

## Making Promises in English in the TV Series *Gilmore Girls*

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the speech act of promising found in the first five episodes of the TV series *Gilmore Girls* (2000). Promises were categorized based on their directness strategies. The direct promising strategy is identified using the IFID of the speech act of promising, that is the performative verb *promise*, while the indirect promising strategy is identified and categorized into 10 types of indirect promising strategy proposed by Ariff and Mugableh (2013): pure promise, discourse conditional, tautological-like expression, body-part expression, self-aggrandizing expression, time expression, courtesy-like expression, swearing expression, adjacency pair, and false promise. The results show that the most commonly used strategy was the indirect promising strategy (94.3%) as the characters in the series tend to make promises casually by not using the performative verb *promise*. Then, the most frequent indirect promising strategy is pure promise (31.3%). In addition, there are two distinctive types of indirect promising strategies found in the TV series, namely, hidden promise and sarcastic promise strategies. This finding suggests that there are many other ways to make promises besides using the performative verb *promise* and the modal verb *will* since the context of the conversations could indicate future acts which a speaker is committed to do.

**Keywords:** *directness, promise, speech acts, strategy.*

### INTRODUCTION

In everyday communication, promises are often used by people to give their commitment to something they have said to the hearer. Promises are also commonly used to assure someone about something that the speaker will or will not do in the near future. Austin (1968) categorized promise as part of the commissive acts. Hence, when someone makes a promise, he/she is committed to performing that promise later. It is interesting to observe how different people produce promises since they may vary from one individual to another.

As an interesting research topic, the speech act of promising has been investigated by many researchers, especially promising in English (see, e.g., Rohmah, 2014; Salgueiro, 2010; Sami, 2015; Searle, 1977). For instance, Salgueiro (2010) and Sami (2015) both did a research on the speech act of promising and threat as part of the same type of speech acts, that is, commissives.

Previous studies have also been made of promising in other languages such as Indonesian (Aini, Sumarlam, and Purnanto, 2017), Javanese (Pradana and Surana, 2015; Partana, 2010), Banjar (Jahdiah, 2014), and Arabic (Ariff & Mugableh, 2013). Attempts have also been made to investigate

the speech act of promising in relation to language acquisition (see, e.g., Astington, 1988; Bernicot and Laval, 1999; and Putri, Tantra, and Piscayanti, 2017).

Unlike the previous studies mentioned above, the present research attempted to investigate promises made in the American comedy-drama television series *Gilmore Girls*. It focuses on this TV series, primarily because there does not seem to be any research exploring the directness strategies of making promises, especially in the TV series *Gilmore Girls*. Moreover, the TV series mainly shows the relationship between a mother and her daughter in their daily life, which might have an impact on the directness of the promises made in the TV series.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been a large number of studies investigating the speech act of promising, especially in English. An early study of promising was made by Searle (1997), who examined thoroughly the making of promises in English. He attempted to investigate what conditions are necessary and sufficient for the act of promising to have been successfully and non-defectively performed in the utterance of a given sentence. By analyzing the simple promises, the ones which are explicit, categorical, and non-hypothetical, Searle came up with the conditions which make an utterance an act of promising. These conditions are what Searle calls the felicity conditions for the making of promises.

Rohmah (2014) analyzed promises uttered in several American drama movies. She categorized the promises into two types, implicit performatives and explicit performative, using Searle (1997) felicity conditions and Austin's (1968) theory of explicitness. She found that 89,04% out of 73 promises used in the five American drama movies were of the implicit performative type. Rohmah concluded that the dominant use of implicit promises indicates how the speaker wants to show their intentions of doing something in a casual way (Rohmah, 2014).

Meanwhile, Salgueiro (2010) and Sami (2014) both conducted their research on the same topic. Both of them compared the speech act of promising to threat as a speech act. Their research focused on the relationship between threat and promise as part

of commissive speech acts. Salgueiro (2010) highlighted the similarities between the two commissive speech acts. Based on Searle's (1997) and Austin's (1968) theories, he attempted to stress the similarities between threat and promise speech acts. The findings indicated that threat and promise are different even though Salgueiro argued that threats and promises share the same basic formal types and that their differences have been exaggerated. On the other hand, Sami (2015) examined the differences between the acts of threatening and promising. He analyzed the differences between threat and promise by elaborating the felicity conditions of the two speech acts and concluded that both threat and promise are closely related since they share the same felicity conditions and syntactic form (Sami, 2015).

