Tương đồng và khác biệt giới tính trong chiến lược phàn nàn của khách hàng người Anh - Mĩ trong lĩnh vực Du lịch và Khách sạn

TÓM TẮT

Bài báo tìm hiểu những tương đồng và khác biệt giới tính trong chiến lược phàn nàn của khách hàng Anh - Mĩ trong lĩnh vực Du lịch - Khách sạn. Phương pháp định tính và định lượng được sử dụng trong nghiên cứu. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ các bộ phim và ấn phẩm dạy tiếng Anh với trích đoạn hội thoại có chứa phát ngôn phàn nàn của khách hàng. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện với các chiến lược phàn nàn được xác định dựa trên phân loại chiến lược phàn nàn có sửa đổi của Murphy và Neu. Kết quả cho thấy những điểm tương đồng và khác biệt giới tính trong chiến lược phàn nàn. Cả nam và nữ khách hàng Anh - Mĩ đều sử dụng chiến lược *"Thể hiện sự không đồng tình"*, *"Thể hiện sự khó chịu"*, *"Yêu cầu"* và *"Thể hiện sự thất vọng"* và số lượng chiến lược phàn nàn nam và nữ sử dụng là như nhau. Tuy nhiên, phụ nữ thường sử dụng các chiến lược *"Thể hiện sự không đồng tình & Thể hiện sự khó chịu & Yêu cầu & Đe dọa"* trong khi nam giới sử dụng các chiến lược *"Thể hiện sự không đồng tình"*, *"Thể hiện sự không đồng tình & Yêu cầu"*, *"Tỏ ra khó chịu & Thể hiện sự không đồng tình"*, *"Thể hiện sự không đồng tình & Chỉ trích"*. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy người học tiếng Anh cần lưu ý những tương đồng và khác biệt giới tính trong chiến lược phàn nàn người Anh-Mĩ hay sử dụng để có thể đạt được mục đích trong các tình huống giao tiếp nội ngôn cũng như giao văn hóa khi cần phàn nàn hay xử lí phàn nàn.

Từ khóa: phàn nàn của khách hàng, chiến lược phàn nàn, phát ngôn phàn nàn, tương đồng và khác biệt giới tính

Gender similarities and differences in Anglo-American customer complaint strategies in Tourism and Hospitality Industry

ABSTRACT

The article aims to investigate the gender similarities and differences in Anglo-American customer complaint strategies in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry to help readers gain some insight into the cultural characteristics of Anglo-Americans through the speech act of complaining. The qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in the study. The data were collected from movies and publications with dialogue extracts containing complaint utterances given by both male and female customers. The complaint strategies identified based on Murphy and Neu's revised classification of complaint strategies. The findings highlight the gender similarities and differences in the complaint utterances. As regards complaint strategies, both men and women used strategies *"Showing disapproval", "Showing annoyance", "Requesting"* and *"Showing disappointment"* and the number of complaint strategies pursued by men and women is almost the same. However, women regularly employed the strategies *"Showing disapproval & Showing annoyance & Requesting & Threatening"*, while men resorted to the strategies *"Showing disapproval ", " Showing disapproval & Requesting", "Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval", " Showing disapproval & Expressing criticism"*. The study results show that learners of English need to be fully aware of gender similarities and differences in complaint strategies pursued by Anglo-American customers, so that they can achieve their goals in intra-lingual as well as cross-cultural communication situations where complaints need to be made or addressed.

Keywords: *customer complaints, complaint strategies, complaint utterances, gender similarities and differences*

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the basis for all human relationships. It is said to be an art developed through practice and used by human beings as a tool to share with others, understand, resolve conflicts and establish social relationships. We all know about the importance of good communication skills and are fully aware of the consequences of lacking these essential skills. Included in the consequences are the failure to achieve desired communication goals, ruined social relationships and a damaged reputation. It is for these reasons that one always tries to avoid hurting others' images and feelings in any circumstance. However, in communication, there are times when we encounter situations where we have to show that we have a negative evaluation of others' wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values. One of the acts that demonstrate that we have a negative evaluation of others is complaining.

Gender is an issue of great interest to researchers. There have been many research works on this issue with a view to gaining some insight into it. Differences between men and women are acknowledged. Holmes[1] observes that "[…] *some researchers have suggested that women and men belong to different cultural groups*". Wardhaugh[2] clearly affirms the distinct differences between men and women and he deduces that these differences derive from different socialization practices. Sharing Holmes and Wardhaugh's view on the gender differences, Spolsky[3] also agrees that "[…] *we should not surprised to find reflexes of gender differences […], for most societies differentiate men and women in various marked ways*".

Reality shows that gender differences are expressed in many aspects: from habit, manners, communication style to perspective and outlook on life. Of these, communication style shows gender differences the most clearly.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Speech act theory

2.1.1. Definition of speech act

In communication, interlocutors perform many different actions via language. Although expressed in various forms, these actions are generally referred to as speech acts. Speech act was first introduced by Austin[4], and later developed by many other scholars like Searle[6], Yule[5]. Austin[4] discovers that when a person says something, he simultaneously does something. Austin[4] identifies three distinct levels of action beyond the act of utterance. He distinguishes the

act of saying something, what a person does in saying it, and what this person does by saying it, and he calls these acts *the locutionary, the illocutionary* and *the perlocutionary act*, respectively. Yule[5] explains these 3 acts as follows:

Locutionary act: It is the basic act of producing a meaningful linguistic expression.

