

THE SPEECH ACT OF COMPLAINTS IN FORD'S *NOCTURNAL ANIMALS*: A PRAGMATIC STUDY

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Abstract

This research is a pragmatic study which focuses on the application of complaint speech act by the characters in *Nocturnal Animals*. The research objectives are to identify the strategies and to reveal the functions of complaint speech act. The pragmatic approach is used as it is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by the speaker and interpreted by the listener.

This research uses qualitative method to examine data which were in the form of utterances spoken by the characters. It adopts the note taking and textual analysis for collecting and analyzing the data. Moreover, the research applies the data sheet as the instrument of this research; and data peer review triangulation to validate the data.

The results of the research are shown as follows. Firstly, there are four strategies employed by the characters in *Nocturnal Animals*, namely no explicit reproach, expression of annoyance and disapproval, accusation, and blame. Secondly, the functions of complaint act revealed in the movie are complaint acts as request for repair, as a threat, and as request for forbearance. Overall, the findings suggest that the characters's complaint acts perform different functions depending on the situational context.

Keywords: Pragmatics, complaint act, *Nocturnal Animals*

INTRODUCTION

People have a need to communicate. The use of a certain language helps them to make communication process works. Unless, being able to efficiently use proper utterances in a certain language is a must. For instance, a person has to be clear in delivering the idea or the information to the receiver so that he or she can give the appropriate feedback in return. Indeed, understanding of its context is necessary. However, people have a tendency not to express what is on their mind literally in their utterances. They often express the idea implicitly. In the same way, the hearer has to be good in analyzing the speaker's intended meaning. In other respect, Pragmatics deals with how listener

successfully catches the speaker's intended meaning.

According to Yule (2010), pragmatics studies are comprised the speaker's expression of what he or she means by saying ideas in a certain context and how the certain context makes any differences. In addition, pragmatics is connected with evaluating of how the unspoken meaning can be important.

In general, as one of the branches in pragmatics, speech act provides the understanding of utterances which performs an action. Particularly, there are three acts that deal within. The first act is a locutionary act. This is the basic linguistic analysis of utterance. On balance, it is the act of uttering a sentence which is compromised syntactic

and phonetic aspects. The second is the illocutionary act which the act is the central discussion of the speech act theory. It talks about what is the speaker on the mind when uttering his or her utterances and what the speaker's goal is for saying utterances. The last one is a perlocutionary act which can be simply described as the effect of the hearer toward the utterances spoken by the speaker. Besides, perlocutionary is about the hearer's responses.

Apart from the three kinds of speech acts, there are five classifications of illocutionary act. One of them is an expressive act. The expressive act is a kind of speech act that states what the speaker feels. The speakers express psychological states, and can be statements of pleasure, pain, like, dislike, joy, or sorrow (Yule, 1996: 53). In addition, the speaker wants to utter some words for referring his or her ideas about her or his personal feeling.

One of expressive speech act variants is the speech act of complaint. In general, speech act complaint contains activity of criticizing, blaming, and disapproving. Those activities are based on the speaker's point of view and judgment that are ruined by the hearer under certain circumstances. In the other word, the speaker as the complainer expresses her or his belief in moral standard that is disobeyed by the complaineer.

Typically, people can see the complaint speech act phenomenon in their daily activity. For the most part, they often

express complaints directly and indirectly as well. By giving that fact, sometimes the complaineer is not-so-sensitive to response the complaint. Although the complainer does really want to express his irritated feeling toward a complainable situation, the complaint is not able to be recognized easily. If the complaineer is a kind of an ignorant person, the complaint speech act cannot be known as a complaint expression. Indeed, it is considered as common utterances without any specific purpose in it. Thus, the understanding of the ways of expressing complaint speech act, the comprehending of types and strategies of complaint speech act is important to be known.

However, in this research, the researcher picks a movie entitled *Nocturnal Animals* as the object of the research since the characters perform the use of speech act of complaint among one another. The analysis of the movie hopefully brings up the issues of speech act of complaint as one of the language phenomena that is worth to be discussed.

Complaint belongs to expressives act, one of speech acts classifications which discuss about speaker's feeling. Thus, a complaint is classified in expressives since it reveals the irritated feeling of the speakers regarding somebody's action. In addition, the act of complaint is the speaker's act that is based on the personal state of affair or judgment in which ruined by the hearer.

