



The Complaining Speech Act In “Wreck It Ralph” Movie

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Jul 1, 2025

Revised Jul 15, 2025

Accepted Jul 25, 2025

Keywords:

Complaining Speech Act;
Complaint; Perlocutionary
Effect; Animated Film;
Pragmatic Analysis

ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the complaining speech act strategies used by the main character, Ralph, in the animated film "Wreck-It Ralph," utilizing Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy and examining their perlocutionary effects according to Austin's (1962) speech act theory. Employing a qualitative methodology, this study collected data from dialogues in the movie, focusing specifically on complaint utterances. The findings reveal that Ralph predominantly uses indirect complaint strategies, accounting for 61.5% of the complaints, emphasizing his preference for subtlety and avoidance of explicit confrontation to maintain social harmony. Direct complaints constitute 35.9%, usually appearing in emotionally charged situations, highlighting pivotal moments of narrative and character development. Modified blame occurs minimally at 2.6%, while explicit blame and requests for repair were not found in the data. Regarding perlocutionary responses, passive or silent reactions were the most frequent (71.8%), indicating a tendency among characters to avoid direct engagement and open confrontation. Defensive or avoidance reactions and empathy or discomfort responses each accounted for 12.8%, reflecting occasional emotional acknowledgment. Justifications or defensive responses were the least common, occurring only in 2.6% of the cases. In conclusion, indirect complaints serve primarily to preserve interpersonal relationships, whereas direct complaints occur during critical emotional and narrative developments.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Complaining is a complex speech act often used to express dissatisfaction while maintaining social balance. As an expressive act, complaints function not only as personal grievances but also as indicators of interpersonal and societal dynamics. Trosborg (1995) categorizes complaint strategies based on levels of directness, while Austin's (1962) perlocutionary theory provides a framework for analyzing the effects of these utterances on the hearers.

This study explores how the main character, Ralph, in the film "Wreck-It Ralph" articulates complaints, the strategies he employs, and how other characters respond to these utterances. Previous research (e.g., Jekti, 2018; Setiadi, 2022) has addressed speech acts in film, yet there is limited focus on both complaint strategies and their perlocutionary impact within animated narratives. "Wreck-It Ralph," an animated film by Walt Disney, provides a rich context to explore this dual perspective due to its nuanced character interactions and exaggerated communicative expressions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design. Data were collected from the film script of "Wreck-It Ralph" (2012), focusing on utterances containing complaints. The researcher employed documentation techniques, including transcription of complaint-related dialogues and contextual interpretation.

Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy was used to classify complaint strategies: indirect complaint, direct complaint, modified blame, request for repair, and explicit blame. Listener responses were analyzed using Austin's (1962) perlocutionary categories: passive/silent responses, defensive/avoidance reactions, empathy/discomfort, and justification. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model: data reduction, classification, and interpretation. Analytical tables were constructed to map the relationship between complaint strategies and their perlocutionary effects.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1. Complaining Strategies in "Wreck-It Ralph"

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Indirect Complaint	24	61.5%
Direct Complaint	14	35.9%
Modified Blame	1	2.6%
Request for Repair	0	0%
Explicit Blame	0	0%

The dominant use of indirect complaint suggests a strong tendency toward non-confrontational expression. Ralph frequently uses statements like "Living in the dump" or "If things were different" to express dissatisfaction without assigning blame.

In contrast, direct complaints, such as "Nobody can!" or "How sad," indicate stronger emotional engagement and are often employed during pivotal moments. Modified blame appeared only once, further emphasizing the characters' preference for indirect strategies.

Table 2. Perlocutionary Responses to Complaints

Response Type	Frequency	Percentage
Passive/Silent Responses	28	71.8%
Defensive/Avoidance	5	12.8%
Empathy/Discomfort	5	12.8%
Justification	1	2.6%

Most complaints received passive or silent responses, indicating avoidance of conflict and emotional distancing. Empathy and avoidance reactions reflect occasional recognition of the speaker's emotions, but rarely result in resolution. These findings highlight the social dynamics of complaint exchanges and the narrative emphasis on emotional complexity and character development.

4. CONCLUSION

The study finds that Ralph predominantly uses indirect complaints to express dissatisfaction without direct confrontation. Listener responses, mainly passive or avoidant, demonstrate a tendency to preserve social harmony. The integration of Trosborg's and Austin's frameworks enables a comprehensive analysis of both the form and function of complaints in animated storytelling. This research provides pedagogical and theoretical insights into pragmatic strategies in film discourse, particularly within expressive speech act analysis.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author expresses gratitude to all academic mentors, particularly Dr. Sigit Ricahyono and Theresia Budi Sucihati, and to peers and family for their support throughout the writing process.

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