Illocutionary act: It is performed via the communicative force of an utterance.

Perlocutionary act: It is the effect S intended the utterance to have on H or listener.

Basically, "*in attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances*". (Yule[5]). Searle[6] believes that "*speech acts are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication.*"

Sharing Searle[6]'s view, Richards[7] states that *speech act is an utterance as a functional unit in communication.* According to Yule[5], "*actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts*". Speech acts serve their function once they are said or communicated and they are commonly referred to acts such as *apologizing, promising, ordering, answering, requesting, complaining, warning, inviting, refusing* and *congratulating.*

2.1.2. Classification of speech act

Based on their functions, Austin[4] classifies speech acts into 5 five types of functions, namely: *verdictives* (e.g., appraising, ...) *exercitives* (e.g., appointing, voting, ordering, urging, advising, warning ...), *commissives* (e.g., promise, propose,...), *behabitives* (e.g., apologizing, congratulating, commending, condoling, cursing and challenging), and *expositives* (e.g., conceding, assuming,...).

However, Searle[8] proposes the most influential and widely used classification of speech acts with a focus on how listeners respond to utterances, which is on the contrary to Austin, who focuses his attention on how speakers realize their intentions in speaking. Searle[8]'s classification consists of five broad types, namely:

Commissives: committing the speaker to doing something (e.g. a promise or a threat).

Declarations: changing the state of affairs in the world (e.g. a pronouncement at court).

Directives: getting the listener to do something (e.g. a suggestion or a request).

Expressives: expressing feelings and attitudes about something (e.g. an apology or a compliment).

Repesentatives: describing states or events in the world (e.g. an assertion or a report).

The speech act of complaining belongs to *behabitives* as Austin's classification, and to *expressives*, as Searle's.

2.1.3. Speech act of complaining

"*Complain*", is defined by Crowther[9] as "*say that one is dissatisfied, unhappy, etc.*"

Semantically, "*complaining*" is explained by Wierbicka[10] as follows:

I say: something bad is happening (to me).

I feel something bad because of that.

I say this because I want to cause someone to know about it and to do something because of that that would cause me to feel better.

Pragmatically, according to Brown and Levinson[11], "*complaining*" is an act that threatens the positive-face want, by indicating (potentially) that S does not care about H's feelings, wants, etc. With the speech act of complaining, Brown and Levinson[11] explain that "*S indicates that he doesn't like/want one or more of H's wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values*".

In communication, complaining is a pervasive form of social interaction, showing the desire to have personal needs satisfied. "*Complaining*", as explained by Kowalski[12] "*is a form of communication that expresses dissatisfaction regardless of having actually experienced the subjective feeling of dissatisfaction or not*".

Using a pragmatic view, Trosborg[13] affirms that "*a complaint is [...] an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his/her disapproval, negative feelings etc. towards the state of affairs described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he/she holds the hearer (the complainee) responsible, either directly or indirectly*".

Olshtain and Weinbach[14] (in G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.). *Interlanguage Pragmatics*, (pp. 108-122), Oxford University Press, 1993) offer a more coherent explanation, saying that "*in the speech act of complaining, S expresses displeasure or annoyance-censure-as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which are perceived by S as affecting her*"

unfavorably. This complaint is usually addressed to H whom S holds, at least partially, responsible for the offensive action".

Olshtain and Weinbach[14] believe that when voicing a complaint, S holds 4 following preconditions: H performs a socially unacceptable act (SUA); S perceives the SUA as offensive; H must take responsibility for the SUA, and S feels obliged to express her frustration or annoyance.

The speech act of complaining was in the focus of a study conducted by Murphy and Neu[15] (in S. M. Gass, & J. Neu (Eds). *Speech Acts Across Cultures: Challenges to Communication in a Second Language*, (pp.191-216), Mouton de Gruyter, 1996) in 1996 to compare the components of the speech act set produced by American native students and Korean non-native students of English with a context where the students had to express disapproval to their professor. From the collected data, the authors identified 5 complaint strategies employed by the American and Korean students: *using of the inclusive pronoun "we"; using of questions; depersonalization of the problem; using mitigators to soften the complaint* and *accepting partial responsibility for the problem.*

In the present study, the researchers accepted Trosborg's definition of complaint, considering it as the foundation for our analysis and evaluation and identify the complaint strategies based on Murphy and Neu's revised classification of complaint strategies.

2.2. Politeness theories

2.2.1. Definition of politeness

Politeness is an important factor that influences the way members of a cultural community think and behave. Researchers agree that politeness is a culture-specific concept and different cultures have different perceptions of politeness. Watts[16] asserts that *"[...] we cannot be at all certain that an English native speaker today understands "politeness" in exactly the same way as the German native speaker understands "Höflichkeit" or the French native speaker "politesse"*. Summing up the issue of politeness, Châu[17] concludes that *"politeness is first and foremost a cultural issue, which is unique to each culture. Every society has to be polite. The thing is what, to what extent or how is considered as polite is culture-specific".*

In pragmatics, the concept of politeness is of special interest to scholars. One of the reasons for politeness to be the focus of pragmatists, as explained by Brown and Levinson[11] is "[...] *the issues addressed there [...] have a perennial importance, for they raise questions about the foundations of human social life and interaction".*