Trosborg outlines a complaint act as an abusive act which means it exposes speaker's disapproval, negative feelings towards the state of affairs described in the proposition as the complainable (1995: 311). In addition, the complainer wants the complainees to take the responsibility for what he or she is doing or has done which is different from the complainer's expectation whether the way of the complainer say so is direct or indirect. Moreover, in Leech's terminology, the complaint is a representative of the conflictive function, which includes acts of threatening, accusing, cursing, and reprimanding (Trosborg, 1995: 312).

Furthermore, the complaint is the precision of the need of correcting someone's wrongdoing action through certain utterance which directs the complainees to fix his or her wrongdoing action. Since the expression of complain is consequently cause offence and intimidation, closely it means that a complainer has a possibility breaking his or her social relationship with the complainees.

Preventing a conflict, there are some strategies arranged for the complainer. According to Trosborg (1995:348), the act complaining has four main categories. There are No Explicit Reproach, Expression of Annoyance or Disapproval, Accusation, and Blame.

The first complaint strategy is No Explicit Reproach. In the complainers who purposely do not want to arise a clash when they utter a complain pick out the strategy of

no explicit reproach to complain the wrong doing. Indeed, this strategy is appropriate for avoiding a confrontation. This strategy refers to a strategy that is used by the complainer to deliver his or her complain without mentioning the particular case yet indirectly questioning the complainees's responsibility. As the example, *Don't see much of you these days, do I?* shows the complainer is complaining the absence of the complainees in certain situation, indirectly the complainer shows his aversion toward that situation.

The second strategy is Expression of Annoyance and Disapproval. Trosborg defines this strategy as the strategy in which the complainer is stating his or her complain by infers that the complainees is the one who has to be responsible for the present circumstances but the complainer avoids mentioning him or her as the guilty person however the speaker asserts the expression of dislike. Thus, it implies that the speaker is the exact guilty person who has to take the responsibility to fix the problem. The expression of this strategy can be divided into two main concerns; annoyance and consequences. The annoyance expression is about the complainer's annoyance feeling that caused by the complainees's wrongdoing. In addition, it involves the personal irritated sentiment, in examples, *'you know I don't like dust, I'm allergic to dust, didn't you know it?'* and *look at these things, all over the place* (Trosborg, 1995: 316)

Different from the previous strategies, in accusation, the complainer clarifies the responsible person at the wrongdoing that includes the complainer in it. In other words, this strategy is a strategy that approximately accuses that the hearer has done something unkind. Thus, the main concern of this strategy is to assert the hearer as the responsible person on a certain wrongdoing. In detail, there are two kinds of complainer's ways of accuse; directly and indirectly. The specific examples are taken from Trosborg (1995:317). For example, if someone said "*Look at the mess, haven't you done any cleaning up for the last week?*" the utterances would imply that the complainer tries indirectly point the hearer as the guilty person but not in blunt way. This strategy occurs when the complainer asks a question to the complainer even the fact is the complainer accuses the complainees as the one who has to be responsible of the mess.

The last strategy is Blame. According to Trosborg (1995:318), act of blame presupposes that the accused is guilty of the offence. Assuming that, compared to all of the preceding strategies revealed overhead, this strategy is the only strategy that belongs to direct complaint. The hearer is definitely accused as the guilty person by the speaker. Furthermore, this strategy has three sub-strategies that illustrate different ways of directness. For example, when people say "*Bloody fool! you've done it again*" shows the way the complainer proposes swear words that

indicates the complainable as the doer of an event.

In a complaint act, generally a complainer wants to express his or her unpleasant feeling headed for the hearer's misconduct. Furthermore the complainer intends the complainees to fix the complainable. Thus, there are some kinds of complaint functions proposed by Trosborg (1995) in order to recognize the complaint act. The first is Request for repair, the second is Threat, and the last one is Request for forbearance.

The first function is Request for repair. This function is applied by the speaker who wants the hearer (complainees) to stop doing the complainable which means this function is all about the hearer's expectation that someone should behave in a particular way or do particular things based on the speaker's belief (Trosborg 1995: 320). For example, "*This is a non-smoke*". in a situation where a passenger says to the other passenger who is smoking in a non-smoking compartment in a train. That utterance shows that the speaker complains the smoker and expects the smoker to stop smoking or to move out the compartment. Hence, the complainees has to be in the same understanding that the hearer initially requests him or her to stop doing the complainable.