Promising in another language other than English was conducted by Ariff and Mugableh (2013). The research focused on identifying promising strategies in Jordanian Arabic by using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). This research found nine strategies applied by Jordanian people to make promises: discourse conditional, tautological-like expression, body-part expression, selfaggrandizing expression, time expression, courtesy-like expression, swearing expression, adjacency pair, and false promise. It was found that the most frequently used strategy of promising by Jordanian people is the discourse conditional strategy. The results also show that in terms of gender differences, female speakers tend to use the body-expression strategy more than the males when they make promises.

Then, Aini, Sumarlam, and Purnanto (2017) investigated the speech act of promising in Bahasa Indonesia in political debates. They attempted to examine the strategies of positive politeness of promising as a commissive speech act. Using Brown and Levinson's (2016) 15 types of positive politeness strategies, this research investigated the effectiveness of positive politeness used in expressing promises during the first debate of DKI Jakarta's Governor Candidates in the 2017 election. The analysis found that there were 78 promises with 146 positive politeness strategies used during all six sessions of the debate. Aini, Sumarlam, and Purnanto (2017) stated that the promises expressed by the candidates help them show the sincerity of their statements. Meanwhile, the positive politeness in making the

promises helped them to maintain their positive images in front of the citizens of Jakarta.

In regard to language acquisition, Bernicot and Laval (1999) conducted a research focusing on how French children understand promises. The aim of the research was to examine the role, in promise comprehension by children aged three to nine, of one of the textual characteristics of utterances: verb tense. By looking at the cues children use to interpret promise utterances, they attempted to see how children understand utterances that express a promise and how their comprehension evolves with age. The research involved 54 native French speaking children (26 girls and 28 boys) by giving them eighteen stories about the adventures of a character with pictures, which provided a situational context for the linguistic context, showed real-life situations taken from children's everyday experiences, and helped keep the subject's attention focused on the task. The findings show that the children age 3 – 6 lack understanding of promise since they can only pick up the specific contextual cues while the children age 9 are able to indicate promises with less specific information. It is also shown that when promise-specific contextual information is lacking, the children correctly process certain markers of the future tense (the immediate future but not the simple future) and reconstruct the promise from those markers.

Then, Putri, Tantra, and Piscayanti (2017) analyzed the language acquisition of EFL students regarding the speech act of promising. They examined the locutionary and illocutionary acts used by the students of SMP N 1 Mengwi as EFL students. The data were collected using five role-play situations to see how the students used verbal acts and verbal response forms of promise. The results showed that most students employed informal forms as their verbal acts and verbal response forms of promise. They also showed that the students tend to choose the strategy of the future act as a verbal act and acceptance as a verbal response to a promise.

The next research was done by Madsar (2015). Her study focused on the comparison of translated sentences containing promising utterances in two translated versions of Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms*. The research aimed to find the types of promising in the novel, the translation techniques

used by the translators, and the significance of the translation techniques on the translation quality in the translated versions of the work in Bahasa Indonesia. The research found 83 utterances of promise, categorized into four promising types: unconditional influencing, conditional non-influencing, unconditional non-influencing, and conditional influencing. For the translation techniques, nine techniques were used: amplification, modulation, reduction, linguistic compression, linguistic amplification, transposition, established equivalence, variation, and borrowing. The findings show that based on the comparison of the translation techniques used to translate the work, the second translators produced better translation than the first. The translation of the second translator is more accurate, more acceptable, and more readable.

The research by Inge Egner (2002) investigated promises in the context of African culture by comparing it with Western culture. It is concerned with the frequent misunderstanding of utterances that Africans express as promises. Therefore, it attempted to examine what Africans regard as promises compared to Western culture. The findings show that what Africans express is what is called "polite promise" or false promise, which does not satisfy Searle's (1997) felicity conditions of promise. In African culture, in contrast with Western culture, the polite promise is used to save face rather than to bind themselves to commit a future act.

The current research is similar to earlier research in the sense that it focuses on the same topic, which is the speech act of promising. It examines promises and strategies for making promises. However, the data source used in this research is different from those in the previous research. The data source used in this research was the American Television Series *Gilmore Girls*.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Promises

In everyday life, it is common to make promises. Although promises are commonly made in everyday communication, they sometimes cause miscom-

munication. Someone might understand someone else's utterance as a promise, while the other person might claim that he/she does not make any promises.