Brown and Levinson[11] believe that *"politeness [...] presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties".*
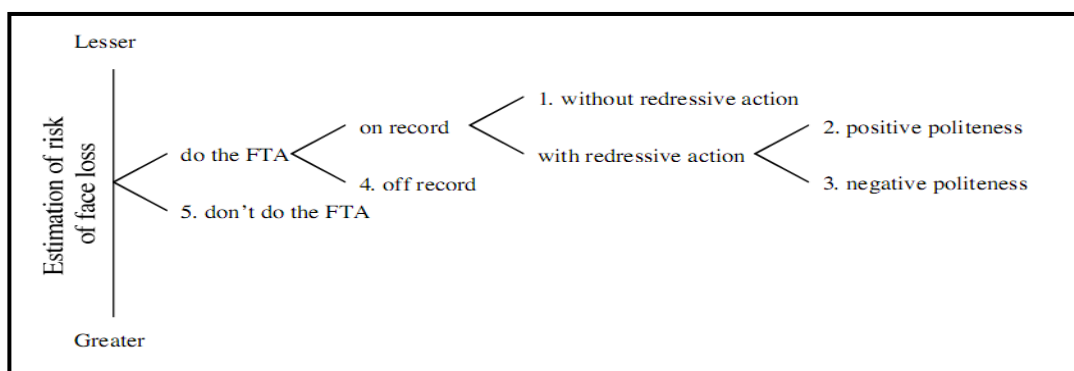
Leech[18] remarks that *"Politeness is manifested not only in the context of conversation but also in the way conversation is managed or structured by its participants such as speaking at the wrong time (interrupting) or being silent at the wrong time has impolite implications".*

Talking about politeness, one cannot help mentioning *face. Face* refers to our public self-image or face wants. There are two types of face wants: face-threatening acts and face-saving acts. Yule[5] explains that a face-threatening act (FTA) is one that threatens another person's expectations regarding self-image and a face-saving act is a speech act performed by S to lessen a possible threat posed to H's face if he perceives that his actions or words are likely to constitute this threat.

Brown and Levinson[11] divide *face* into two categories: *negative face,* the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction, and *positive face,* the positive consistent self-image or personality claimed by interactants. The concept of "*positive face*" and "*negative face*" is the foundation of "*negative politeness*" and "*positive politeness*".

2.2.2. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory

Brown and Levinson[11] put forward their theory of politeness with its core concept being "*face*". Their theory consists of a set of possible strategies for avoiding FTAs or for minimizing the face threat of the FTAs. The strategies are shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1. *Possible strategies for doing FTAs* (Brown & Levinson[11])

According to Brown and Levinson[11], the more an act threatens S's or H's face, the more S will want to choose a higher numbered strategy.

As can be seen from Figure 1, S can choose either to do or not to do the FTA. When S realizes that the risk of the FTA is so great or he does not want to, offend H, he can say or do nothing that is likely to damage H's face, which means he chooses strategy 5. If S decides to do an FTA, he can choose one of the other four strategies.

S can choose to go off record if he produces a communicative act indirectly addressed to H.

The "*bald on record*" strategy is chosen, whenever S wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy H's face, even to any degree.

With redressive action, S gives face to H, which means he attempts to counteract the potential face damage of the FTA by doing it in such a way that no face threat seems to be intended. S, in general, recognizes H's face wants and himself wants them to be achieved. The redressive strategies include positive politeness and negative politeness.

"*Positive politeness*", according to Brown and Levinson[11], "*is redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his want (or the action/ acquisition/ values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable*". Positive politeness is used by S to make H feel a sense of closeness, feel good about himself, as well as his interests, and attempt to avoid conflict. With redressive action, S shows respect for H's face, and also S's face. Positive politeness has 15 strategies: *notice, attend to H, exaggerate, intensify interest to H, use in-group identity markers, seek agreement, avoid disagreement, presuppose/ raise/ assert/ common ground, joke, assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, offer, promise, be optimistic, include both S and H in*

the activity, give (or ask for) reasons, assume or assert reciprocity, and *give gifts to H.*

"*Negative politeness*", according to Brown and Levinson[11], "*is redressive action to the addressee's negative face; his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded*". Negative politeness is used by S to interact with H in non-imposing way. With negative politeness, the risk of FTAs on H is reduced. Negative politeness has 10 strategies: *be conventionally indirect, question, hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, give deference, apologize, interpersonalize S and H: avoid the pronouns "I" and "you", state the FTA as a general rule, norminalize,* and *go on record as including a debt, or as not including H.*

Let's consider the following dialogue:

(19)

- *Damn*, boy. What *the hell* took so long?

- Well, you had the two well-done steaks, so it usually takes a little while to cook.

- Yeah, well, could you get me some more ketchup?

- Sure. No problem.

The underlined complaint utterance of dialogue (19) contains the word "*damn*", which is a swear word that people use to show that they are annoyed, disappointed, etc. (Wehmeier[19]) and the word "*hell*" which is a swear word that some people use when they are annoyed or surprised or to emphasize something. (Wehmeier[19]).

According to Holmes[1], "*Swear words [...] may express annoyance, aggression and insult, for instance, or they may express solidarity and friendliness*". In terms of politeness, "*expressing solidarity and friendliness*" is the manifestation of the positive politeness.