The second function is a complaint that functioned as a threat. Primarily, this function of speech complaint is expressed by the speaker as his or her further expression of

discomfort. As the complainer express a complaint as the request for repair but the complaine is still doing the wrongdoing, the complainer might express the complaint that functioned as a threat instead. Trosborg (1995:321) states a complainer may choose to attack the complaine's face openly by issuing a threat. In doing so he or she often states an ultimatum with immediate consequences. For example, in a cassette shop there is a thief who steals a cassette and the shop keeper caught him in the act of theft. The complainer complains the complaine wrongdoing which showed by intimidate the complaine. Additionally, there is a consequence later on if the complaine doesn't do anything headed for the complainable.

The last function is Request for Forbearance. According to Trosborg (1995:322), it is intended as a negative reinforcer relative to the subsequent repetition by the complaine of the specified behavior and may result in a promise of forbearance on the part of the complaine. Likely, the complainer in the near future hopes that the complaine in all probability never does the complainable ever again. For example, when people say "*and then in future ask me before you want to wear something of my clothes because eh it's quite annoying not knowing whether my jacket's hanging in the wardrobe or my dress is in the cupboard or whatever..*" "my feet are killing me," the complainer's expect that the complaine not to repeat the

offence readers perceived the emotion as informative.

The form of the data was utterance of the characters in *Nocturnal Animals* for examining the strategies and function of complaint act in the movie. Besides, the data of this research were in the form of utterances in which indicated complaint speech act. The context was the dialogues of the characters in the movie. In addition, the sources of the data were the movie entitled *Nocturnal Animals* and its transcript

Nocturnal Animals is the object of the research which is a 2016 American movie directed by Tom Ford, from an adapted novel entitled *Tom and Susan* written by Austin Wright. This movie is categorized as romantic thriller and there are two kinds of plot in the film; the real event and the manuscript based. This adaptation movie is about a deep feeling of a person who feels very guilty and sad about something she or he done. Besides the movie conveys remorse, it also carries a hidden complaint and revenge.

The objectives of this research are to explain the functions of complaint expression; and to explain the kind of complaint strategies expressed by the characters in *Nocturnal Animals* based on its context. Furthermore, complaint act involves the speaker's intention of expressing the complaint utterances. Indeed the awareness of the strategy and function of complaint act is necessary. Thus, the category of strategy and function proposed by Anna Trosborg is used. It

becomes clear then in Trosborg (1995:315), there are four strategies of complaint namely no explicit reproach, expression of annoyance, accusation and blame. Besides, the functions of the complaint act are request for repair, request for forbearance, and threat.

This research is expected to enrich the study of English Literature analysis especially in the field of complaint speech acts in pragmatics. Furthermore, the result of this research gives a good comprehension of complaint speech act analysis for English lecturers and English students in their teaching-learning process. Generally, this research could be one of convincing additional materials grounds for other researchers in the same realm

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used qualitative approach since it focuses on the meaning of experience by exploring how people define, describe, and metaphorically make sense of experiences (Vanderstoep and Jhonston, 2009: 165). Furthermore, the advantage of applying qualitative research gives a chance for the researcher in gaining the in-depth phenomenon as it provides an inductive method. According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 168), an inductive approach is a process of reasoning that follows a reverse path observation precedes theory and interpretation. In other word, the data in qualitative method are presented in a narrative model.

Moreover, qualitative approach also proposes a concept named a social construction of reality which means that the researcher could not possibly analyze and understand a phenomenon only with understanding all of its parts without its context (Vanderstoep and Jhonston, 2009: 166). Furthermore, qualitative perspective was chosen since the objectives of this research are to explain the functions of complaint expression; and to explain the kind of complaint strategies expressed by the characters in *Nocturnal Animals* based on its context.

