

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the study. It includes background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, methodology and clarification of key terms. This chapter ends with organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the study

People use language to communicate. As a means of communication, language does not only consist of words, but also performs actions. This is what Austin (1962) defines as speech act. Speakers employ speech act to achieve certain communicative goals such as apologizing, requesting, refusing and complaining. As a type of speech acts, the speech act of complaining can be triggered by uncomfortable situations such as when people get annoyed, dissatisfied or unhappy about other people or circumstances.

In business situations, particularly in hospitality business such in a hotel or at a restaurant, people often use the speech act of complaining to express their displeasure or to ask for repair. This is because the business service relates to satisfaction of customers. Trosborg (1995) defines complaints as the speaker's illocutionary acts to displeasure, which are expressed in utterances, to the hearer who is deemed responsible. For example, in the utterance "How can you give me a broken phone charger?" The speaker expresses his/her emotion by questioning the hearer's act of giving the broken charger. By uttering the complaint, the speaker asks the hearer to do some action of repair.

Furthermore, Cunliffe and Johnston (2008) mention some common factors or circumstances that trigger complaints in business settings. These factors or circumstances are bad product quality given by sellers, no actions or efforts from the sellers to manage the complaints, repetition of the same mistakes or offenses, tardiness of the services given by the sellers, or inappropriate acts of the sellers. Meanwhile, from the pragmatic perspective, Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) argue that there are four preconditions of complaints to meet. First, the hearer performs a socially unacceptable act (SUA) which violates shared norms between the speaker and hearer. Second, the SUA negatively affects either the speaker or the general public. Third, the speaker expresses his/her annoyance to the hearer. Fourth, the speaker views the SUA as a direct or indirect violation against the norms. Since this SUA

cause emotional imbalance, the speaker feels the need to make a complaint to compensate for his/her displeasure or to fix the situation.

Regarding complaints, a large number of studies focusing on this issue including complaint responses have been carried out. One of these was conducted by Tabatabaei (2015) who investigated pragmatic norms in the speech act of complaining among English and Persian native speakers and found that the Persian subjects tended to express complaints explicitly by the use of criticism strategy. Meanwhile, their English counterparts tended to make more implicit complaints by the use of complaint strategy. Another study came from Deveci (2015) who investigated the realization of the speech act of complaining, about marks for assignments, among first-year English students directed to their teaching staff. Based on the study, it was discovered that the students tended to combine the speech act of criticism with complaints, a move considered to be socially inappropriate. In addition, a study that focused on the speech act of complaining in a business setting was also conducted by Linli (2011). The study investigated the types and strategies of complaint responses among Chinese customer service staffs and revealed that favorable responses, those that take into account face of their own and that of others, were given by the staff when responding to severe complaints. On the contrary, when responding to mild complaints, unfavorable responses, which is the refusing complaints, were given.

Despite the large number of studies on the speech act of complaining, it seems that the realization of the speech act of complaining in a business setting has not received much attention. Moreover, in studying complaints and complaint responses in a business setting, besides focusing on pragmatics, researchers should also pay special attention to the business aspects such as customer services. Based on these reasons, this study attempts to study the occurrence of the speech act of complaining and the speech act of complaint responding in a business setting by taking into account the business aspects. More specifically, this study aims to explore the realization of the speech act of complaining by guests at a hotel and the way the hotel staff responds to the complaints. Unlike most of speech act studies that use data through Discourse Completion Test (DCT) or role-play, this study uses naturally-occurring data.

1.2 Research questions

The objectives of the study mentioned above are formulated in the following research questions:

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THE INVESTIGATION OF THE GUESTS' COMPLAINT AND THE EMPLOYEES' RESPONSE OF A HOTEL IN BANDUNG

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- 1) What complaints regarding the hospitality business are made by hotel guests to the hotel employees?
- 2) How do the guests complain to the hotel employees?
- 3) How do the hotel employees respond to the guests' complaints?
- 4) What politeness strategies do the hotel employees use when responding to the guests' complaints?

1.3 Aims of the study

In general, this study is aimed at identifying and classifying complaints made by the hotel guests and responses given by the hotel employees. Specifically, the study aims are as follows:

- 1) To identify and to classify the complaints made by the hotel guests about the services given by the hotel based on business management perspective;
- 2) To discover the way the guests complain;
- 3) To examine the responses given by the hotel employees to the complaints;
- 4) To investigate the strategies used by the hotel employees in responding to the guests' complaints.

1.4 Scope of the study

This present study is limited to the investigation and classification of complaints made by guests at a hotel in Bandung and responses given by the hotel employees to the complaints. There are many aspects of complaints and complaint responses that can be analyzed. However, the present study focuses on the classification of complaints based on their sources and types, and the responses as well as the strategies used by the hotel employees to respond to the complaints.

1.5 The significance of the study

The results of the study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of pragmatic awareness. Theoretically, the study attempts to enrich research on complaints and complaint responses in pragmatics and business settings and is also expected to be a helpful resource for those interested in the field of pragmatics, especially the speech act of complaining. Moreover, the study provides a new template for the analysis of complaints and complaint responses by combining theories from two fields of study,

pragmatics, and business management such as customer service. Practically speaking, the findings of the study are expected to help hotel improves its customer service.

1.6 Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. This research method is appropriate for this study which attempts to describe and explore phenomena related to the speech act of complaining. The data of the study were taken from the employees who worked at the time the data gained, which are two female and one male front-office employees, two male hotelkeepers, and 14 hotel guests and were collected through audio recordings and notes taking of the conversations between the guests and employees. The data were analyzed by content analysis procedure through two steps. First, identifying complaints and complaint responses by discovering illocutionary force indicating device (IFID). Second, classifying complaints, complaint responses and strategy of complaint response based on Cunliffe and Johnston (2008), Boxer and Pickering (1995) and Linli (2014).

1.7 Clarification of related terms

Hospitality business: it is all about the service given by the business company as well as its staffs to customers. It includes three categories, which are food and beverage, accommodations, and travel and tourism (Reynolds, n.d)

Speech act: Language that performs some actions of the speaker includes apologizing, requesting, refusing and complaining (Austin, 1962).

Complaint: The speaker's illocutionary acts to displeasure, which are expressed in utterances, to the hearer who are deemed responsible (Trosborg, 1995).

Complainant: The speaker who utters his/her annoyance in a formal charge toward unaccepted occasion (Merriam-webster, n.d)

Complainee: The person who is complained about (Wordow, n.d)

1.8 Organization of the study

This paper consists of five chapters with specific functions and organization elaborated as follows: Chapter I Introduction. This chapter consists of background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, methodology, and organization of the paper. Chapter II Theoretical Frameworks. This chapter presents relevant theories, ideas, and issues in which the principles and justifications of the research are grounded. It provides findings of previous research and other supporting information relevant to the present study. Chapter III Research Methodology. This chapter describes approaches and procedures, research design, data collection and data analysis all manifested in the research. Chapter IV Findings and Discussions. This chapter provides results of data analysis and the discussions. Chapter V Conclusions and Suggestions. This chapter provides conclusions drawn from the research findings. In addition, suggestions for future research are also included in this chapter.