In the present study, the researchers accepted Brown and Levinson's viewpoint on politeness and base ourselves on these two authors' politeness framework to identify and classify complaint strategies used by Anglo-American male and female customers in complaint utterances in conversation.

2.3. Previous studies

Politeness is a universal concept. It is an indispensable aspect when the speech acts are mentioned. A lot of researches into different speech acts have been carried out under the umbrella of politeness. In recent years, various studies on speech acts have recorded a lot of impressive achievements, helping researchers gain some insight into the mechanism for the formation and realization of the speech acts in human communication. However, so much will have to be done to find out about the interesting aspects of these topics. Typical is the aspect of gender in complaining in communication.

Studies of language and gender have indicated that men and women are different in many aspects, including speech. Specifically, to elaborate the contrasts between males and females in their use of different strategies of complaint in English and Persian and ascertain the degree to which independent variables like gender and language affect the application of these strategies during informal communication, Mehrabani[20] conducted a study entitled "*Investigating the Relationship Between Gender and Different Strategies of Expressing Complaint in English and Persian Films*". This study targets at pointing out the differences between English and Persian males and females in relation to the application of the previously-mentioned strategies. The corpus for the study contained complaint utterances given by male and female movie players. The utterances are contrastively studied in order to identify how the patterns of distribution of complaint strategies differ between the two genders. This study follows on-participant observation research predicated on the ground of qualitative research design, where the researcher used worksheet to record what was going on in the movies, identified the complaint utterances, then applied the worksheet and pen and inserted these utterances into the worksheet table and classified them based on the different strategies and sub-strategies. The study findings show that as for the area of comparison across the '*same-language cross-gender*' section, relating to the implementation of complaint strategies, the application of opener, act-statement, justification of speaker, justification of addressee, and valuation were more widespread among English males than females. Also, Persian males applied act-statement and justification of addressee, while complaining, more than females did, whereas valuation was a complaint strategy, found to be more prevalent among Persian females than males.

Among a considerable number of research works on the speech act of complaint that have been carried out, a work entitled "*Gender differences in complaint strategies among Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students*" by Kakolaki and Shahrokhi[21]. The study aims to shed light on the politeness of complaining used by Iranian male and female EFL learners and it further investigated the effect of participants' gender on their perception of politeness in performing complaint strategies. He gathered the required data from Iranian EFL learners consisted of a number of 60 language learners (30 males and 30 females) studying at upper intermediate level at Iran Language Institute in Esfahan, Iran and analyzing it through Chi-square technique. The study findings reveal that gender was an important factor in the rating of politeness. This manifests itself in the proof that the male learners were more direct in their complaint utterances than the female learners, which means the female learners were more polite than the male ones in voicing a complaint.

Ndubisi and Ling[22] carried out a study entitled "*Evaluating gender differences in the complaint behavior of Malaysian consumers*" to investigate whether male and female Malaysian consumers differ in their dissatisfaction complaint behavior and its aftermath. The study examines the moderation effect of gender in the relationship between public complaint behavior, private complaint behavior and customer defection. The data for the study were collected from 218 Malaysian customers of retail banks. The survey instrument used in the study was a questionnaire consisting of three sections. Sections one and two contain the items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely), used to evaluate dissatisfied complaint action and defection with the complaint utterances categorized into public and private. Section three contains respondents' demographic profile. The study findings show that customer complaint behavior can explain defection. Although both public and private complaints have significant impact on defection, the impact produced by private complaints is greater than

that by public ones. This indicates that among customers who defect, many are unlikely to complain to the bank before leaving. The number of bank customers who complain before defecting is modest. This result is not caused by the customers' gender but by a generic view of male and female customers of Malaysian banks. Regardless of their sex types, they are generally less likely to complain to the banks before defection.

An investigation into gender differences in complaints is a piece of interesting research. Although there have been a lot of works on the speech act of complaining in different aspects, there has been no research on complaining in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry. Therefore, the researchers decided to carry out a study entitled "*Gender similarities and differences in customer complaints in Tourism and Hospitality Industry in English conversation*" with a view to finding out the similarities and differences in complaints voiced by male and female customers in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in terms of complaint strategies to help readers learn more about the cultural characteristics of Anglo-Americans through the speech act of complaining and maximize the effectiveness of the use of this speech act in intra-lingual as well as cross-cultural communication.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research methods

The study's design was based on a mixed-method approach to achieve the aim of the study. Specifically, the study was conducted based on the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach was used to classify and describe conversations made by Anglo-American male and female customers in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in order to identify complaint strategies and linguistic means of displaying complainers' attitudes in these utterances. Besides, some techniques used in linguistics such as semantic, context and pragmatic analyses were also used to support the qualitative approach. The quantitative approach with statistical analysis techniques was used to count and analyze the collected data. The contrastive analysis was applied to compare and contrast the types of complaint strategies used in the complaint utterances. Lastly, the description and interpretation techniques were used to characterize and interpret the findings.

3.2. Data collection

In order to gather data for the study, the researchers collected 60 dialogues containing customer complaint utterances (30 male and 30 female) from 04 Anglo-American movies, 33 video clips and 02 publications designed to teach communicative English to find out about gender similarities and differences in complaint strategies used in complaint utterances given by Anglo-American customers in conversation.

