context, particularly focusing on Shameika as a student. The analysis is based on theories by Austin (1962), Short (1997), Brown and Levinson (1978), Culpeper (2011), and Brown and Prieto (2017). The findings reveal that there is a relation between speech act and politeness degree. The illocutionary act of Shameika's impolite utterances that are directed toward Mr. Clark cannot fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect, even when she uses mock impoliteness when their relationship is already close. Meanwhile, the illocutionary act of Shameika's polite utterances that are directed toward Mr. Clark can fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect, even if the polite utterance is not produced voluntarily by Shameika. The study concludes that one of the most effective ways for a student to produce polite utterances toward a teacher is by fulfilling the teacher's intention.

Keywords: illocutionary, impoliteness, perlocutionary, politeness

INTRODUCTION

This study discusses how the compatibility between intended perlocutionary effect and actual perlocutionary effect can indicate politeness degree within an utterance. The writer chooses to analyse *The Ron Clark Story* movie (Haines, 2006) due to one of the students named Shameika who produces many unique polite and impolite utterances to Mr. Clark. These utterances contain many illocutionary acts that can either fulfil or oppose Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect on their own interesting ways before and after she respects Mr. Clark. Therefore, the writer wants to analyse if the compatibility between the illocutionary act within Shameika's utterance as actual perlocutionary effect and Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect can indicate politeness and impoliteness within Shameika's utterances before and after she respects Mr. Clark. The writer uses theories proposed by Austin (1962), Short (1997), Brown & Levinson (1978), Culpeper (2011), and Brown & Prieto (2017).

METHODS

The writer used a qualitative method in this study. The data were taken from Shameika's and Mr. Clark's utterance to each other in *The Ron Clark Story* movie. The source of the data is taken from the utterances in the entire movie. The writer used a two-digit numbering system to observe the chosen scene and collect the data. The speech act portion of the data was analysed using Austin's (1962) theory of speech act and Short's (1997) theory of intended and actual perlocutionary effect. While the politeness

degree was analysed with Brown & Levinson's (1978) theory of politeness, Culpeper's (2011) theory of impoliteness, and Brown & Prieto's (2017) theory of gesture and intonation in politeness degree.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents Shameika's polite and impolite utterances when she is talking to Mr. Clark, along with the compatibility between her illocutionary acts and Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effects before and after Shameika respects him. Before Shameika respects Mr. Clark, most of her utterances are impolite. Meanwhile, most of her utterances are polite after Shameika respects Mr. Clark. The writer found that all of her polite utterances can fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect, while all of her impolite utterances cannot. The comparison between Shameika's polite and impolite utterances before and after she respects Mr. Clark is discussed in the section below.

Before Shameika Respects Mr. Clark

Within the first half of the movie when Shameika does not respect Mr. Clark, there are total of 18 utterances that are impolite and only 1 utterance that can be considered to be polite to Mr. Clark.

Polite

Below are the examples of conversations before Shameika respects Mr. Clark where her responses to Mr. Clark can be considered to be polite.

Sample 1

Situation 6: In the hallway

C: It's up to you whether we eat or not. Shameika, this is a family and families treat each other with respect. They never, ever, lie to one another. Did you cut in line? We are all just waiting... on you. (6. 7)

Intended perlocutionary effect: Shameika admits that she cut in line.

S: Yeah. (6. 8)

Illocutionary act: Shameika admits that she cut the line

In utterance 6.7, Mr. Clark persuades Shameika to admit that she cut the line by using peer pressure and reminding her to respect her friends. The intended perlocutionary effect that Mr. Clark wants is for Shameika to admit that she cut the line. In utterance 6.8, Shameika finally answers "yeah." Here, Shameika nods her head to represent her admission to Mr. Clark's accusation. She uses low-intonation because she feels bad losing to Mr. Clark after a long opposition. These gestures indicate politeness because Shameika does not have any choice, but to admit her fault after a long persuasion by Mr. Clark. This utterance is a confession. The illocutionary act is that Shameika admits her fault of cutting the line, which fulfils Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect.

Impolite

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Sample 2

Situation 1: At Shameika's place

C: Shameika Wallace? I'm Mr. Clark, your new teacher. I called earlier. (1.1)

Intended perlocutionary effect: Shameika greets him back and introduces herself.

S: It's Saturday fool. (1.2)

Illocutionary act: She does not want to be interrupted on a Saturday and Mr. Clark is not welcome.

