

THE USE OF COMMAND STRATEGIES BY DAVE'S MOTHER IN A NOVEL ENTITLED: *A CHILD CALLED 'IT'*

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to identify the types of commands, forms of command, and three levels of meaning of commands used by Dave's mother in a novel entitled: *A Child Called 'It'*. The data of this research are the commands made by Dave's mother in the novel entitled: *A Child Called 'It'* written by Dave Pelzer. The findings show that there are two types of command found in the novel which are direct and indirect command. Direct command is the most dominant type used by Dave's mother. Furthermore, it is found that there are three levels of meaning found in the commands uttered by Dave's mother; abstract meaning, contextual meaning, and force.

Keywords: speech acts, types of command, levels of meaning

INTISARI

Penelitian ini membahas jenis-jenis kalimat perintah, bentuk-bentuk kalimat perintah dan tiga level makna kalimat perintah yang digunakan ibunya Dave di dalam novel yang berjudul A Child Called It. Data-data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kalimat perintah yang diucapkan oleh ibunya Dave di dalam novel berjudul A Child Called It karangan Dave Pelzer. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada dua jenis kalimat perintah yang terkandung di dalam novel, yaitu kalimat perintah langsung dan kalimat perintah tidak langsung. Kalimat perintah langsung merupakan yang paling sering dijumpai. Adapun hal yang lain yang ditunjukkan dalam penelitian ini adalah terdapat tiga level makna pada kalimat perintah yang digunakan ibunya Dave, yaitu: abstract meaning, contextual meaning, dan force.

Kata kunci: tindak tutur, jenis-jenis kalimat perintah, level makna

Linguistics is “the study of human speech including the units, nature, structure, and modification of language” (Merriam-Webster.com). To understand the language, people have to understand the speaker’s meaning. George Yule states: “Pragmatics is the study of “invisible” meaning or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn’t actually said or written” (128). There are some issues of Pragmatics, one of which is speech acts. According to Searle, “a speech act is an act that a speaker performs when making an utterance” (*An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* 178).

Speech Acts are not only used for communication in daily life. It is even used in imaginary life. This can be seen in one of the novels entitled: *A Child Called It*. This is Pelzer’s first novel which has been sold 1.6 million in five years. In his novel, Dave writes the story about an alcoholic mother who often abuses her son physically and mentally almost every day. Dave is not the only child in his family. However, his mother only abuses him in front of her other children and her husband. He is forced to eat in two minutes, wash the plates in a limited time, clean the house and even eat saliva. In school, he is also bullied by his friends. No one helps him for many years. He has suffered since he was five years old (Pelzer).

The objectives of the research are:

- a) To identify and classify the types of commands employed by Dave’s mother in the novel entitled: *A Child Called ‘It’*
- b) To identify and classify the forms of command employed by Dave’s mother in the novel entitled: *A Child Called ‘It’*
- c) To describe how the three levels of meaning found in commands produced by Dave’s mother

The data used in the research are commands made by Dave’s mother in a novel entitled: *A Child Called ‘It’*. The data are collected through library research. To collect the necessary data, the writer reads the whole story carefully while identifying the commands uttered by Dave’s mother, especially the

commands that are addressed to her son, Dave. After that, the present writer copies the commands made by Dave’s mother by writing the commands in a piece of paper.

The qualitative approach is used in analyzing the data in this research. Miles and Huberman states that there are three procedures contained in qualitative analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (qtd. in Monette, Duanne, and DeJong 434). The data are analyzed by focusing on the types of command employed by Dave’s mother, the forms of commands and the three levels meaning found in the commands. After collecting the data, the writer analyzes them by classifying the data into the types of command into two types; direct and indirect commands. After that, the data are classified into the forms of commands according to Holmes who distinguishes into three forms: imperative, declarative, and interrogative (8). Then, the present writer explains how the three levels of meaning found in the commands uttered by his mother using the theory from Thomas who distinguish levels of meaning into three levels; abstract meaning, contextual meaning, and force (2). The last step is making a conclusion of the research.

