

ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINING STRATEGIES IN THE HOLLYWOOD SONG “IF I WERE A BOY” BY BEYONCE KNOWLES

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ABSTRACT -In this digital era, complaining has become so pervasive that it creeps into our conversations from the dinner table to our workplace. A complaint is incomplete without three main elements: a speaker, a listener, and a signaling system or language. Language plays a crucial part in our lives to inform people around us of what we feel, what we desire and question or understand the world around us. The fundamental function of language is communication. Songs are one of the greatest creations of human kind in the course of history. It is creativity in a pure and undiluted form and format. The speech act is an utterance considered as an action, particularly with regards to its intention, purpose or effect. Jane Austin claims that many utterances are equivalent to actions which means without performing an action by mere words action can be performed.

Songs reflect the society, what's present in the society creates an impact on the songs written by various songwriters and hence songs are incomplete without complaints, be it any romantic song, sad song or an inspiring one. Complaints can be found in every song about the lover, the world or the people. In this study, the lyrics of a Hollywood song “If I were a boy” by an American singer Beyonce Knowles has been used for the analysis of complaining act. The study illuminates how complaints are being used in our daily lives through songs and has become a part of it. Complaints are becoming human nature so the effect of the complaints can also be seen in songs.

Keywords: Complaints, Speech Acts, Hollywood, Songs,

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial part in our lives to inform people around us of what we feel, what we desire and question or understand the world around us. The fundamental function of language is communication. We communicate effectively with our words, gestures and tone of voice in multitude of situation. Music is a way to escape life, takes us away from the pain and helps us reduce stress from daily routine. In this busy schedule of life we don't just sit around free and listen to it but it has become such a part of our lives that we listen to it while travelling, driving etc. Song washes away from the soul, the dust of everyday life and inspires one to live a lofty life.

According to an American philosopher J.R. Searle, speaking a language is performing speech acts such as, making statements, giving commands, asking questions or making promises. Speech acts are the minimal or basic units of linguistic communication. They are not mere artificial linguistic construct as it may seem, their understanding together with the acquaintance of context in which they are performed are often essential for decoding the whole utterance and its proper meaning. He speech acts are used in proper quotidian exchanges as well as in jokes or dramas. Speech acts cannot be fully understood without hearing the hearers as well as the speakers.

DEFINITION OF COMPLAINTS

A complaint is a protest or outcry or an expression of grief of something that one does not admire or something that dissatisfied the person. Although the strategies used to express complaints may vary with the situation and among languages, complaints are generally realised by means of following strategies proposed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1988).

1. **Below the level of reproach:** The speaker avoids explicit mention of the offensive event by means of various remarks without directly blaming the interlocutor. For example, if someone breaks a glass, the interlocutor may mention a remark such as: ‘don't worry about it, such things happen.’ Here the speaker does not intend to reprimand the interlocutor too strongly.

2. **Expression of annoyance or disapproval:** These are realisations of disapproval by means of indirect or vague indications that something has been violated without holding the interlocutor directly responsible. In these cases, the speaker avoids direct confrontation with the interlocutor and makes general remarks that something has happened expressing some kind of annoyance at the violation.

3. **Explicit complaint:** The speaker explicitly states a direct complaint holding the interlocutor responsible for such a violation. this is often a direct or unmitigated complaint addressed to the interlocutor's face: ‘you're such an inconsiderate person; you should have consult me first’.

4. **Accusation and warning:** The direct action taken by the speaker making an explicit complaint carries potential consequences for the interlocutor: ‘Next time, you'll play for it with your own money.’

5. **Requests and repair:** These include questions that ask the hearer to remediate the problem: ‘please see if you can fix this as soon as possible.’

6. Justifications: These include reasons expressed when complaining to defend or lend support to the speaker's position or request for demand.

7. Criticisms: A person who expresses a complaint may offer an evaluation of the situation that directly affects the interlocutor's face: 'You've ruined my car.' (*docjax.com*)

The function of language is closely tied up in particular with the speakers' intentions, the ideas they want to convey, and the listener's current knowledge. First, speakers intend to have some effect on their listeners in order for the speakers' intention to be appropriately understood, speakers must get listeners to recognize these intentions. The utterances used must therefore reflect these intentions. Secondly, speaker's wants to convey certain ideas, and to do this the sentences must also reflect the listener's ways of thinking. Listeners have their own perspectives, conceptions and misconceptions of objects, states, events and facts. And thirdly, speakers must have some conceptions of what is in the minds of the listeners at the moment.