A promise is expressed to show commitment to doing something since a speaker usually promises to assure the hearer that he/she will or will not do something in the future. Sometimes, promises are also used to control the action of the hearer. For instance, when someone wants the hearer to do certain actions for him/her, she/he will make a promise as a reward so that the hearer will fulfil their request. Either way, linguistically, a promise is a commissive speech act whose point or purpose is an undertaking of an obligation by the speaker to do something (Searle, 2005). Below is an example of the speech act of promising in the TV series *Gilmore Girls* taken from episode 2.

(1) Lorelai: Thank you.

Luke: You're welcome.

Lorelai: No lectures?

Luke: My blood sugar's low. **I'll eat an apple and get back to you.**

In example (1), Lorelai comes to Luke's diner to get some coffee. She is surprised that Luke does not give any lectures about her getting too much caffeine. Luke promises Lorelai that he will get back to her and presumably gives her a lecture about caffeine after he has eaten an apple.

### Strategies of Promising

Promises can be expressed directly or indirectly. Since there are no specific theories on direct promising, Yule's (2017) theory of direct and indirect speech act was applied to identify the direct promising strategy used in the TV series. A speech act is understood to be direct when the syntactic structure is parallel to the function of the speech act (Yule, 2017).

In this research, Ariff and Mugableh's (2013) strategies of promising were specifically applied to classify the indirect promising strategy used in the TV series. Ariff and Mugableh (2013) found that there are several strategies in making promises, especially in Jordanian Arabic: pure promise, discourse conditional, tautological-like expression, body-part expression, self-aggrandizing expression,

time expression, courtesy-like expression, swearing expression, adjacency pair, and false promise. It is important to note that Ariff and Mugableh's (2013) research was done on Jordanian Arabic. Therefore, the result in the current research might be different from Ariff and Mugableh's (2013) due to the application of the cross-cultural/cross-language strategies of promising. Presented below are the characteristics of each indirect promising strategy.

#### 1. Pure Promise

This strategy is identified by Ariff and Mugableh (2013) as part of the Western culture in making promises as opposed to Jordanian culture. This strategy did not apply in their research. In order to make a pure promise one only has to express their intention to do some future act that they are committed to doing.

#### 2. Discourse Conditional

In general, it can be said that when a promise is made with any addition of some conditions that control the speaker's ability to do the promised act, the promise is made with discourse conditional strategy.

#### 3. Tautological-like Expression

Tautology is the repetitive use of phrases or words which has similar meanings. This strategy means that a speaker repeats some words with similar meanings to express their promise to the hearer in making a promise.

#### 4. Body-part Expression

A promise containing part of the human body in its utterance is called using body-part expression strategy. In Jordanian culture, the most frequently employed body parts are: the eye, the head, the beard, and the moustache of either the speaker or the hearer (p. 256). As Ariff and Mugableh (2013) suggested, those body parts employed are usually the ones which symbolize the speaker's dignity.

#### 5. Self-aggrandizing Expression

Ariff and Mugableh (2013) suggested that most people cannot avoid praising themselves at the expense of others when they are engaged in a conversation. This also applies when people make promises; they sometimes depict their talents and abilities to assure the hearer about what they say.

#### 6. Time Expression

In communication, time is closely related to the past, present, and future acts that we express. Using a time expression is a strategy for making promises by employing the adverb of time on which the speaker is going to fulfil the promise.

#### 7. Courtesy-like Expression

Ariff and Mugableh (2013) stated that in this particular strategy of promising, the speaker relies on the use of some praise that is given lavishly to the hearer when issuing a promise.

#### 8. Swearing Expression

Swearing is another way which people use in promising. People employ swearing expressions to emphasize their intention to do or not to do something when they think the hearer is uncertain of their promise.

#### 9. Adjacency Pair

An adjacency pair is “a two-part exchange in which the second utterance is functionally dependent on the first, as exhibited in conventional greetings, invitations, and requests” (Nordquist, 2019). In English, FPP (first pair part) and SPP (second pair part) compose an adjacency pair. Schegloff (1973), as cited in Nordquist (2019) stated that the components of adjacency pairs are ‘typologized’ into the *pair types* such as greeting-greeting (“hello,’ hi”), question-answer (“do you know what time it is?”, ‘Four o’clock”), offer-accept/decline (“would you like a cup of coffee?” ‘No, thanks,” if it is declined).

#### 10. False Promise

This strategy is similar to the discourse conditional strategy in that it sets a condition that controls the speaker’s ability to do the promised act. However, promising with the false promise strategy places some impossible conditions.