The commands are usually used in daily life and have an important role in the story. When Dave is abused mentally, his mother uses many commands. In the novel written by Dave Pelzer, “*A Child Called ‘It’*, the commands used by Dave’s mother are not always direct commands, such as “Get up!”, “Eat it!” or “Look at me when I’m talking to you!”. She also uses threats to make a command. By analyzing the commands of the story, the writer wants to understand about the types of commands and the three levels meanings of command in the story.

COMMANDS IN *A CHILD CALLED ‘IT’*

From the total number of 30 commands, it is found that direct command is the most dominant type of command used in the novel entitled: *A Child Called ‘It’* (ACCI). This strategy is used 20 times (66.67%), followed by indirect commands which

are used 10 times (33.33%). It can be assumed that the speaker, Dave's mother, often speaks using direct command because of her relationship with the hearer is close. Therefore, it is possible for the speaker to express the command directly. The dominant form of command is the imperative which is used 25 times (88.3%). Meanwhile, the declarative is used 3 times (10%). Lastly, the interrogative is used twice (6.67%).

The analysis below describes the forms and levels of meaning that contain in direct and indirect commands.

FORMS AND LEVELS OF MEANING OF DIRECT COMMAND

Example 1

Dave's Mother: "Tell 'em Tell 'em you ran into the door" (ACCI: 8)

(Dave's mother yells at Dave to return to where she parks her car. He realizes that he has forgotten his lunch bag. She commands Dave to tell people in his school that he got an injury because of running into the door.)

The example above shows that Dave's mother asks her son to lie that he got the scar because of running into the door. Actually, Dave is hit by his mother. The command is a direct command because she directly commands her son to do something. To emphasize the command, she repeats the command twice by saying, "tell 'em... tell 'em..." (ACCI: 8). The command can be classified as the imperative form of command. Specifically, it is the base form of verb because "tell" is the first form of the verb.

Levels of Meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave is commanded to tell the others that he got the scar because he hits the door.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to lie that he got the scar because he hits the door.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to lie that he got the scar because he hits the door.

Example 2

"You know damn well what you're looking for." She screamed. "Now go find it!" (ACCI: 22)

(Dave is smacked by his mother because of asking what things that has to be found. She only commands him to find the things without telling him what things that has to be found.)

The command uttered by Dave's mother above contains a direct command. When commanding, she does not care with the fact that Dave does not know what things he has to look for. The command is an imperative sentence with the base form of verb.

Levels of Meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave is commanded to find something.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to find something that is lost belongs to his mother.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to find something, but he does not know what 'thing' that is lost.

Example 3

After what seemed like an hour, Mother knelt down beside me and in a soft voice said, "Eat it." (ACCI: 34)

(Dave is punished to sit on a chair in a corner of the room. He is punished by his mother because of making too much noise. As the consequence, he is forbidden to go with his father and his brothers. He knows that his mother has a hideous way to punish him. After an hour, his mother comes back and commands him to eat a diaper.)

In the utterance above, Dave's mother expresses the command using direct command because she commands her son explicitly. By saying, "eat it" and shows something that Dave should eat; she wants to make Dave understand and carry out her command. The command, which is imperative, contains the base form of verb.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave is commanded to eat something.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to eat the diaper.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to eat the diaper.

Example 4

“I said eat it!” she sneered. (ACCI: 34)

(Because Dave refuses to eat the diaper, she smacks and commands him again to eat the diaper.)

Dave’s Mother commands Dave to eat Russel’s diaper. In this case, Dave’s mother commands her son directly. Because Dave does not obey her command, she commands him again. She raises her voice which means she is impatient and a little angry because Dave does not want to obey her command. The command can be classified as imperative command, specifically base form of verb since it ends with exclamation mark and uses verb I.

Because Dave refuses to eat the diaper, his mother commands him again by saying, “I said eat it!”. Dave understands that he should obey his mother’s or he will get a punishment. However, it is very difficult to do his mother’s command since the command is eating the diaper.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave is commanded to eat something.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to eat the diaper.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to eat the diaper, but he refuses to obey it.