3.3. Data analysis

Having been gathered, the complaint utterances were analyzed to identify complaint strategies that Anglo-American customers used in the complaint utterances collected based on Brown and Levinson[11]'s politeness theory. As stated in 1, in the present study, the researchers accepted Trosborg[13]'s definition of complaint and took this definition as the basis for the researchers' analysis and evaluation. With Trosborg[13]'s definition of complaint as the basis, the researchers singled out the complaint utterances from the dialogues collected and then identified complaint strategies from these complaint utterances based on Murphy and Neu[15]'s revised classification of complaint strategies.

Following are the illustrations of two complaint strategies used in two complaint utterances from two dialogue extracts from the transcripts of 2 Anglo-American movies:

(1)

- I want to occupy your room in the afternoon.

- Sir, you are not lucky as we don't have any booking of that room till the afternoon. But sir, as you know 12 p.m. is our last checkout time and if you like to stay more then you have to pay for that.

- <u>What? What the hell are you talking about? Why do I have to pay?</u>

- Sir, it is the rule, sir. You will be happy to hear that you will not have to pay full-day room rent if you stay till the afternoon. Then you will be charged only 50 percent of the room rent.

Based on the situational context and the words used in the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (1) as well as Trosborg[13]'s definition of complaint, the complaint strategy was identified as "*Showing annoyance*".

(2)

- Excuse me. I think there's a mistake in the check. We only had two glasses of wine, not a bottle.

- Yes, you're right. I'm very sorry.

- It's not my day.

- Today, I'll get you a new check.

- Thank you.

Based on the situational context and the words used in the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue (2) as well as Trosborg[13]'s

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, the researchers employed the theory of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson[6], as a theoretical foundation to investigate the complaint strategies identified from 60 complaint utterances (30 male and 30 female) collected from English movies, video clips and publications designed to teach communicative English as data to find out about gender similarities and differences in complaint utterances made by Anglo-American customers in daily communication.

4.1. Complaint strategies used by Anglo-American male and female customers

4.1.1. Complaint strategies used by Anglo-American male customers

Based on the analysis of the collected data, the

definition of complaint, the complaint strategy was identified as *"Showing disapproval".*

After the complaint strategies displayed in the complaint utterances had been identified, they were counted and presented in the form of tables, subjected to contrastive analysis in order to identify the gender similarities and differences in the complaint strategies used in the complaint utterances given by Anglo-American customers in conversation.

researchers found that Anglo-American male customers used 8 different complaint strategies with varying levels of frequency. The study results are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. *Distribution of types of complaint strategies used by Anglo-American male customers*

No.	Types of complaint strategies used by Anglo-American male customers	Nº	%
1	Showing disapproval	9	30
2	Showing disapproval & Requesting	5	16.67
3	Showing disapproval & Threatening	1	3.33
4	Showing disapproval & Showing annoyance	9	30
5	Showing annoyance	2	6.67
6	Showing annoyance & Showing disappointment	1	3.33
7	Showing annoyance & Expressing criticism	1	3.33
8	Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting	2	6.67
Total		**30**	**100**

Table 1 shows that the male customers used 8 types of complaint strategies with a wide range of frequencies. The complaint strategies most frequently used by the male customers is *"Showing disapproval"* and "Showing disapproval *& Showing annoyance*" accounting for 30% each, followed by *"Showing disapproval & Requesting"* with 16.67%. 2 strategies *"Showing annoyance"* and *"Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting"* account for the same percentage with 6.67%, twice as high as the remaining 3 strategies "*Showing annoyance & Showing*

disappointment", "Showing disapproval & Threatening", "Showing annoyance & Expressing criticism".

In the section that follows, the researchers will explain the meaning of the complaint sentences that Anglo-American male customers use to make complaints. The numbers in brackets are the ordinal numbers of the dialogues in the appendix.

4.1.1.1. Showing disapproval

"*Disapproval*", according to Wehmeier[14] (Chief Editor) "*is a feeling that you do not like an idea,*

an action or somebody's behavior because you thing it is bad, not suitable or going to have a bad effect on somebody else". Showing disapproval is one of the two strategies employed by the male customers with 30%, as in:

(3)

- Excuse me. I think there's a mistake in the check. We only had two glasses of wine, not a bottle.

- Yes, you're right. I'm very sorry.

- It's not my day.

- Today, I'll get you a new check.

- Thank you.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue (3), the man expressed his displeasure with the waiter at being served a bottle of wine instead of 2 glasses. Maybe, in this case, the water had misunderstood the male customer's order. He had only ordered 2 glasses of wine, not a bottle.

4.1.1.2. Showing disapproval & requesting

In communication, *"Showing disapproval"* often goes hand in hand with requesting, which according to Trosborg[13], is an impositive act the speaker performs in order to affect the hearer's intentional behavior for the benefit of only the speaker and at the cost of the hearer. *Showing disapproval & Requesting* was used with 16.67%, as in:

(4)

- Good afternoon. I am Eduard staying in Room 3. I have no hot water and there is a gecko on the ceiling. I couldn't sleep well last night. Can you go and fix the water heater? …And please I need to gecko out of my room.
- I apologize for the inconvenience.
- I will ask a room boy to take the gecko out and they will send my engineer to fix the water heater.
- Okay, thank you.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue (4), the man complained to the receptionist that the hotel's service was too poor, such as no hot water. And that he was displeased with a gecko crying on the ceiling, which means that the restaurant service is not good. After that, the man requests that the problems be fixed.

