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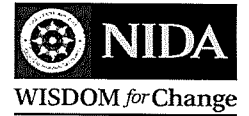
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# NIDA



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National Institute of Development Administration

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# The Dynamic Formulation of a Complaint in a Thai Service Encounter: A Case Study

Nattana Leelaharattanak<sup>\*</sup>

## Abstract

It seems to be more difficult analyzing a complaint than the analysis of rejections due to the fact that complaints have multi-layered and complicated characteristics. Consequently, this research aims to explore the way in which customers launch, develop, revisit and end the commercially-oriented complaint over a long conversation during Thai service encounters. It also highlights some of the resources utilized by the participant to construct and respond to the complaint. Data consisted of one long naturally occurring face-to-face service encounter video- and audio-recorded between Thai customers and agents at a Thai hotel. The data revealed that it is significant for the customer to collect sufficient and reasonable information supporting the customer's finely elaborated complaint before launching it. In addition, both customer and agents employ various mixed (non)verbal and prosodic strategies to aggravate or redress the finely articulated complaint in a single turn, for example, the unparalleled use of pronominal forms, making apologies and giving a promise of a future repair. Loudness, disaffiliative laughter and the expression of a dissatisfied face are nonverbal features employed to aggravate the

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explicit complaint, which threatens the agents' face. In contrast, smiles, the use of a pleasant voice and silence help to mitigate the complaint and indicate the agents' patience and face concerns.

**Keywords:** Complaint, Thai, Service Encounter, Face-to-Face

# การก่อเกิดทางพลวัตของการร้องเรียน ในการปฏิสัมพันธ์เพื่อการบริการในบริบทของไทย: กรณีศึกษา

ณัฐนา สีพรัตน์รักษ์\*

## บทคัดย่อ

การวิเคราะห์การร้องเรียนดูเหมือนจะเป็นเรื่องที่ยากกว่าการวิเคราะห์การปฏิเสธ เนื่องจากการร้องเรียนมีลักษณะซับซ้อนหลากหลายชั้น ด้วยเหตุนี้ การศึกษานี้จึงมีจุดประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาวิธีการที่ลูกค้าเริ่ม พัฒนา ย้อนมาพูดถึง และยุติการร้องเรียนในการปฏิสัมพันธ์เพื่อการบริการที่ดำเนินเป็นเวลานานในบริบทของไทย รวมทั้งยังมุ่งเน้นศึกษาวิธีการทางภาษาที่ผู้สนทนาใช้เพื่อสร้างและโต้ตอบการร้องเรียน ข้อมูลประกอบด้วยการปฏิสัมพันธ์เพื่อการบริการแบบเห็นหน้าเห็นตาที่ถูกบันทึกภาพและเสียงระหว่างลูกค้าและพนักงานชาวไทยที่โรงแรมแห่งหนึ่งในไทย ผลการวิจัยเปิดเผยว่าลูกค้าจะเก็บข้อมูลมากเพียงพอที่สนับสนุนให้ทำการร้องเรียนก่อนที่จะเริ่มการร้องเรียนออกไป อีกประการหนึ่ง ลูกค้าและพนักงานจะใช้กลยุทธ์ทั้งภาษาพูด ภาษากาย และเสียงที่หลากหลายผสมกันเพื่อเพิ่มหรือลดความรุนแรงของการร้องเรียนในการพูดแต่ละครั้ง เช่น การใช้คำสรรพนามที่ไม่ชัดเจนกัน การขอโทษ และการสัญญาว่าจะชดเชยให้ในอนาคต ส่วนภาษากายที่ใช้เพิ่มความรุนแรงของการร้องเรียน ได้แก่ การทำเสียงดัง การหัวเราะแบบไม่เป็นมิตร และการแสดงสีหน้าไม่พอใจ แต่การยิ้ม การใช้น้ำเสียงที่เป็นมิตร และการเงิบ ช่วยลดระดับความรุนแรงของการร้องเรียน และแสดงถึงความอดทนและคำนึงถึงหน้าตาของพนักงาน

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## Introduction

This research was formulated when analyzing a corpus of naturally occurring service encounters which were video-and audio-recorded at a Thai hotel for the purpose of a large-scale study of face manifestation of the participants in elaboration of face-sensitive activities, i.e. disagreements and refusals. During the analysis, the author was struck by the analysis of the way in which the complaints were elaborated upon through a long thread of naturally occurring conversations regarding complaints, which has been primarily concentrated on the first turns which were introduced and dealt with. Consequently, this paper focuses on an examination of the way in which customers launch, develop, revisit and end the complaint over an extended conversation during Thai service encounters. This study highlights not only some of the resources utilized by the participants to construct and respond to the complaint, but also the way in which face concerns are manifested interactionally (Haugh, 2010; Márquez-Reiter, 2013).

The service encounter investigated is primarily goal-oriented. It represents transactionally-oriented face-to-face interactions between agents and customers in a Thai hospitality setting. In general, agents and customers at a hotel are unacquainted with one another and unlikely to converse with each other again because the customers do not revisit the hospitality setting again. However, some customers may occasionally come back to receive services at the same hospitality setting. More importantly, in situations involving complaints, the interactional purpose of agents and customers do not coincide: the customers want to manifest their dissatisfaction towards the service provided or product, whereas the agents need to protect their institutional benefits. Therefore, they take part in elaborating a range of responses from each other to accomplish their different goals.