### Context

As this study applies a pragmatic analysis, understanding context is needed to understand further the promising utterances found in the data source. Context is crucial to determine the meaning of a conversation. In this research, context is needed to understand the meaning of utterances said by the characters, what is being promised, and why the speaker produces such utterances. Context is important in this research since it helps us to

understand whether or not an utterance said by the characters in the TV series can be said to be a promise. It is used to support the application of felicity conditions by analyzing which utterances are the utterances of promise. In addition, context is also needed to analyze whether the characters use direct or indirect strategies in expressing the promises.

According to Yule (1996), pragmatics involves the interpretation of the meaning of people’s utterances in a particular context and how the context influences what is being said. He argues that pragmatics “requires a consideration of how the speakers organize what they want to say in accordance with who they are talking to, where, when, and under what circumstances” (p. 3).

## METHODS

The data for this research were collected from the TV series *Gilmore Girls*. It was originally aired on The Warner Bros Television Network from October 2000 – May 2007. Only the first five out of the 21 episodes in the first season of this TV series were selected as the data source.

The first season is chosen because it shows the beginning of the story. Therefore, it is easier to follow the plot. Then, the genre of the TV series is drama comedy. The settings and events shown in it resemble the ones which happen in real life. Therefore it can give a perspective of how the speech act of promising is used daily.

In this research, the data were utterances containing the speech act of promising with or without the word *promise* found in the TV series. The utterances were collected using the observation method considering some criteria such as the use of the performative verb *promise* and modal verbs *will* and *be going to*, which indicate future action. The identification of promising utterances was based on the felicity conditions for promises. Searle (1997, p.57-62) suggested four felicity conditions for a promise to be a successful speech act:

#### 1. Propositional Condition

The utterance of a promise predicts some future act of the speaker. In other words, to be a successful

speech act there should be a prediction of future act by the speaker implied in the utterance of a promise.

- (2) Babette: Cinnamon is stuck under our front porch again. Can I borrow some vegetable oil and a shoehorn?

Rory: **I'll get it.**

Example (2) shows how Rory promises Babette to get her some vegetable oil and a shoehorn. The use of *will* in *I'll get it* indicates a future act of the speaker, in this case, Rory.

## 2. Preparatory Condition

A promise must be something that the speaker is able to perform, and the hearer wants to be done or at least would prefer to have done rather than not done. Example (2) shows that Babette asks Rory to perform an act, which is to lend her some vegetable oil and a shoehorn, and that Rory can perform the act hence the promise that she will get the items for Babette.

## 3. Sincerity Condition

In order to make a promise, the speaker must have an intention of keeping it and is willing to do it. Sincerity condition is a little tricky since the sincerity of an utterance has to do with the psychological attitude of the speaker about the utterance and it is not easy to identify the sincerity of the speaker from the utterance alone. However, Searle (1997) stated that "a promise involves an expression of intention, whether sincere or insincere" (p.62). Therefore, for insincere promises, such as those promises which are made with false promise strategy, the sincerity condition is revised as followed: the utterance will make them responsible for intending to do an act. Example (2) shows that Rory expresses her intention to get the vegetable oil and shoehorn for Babette, so she is responsible for intending to do the promised act.

## 4. Essential Condition

When making a promise, the speaker is obliged to do the promised act. Example (2) shows that the promise which has been expressed by Rory obligates her to do an act.

There were several steps in collecting the data in this research. The first step was watching the videos of each selected episode on Netflix and examining the subtitles downloaded from Subscene (<https://subscene.com>). After that, utterances which

indicate future action were written in notes and later identified using the felicity conditions for promises to make sure they were all utterances of promise. Then, the dialogues before and/or after the utterance containing a promise were written along with the promising utterance to give a clearer context if they were necessary. The subtitles of each episode were checked before writing down the dialogues to make sure that they were correct. The contexts of each dialogue were also provided to help understand what was happening or the reason why the characters in the TV series made a promise. Finally, the data were sorted chronologically.