4.1.1.3. Showing disapproval & threatening

Threatening is defined by Wierzbicka[10] as *"utterances that refer to a future action by the speaker which is regarded as bad for the addressee".* It is common knowledge that threatening is a rarely used act except when the complainer is either in a bad mood or too angry. *"Showing disapproval & Threatening"* was used by the male customers with 3.33%, as in:

(5)

- If you stay till afternoon then you will be charged only 50 percent of the room rent.
- Hey man... don't you know I have settled my account already.
- Yes, sir. But...
- Hey, listen to me? I will not pay a single cent for four hours. Are you deaf? I will not pay anymore. Is that clear to you?
- Sir, I really understand your problem. But I am afraid I have nothing I can do before 12 p.m. is our last checkout time and if you want to stay more. You have to pay that is the rule we have for all of our guests.
- I have been staying in this hotel for three days. Your service is so poor. I will complain about you.
- We are very sorry, sir.

In the underlined complaint utterances of dialogue extract (5), the man raised his complaint about the poor service and he threatened to complain to the hotel employee about the receptionist's bad handling of his complaint.

4.1.1.4. Showing disapproval & showing annoyance

"Annoyance" is *"the feeling of being slightly angry"* (Wehmeir[19]). *Showing disapproval & Showing annoyance* is one of the two strategies was the most frequently used by the male customers with 30%, as in:

(6)

Man: The food quality is very bad in this hotel.

Manager: Why, sir?

Man: This is because I feel ill after consuming the food.

Manager: Thanks for the feedback. We will surely look into the matter.

Man: In addition to this there is also not much services. When I feel ill there

was no one to call. We were so helpless here.

Manager: I am so sorry, sir. Next time such will never happen.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (6), the man expressed his displeasure with the poor quality of the hotel's food, which caused him to fall ill as well as this hotel's bad service when he needed help.

4.1.1.5. Showing annoyance

"Showing annoyance" was a strategy chosen br male customers with 6.67%, as in:

(7)

Guest	Excuse me, I just checked into my room, and there's hair in the tub and it's not
	mine. It's really gross.
Rose	Oh, I'm so sorry. That's not acceptable at all. I'll clean the tub for you immediately, or if you'd like, I can see if another room is available.
Guest	Thank you. If you clean it, that will be just fine. I have to go out. I'll be back in about an hour.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue (7), the man showed Rose that he was extremely discontented with the hotel's poor service and the lack of hygiene.

4.1.1.6. Showing annoyance & showing disappointment

"*Showing annoyance*" and "*Showing disappointment*" are two different emotional expressions that can be conveyed through various means. While "*Showing annoyance*" refers to the expression of displeasure at the other's speech or acts, "*Showing disappointment*" refers to the feeling of sadness or dissatisfaction that arises when one is not pleased with what one expects. Both kinds of feelings can be expressed through various means such as avoiding eye contact, biting one's nails, frowning, scowling, or saying something with a hint of sarcasm. This strategy was employed by the male customers with 3.33%, as in:

(8)

- Hello.
- Hi, sir.
- I'm the receptionist of the hotel. I contacted the restaurant, but unfortunately, the chef said that we ran out of the lobster soup and because of the weather, we can't buy the

ingredients at this moment. Could you change to another soup?
- What a great night! First the room and now is the soup. What else did your hotel run out of?
- I'm really sorry about that.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (8), S sarcastically exclaimed *"What a great night!"* showing that this male customer had to experience successive problems that made him uncomfortable and extremely frustrated with the service and the quality of food. Therefore, he uttered a sarcastic sentence without issuing any demand.

4.1.1.7. Showing annoyance & expressing criticism

"Showing annoyance" and *"Expressing criticism"* are two different ways of conveying dissatisfaction or irritation. Criticizing refers to acts "*that show that S has a negative evaluation of some aspect of H's positive face*" (Brown & Levinson[11]). As such, while *"Showing annoyance"* refers to the expression of displeasure or irritation, *"Expressing criticism"* refers to the act of pointing out flaws or shortcomings in something or someone. Both of the speech acts can manifest themselves via various means such as a pinched expression, exaggerated sigh, or using a sharpening tone while one is speaking, or pointing out specific flaws. *Showing annoyance & Expressing criticism* was used by the male customers with 3.33%, as in:

(9)

- Good afternoon, sir. Welcome to A La Cat.
- Menu is this normal? Sir... Having your customers wait like they're going to be attended to by the president.
- I'm so sorry about that. So sorry about that.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (9), the customer showed his anger at being kept waiting for so long on a note of disapproval.

4.1.1.8. Showing annoyance & showing disapproval & requesting

In communication, "*Showing annoyance*" refers to the expression of displeasure, *"Showing disapproval"* to the act of expressing dissatisfaction and *"Requesting"* to the act of asking for something politely or officially. In the service sector, showing annoyance, complaining, and requesting are often seen together. When displeased with a service or a

product, consumers often express their annoyance, voice their complaint and then make a request for things done. This strategy was used by the male customers with 6.67%, as in:

(10)

G1: <u>Yes, this is Scott Hayek in room 313. I have a problem with my laptop. I can't seem to connect to the Internet. It's very important. I'm really in a bind. I've got this wedding tomorrow, and I need to check the registry.</u>

FD: I'm very sorry for your inconvenience, Mr. Hayek. Please allow me to call Gary. He's our maintenance engineer. He's pretty good with computers.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (10), the man was annoyed at the hotel's poor Internet service. After implicitly showing his annoyance and complaint, he made an indirect request for an urgent repair.