Example 5

Again she repeated, “Eat it!” I held my breath. (ACCI: 35)

(She never gives up commanding Dave, her son to eat the diaper. She repeats it in order to

make Dave know that she is serious in commanding him to eat it.)

The command is a direct command because it is expressed directly to the hearer. Dave’s mother never gives up forcing Dave to eat the diaper. She repeats her command four times. The command which is imperative is explicit. Dave can understand that he is commanded to eat the diaper. The word “eat” is verb I, so it can be classified that the command is the base form of the verb.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave is asked to eat something.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to eat the diaper.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to eat the diaper, but he doesn’t obey the command.

Forms and Levels of Meaning of Indirect Command

Example 6

Before dawn, Mom would creep into our room and wake us up, whispering, “Santa came.” (ACCI: 18)

(On Christmas, after a special dinner and caroling, Dave and his brothers are usually allowed to open their gifts. However, they fall asleep. Dave’s mother tries to wake them, including Dave. She asks her children to wake up in order to open their presents.)

Dave is commanded to get up from his bed by his mother. He is not the only one who is commanded to get up. The command used is indirect command because she prefers to say, “Santa came” than saying, “Wake up, boys!” His mother commands Dave indirectly since she does not say the exact words. The utterance is declarative. The command contains hints because she commands them without using direct command, but a declarative.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Santa Clause has arrived.

2. Contextual meaning: Dave and his brothers are commanded to wake up.
3. Force meaning: Dave and his brothers are forced to wake up.

Example 7

"Now you're going to eat it." (ACCI: 35)
(Dave's mother commands her son to eat the diaper. She has not succeeded to make Dave eat the diaper.)

The command used by Dave's mother is indirect command. Because Dave does not obey her command, she repeats her command several times in order to make him obey her. By repeating the same commands, it can be seen that she really wants Dave to eat the diaper in front of her. You + imperative is a form of command which is used by Dave's mother. The command is made by using declarative form, so it is implicit or indirect. It is implicit because she prefers to say, "Now you're going to eat it!" rather than, "Eat the diaper!"

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave is going to eat something.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to eat the diaper.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to eat the diaper.

Example 8

"You have 20 minutes! One minute, one second more and you go hungry again! Is that understood?"(ACCI: 51)

(When Dave begins to clear the dishes from the dining room table, his mother commands him to wash the plates in 20 minutes, If Dave does not succeed to finish it, he will not eat, or in short he will be hungry.)

Those sentences are indirect commands. She expresses the command without saying it explicitly. She commands him by mentioning the time and the effect of not obeying her commands. She makes

sure that Dave knows by saying, "Is that understood?"

The commands spoken by Dave's mother can be classified as verb ellipsis since the sentence is incomplete. "You have 20 minutes" means Dave has to wash the plates in 20 minutes. It should be written "You have to wash the plate in two minutes!" However, the command is uttered in incomplete word in order to make it implicit.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave has 20 minutes.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to wash the plates in 20 minutes.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to wash the plates in 20 minutes.

Example 9

"If you don't finish on time, I'm going to kill you." (ACCI: 51)

(When Dave looks at her, it is too late for him. His mother is angry and commands him to wash the plates on time while snatching a knife. She says she is going to kill him if he does not finish on time. This is to make Dave obey her commands.)

In this situation, Dave's mother uses indirect command because it is not explicit. The command is followed by a threat, "If you don't finish on time, I'm going to kill you". In this case, his mother commands him to wash the plates faster than what he is doing. The command used by Dave's mother is declarative form which contains embedded agent since the command is explicit.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: If Dave doesn't finish his work on time, his mother will kill him
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to wash the plates on time, or he will get punishment.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to wash the plates on time. There is a punishment if he fails to obey the command on time.

Example 10

“Two minutes.” *Mother barked. (ACCI: 62)*
(While saying, “two minutes”, Dave’s mother gives Dave a plate of food.)

The sentence is indirect command. She does not say the command clearly, because she only mentions the time. The command is implicit since she does not say what her son should do. Even though she says her command indirectly, Dave can clearly understand the command. The command means he has to eat the food in two minutes. This is because Dave’s mother makes a command while giving her son a plate of food. It can be classified as imperative form which contains verb ellipsis since it contains an incomplete sentence. It should be written, “You should eat the food in two minutes!” but, she only says, “Two minutes.”

