

An Overview of the Speech Act of Complaining

Dan Zhang¹

College of Foreign Language, Henan University of Science and Technology, Luoyang,
HeNan, China
jerryzhangdan070@sina.com)

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Abstract. Complaint is the sort of the speech act which threatens the hearer's face. Therefore, different people will adopt the different realization patterns of complaints. Therefore, this paper will present an overview of the speech act of complaining from at home and abroad.

As the development of the speech act theory, more and more linguists show their great interest to the study of the different speech act, such as compliments, refusals and apologies; since 1980s, more and more scholars have made the research on the speech act of requests (Walter, 1981; Fraser & Nelson, 1981; Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1983; Blum-Kulka & Levenston, 1987), refusals (Beebe, Takashi and Uliss- Wertz forthcoming), apologies (Borkin & Reinhart, 1978; Zimin, 1981; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Cohen & Olshtain, 1987; Trosborg, 1986) and thanks (Eisentein & Bodman, 1986). From all these speech acts, it seems that the study of the speech act of complaining becomes the important part which attracts attention of some scholars. They have viewed this from different perspectives. Here, the paper will present an overview of the speech act of complaining from at home and abroad.

Definition of the Speech Act of Complaining

Just as Alicke et al (1992) has mentioned that the speech act of complaining is the kind of the common features of daily interactions. Although it can be expressed to satisfy the positive effects of complainer, such as venting the frustration and hearing the complaint this can be aversive. Moreover, the speech act of complaining can hinder the conflict of the interpersonal relationship.

In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, complaint can be explained as a kind of annoying, dissatisfying about something and someone. Therefore, it can be viewed as an emphasis which the speaker has ignored the hearer's face and feelings. As the work of Trosborg (1995), complaints, viewed as the expressive function, can also the illocutionary act in which the speaker can show his dissatisfaction and annoyance either directly and indirectly. As the scholar House & Kasper (1981) has mentioned that the complaint is the kind of directness and modality markers. Marty Larforest (2002) gives the definition that complaints which can be expressed the dissatisfaction addressed by the individual A who concerned the behavior of individual B who will feel unsatisfactory. Olshtain & Weinbach (1993:108) has developed the widely-accepted definition which refers to the complaints. It is emphasis that the speaker shows his/her dissatisfaction or censure which the natural reaction to the past or on-going action, the results which have been made by the speaker who affected his/her unfavorably.

An Overview of the Speech Act of Complaining

Since 1980s, a lot of scholars who have made the comparative investigation of the complaints, and all the research which has centered on the comparison between English and other languages. The previous study of complaints is mainly centered on the definition of complaints, the realization patterns of complaints and the classification of complaints.

Among them, the most representative is House & Kasper (1981), who makes the investigation of the directness of complaints made by the English speakers and German speakers. In this study, it seems that they have found that the most polite way is the indirect level of the complaints. They also have found that four important schemata which has made the determination that the level of directness ranges from the level one to the level eight, so, the level one is to be the most direct one

and the level eight is the most direct. As last, they have found that German speakers' complaints are the most direct and also use fewer down-graders than those of English speakers.

Olshatain & Weinbach(1987) make the investigation of the speech act of complaining which has been made by the native and non-native speakers of Hebrew. Data has been collected to a discourse completion questionnaire, which consist of 20 situations. The data, collected from 35 Israeli university students which lead to the development of the scale for the perception of the severity of the speech act of complaining. The scale can makes us to categorize the complaint realizations on five points along a continuum. It has been included below the level of reproach, expression of the dissatisfaction, explicit complaints, warning, immediate threat and warning. Besides, the studies also emphasize that the contextual parameters which include social factors and situational factors which may affect the realization patterns of speech acts which has been produced by the learners and some of these interlanguage features which have the potential to represent any speech act behaviors while others are speech act specific.

De Capua (1989) who is to aim to find, during the process, whether the pragmatic transfer is existed or not. From the collecting data which is by the way of DCT, he sets the different situations and asks the examinee to give the responses accordingly. All these responses refer to the different realization pattern of complaint. DeCapua has made the classification of the data in to the different types of the semantic components of complaints, from the level of directness and types of directness markers.

Box, D.(1993) has made the investigation to analyze the speech act lines of the indirect complaint. She gives the definition of the indirect complaint as the negative assessment while the hearer in not respond for the perceive offense—to express the annoyance and angry. The six complaint responses have been made up of it. Therefore, it also included the topic switch, contradiction, joke, advice and agreement (commiseration). At last, she has found that the reaction of the native speaker to the complaint is that commiseration whether the non-native speaker will try their best to build solidarity with the native speakers

Trosborg(1995) tries to make the contrast of the realization of complaint between the non-native English learners and native speakers.

As Murphy and Neu (1996) have made the comparison of the productive aspect of the complaint speech act set as performed by the Native Speakers and Korean non-native speakers of English. The results have been shown that the semantic formula of the complaints are the following:

The Purpose Explanation;

A Complaint;

A justification;

A candidate solution: request.

From the analysis of the result of the study, it seems that the complaint speech act set which has been made up of four basic elements: expatiation of purpose, complaint, justification and candidate solution: request. At last, they have found that the criticism and complaint are the most important distinct speech act sets that refer different elements. Moreover, the differences of complaints which have existed both the Native speakers and Non-native speakers. It has been found that, in the American cultural context, the speech act of complaining is too direct which has been found produced by the speakers of English.

Conclusion

From the above-motined analysis, it seems that the study of the speech act of complaint has received much attention in the different languages. Here, the author has made the deep investigation into the analysis of the study of the speech act of complaining. Moreover, it is very important part for the language learning and teaching as well as the cross-cultural communication.

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