SPEECH ACT

The speech act is an utterance considered as an action, particularly with regards to its intention, purpose or effect. Jane Austin claims that many utterances are equivalent to actions which means without performing an action by mere words action can be performed. Like, when someone says, "I now pronounce you man and wife"; the utterance creates a new social or psychological reality.

Speech act is not only pragmatic but also psycholinguistics. According to J.R. Searle "speech acts are basic or minimal units of linguistic communication. He also said, "Speaking language is performing speech acts such as making statements, giving commands, or making promises. A complaint is a protest or outcry or an expression of grief, something that one does not admire or something that dissatisfies the person. The speech act of complaint occurs when a speaker reacts with displeasure or annoyance to an action that has affected the speaker unfavorably. These are direct as well as indirect ones. Misapplication of the indirectness principle can lead to communication disruption or even social corruption.

CLASSIFICATION OF COMPLAINTS

The speech act of a complaint occurs when a speaker reacts with displeasure or annoyance to an action that has affected the speaker unfavorably. It is a face threatening act for the listener. People talk for a purpose to assert beliefs, request help, promise action or ask information. Listeners would be remiss if they did not register this purpose and act accordingly. In normal circumstances listeners record beliefs, provide help, record promises and provide information.

In direct complaint speech acts, the speaker who complains addresses an interlocutor directly and uses various strategies of displeasure that precede or follow a direct complaint whereas, indirect speech act of complaints are the type of complaints in which complaints are made about the people who aren't present or if present the statement would not annoy them directly.

According to Boxer (1989), two categories of complaint can be distinguished in terms of their patterns and functions: direct complaints and indirect complaints. In the first category, i.e., direct complaints, the addressee is held responsible for the perceived offence and is expected to acknowledge or change the undesirable state of affairs (Boxer, 1993). Direct complaints display the situations that hearers express their displeasure or annoyance immediately and face to face when they are perceived by the speaker as affecting him unfavorably. A direct complaint involves an explicit or implicit accusation and at least one explicit or implicit directive (Clyne, 1994, p. 54). By stating or implying that the addressee is responsible for a perceived offence, direct complaints threaten the addressee's positive face, i.e. the need to be approved of and liked. Moreover, by stating or implying that the addressee should undertake some action to change the undesirable state of affairs, the complaint impinges on the addressee's negative face, or their need to be unimpeded and autonomous (Daly, Holmes, Newton & Stubbe, 2003). An indirect complaint is defined as a long or repeated expression of discontent not necessarily intended to change or improve the unsatisfactory situation (Clyne, 1994). It differs from a direct complaint in that the addressee is neither held responsible nor capable of remedying the perceived offense. Data from a large study on indirect complaint among native speakers showed that indirect complaints are frequently employed as positive strategies for the purpose of establishing points of commonality (Boxer, 1993). They function to provide emotional release, or to off-load negative effect, rather than provoke actions to redress the offense. In other words, indirect complaints are not prototypical FTAs; rather, they are typical ways of establishing rapport with others. In business communication, customers are likely to complain directly in order to express their dissatisfaction and redress the offense. Therefore, the present study focuses on direct complaint.

ANALYSIS

Complaints have very interesting roles in our lives as we neither can live with them nor without them. Musicians and song writers seem to be very influenced with this complaining nature of humans and the society and they represent complaints in various kinds of songs be it any romantic songs, sad songs, motivational songs etc.

This song is taken from Billboards top sound track and is one of a kind of its own. It shows us the perfect complaining nature of humans through various ways. The song taken for analysis of speech acts of complaint is 'If I were a boy' by Beyonce Knowles, an American singer, songwriter and actress. The song was from Beyonce's third album 'I am... Shasha Fierce', released in October 12, 2008 which reflects a dependent women who desires to be independent and carefree like a boy or her husband and complaints about all the things she would do if she would be a boy. The song was written by BC Jean (an American songwriter and a actress) and Toby Gad (an American based German music producer/songwriter). The lyrics of the song are about a gender-exchange thought experiment through which Beyonce highlights the susceptibility of woman and speculate how things would be different if men had women's sense of insight.