4.1.2. Complaint strategies used by Anglo-American female customers

The analysis of the collected data shows that the female customer used 8 different complaint strategies at different frequencies. The study results are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. *Distribution of types of complaint strategies used by Anglo-American female customers*

No.	Types of complaint strategies used by Anglo-American female customers	Nº	%
1	Showing disapproval	8	26.67
2	Showing disapproval & Requesting	3	10
3	Showing disapproval & Threatening	2	6.67
4	Showing disapproval & Showing annoyance	11	36.67
5	Showing annoyance	1	3.33
6	Showing annoyance & Showing disappointment	1	3.33
7	Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting	3	10
8	Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting & Threatening	1	3.33
	Total	**30**	**100**

As indicated in Table 2, the female customers used 8 complaint strategies with a variety of ratings. *"Showing disapproval & Showing annoyance"* is the most frequently used strategy with 36.67%, followed by *"Showing disapproval"* with 26.67%. *"Showing disapproval & Requesting"* and *"Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting"* takes the same 10%. *"Showing disapproval & Threatening"* with 6.67%, twice as high as the 3 remaining strategies *"Showing annoyance"*, *"Showing annoyance & Showing disappointment"* and *"Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting" & Threatening"*.

In the part that follows, the strategies the female customers used to make complaints will be elaborated with the numbers in brackets being the ordinal numbers of the dialogues in the appendix.

4.1.2.1. Showing disapproval

Showing disapproval is a strategy used by the female customers with 26.67%, as in:

(11)

- Excuse me.
- Yes sir.
- <u>I asked for my steak rare and this is well done.</u>
- I'm very sorry I'll send it back to the kitchen.
- Could we have a check, please?
- Yes sir, your check.
- Thanks

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue (11), the woman expressed a complaint to the employee when he did not follow her request *"I asked for my steak rare and this is well done"*. This shows the lack of professional service restaurant business.

4.1.2.2. Showing disapproval & requesting

Showing disapproval & Requesting is a strategy used by the female customers with 10%, as in:

(12)

Julie: I'll call the waiter over now. Excuse me!

Waiter: Yes, madam. How can I help you?

Julie: <u>One of my friends ordered a rare steak and you've brought him a well-done steak. My other friend's carrots are overcooked and her potatoes are raw. Can you send them back to the kitchen to be replaced please?'</u>

Waiter: I apologize for the steak. I'll replace it

straight away. Both the carrots and the potatoes are supposed to be like that. I'm afraid there is nothing I can do.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (12), Julie was not satisfied with misunderstood her friend's order and she complained to the waiter about the restaurant's service quality and made an explicit request for things done.

4.1.2.3. Showing disapproval & threatening

Showing disapproval & threatening is a strategy used by the female customers with 6.67%, as in:

(13)

- Are you a manager here?
- Yes, madam. I am Brett. I am the manager in this café. How may I help you?
- I am sorry to say that the burger wasn't good at all. Your cookie put a lot of salt on my burger. I am not paying for that. I am sorry.
- I apologize for that, madam. Let me do my best. I will ask my team to bring you a new one, and they will give you one soda water for free. I am sure it won't happen next time.
- That would be great.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (13), this woman was so displeased with the quality of the burger that she explicitly expressed her displeasure by affirming that she was not paying for that burger.

4.1.2.4. Showing disapproval & showing annoyance

Showing disapproval & showing annoyance is a strategy the most frequently used by the female customers with 36.67%, as in:

(14)

- How may I help you?
- Good morning. I'm calling from room 360. I'm so disappointed because I traveled all the way here to find a filthy room and I tried a lot to book this room and only to discover that it was filthy.
- I completely understand your frustration.
- I feel the same way.
- I apologize for the inconvenience.
- This way at the moment we will speak with my hotel manager about your problem.
- Thank you for your patience.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue (14), the female customer did not hide her extreme disappointment and annoyance at the room's poor hygiene and she explicitly complained to the hotel staff about it.

4.1.2.5. Showing annoyance

Showing annoyance is a strategy used by the female customers with 3.33%, as in:

(15)

G: Waitress.

W: Yes, madam. Is there anything wrong?

G: Certainly, there is. This cup is very dirty.

W: I'm sorry, madam. I'll get you another one.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (15), the female customer expressed irritation at the restaurant's lack of hygiene and she explicitly displayed her discomfort by asserting that *"Certainly there is. This cup is very dirty."*

4.1.2.6. Showing annoyance & showing disappointment

Showing annoyance & *Showing disappointment* is a strategy used by the female customers with 3.33%, as in:

(16)

Guest: Waiter.

Waitress: Yes, madam. What can I do for you?

Guest: I ordered my lunch 20 minutes ago, but it has not appeared yet.

Waitress: I am sorry about that, madam. I'll speak to the headwaiter immediately.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (16), the female customer's order is forgotten by the restaurant and she has been waiting for being served for up to 20 minutes. Therefore, she felt fairly annoyed about the professionalism of the restaurant staff.

