

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the problem

To communicate bad news to customers is not as easy as to communicate the good ones. This strengthens the idea that communication does indeed play such an important role for a success of a service-company in business world. For Lion Group, a service-business in Airline Companies, an excellent communication skill is truly needed by the officers whose main job is to deal directly with passengers, especially in handling the passengers' problems. This may be the basic reason why Airline Companies, including Lion Group, do not mind spending much money to train the officers in order for them to have an excellent communication skill to be applied when they communicate with passengers.

Working in an Airline Company, Lion Group officers in Pattimura airport cannot separate themselves from the problems that may occur at any times within the operation of the company. Problems happen within the operation of Airlines Company very often and are sometimes followed by complaints. Complaints are made when passengers notice the gap between what and how they think they should be served (customers' expectation) and how they feel after being served (customers' satisfaction). However, when a problem occurs and the complaint is made, it does not necessarily mean that the passengers will become lost passengers; on the contrary, "often when customers complain and have their problems solved, they become more loyal than if they never had a complaint (Forde, 2002, p.80)". Here, in Lion Group, the way the officers handle each and every problem with passengers will surely determine the longevity of company-passengers relationship.

As the most crowded Airline Company in Indonesia, Problems which happen very often within Lion Group operation from which abundant of complaints are made are the delay and the baggage problems. The delay case may be caused by some reasons, like AOG (Aircraft On Grounded, the situation when the aircraft gets damaged and needed to have some repairments), Missconnect (the situation caused by the delay case of other aircraft which is still in one

connection), the weather, and the postponement case. There is also an overload case (the situation in which the number of sold tickets is more than the capacity of the aircraft). Another one is the baggage problem that usually happens in Lost and Found counter. Generally, there are three types of cases that usually happen in Lost and Found counter which are AHL (lost baggage), DPR (broken baggage) and courtesy (lost handcarry). Those are the cases from which hundreds of complaints come for the company. The truth is the officers sometimes struggle in communicating these problems to passengers when they occur. This means that the officers do not realize how their language used in handling problems with passengers will bring serious impacts to the company itself.

However, in communicating their problem, passengers' attitude can also vary. In one time they use a very polite intonation and appropriate words which finally make me classify them as calm passengers, but in other time, they show their disappointment by using high intonation and some inappropriate words while speaking which make me classify them as emotional passengers. Basically, when passengers express their unhappiness because of the problems, they expect a positive response from the service provider (Harris, 2007). One of the positive responses they expect is an apology. In general, an apology is done when social norms have been violated (Trosborg, as cited in Apology Strategies, 1999). Within the operation of Airlines Company like Lion Group, an apology is the first thing the officers are expected to do in order to reduce the offensiveness of the situation because of the problems.

One phenomenon happens in the operation of this well-known Airline Company is that this company still manages to have a high number of passengers though many of them have been disappointed because of the problems that happen even more than often. As Forde (2002, p.80) stated that "responding appropriately to complaints and taking the necessary corrective actions can determine a business' success", I chose to make an observation on Lion Group officers in Pattimura International Airport in Ambon to see how they respond to the problems with both calm and, or emotional passengers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The research is conducted to find out types of apology strategies that are mostly used by Lion Air officers in Pattimura, the International Airport of Ambon, in handling problems with passengers. In doing this research, I focused on these three basic questions;

1. What are the four types of apology strategies used more frequently by the officers in handling problems with calm passengers?
2. What are the four types of apology strategies used more frequently by the officers in handling problems with emotional passengers?
3. What are the similarities and/or differences of types of apology strategies used by the officers in handling problems with both calm and emotional passengers?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In this research, I would like to find out types of apology strategies used by Lion Group officers in Pattimura International Airport in Ambon in handling the problems with calm and, or emotional passengers.

1.4 Significance of the Study

By studying the types of apology strategies used by the officers of Lion Air in handling the problems with passengers, I hope to give contribution to those who are interested in learning more about apology strategies especially the ones which are used in Airline Companies. Also, I hope that this research would give insight for the further studies.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope is the sociolinguistic which is the study about society and language, and the apology strategies as the main focus. The data was taken by recording the real situation of the problems happened within Lion Group operation in Pattimura Airport between August 19th until September 3rd, 2015.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Apology : “An attempt by the speaker to make up for some previous action that interfered with the hearer’s interests, counteracts the speaker’s face wants” (Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper, 1989).

Apology Strategy : “The methods used by individuals to perform speech acts which pay attention to the face needs of the addressee” (Summers, 1992, p.45)

Category of apology strategies: as Ogierman (2009) divided it into three main categories which are Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), Account, and Positive Politeness Apology Strategies (PPAS).

Types of Apology Strategies : sub-categories of each category of Apology Strategies proposed by Ogierman (2009)

1.7 Organization of the Study

This research consists of five chapters. First is the introduction which consists of the background of the study, the statement of problem, the purpose of the study, the definition of key terms, the scope and limitation, the significance of the study, and the organization of the study. The second chapter is the review of related literature which covers all theories dealing with the topic. Then, the third one is methodology. In this chapter, I explain the procedures of data collection, the instruments for collecting the data, and data analysis and its steps. The fourth chapter is the analysis and findings. Finally, the last chapter which is chapter five is the conclusion of the study