The instrument employed by the researcher was a data sheet. The data sheet was in the form of table for categorizing the data into strategies and functions of complaint based on the theory proposed by Trosborg. In addition, note taking was selected as the data collection technique in this research. It provided the researcher's chance to collect and record the data manually. The data of this research were gathered from the utterances employed by the characters in *Nocturnal Animals* movie. In detail, the steps are: Watching *Nocturnal Animals* movie cautiously; downloading *Nocturnal Animals* transcript; re-reading the transcript, re-watching the movie to make sure that utterances of the data were accurate, taking note of the utterances consisting complaint in the transcript of the movie, selecting the marked data into the group of complaint strategies and functions in

accordance to Trosborg's theory and transferring the data into the data sheet.

The research used textual analysis as the research method in analysing the data. Moreover, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:210) states that textual analysis consist of the identification and interpretation of a set of verbal or nonverbal communication. Since this research was qualitative research, the researcher employed textual analysis to examine the qualitative data. Thus, textual analysis was used as the research analysing techniques.

In detail, the data analysis technique steps were preparing the data gained from the *Nocturnal Animals* transcript, evaluating the utterances and its contexts so that the researcher could determine the strategies and functions of complaint act, categorizing the data based on the theory, rechecking the collected data to ensure it has been categorized correctly, explaining the data narratively based on the strategies and functions of complaint act in *Nocturnal Animals*, conducting peer reviews to accomplish the validity of the results so that the data could be suitably put, drawing the conclusions according to the research findings.

The credibility of the data analysis has to be gained so that triangulation technique is used to evaluate the data analysis. According to Denzin in Lincoln and Guba (1983: 305) triangulation was divided into four types, they are by source, by methods, by researcher, and

by theories triangulation. In this research, the researcher used triangulation by theories and triangulation by researcher. Therefore, in the same way, the researcher conducted peer review with the supervisor and the some students of English Literature majoring Linguistic as the peer reviewers to validate the data.

DISCUSSIONS

There are four strategies performed in the movie. They are no explicit reproach, expression of annoyance and disapproval, accusation and blame. The three of them belong to indirect complaint act and the blame strategy is classified as the direct one.

No Explicit Reproach strategy is used by the complainer to deliver his or her complaint without mentioning the particular case, yet indirectly questioning the complaine'e's responsibility. The example of this strategy is presented in the movie as in the following example.

- (1) Hutton : I'm sorry. Really. By the time I left the office I was late for my dinner
Susan : **It would have taken you 15 minutes. 15 minutes and it would have meant a lot to me.** (datum 3)

The dialogue shows that in order to complain someone the complainer does not need to always mention the exact problem in the complaint. The manifestation of a complaint can be shown in the utterance which implies the complaint expression. In the data, the complainer does not state openly what the problem or the complainable is.

Additionally, she does not mention directly the doer or the complaine. Nevertheless, in the utterances there is no word indicating what the object she is grumbling about.

The expression of annoyance and disapproval strategy also found in the movie. It is used by a complainer when expressing his or her annoyance, dislike, disapproval, towards a particular thing that is bad for him or her. In addition, in some cases, the complainer infers that someone has to take a responsibility of the complainable, but he or she avoids pointing out the doer as the guilty person. The example of this strategy is presented in the following dialogue.

(2) Tony: Because I just had it completely rebuilt. It's a classic.

India: **It has a terrible sound system.**

Tony: Well you'll have to suffer through that.

(datum 18)

Here, the complaine chooses the wrong decision about selecting the most preferable car. Without mentioning the doer as the responsible person, the complainer tends to shows her irritated feeling by adding the information related to cause of the wrongdoing. It can be shown in utterance *It has a terrible sound system* which uttered as the expression of annoyance feeling headed for a particular thing that is bad for her.

Furthermore, in *Nocturnal Animals* movie, accusation is used as In this strategy, the doer of a wrongdoing is mentioned in certain. Not only can be appointed directly as strategy for the complaine to assert the involvement of a complainable that linked

with a definite setting and condition. The example of accusation is presented in the dialogue of some characters as in the following example.

(3) Susan : **Where were you last night? You didn't come by the gallery.**

Hutton : I'm sorry. Really. By the time I left the office I was late for my dinner.
(datum 2)

It consists of the direct accusation since the complainer openly mentions the word 'you' which means to appoint the accused person of the wrongdoing. Additionally, the complainer also directly states the circumstances at a given time. Susan as the complainer proposes a complaint that accused Hutton for not coming to her exhibition.