Since the data were taken from five different episodes of a season in the TV series, a coding system was applied in this research to make the analysis easier. The coding system is as follows. As this research used subtitles as the data source, the timestamps in which the dialogue occurs are provided. Then, the code of the episode was written next to the timestamps; E1 for Episode 1, E2 for Episode 2, E3 for Episode 3, E4 for Episode 4, and E5 for Episode 5. Next to the episodes is the directness of the strategies: D for the direct promising strategy and IN for the indirect ones followed by the number of occurrence of each strategy. Finally, if a promise was made indirectly, the following code was added: PP for pure promise, DC for discourse conditional, and TLE for tautological-like expression, and the number of occurrence of this indirect strategy. The following is an example of how the data were coded:

- (3) 00:30:50,597 → 00:30:54,476  
[E3.IN.31.DC.05]

*Context: Drella is rehearsing the songs that she will play at the wedding day. Mrs. Shales suggests that Drella plays the songs she wanted her to play. At first Drella is not interested to play the songs that Mrs. Shales requested, because the songs do not match her style. Then, Mrs. Shales promises her that she will give an extra \$100 for Drella to play her playlist on the harp.*

Mrs. Shales: **I'll give you an extra\$100.**

Drella: You just got yourself a jukebox.

In example (3) 00:30:50,597 → 00:30:54,476 shows the exact time in which the dialogue occurs, E3 stands for the episode in which the utterance is

found, i.e. Episode 3: Kill Me Now. After that, IN indicates the directness of the promise, which is indirect, while 31 is the number of occurrences of the strategy. DC stands for Discourse Conditional; the type of indirect promising strategy used to make the promise and 05 is the number of occurrences for this type of indirect promising strategy. The bold utterance is the one identified as a promise. The context is presented in italics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Altogether 88 promising utterances were found in the TV series *Gilmore Girls* (2000) season one episodes one to five. As mentioned earlier, these utterances were identified based on the directness strategies using Yule's (2017) direct and indirect speech acts theory and Ariff and Mugableh's (2013) promising strategies. Table 1 presents the frequency of the directness strategies of the promises used in the TV series.

Table 1. The frequency of direct and indirect promises in the TV Series

No.	Strategies of Promising	Token	%
1.	Direct Promises	5	5.7
2.	Indirect Promises	83	94.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table shows that indirect promises are more frequently made in the TV series than direct promises. Out of 88 promises found in the data source, only 5 promises (5.7%) are made directly, while 83 (94.3%) are made indirectly. The findings suggest that the characters in the TV series tend to make promises indirectly.

### Direct Promising

There are only five utterances of promise which were categorized as direct promising. They are categorized so since the future acts of the promises were expressed directly. The utterances of promise were identified as direct promises using the IFID for the speech act of promising, which is the performative verb promise. In other words, direct promises are promises that can easily be said as a promise even

without thoroughly examining the context since a linguistic element directly indicates them as a promise. The following example illustrates the use of direct promising in the TV series.

(4) 00:37:43,301 → 00:37:55,438 [E5.D.04]

*Context: Rory is confronting Lorelai about what is going on with her and Mr. Medina. She is upset about the fact that her mother didn't tell her about her relationship with her teacher.*

Rory: I can't believe that you didn't tell me about this. Why wouldn't you tell me?

Lorelai: 'Cause I thought you were going to take it bad. Thank God I was wrong. Okay. Listen, I'm sorry. **I won't date him, I promise.**

In the conversation between Rory and Lorelai, Rory is upset that her mother Lorelai did not tell her that she has been close with Mr. Medina. Lorelai tries to reassure Rory that she feels terrible for not telling her. Lorelai then promises that she will not date Rory's English teacher, which Rory prefers because it would be weird to have her mother dating her teacher. The use of the performative verb *promise* in Lorelai's utterance emphasizes how much Lorelai wants her daughter to believe her words.

### Indirect Promising

In contrast with the direct promising strategy, the promises discussed in this section are considered as indirect promises since the future acts of the promises were expressed indirectly. In order to fully acknowledge indirect promising strategy the context of the conversation in which the utterance of promise is found should be thoroughly examined.

Table 2 below shows the frequency of indirect strategies used to make promises in the TV series. As can be seen in the table, the most frequently used strategy in making promises is Pure Promise, with 26 occurrences (31.3%). The table also shows that no promise was made using the body-part, courtesy-like expression, swearing expression and false promise strategies. Tautological-like Expression and Self-aggrandizing Expression strategies were used only twice (2.4%). These findings seem to suggest that the characters in the TV series tend to express promises without any other goals besides expressing their intention to do a future act for the hearer.