The title as well as the first line of the song "If I were a boy" as a conditional clause, it itself represents an indirect complaining which the writer/singer wants to put. The first stanza in the song is a complaint against the patriarchal society, where

a girl also wants to be treated as a boy. The first verse of the song depicts an indirect complain by the singer, when in the same verse she points about taking beer with a boy and also wants to chase the girls, as these acts reflect about a man rather than a woman. Not only this but she also wants to treat the love cruelly as a man, where she complains in the form of rebel, which is also an indirect form of complaint. It means there should not be discrimination on the basis of gender, that is why, the writer/singer puts the indirect complain. It is an indirect complaint because the girl has represented her unfulfilled desire rather than a direct complaint.

If I were a boy
 Even just for a day
 I'd roll outta bed in the morning
 And throw on what I wanted and go
 Drink beer with the guys
 And chase after girls
 I'd kick it with who I wanted
 And I'd never get confronted for it
 'Cause they'd stick up for me.
 And everything you had got destroyed **(Stanza I)**

In the second stanza, Beyonce abdicate herself and continues about the barbarism that the man often applies on woman. Still conceptualizing herself imitating the man who has cheated her, she focuses (in the form of the indirect complain) how men switch off their phones to avoid ex-lovers after having found another girl. She also emphasizes how it feels to be cheated on.

If I were a boy
 I would turn off my phone
 Tell everyone it's broken
 So they'd think that I was sleepin' alone
 I'd put myself first
 And make the rules as I go
 'Cause I know that she'd be faithful
 Waitin' for me to come home (to come home) **(Stanza II)**

In the third verse, Beyonce stops about singing about the behavior of men, she would indulge in if she were a man and addresses her careless lover directly. Again she complains indirectly in the lines "I think I could understand; How it feels to love a girl; I swear I'd be a better man" that she would be a better lover than the real one (men).

If I were a boy
 I think I could understand
 How it feels to love a girl
 I swear I'd be a better man.
 I'd listen to her
 'Cause I know how it hurts
 When you lose the one you wanted (wanted)
 'Cause he's taken you for granted (granted)
 And everything you had got destroyed **(Stanza III)**

In the fourth stanza, she uses the words 'mistake' and 'forgive', which exemplify the mistake by the lover but she thinks that either she should forgive him or not. The last two lines of the verse again embody the indirect form of the complaint against the lover who cannot understand the pain through which the singer suffers due to decoy by her lover.

It's a little too late for you to come back
 Say it's just a mistake
 Think I'd forgive you like that
 If you thought I would wait for you
 You thought wrong
 But you're just a boy
 You don't understand **(Stanza IV)**

In the last verse, Beyonce concludes, "But you're just a boy". With a creak in her voice (which also represents an indirect form of complaint), she repeats the chorus for final time as she fights to persist her strength, not allowing her misery to bring her down.

Yeah, you don't understand, oh
 How it feels to love a girl someday
 You wish you were a better man
 You don't listen to her
 You don't care how it hurts
 Until you lose the one you wanted
 'Cause you've taken her for granted
 And everything you had got destroyed
 But you're just a boy **(Stanza V)**

CONCLUSION

As I have mentioned earlier, complaints are becoming human nature so the effect of complaints can also be seen in songs. Songs reflect the society, what's present in the society creates an impact on the songs written by various songwriters and hence songs are incomplete without complaints, be it any romantic song, sad song or an inspiring one. Complaints can be found in every song about the lover, the world or the people. In the present study, indirect complaint strategies have been widely used by singer (female) in order to observe politeness. They are used when there is a need to assert/inform without leading into a conflict. Though the choice of complaint strategy mostly depends on the situational seriousness but it has also been observed that females choose indirect strategies to avoid direct confrontation (Jayal & Kumar, 2018). Directness and indirectness are not exactly black and white terms. A particular direct speech may become indirect if uttered in a different context or environment. However, direct speeches are plainly informative and often used to express orders and harmful or dry unfriendly talk.

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