Below are the examples of conversations before Shameika respects Mr. Clark where her responses to Mr. Clark can be considered to be impolite. In utterance 1.1, Mr. Clark greets Shameika as her new teacher. Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect of this utterance is for Shameika to greet him back and introduce herself politely. However, in utterance 1.2, Shameika responds by saying that it is Saturday, while calling Mr. Clark a "fool." Shameika uses high-intonation on the word "Saturday" to emphasise that Mr. Clark should not visit her on holiday. Due to this, Shameika's utterance is impolite because it directly rejects and insults Mr. Clark who has more authority. This utterance is a rejection. The illocutionary act of her utterance is that she does not want to be interrupted on Saturday so Mr. Clark is not welcomed, and thus does not fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect.

Sample 3

Situation 6: In the hallway

C: Shameika, did you cut in line? (6.1)

Intended perlocutionary effect: Shameika admit that she cut in line.

S: No, sir. I did not. (6.2)

Illocutionary act: Shameika lies to hide the truth that she cut the line.

In utterance 6.1, Mr. Clark asks Shameika if she cut in line. The intended perlocutionary effect that he wants is for Shameika to admit her fault of cutting the line. In utterance 6.2 however, Shameika responds by saying that she did not cut in line. This utterance has no verbal gesture, but is accompanied by head shakes to emphasise that Shameika disapproves of the accusation. Due to this, this lie can be considered impolite because Shameika tries to benefit herself by avoiding the accusation, which means it is not a white lie that can be considered polite. This utterance conveys disapproval. The illocutionary act of this utterance is that Shameika lies to convey that she did not cut in line, which obviously does not fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect that demands her to admit her fault.

After Shameika Respects Mr. Clark

Within the second half of the movie when Shameika finally respects Mr. Clark, there are a total of 13 utterances that are polite and only 4 utterances that can be considered to be impolite to Mr. Clark.

Polite

Below are the examples of conversations after Shameika respects Mr. Clark where her responses to Mr. Clark can be considered to be polite.

Sample 4

Situation 9: In the classroom

C: Shameik-izzle. *Gives Shameika her test result* (9.1)

Intended perlocutionary effect: Shameika takes her test paper back.

S: *Takes her test paper back* Thank you, Mr. Clark. (9.2) *Illocutionary act: Shameika expresses her thanks to Mr. Clark for giving her paperback.*

In the utterance 9.1, Mr. Clark calls Shameika as “Shameik-izzle,” while giving her paperback. The intended perlocutionary effect that he wants is for Shameika to take her paper politely. In utterance 9.2, Shameika thanks Mr. Clark for giving her the test paper. Even though both verbal and non-verbal gestures are not present within this utterance, it is polite because Shameika expresses her gratitude by thanking Mr. Clark. This utterance is a gratitude. The illocutionary is that Shameika expresses her thanks to Mr. Clark for giving her paperback, which fulfils Mr. Clark’s intended perlocutionary effect.

Sample 5

Situation 14: In the classroom

C: No. You are not losers. These rules? They represent everything you've accomplished this year. Discovering new things, believing in each other, believing in yourselves. And I'm proud of you. Compared to all that, this test? Pfh. It's nothing. (14.1)

Intended perlocutionary effect: The students stop worrying or at least be honest about their worries.

S: Mr. Clark, we have to get certain grades to graduate, right? So what if we, you know, choke? (14.2) *Illocutionary act: Shameika wants Mr. Clark to know that the students are not sure if they can pass the grade requirement.*

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In utterance 14.1, Mr. Clark tells the students that they are not losers and compared to everything they learned this year, the upcoming test is nothing. The intended perlocutionary effect that he wants is to make the students stop worrying by consulting with him. In utterance 14.2, Shameika responds by asking if they should get a certain grade to graduate, and about the possibility for them to choke. In this utterance, Shameika uses low intonation and lowers her eyebrows to express her worry about the state exam. These gestures indicate confession within Shameika's utterance, which makes it polite. The illocutionary act is that Shameika wants Mr. Clark to know that she and others are not sure if they can pass the minimum grade requirement. This utterance can still fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect because even though Shameika is still worried, she at least opens herself to consult with him.

Impolite

Below are the examples of conversations after Shameika respects Mr. Clark where her responses to Mr. Clark can be considered to be impolite.

Sample 6

Situation 8: At the schoolyard

C: Yeah. *Jumps into the rope* Ok, ok, ok, can you just go a little slower? (8.7)

Intended perlocutionary effect: The students agree to spin the rope a little slower.