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave is commanded to do something in two minutes.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to eat the food in two minutes.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to eat the food in two minutes.

Example 11

“You have two minutes to eat it! That’s all.” (ACCI: 62)

(Dave is really hungry. He begs for food, but his mother only laughs. One evening, his mother gives him a plate of food and commands Dave to eat in two minutes. However, when he almost eats the food, his mother stops him.)

The command can be classified as indirect command because the command is implicit because she prefers to say, “You have two minutes to eat it!” rather than commanding him by saying, “Eat it in two minutes!”. It means, she indirectly commands her son to carry out her order. The form of command is you + imperative since the first word of the command is “you” and followed by imperative.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave has to eat something in two minutes.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to eat the food in two minutes.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to eat the food in two minutes.

Example 12

Well, why doesn’t my precious little boy get his ass out of the bathtub and warm his head in his father’s bed?” (ACCI: 71)

(Dave’s mother commands her son to get out from the bathtub and warm his head in his father’s bed.)

It is indirect because she commands her son indirectly by using interrogative. The use of indirect command will avoid the possibility of refusal of her command. She uses interrogative, “Well, why my precious little boy doesn’t get his out of the bathtub and warm his head?” to convey her command. It makes it implicit since a command is usually used in imperative. By saying this utterance, she seems to make the hearer comfortable because she knows exactly how her son suffers of the cold water.

The command is classified as interrogative which contains non-modals, since the command is implicit.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave’s mother gives a suggestion for Dave to get out from the tub and warm his body in his father’s bed.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to get out from the tub and warm his body in his father’s bed.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to get out from the tub and warm his body in his father’s bed.

Example 13

“It’s over sweetheart. After this moment I want you to forget any of it happened at all. You will try to be good boy, won’t you?” (ACCI: 73)

(One Sunday, Dave's mother wakes his son up. She tells him that she is tired of the life she is living. She wants to stop commanding Dave to do something he does not like. She also feels sorry for everything she has done to him)

She uses indirect command because she prefers to say "I want you to forget any of it happened at all" than the exact word, "Forget everything that happened!". It shows that she commands her son indirectly because she says what she wishes instead of command her son directly. "I want you to forget any of it happened at all" means that she wants Dave to forget what she did in the past. The command can be classified as declarative, specifically embedded agent since the statement is uttered not in a polite way and clear enough to be understood by Dave. It is clear because she tells her son what he has to do.

Levels of meaning:

1. Abstract meaning: Dave's mother wants Dave to forget everything.
2. Contextual meaning: Dave is commanded to forget everything.
3. Force meaning: Dave is forced to forget everything that happened.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there are two types of command applied by Dave's mother in the novel entitled: *A Child Called 'It'*; direct and indirect commands. The most dominant type of commands is direct command. Furthermore, there are three forms of command used by Dave's mother which are 25 imperatives, 3 declaratives, and 2 interrogatives. In the imperatives, the dominant form used by Dave's mother is the base form of the verb. While in declarative, it is found that the embedded agent is the dominant form of command used by Dave's mother. There are two modals found in the interrogative command applied by Dave's mother.

In the novel, the present writer also finds out that there are three meaning of language: abstract meaning, contextual, and force. However, the abstract meaning is the dominant function applied by Dave's mother. As stated by Chaika, "a direct command is allowed and commonly found" in the family (qtd. in Widowati) and this is proved in the novel that Dave's mother uses direct commands in asking her son to carry out her orders.

Dave's mother uses more of the base form of the verb in asking her son to obey her order because the base form of the verb is easy to be understood by children. She uses more of the embedded agent than hints because she does not want to make Dave confused. In the embedded agent, the speaker commands the hearer explicitly without trying to make a polite statement.

There are three levels of meaning found in commands produced by Dave's mother in the novel: abstract meaning, utterance meaning, and force meaning. Abstract meaning is the dictionary meaning. Utterance meaning is what the speaker's said and force meaning is what the speaker's intention. These levels are closely related.

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