4.1.2.7. Showing annoyance & showing disapproval & requesting

Showing annoyance & *Showing disapproval* & *Requesting* is a strategy used by the female customers with 10%, as in:

(17)

- Good morning. How can I help you?
- Good morning. I'm calling from Room 204, I came all the way here for a good holiday and I paid a lot to book this room, but I found out

that the water is not even running and the guest room next door is very noisy. Can you do something about this?
- Sorry to hear that, ma'am. I will talk to my hotel managers about this right now.
- Okay.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue (17), the woman displayed her disillusion and displeasure at the quality of the hotel. The woman showed her annoyance, expressed her disapproval and requested that something be done at once.

4.1.2.8. Showing annoyance & showing disapproval & requesting & threatening

This strategy was used by the female customers with 3.33%, as in:

(18)

- The water was so cold this is unacceptable. I'm gonna make a complaint.
- This is the front desk. How can I help you?
- This is Anita Martin from Room 101. I'd like to make a complaint

- Sure, madam. What seems to be the problem?
- There's no hot water in my room so I had to take a cold shower. This is unacceptable I'm very disappointed with your service. I'd like you to resolve this matter as quickly as possible or I'll have to cancel my reservation.
- Please accept our sincerest apologies for not having hot water.

In the underlined complaint utterance of dialogue extract (18), the hotel guest pointed out the problems, which were not so small that she expressed extreme annoyance and disappointment with the receptionist. Then, this guest requested that the matter be solved quickly and she issued a threat to the hotel, saying that she would cancel her reservation if her requirements were not satisfied immediately.

4.1.3. Gender similarities and differences in Anglo-American customer complaint strategies

A summary of the results of the different types of complaint strategies obtained from the analysis of male and female customer complaints is presented in Table 3:

Table 3. *Distribution of types of complaint strategies used by Anglo-American male and female customers*

No.	Types of complaint strategies used by Anglo-American male and female customers	Male		Female	
		Nº	%	Nº	%
1	Showing disapproval	9	30	8	26.67
2	Showing disapproval & Requesting	5	16.67	3	10
3	Showing disapproval & Threatening	1	3.33	2	6.67
4	Showing disapproval & Showing annoyance	9	30	11	36.67
5	Showing annoyance	2	6.67	1	3.33
6	Showing annoyance & Showing disappointment	1	3.33	1	3.33
7	Showing annoyance & Expressing criticism	1	3.33	0	0
8	Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting	2	6.67	3	10
9	Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting & Threatening	0	0	1	3.33
	Total	**30**	**100**	**30**	**100**

4.1.3.1. Gender similarities in Anglo-American customer complaint strategies

As shown in Table 3, the complaint strategies used by the male and female customers have some similarities. First, both genders used the same number of complaint strategies, which are 8 strategies, and these strategies had a diverse range of frequencies. Second, both genders used the strategy "*Showing annoyance & Showing disappointment*" with the same percentage of 3.33%.

4.1.3.2. Gender differences in Anglo-American customer complaint strategies

Table 3 shows that there are some differences between male and female customers in the use of complaint strategies. First, women used "*Showing disapproval & Showing annoyance*" with the proportion higher than that of men (36.67% compared to 30%). Second, "*Showing disapproval & Threatening*" used by women is twice as high as men (6.67% and 3.33% respectively) while "*Showing disapproval & Threatening*" was used by men with the percentage twice as high as women. Third, with a not inconsiderable proportion, men followed "*Showing annoyance & Expressing criticism*" with 3.33%, but women did not resort to this strategy. Likewise, women pursued the strategy "*Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting & Threatening*" with 3.33% while men did not utilize this strategy. Fourth, the strategies "*Showing disapproval & Requesting*" and "*Showing disapproval*" were used with the percentages higher by men (30% and 16.67% respectively) than by women (26.67% and 10% respectively) while women chose the strategy "*Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting*" with the higher percentage than men (10% versus 6.67%). Fifth, the strategy "*Showing annoyance*" was adopted with the percentage by men twice as high as by women.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the consumer complaint utterances highlights some gender similarities and differences in the complaint strategies pursued by Anglo-American customers. As regards the similarities, both genders used the same number of complaint strategies whose range of frequencies was diverse and they employed the strategy "*Showing annoyance & Showing disappointment*" with the same percentage. As for the differences: first, women used "*Showing disapproval & Showing annoyance*" with the proportion much higher than that of men. Second, "*Showing disapproval & Threatening*" used by women was twice as high as men while "*Showing disapproval & Threatening*" was used by men with the percentage twice as high as women. Third, with a not inconsiderable proportion, men followed "*Showing annoyance & Expressing criticism*", but women did not resort to this strategy. Likewise, women pursued the strategy "*Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting & Threatening*" while men did not utilize this strategy. Fourth, the strategies "*Showing disapproval & Requesting*" and "*Showing disapproval*" were used with the percentages higher by men by women while women chose the strategy "*Showing annoyance & Showing disapproval & Requesting*" with the higher percentage than men. Fifth, the strategy "*Showing annoyance*" was adopted with the percentage by men twice as high as by women. Although 60 complaint utterances is a modest number, the research findings help paint a striking picture of the distinct similarities and differences in complaint strategies employed by Anglo-American male and female customers in conversation. Learners of English need to be fully aware of gender similarities and differences in Anglo-American customer complaints so that they can achieve their goals in intra-lingual as well as cross-cultural communication situations where complaints need to be made or addressed.

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