Lastly, the other complaint act strategy is blame. The blame strategy presupposes that the accused is guilty of the offence. In some cases this strategy is often uses swear words. An example of this strategy is presented as in the following.

(4) Ray: You must have busted it when you was shoving us off the road.

Laura: **We did not shove you off the road! You shoved us off the road!**
(datum 20)

The complainer mentions the pronoun 'you' to emphasize the directness of the complaint. The complainer censures the complaine in order to against the complaine's previous statement. It indicates that the complainer directly blame the complaine for the offence.

Moreover, the functions of speech act of complaint are complaint act functioned as

request for repair, complaint act functioned as threat, and complaint act functioned as request for forbearance.

The first function that applied in *Nocturnal Animals* movie is request for repair. This function is applied by complainer in order to give a request to the hearer in which they have to stop doing the complainable or to revise it. The example of this function is presented in the movies as in the following.

- (5) Hutton: I didn't know he could write.
Susan : **Yes you did. He was writing a novel when you and got together, you just don't remember.**

The complainer, Susan, wants Hutton to revise his utterance which state that he did not know that Edward can write. She corrects his utterance by saying that Hutton only cannot remember it well. It indicates that by uttering the complaint, its function as a request for Hutton to revise his previous statement.

Another function is complaint act as a threat. In this function, the complainer directly accuses the complainees for doing the complainable. The way the complainer utters the complaint is intimidating and sometimes he or she gives an immediate consequence in the future. An example of this function is presented as in the following.

- (6) Tony: Alright fine. Get in your car and we'll follow you there.
Ray: **Fuck you! No way! You go in my car.**

It indicates a complaint that uttered by Ray who adds swear word in it. The swear word indicates his attempt to give a threat for Tony. It means that he wants to frighten Tony by his complaint intentionally.

Moreover, the last function that employed by the characters in *Nocturnal Animals* is complaint as the request for forbearance. This function contains of the complainer requests for the complainees which involves the expectation that the complainees will never performs the offence on the future behaviour. This application of complaint function is in the following dialogue.

- (7) Edward: I am sorry. I hope that doesn't offend you. But she has always seemed sad to me. She has sad eyes. I've thought that since I was a little boy. You have the same eyes. They're beautiful.
Susan : **Please don't say that. I don't want to be like my mother.**

The utterances *please don't say that. I don't want to be like my mother* must be indicates statement of a complaint as request for forbearance. Consequently, Susan hopes that he will not say that offence anymore. The word *please* possibly expresses the request for Edward not to state that Susan and her mother are alike. Her intention is that she does not want to hear the same utterance about their similarity in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

There are four strategies of complaint act that employed by the characters in *Nocturnal Animals*. They are explicit no

reproach, annoyance or disapproval, accusation, and blame. By using the no explicit reproach, the characters aim to avoid a conflict when they deliver the complaint. It is used by some characters to formulate the complaint without even mentioning the exact case. In addition, the complainer does not express any intimidation to the complaine.

The blame strategy is the only strategy that shows the way the complainer directly indicts the complaine as the guilty person. Some of the characters usually use swear words with the intention of threatening the complaine. Meanwhile, the complainer who uses this strategy often appoints directly the complaine by using pronoun 'you'. Meanwhile, the strategy which shows the expression of annoyance and disapproval is used by some characters to indirectly censure the complaine as the one who should be responsible of a wrongdoing. Typically by asserting his or her annoyance, dislike, or disapproval expression, they want to avoid mentioning the complaine as the guilty person in a direct way. The last, the occurrence of accusation strategy comprises the complainer who is questioning the complaine's involvement in a wrongdoing.

There are three functions of complaint act in Trosborg theory that employed by the characters in *Nocturnal Animals* namely request for repair, a threat, and request for forbearance. In fact, when a speaker complained a wrongdoing of someone, it means to say that something is wrong or not

satisfactory based on the complainer's standard. Inconclusively, most of the characters propose the functions of complaint which mean that the complaine has to repair the misconduct. Furthermore, the other function of complaint that intended by the characters is to threat. The complaint expression functioned as a threat means to give the intimidation for the complaine related to their misbehaving. Also the characters propose the complaint act functioned as request for forbearance to expect the complaine for not doing the offence forever more.

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