

SPEECH ACTS ANALYSIS ON LILLY CONTINO'S COMPLAINT VIDEOS IN A RESTAURANT SETTING

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Abstract

This study examines the use of Speech Acts complaining in Lilly Contino's misgendering videos. Using Speech Acts categorizations by Searle (1969) and Moon's (2002) complaining framework, the study aims to identify the strategy of complaints used by Lilly Contino and to examine its effectiveness. The study reveals that Lilly Contino used both implicit and explicit strategies. The implicit strategy used as an initial complaint by using assertive Speech Acts comprises reaffirming, recognizing, and stating, the explicit strategy used as a follow-up complaint by using directive Speech Acts includes demanding and requesting; and the expressive Speech Acts is used as well encompass Lilly's personal feeling. It is also found that the implicit strategy is less effective for complaints rather than the explicit one. The study furthermore reveals that complaining has its level to address offensive situations. Therefore, this study is particularly useful for understanding the intent of complainers and how the hearer develops a suitable apology.

Keywords: *Speech Acts, complaint, complaining strategy*

INTRODUCTION

Speech Acts have an important role in social contexts because they are a dynamic means of mutual understanding and successful communication between people. Speech Acts has the immediate ability to convey ideas, feelings, and intentions, which influences social dynamics in addition to facilitating information flow (Kumala, 2018). Therefore, the urgency of Speech Acts is essential for connecting with people, settling disputes, and creating a shared understanding that serves as the cornerstone of a peaceful and cohesive social fabric in all contexts, including indicating an unfavorable discrepancy between expectations and actuality.

One way to communicate one's displeasure, irritation, or sadness over something is to complain (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987 as in Moon, 2002). The context of expressing dissatisfaction within dining establishments, a common locus of contention about the quality of service becomes the interest of this study. Specifically, a noteworthy aspect of such grievances involves instances where service personnel, notably waitstaff, failed to acknowledge customers' concerns through their words. This act somehow influences the nature of the complaint itself. For instance, when customers are not properly treated or greeted, they can become irritated and feel underappreciated which often leads to escalated complaints. Therefore, a simple act of understanding customers' requests is crucial as a form of immediate service and providing a good experience. This discussion is in line with Preotiuc-Pietro et al. (2020), that comprehending the expression of

complaints is crucial to recognizing human characteristics, explaining complaint behavior, and enabling organizations to enhance customer service by effectively resolving client worries and issues. Furthermore, comprehending the complainer's mode of communication to effectively handle complaints is important as well. For instance, complaints can be made directly or indirectly, and positively or negatively. Therefore, complaining is most noticeable in situations where societal expectations and conventions are not met. Thus, it makes sense that when two sides do not understand one another, one side will naturally feel wronged and use the complaint as a form of confrontation asking for repair or compensation (Decock & Spiessens, 2017; Hasyim, 2020).

Analyzing the complaints in Speech Acts has been the subject of numerous research projects. One such instance is the analysis of social media complaints, where the recipient is influenced by the Speech Acts type and the complaint strategy chosen by the complainant (Argyris et al., 2021; Hasyim, 2020; Jin & Aletras, 2021). Studies on Speech Acts have also been conducted in the field of education, for instance by Laabidi & Bousfiha (2020) examining the complaints from EFL students, and the findings indicate that students prefer to file indirect complaints to their teacher as a form of politeness rather than to do it in a confronting way. However, studies on the Speech Acts of misgendering complaints in restaurant settings are still not widely explored. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap and the findings of this study will contribute to the evolving discourse linguistic phenomena and provide insights into the strategy of complaining in various social contexts.

This paper carries out a Speech Acts analysis on Lilly Contino's misgendering complaint videos. The Speech Acts analysis theory was first presented by Searle (1969) to examine the descriptive Speech Acts (utterances) and complaining strategy framework from Moon (2002). Therefore, this research was guided by one question: "What complaining strategy was used by Lilly Contino in her videos?"

METHODOLOGY

The Speech Acts in Lilly Contino's videos were analyzed using qualitative research in this study. Discourse analysis and content analysis provide the study's foundation. According to its definition, content analysis is a research technique that involves the subjective interpretation of data to find themes and patterns in the audio transcriptions. Therefore, it is in line with (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2007) this method aims to emphasize the importance of exploring and understanding the complexities of human experiences and social phenomena through in-depth inquiry and interpretation. Lilly Contino, a social media personality, is a participant in this study. She is a transgender woman who actively makes complaining videos in restaurants regarding her annoyance at being misgendered by the waiters. The reason why we chose her videos as the contents of the analysis is because her Speech Acts are fit for this study.

The technique of gathering the data is applied in this research by conveying several stages. First, we selected the complaining videos in Lilly Contino's TikTok account and we found five videos with the same setting, which is in a restaurant. The videos were watched several times to understand the content and find the important details that supported this research. Last, for the data to be well understood, we converted the dialogue audio into text (Transcription) using the verbatim technique.

In data analysis of audio transcripts, the process begins with analyzing the transcribed content by labeling the same words or phrases. Next, the researchers classify the Speech Acts present in the videos and categorize how the communication between Lilly and waiters is structured and conveyed. Following this classification, attention turns to identifying the specific complaint strategy employed by Lily Contino. Finally, the findings are interpreted and presented in the results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings from the data analysis will be discussed to answer the research question. The results of the data revealed that Lilly Contino often used assertive, directive, and expressive Speech Acts in complaining. Moreover, she also tends to use both implicit and explicit complaining strategies.