Table 2. The frequency of indirect promising strategies in the TV Series

No.	Promising Strategies	Token	%
1.	Pure promise	26	31.3
2.	Discourse Conditional	13	15.7
3.	Tautological-like Expression	2	2.4
4.	Body-part Expression	0	0
5.	Self-aggrandizing Expression	2	2.4
6.	Time Expression	5	6.1
7.	Courtesy-like Expression	0	0
8.	Swearing Expression	0	0
9.	Adjacency Pair	25	30.1
10.	False Promise	0	0
11.	Hidden Promise	6	7.2
12.	Sarcastic Promise	4	4.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>83</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### ***Pure Promise***

This strategy is the most frequently used strategy in this research, with 26 occurrences (31.3%).

(5) 00:18:06,257 → 00:18:16,264 [E1.IN.06.PP.06]

**Context:** Lorelai's best friend Sookie is visiting Lorelai's house. She is going to cook for them to celebrate Rory's acceptance at Chilton. However, there is nothing to cook at Lorelai's so Sookie plans to go to the store to buy some groceries and promises that she will be back.

Sookie: Where's your pate?

Lorelai: At Zsa Zsa Gabor's house.

Sookie: I'm going to the store, because you have nothing. Do you feel like duck?

Lorelai: If it's made with chicken, absolutely.

Sookie: **I'll be back.**

In the conversation above, Sookie's utterance, "I'll be back", is a promise which employs the pure promise strategy. This is because Sookie expresses her intention to do something, that is, to be back at Lorelai's house, without expressing any condition or any other intention. This indicates the sincerity of the promise.

### ***Discourse Conditional***

The discourse conditional strategy of promising was used 13 times (15.7%) in the series. According to Ariff and Mugableh (2013), at the functional level, there may be ranging interpretations of the use of the discourse conditional strategy to make promises. For instance, this strategy may be used as a means of persuasion to the audience; it can also be used as a means of equivocation to postpone the accomplishment of some future acts, which means it is not as sincere as the pure promises because the promise has other motive(s) besides placing the speaker under the obligation to do something. On the other hand, Ariff and Mugableh (2013) stated that "at the syntactical level, using discourse conditional to preface a promised act would increase the degree of commitment on the part of the speaker to do a certain act" (p. 256).

However, those contrasting interpretations, which have to do with the degree of sincerity of the promises, depend on the context of the conversation since sincerity has to do with the speaker's psychological attitude, and we can only assume the amount of sincerity of the promises based on the provided contexts and the condition(s) to the promises. The following example illustrates the use of the discourse conditional strategy in the TV series, which is used to persuade.

(6) 00:09:08,840 → 00:09:15,760  
[E4.IN.33.DC.07]

**Context:** Rory is studying hard for her upcoming test since she was disappointed by her previous paper result. Lorelai doesn't know why Rory study so hard. She keeps trying to get Rory's attention to make her daughter spend time with her.

Rory: Lorelai, go to your room!

Lorelai: Wow, smart girls are mean.

Rory: **If you let me study now, I'll play with you this weekend.**

In example (6), the condition "If you let me study now," is added to a promise, "I'll play with you this weekend". According to Ariff and Mugableh (2013), such addition changes the function of the speech act. For instance, in this conversation, Rory's utterance is not expressed only to promise Lorelai



that she will play with her, but to persuade Lorelai to leave Rory alone so she can study. It appears that Rory's main motive in making the promise is not to make a commitment to play with her mother on the weekend, but to make Lorelai let her study instead.

(7) 00:07:08,298 → 00:07:15,033  
[E1.IN.29.DC.03]

**Context:** *Michel, the Independence Inn's French receptionist, finally gives up to the mother and daughter, Lorelai and Rory, who have been disturbing him, trying to persuade him to check out Rory's French paper. He finally lets Rory leave the paper for him to examine.*

Michel: Leave it. **I'll look at it if I get a chance.**

Rory: It's due tomorrow, and pay special attention to the grammar.

In example (7), Michel finally decided to let Rory leave her French paper and made a promise to look at it if he gets a chance. In this case, Michel made the promise to postpone the promised act, that is, to examine Rory's French paper. He expressed the promise with a condition "... if I get a chance", which means that the sincerity of the promise is reduced, as there is no clear clue whether or not and when exactly Michel will do the promised act. Nevertheless, Michel has made the promise to look at Rory's paper and Rory believed his promise.

(8) 00:41:22,144 → 00:41:33,614  
[E5.IN.39.DC.13]

**Context:** *Lorelai keeps making promises that she will not date Rory's teacher if that is what her daughter wants. Rory knows that Lorelai is trying to get her permission to date Mr. Medina, so she teases her by responding to Lorelai's promises with anything but affirmatives.*

Lorelai: But I mean it. **I won't see him if you don't want me to.** If there's anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, big or small, then he's out of there.