S: Nuh-uh. You gotta do like we do. (8.8)

Illocutionary act: Shameika tries to challenge Mr. Clark to get closer to him.

This situation happens when Mr. Clark sees his students playing rope jump after school. He then asks if they can teach him to do a rope jump trick called "Double Dutch." In utterance 8.7, Mr. Clark finally tries to jump into the rope, but he asks the students to go slower shortly after. The intended perlocutionary effect that he wants is obviously for the students to spin the rope slower. In utterance 8.8 however, Shameika refuses and says that Mr. Clark has to do it like they do. Shameika does not use any verbal gesture in this utterance, but she uses some non-verbal ones, like head shake, hand spin and smile. The head shake is used to emphasise her disagreement to Mr. Clark's request to go slower. The hand spin refers to the way the students usually play rope jump. The smile is used to challenge Mr. Clark or underestimate him. This utterance is a disagreement and impolite, even though it is a mock impoliteness that Shameika uses to make her closer to Mr. Clark. The illocutionary act is that Shameika wants to challenge Mr. Clark's further in the game to get closer to him, which obviously goes against Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect to go slower.

Speech Act as Politeness and Impoliteness Indicator

In this section, the writer provides his analysis by comparing the ability of Shameika's illocutionary act within her polite and impolite responses to fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect. The analysis divides Shameika's responses to Mr. Clark into two groups, which are before and after she respects him. Before Shameika respects Mr. Clark, most of her utterances are impolite due to Shameika's efforts to oppose Mr. Clark's authority as the teacher. There is only 1 polite utterance that is forcefully produced by Shameika due to Mr. Clark's confrontation. After she respects him, almost all of Shameika's utterances to Mr. Clark are polite because she tries to cooperate with Mr. Clark as best as she

can. Even then, she still produces 4 impolite utterances with 2 of them being mock impoliteness. From the analysis, the writer used Brown & Levinson's (1978) theory of politeness, Culpeper's (2011) theory of impoliteness, and Brown & Prieto's (2017) theory of gesture and intonation to identify if Shameika's utterances can be considered polite or impolite. Furthermore, the writer used Austin's (1962) theory of speech act and Short's (1997) theory of intended and actual perlocutionary effects to decide whether Shameika's responses can fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect or not. The table below shows the compatibility between the illocutionary acts in Shameika's polite and impolite responses with Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect before and after she respects him.

Table 4.3 Shameika's Responses in The Entire Movie

Shameika's Responses			
Before	Polite	Compatible	1
		Not Compatible	0
	Impolite	Compatible	0
		Not Compatible	18
After	Polite	Compatible	13
		Not Compatible	0
	Impolite	Compatible	0
		Not Compatible	4

The table above shows the numbers of Shameika's polite and impolite utterances, along with their compatibility with Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect before and after she respects him. The result shows that before Shameika respects Mr. Clark, she produces 18 impolite utterances that cannot fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect and 1 polite utterance that can fulfil it. After she respects Mr. Clark, Shameika produces 13 polite utterances that are able to fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect and 4 impolite utterances that are not.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the writer found out that politeness and impoliteness within a speaker's utterance can be indicated by its compatibility with the hearer's intended perlocutionary effect. All of Shameika's polite utterances contain illocutionary act that can fulfil Mr. Clark's intended perlocutionary effect, while all of her impolite utterances contain illocutionary act that cannot. From this study, the writer concludes that one of the most effective methods to increase the degree of politeness within an utterance is by trying to fulfil the intended perlocutionary effect of the hearer. On the other hand, if one wants to be impolite, one of the most effective methods is to go against the intended perlocutionary effect of the hearer. This result is aligned with the definitions of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1978) and impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011) that describe them as efforts to either fulfil or go against hearer's expectation respectively. However, this method cannot work under certain circumstances, such as when a hearer recognizes a speaker's lies or when a speaker has a higher authority than a hearer. If a hearer found out

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that a speaker pretends to be polite by lying, then it won't fulfil the hearer's intended perlocutionary effect even if the lie is a white lie. Meanwhile, a speaker who has a higher authority has less obligation to the hearer below him. This study however, does not discuss more specific elements of speech along with politeness and impoliteness strategies because these elements are not so dominant in the Ron Clark Story movie as the object of this study. Due to this limitation, the writer hopes that in the future, other studies can delve deeper into the relation between speech act politeness degree.

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