First, Lilly uses an *assertive* Speech Acts in which she conveys facts about herself. She stated the statement as a form of satire in the hope that the waiter would understand what she was saying. Here too, Lilly has indicated that she uses *implicit* strategy because she did not involve the waiter directly in her confrontation. Below are the utterances that Lilly said.

"... I use she/her pronouns ..."

"... I'm not a Sir (sigh) nothing like a good misgendering ..."

Second, Lilly also used *directive* Speech Acts in expressing her annoyance at being called Sir. Thus, she is more demanding in expressing her complaints. For example, he immediately asked the waiter not to call him "Sir", and wanted to talk to the manager, even to the point that she left the restaurant. Therefore, Lilly also used an explicit complaining strategy because she directly involved the staff in the confrontation and asked for accountability or compensation from the staff.

"... I just need not to be called Sir, you know?"

"... I was wondering if there's a manager, I could talk to about something that happened."

"... I just want to tell you that the person who gave me this called me Sir"

From the utterances above, it can be concluded that Lilly became aggressive in stating complaints. This happened because her complaint at the beginning was ignored and not addressed by the staff, which made Lilly feel unappreciated. Therefore, what he initially used as an implicit strategy became an explicit level.

Additionally, besides using assertive and directive Speech Acts. Lilly also uses expressive Speech Acts as a form of expressing her personal feelings. Lilly also uses expressive Speech Acts as a form of response to situations that occur. In each of her short videos, she always expresses how she feels when being misgendered with almost the same phrase. Here are the examples.

“Yeah, it’s like a knife in the heart ...”

“It just hurts a lot to get called Sir”

“... It is a knife in the gut when I get called ‘Sir’ ...”

From the all-over analysis, Lilly used both implicit and explicit complaining strategies in her videos. She tends to use implicit strategy as an initial complaint. Nonetheless, when her complaints were not being addressed, she tended to use explicit strategy.

From the results of the finding above, Lilly's strategy in stating complaints uses three Speech Acts, namely assertive, directive, and expressive. This can be justified by Moon's theory (2002), that in expressing a complaint a person will at least use two Speech Acts, namely assertive where he or she states facts or information about the situation and directive to ask for compensation from the hearer. Thus, in other words, complaints possibly co-occurred with other Speech Acts.

In the following analysis of Lilly's complaining strategy, Lilly used an implicit strategy at the beginning of the complaint because she did not want to threaten the waiter's negative face. That's why she used a short statement or fact as a form of confrontation that is not too harsh. Puksi (2016) stated that customers can make a complaint easily and quickly with the intention not to make any scene in public space. Moreover, this is in line with Brown et al. (2018), Ghaznavi (2017), and Preotiuc-Pietro et al. (2020) that complaints in the early stages often do not directly involve another party and do not directly expect to ask for responsibility, since Lilly’s first complaints were likely to be ignored by the staff, therefore, implicit complaint strategy is less effective and weak.

However, Lilly’s annoyance and dissatisfaction weren’t immediately addressed by the staff, until it came to the point that she went rage and asked for a manager. Therefore,

she used an *explicit* strategy to point out “what is wrong” with the situation by blaming the waiters for calling her a “Sir”. Thus, an *explicit* complaint is a complaint that is already at a higher level because the complainer has reached the stage of ‘blaming’ another party in an offensive situation and favor to return the “debt” (Brown et al., 2018; Moon, 2002; Preotiuc-Pietro et al., 2020). Moreover, in other videos, Lilly came to the point that she was too mad and left the restaurant as an act of complaint. Her behavior indicates the *explicit* complaining strategy on another level. As in agreement with Fiqih & Sudana (2022) Gunarathne et al. (2017) the use of an explicit complaining strategy without demanding compensation anymore is categorized as a little bit extreme and repeated complaints make a speaker feel less likely better. However, some staff had to say sorry as an act of apology. Therefore, it indicates that an *explicit* complaining strategy is stronger to use to demand a justification, compensation, or request (Hassouneh & Zibin, 2021).

CONCLUSION

According to the findings, Lilly Contino's use of speech acts and complaint strategies in a restaurant setting is acceptable since she used the proper procedure to subtly express her displeasure at being misgendered and because her intentions were appropriate for the situation. The annoyance or dissatisfaction for being misgendered is mostly realized by Lilly herself, not the staff due to several reasons. First, the waiters purposely refer to Lily as a man because the practice of pronouns and gender norms by the LGBT community is still not widely acceptable and doesn't fit cultural beliefs. Second, it's a natural language habit, when we see a man, we directly address him as a 'he' not a 'she'. Last, it takes a lot of effort for some people to comprehend such situations especially when it comes to complaints about misgendering.

Moreover, it can be seen that the implicit strategy that Lilly used is the weakest one for confrontation since her initial complaints were not being addressed. Lilly was being passive-aggressive rather than constructive which led to confusion and irritated the staff. The cultural differences can also escalate the misunderstanding of this issue and often fail to provide meaningful resolution. Nonetheless, Lilly also successfully used an explicit strategy (a strong one) which eventually worked and made some waiters apologize. For instance, Lilly was clear with her feelings and directly confronted the waiters. This happened because explicit complaint usually provides clarity and empowerment.

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