Rory: Good to know.

In the conversation above, the condition: "... if you don't want me to" shows that Lorelai is being thoughtful about her daughter's preference on her decision which will affect their life as a family. In

other words, the condition that Lorelai proposed is somewhat beneficial to Rory since her choice being the condition means that it controls Lorelai's decision. Therefore, in this context, at the syntactical level, we can say that the use of discourse conditional strategy in Lorelai's promise increases the degree of her commitment to do the promised act, that is, not to see Mr. Medina.

### ***Tautological-like Expression***

Ariff and Mugableh (2013, p. 256) suggested that tautological-like expression serves two communicative functions: showing confirmation and showing annoyance besides admiring, condemning, showing indifference and showing a fatalistic point of view.

(9) 00:31:59,829 → 00:32:07,561  
[E1.IN.41.TLE.02]

**Context:** *Lorelai insists to discuss about the guy friend of Rory that Miss Patty mentioned. Rory is embarrassed because she feels that her Mom will know the excuses she made about not wanting to move school was merely to cover the fact that she has been distracted by a good looking guy who just moved to her current school.*

Rory: I don't want to talk about this. Could you please just leave me alone?

Lorelai: **Okay, fine.**

In the conversation above, Lorelai used a tautological-like expression, "Okay, fine," to promise her daughter, Rory, that she would leave her alone. In this case, from the context, we can say that Lorelai's promise serves at least two communicative functions, which are mentioned before: Lorelai's confirmation of Rory's request, which she proves in the next scene as she leaves her daughter alone, and annoyance, as Lorelai leaves Rory's room, annoyed by her daughter's attitude.

### ***Self-aggrandizing Expression***

Similar to the previous strategy, this strategy of promising was only used twice (2.4%) in the data source.

(10) 00:23:07,440 → 00:23:14,960  
[E4.IN.42.SAE.01]

**Context:** *Rory is feeling down and anxious about her academic life because of the score she got on her previous test. Lorelai tries to reassure Rory that she can get better and Lorelai will get her through Rory's academic journey.*

Lorelai: You can do this, and I'll help you. **I'll get you through this.** Now put the "D" behind you. What's next?

Rory: I have a test on Friday.

In the conversation above, Lorelai tries to reassure Rory that things will be alright by exaggerating her own image through the utterance, "I'll get you through this," which means she is more than capable of getting Rory through her hard times. Thus, she promised that she will. By exaggerating her ability, Lorelai tries to say that Rory does not have to worry because she will do whatever she needs to do to support Rory through her journey.

### **Time Expression**

In this research, the time expression strategy was used five times (6.1%) in the data source, and the promises employed expressions that indicate short spans of time.

(11) 00:15:51,760 → 00:16:09,080 [E4.IN.44.TE.01]

**Context:** *Lorelai is attending a PTA meeting at Chilton. She comes late and takes everyone's attention away from the meeting. Lorelai keeps making noises that disturb the meeting. Because she feels bad, she promised to just sit then.*

Lorelai : I'm so sorry. I had a terrible pothole incident. You don't care. So please, go on.  
[Lorelai tumbles as she hit a globe] What in the world?

Mr. Medina: You okay?

Lorelai: **I'll just sit now.**

In example (11), Lorelai promises that she will sit down so that the meeting of the PTA can continue without her unwanted interruptions. Lorelai promises using a time expression, "I'll just sit now," which indicates a very short spanned time as 'now' means 'that exact moment', or rather; the second after she said the word, there is a need to do the act right there and then.

### **Adjacency Pair**

This strategy of promising was used 25 times (30.1%).  
(12) 00:25:23,782 → 00:25:29,249 [E2.IN.53.AP.05]

**Context:** *Emily calls Lorelai at work to tell her that she has just bought a parking spot for Rory at school. After debating that Rory does not need a car, nor she does have a parking spot, Lorelai immediately tells her mother that she has to hang up the telephone because she needs to go back to do her job.*

Lorelai: You know what, Mom? I gotta go.

Emily: Fine. We'll discuss this at a later date.

Lorelai: **Okay.** Bye.

In example (12), Emily calls and tells her daughter, Lorelai, about what she just did for Rory. Upon hearing her mother bragging about buying Rory a parking spot at her new school, Lorelai excuses herself to go back to work. Lorelai does not like the idea of hearing her mother talk about Rory because she suspects her mother is trying to control Rory's life. Therefore, when Emily suggested that they should discuss the matter at a later date, Lorelai confirmed by saying, "Okay".

