

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Transaction between sellers and buyers may cause complaints. It usually happens when the buyers receive something which is contrary to their wants, for example, damaged goods. This will lead to their dissatisfaction. In order to express their dissatisfaction, or perhaps to ask the seller to be responsible, they may complain. Complaints can be done without meeting the sellers (or in this case the complainees) directly, for example by writing complaint letters in newspapers. In this case, the complainers deal through the written column in the newspaper, which is open for the public to read.

Although complaints mostly occur because the complainers suffer from a loss due to the complainee's carelessness or ignorance, the complainers still have to be polite in expressing complaint. In addition, even though the complainers suffer from a great loss, they still need to express their complaints chronologically. This is because many people will read them. In such cases, if the complainers write those complaint letters disorderly, those letters perhaps will confuse the readers and weaken their claims. In addition, if the letters are not polite, they will embarrass the complainees. As the consequence, the complainees will lose face. The notion of *face* is important in social relationship, as Brown & Levinson stated, "All human beings, in order to enter into social relationships with each other, must acknowledge the *face* of other people" (as cited in Cook, 1989, p.34). Therefore, we have to be careful in making complaint; otherwise, we may threat the face of others. These kinds of acts, which threaten the face of the others, according to Brown & Levinson (1987), are defined as Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). People who receive those kinds of acts usually will feel embarrassed, mainly, if it happens in front of the public.

Since complaint is a kind of acts that can threat the face of the others, the researcher believes that complaint is worth studying. By studying it, we can know more about the general ways of making complaint (the ways of complaining which usually occur in the society); so that if we want to make complaint, we do not make it awkwardly. However, the researcher also thinks that it is a difficult thing to do.

This is because sometimes we may misinterpret the actual aim of the complaint. We may misinterpret whether the complainer just wants to remind the seller about the problem (merely gives suggestion for the complainees), ask for refund, or perhaps the complainer wants to ruin the reputation of the complainees because of his/her dissatisfaction.

In this study, the researcher is going to study some complaint letters which are published in Metropolis Watch, a column for the readers to express their thoughts in Jawa Pos, one of the most popular newspapers in East Java. It is sold for about 450.000 copies everyday (Rusdi, Graha Pena Jawa Pos, 17 Desember 2004). From this amount, we can know that Jawa Pos is read by so many people. In this case, the face threatening effects of the complaint letters which are found in the newspaper is likely to be great, especially for the complainees. Therefore, from the complaint letters in Metropolis Watch, the researcher can get the data to be investigated which were complaining in front of public.

In the complaint letters in Metropolis Watch, the complainer is retelling what make him/her feel dissatisfied or annoyed (retelling the problems she/he faced) toward the complainees in the form of narrative, that is, an account of events faced by the complainers that finally lead to their dissatisfaction of the problems they face. According to Trosborg (1995), “In complaint, the events described in the proposition took place in the past” (p. 311). That is why, the complainers use the narrative form to express their complaints. Mostly, after the complainer finished retelling about the problems, the complaint is followed by a closure (defined as **coda** following the narrative model based on Labov’s classification). It generally contains some kinds of message or what the complainer wants towards the complainees. Here, of course, the complainer needs to be careful in expressing it. This is because after having told the problems to the public, the complainer usually still demands something from the complainees, or merely gives suggestions to the complainees, which commonly occur in the coda of the letter.

For example: (taken from Metropolis Watch, 2nd December 2004). The “X” and “Y” in the following letter are the signals of the researcher to hide the identity of the complainees.

Beli Buku, Halamannya Meloncat

Seminggu yang lalu, saya membeli buku bahasa Inggris di “X”. Buku tersebut jenis cerita pendek terbitan “Y”. Awalnya, tidak ada masalah. Saat saya sudah membaca hingga setengah halaman, saya merasa ada yang aneh, karena cerita yang saya baca menjadi tidak nyambung. Setelah saya teliti, ternyata halamannya banyak yang tertukar, alias meloncat-loncat. Bukankah hal tersebut membuat saya tidak runtut membacanya? **Saya berharap karyawan “X” untuk menyotir dulu buku-buku yang halamannya tidak lengkap.** Terima kasih.

(Translation: **Buying Book, the Pages Skip**

A week ago, I bought an English book at “X”. The book is a kind of short story which is published by “Y”. Firstly, there was no problem. However, after I read half of a page, I found something wrong because the story that I read could not match with each other. After I observed, apparently, many of the pages were exchanged, or skipped. Don’t that make me cannot read systematically? **I hope the “X” workers can check first the books in which pages are incomplete. Thank you.)**

From the letter, we can see that the problem which is faced by the complainer was the disordered pages of book. We can also see that the complainer is demanding something from the complaine in the coda (closure part). By expressing **“I hope the “X” workers can check first the books in which pages are incomplete”**, the complainer is hoping the workers to check the books first before distributing them. Here, the complainer is making a request in the coda. The complainer is requesting for an act from the seller to prevent such thing to happen again although the problem seemed not too serious (there was only one problem in the letter). Such phenomenon gives the inspiration for the researcher that different number of problems may create different types of codas, too. Thus, the researcher is encouraged to make an investigation on the types of codas occurred in the complaint letters in Metropolis Watch and whether they were affected by the number of problems that the complainers face.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In this study, the research problem was:

How do the complainers use codas in the complaint letters in Metropolis Watch?

Hence, as the guidelines of the investigation, the research problem was elaborated as follows:

1. Do codas always occur in the complaint letters in Metropolis Watch and in what types?
2. Does the number of problems in the complaint letters affect the types of codas?

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to reveal the codas occurred in complaint letters in public written media. Also, through this study, the writer wanted to find whether the seriousness or the number of problem in the letters influence the types of codas.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Since complaint is a Face Threatening Act, the writer believes that this research was worth doing in order to give the readers the general pattern of complaint letters. Also, this research can give the readers the general ways to make complaints which are not awkward; especially, in the coda, which is a kind of message after the complaining. In other words, the researcher hopes that the readers of this thesis can understand how to maintain the face of the others in front of public, especially in expressing a kind of message after retelling the problems in complaining.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is Discourse Analysis, in particular, narrative complaints in the form of letters published in newspaper, which were found in Metropolis Watch based on the classification by Labov (1972). This study was restricted to the complaint about damaged goods because this kind of complaint occurs very often in the newspaper. In this study, the researcher only concerned about the problems, actions and solutions in relation to the codas.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

The following terminologies are referred to in this study:

1. Complaint: a statement that one is annoyed or not satisfied about something
(Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1995, p. 233).
2. Complainer: person who makes complaint.
3. Complaine: the one who is being complained.
4. Face: the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself
(Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.61).
5. Face-Threatening Acts: an act that causes a threat to the hearer's face (Brown
& Levinson, 1987).
6. Narrative: one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a
verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it
is inferred) actually occurred (Labov, 1972, pp.359-360)
7. Coda: the signal that the narrative is finished (Labov, 1972, p.365)

1.7. Organization

The writer divided this thesis into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction, which among other things covers the background of the study, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, significance, scope and limitation, definition of key terms, and organization. The second chapter is a review of related literature. It consists of related theories and related studies. The third chapter deals with the methodology, that is, the way to collect and to analyze the data. The forth chapter concerns with the findings and analysis. Finally, the fifth chapter is the conclusion of all the findings of the analysis.