### **Hidden Promises**

The hidden promise strategy is a new category of indirect promising found in the data source. Hidden promises are those promises which are completely expressed indirectly. The utterances of promise are not expressed the way promises are syntactically uttered; using the formula, in active voice which implies the speaker himself as the promiser or the one who makes and will fulfill the promise, "I will ...," or "I promise that ...".

(13) 00:03:08,900 → 00:03:19,002 [E1.IN.74.HP.01]

**Context:** *When Lorelai has got the coffee for Rory, Joey, a guy who tried to flirt with her a moment ago, is trying to have a conversation with Rory. She immediately comes to her table and tells him that Rory is her daughter. Joey is shocked and embarrassed. Lorelai gives a hint that she expects Joey to leave them alone by announcing her daughter's age.*

Joey: So, daughter. You know, I am traveling with a friend.

Lorelai: She's 16.

Joey: **Bye.**

Lorelai: Drive safe.

In the conversation between Lorelai and Joey, the word "bye" does not simply mean only a goodbye. Even though Joey does not say that he will leave, the utterance itself means that Joey is going to leave as he bids them a quick farewell. Moreover, the context of the conversation indicates that Joey is promising that he will go and leave the mother and daughter alone, granting Lorelai's hinted request.

### *Sarcastic Promises*

This strategy is also a new category which is not found in Ariff and Mugableh's (2013) promising strategies. Sarcastic promises are promises which indicate sarcasm or sarcastic expressions inside the utterance of a promise. Sarcastic promises in this research are those utterances of promises that have the opposite meaning of what is said, or said to insult someone, show irritation, or be funny.

(14) 00:05:01,424 → 00:05:15,334 [E1.IN.80.SP.01]

*Context: Drella, the harpist whom Lorelai employed to play at the inn, is moving her harp in the crowded lobby. She struggles to move the heavy harp while the inn's guests keep getting on her way.*

Drella: No, don't move. Just ignore the tiny woman pushing the 200-pound instrument around. This is good. I like this. Maybe after this I'll bench-press a piano.

*(A female guest stops right in front of the harp to tie her shoelace)*

Drella: That's it, lady. Tie your shoe now. Don't worry. **I'll wait.**

In the conversation above, the utterance "I'll wait" does not only mean that Drella promises she will wait for the lady to tie her shoelace but also that Drella wishes the lady to finish her business quickly so that she can move forward quickly. In this case, Drella adopted sarcasm in making a promise in order to

show her irritation to the lady who spontaneously ties her shoe in front of her and her big heavy harp.

## CONCLUSION

This research investigates the speech act of promising found in the TV series *Gilmore Girls* season one (2000) episodes one to five. It is found that there are 88 utterances containing the speech act of promising in the first five episodes of the TV series. The most frequently used strategy in promising was indirect promising strategy (94.3%), which predominates direct promising (5.7%). Then, the most frequently used type of indirect promising strategy is the pure promise strategy (31.3%).

In addition, there are two new types of indirect promising strategies found in the TV series, namely, hidden promise and sarcastic promise strategies. However, four types of indirect strategy were not applied in the making of promises in the TV series: body-part expression, courtesy-like expression, swearing expression, and false promise. The lack of use of these strategies in making promises in the TV series possibly has to do with the cultural differences on the recognition of the speech act of promising in Jordanian Arabic and in English.

Since most of the promises used in the TV series were expressed indirectly, we can say that the characters in the TV series tend to express promises in an implicit way by not using the performative verb *promise*. This supports Rohmah (2014), who reported that people express promises indirectly since they have the assumption that the hearer will believe that they will carry out the promised future act hence the minimum use of performative verb to emphasize the promises.

Then, the dominant type of indirect promising strategy, pure promise strategy, implies that the characters in the TV series tend to make promises without any other means besides expressing their intention to commit themselves to a future act for the hearer's benefit. This finding supports Ariff and Mugableh's (2013) argument that Westerners are likely to make promises when they have the desire to do the act and when they are sure that they are able to fulfill it.

In conclusion, this research found that there are many ways to express promises, and there are many forms of promises besides the formula, “I will ...” or “I promise (that) ...”. For instance, in a certain context, by answering a question, we could bind ourselves to do a certain future act. Hence, a clear understanding of context is needed in order to recognize such promises.

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