Cultural norms, however, are likely to have an impact on people's communicative behaviour. During Thai service encounters, customers often express implicitness when rejecting the suggested product for avoiding confrontation and maintaining face through prosodically dispreferred responses, such as hesitators, (Leelaharattanarak, 2015) although they are considered socio-economically superior

due to their power of money (King, 1995). Like complaints, rejections can be taken into account as face-sensitive activities because they have the potential to threaten face for the receiver (hearer). The results of this empirical study indicate that customers are likely to be concerned about the interpersonal relationship with agents. Nevertheless, there seems to be insufficient evidence to say that customers are restricted to interpersonal harmony with agents when considering situations involving complaints where the speaker is affected unfavourably (Deveci, 2003; Umar, 2006) and wants to offend his/her benefits. The present research is expected to contribute to this question.

The following section is dedicated to a review of the literature on complaints. The characteristics of complaints are reported, in general, and the interactional environments that have so far been in focus. Afterwards, the background information, data and methods are presented to help the reader fully understand the way in which complaints are managed in the hospitality setting investigated. This is followed by the section, namely “Discussion, conclusion and implications” where the results are discussed and concluding remarks and implications are presented. Lastly, the final thoughts about the practical and pedagogical contributions are provided for the application of this research in teaching and learning.

## Previous Research on Complaints

Searle (1976) categorises complaints as “special” representatives whose aim is to commit the hearer to do something with the interest of the speaker. Complaints are an offensive act and an emotional state which the speaker expresses displeasure, disapproval (Márquez-Reiter, 2013; Wan et al., 2011), threat, frustration (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993) (non)verbally as a reaction to a past action, a perceived offence, an ongoing action and/or the hearer him/herself (Geluykens & Kraft, 2003). Complaints also involve a retrospective stance, i.e. a linguistic contribution in a complaint sequence is derived from a past failure or poor performance, or may well emerge throughout the course of the interaction. Unlike requests, complaints do not have contingencies of conversational turn-taking and predictably linguistic index. Considering the natural characteristics of complaints, complaints tend to be



regarded themselves as a potentially interpersonally-delicate activity.

A complaint sequence is more flexible in the number of turns, but more difficult to predict how the interlocutor will respond to the prior utterance than other initiating activities. For example, in commercial service calls, the complainant often initiates the conversation through a greeting and providing their own information before elaborating the complaint, and then is followed by grounds of the complaint (Márquez-Reiter, 2013). In transactional service calls, the way in which complaints are articulated step-by-step instead of going straight to them indicates the speaker's realisation of their potentially interpersonal delicacy and his/her careful orientation of the act of complaining to his/her interactional goal. Through the complaint sequence, complaining strategies which help formulate the act of complaining include troubles-telling, criticism (Cupach & Carson, 2002), irony, insult (Umar, 2006), challenging (Murphy & Neu, 1996), expressing disappointment and accusation (Edwards, 2005; Rhurakvit, 2011), expressing issue threats and solidarity (Chen et al., 2011; Márquez-Reiter, 2005), expressing disagreement (Orthaber & Márquez-Reiter, 2011), warning, annoyance, reformulation of complaints, and explicit complaints (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993).

Alignment to complaints is seen as a mitigation of the face-threat and re-construction of the alliance destroyed in a complaint sequence. The alliance of complaints can be developed through alternative offers and compensation. On the other hand, disalignment to complaints or rejection of providing a remedial action can trigger the presence of further developed face-sensitivity since it aggravates the ongoing conflict and the vulnerable relationship between agents and customers. During service encounters, the idea that "the customer is God" (Arrington, 1990) may indicate that in a complaint sequence agents tend to align with customers by serving their needs or compensating the loss when being complained. The provision of satisfactory service to customers or not affects customers' service quality and then the public's image of the professional institution and, finally, agents' own career. When positively evaluated in public, hotels and tour agents will be able to earn more profits. In other words, the power of money and the

expectation of a good image are likely to influence agents' compliance of providing a remedial action for complaints. However, simultaneously agents as an institutional representative have a significant mission to reserve institutional benefits in accordance with the institution policies. The infringement of the institution's policies may potentially cause negative outcomes for their career. Highly productive benefits that agents can produce may result in their job promotion and their own benefits that they may receive from their professional institution. Consequently, agents tend to reject customers' request for repairs. The power of money and reservation of the institutional benefits according to the institutional policies seem to contradict each other in a complaint sequence. This study is challenging in verifying which contextual variables are more influential on agents' response to complaints during service encounters.

Earlier studies of complaints have been undertaken in diverse areas; for instance, strategies employed to elaborate complaints in intra-cultural and cross-cultural perspectives (e.g., Chen et al., 2011; Márquez-Reiter, 2005; Rhurakvit, 2011; Umar, 2006), pragmatic competence (Deveci, 2003; Tanck, 2002), and discursive process of the articulation and negotiation of complaints (e.g., Drew & Holt, 1988; Edwards, 2005; Márquez-Reiter, 2013; Orthaber & Márquez-Reiter, 2011; Vásquez, 2009). Those studies have indicated the potential influence of contexts on the realisation and elaboration of complaints, such as culture (Geluykens & Kraft, 2003; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Wan, 2011), social authority (Vöge, 2010) and gender (Rhurakvit, 2011). American and Chinese people vary in their choice of linguistic forms and content constructed by certain complaint patterns, i.e. for the Chinese, complaints differ according to the interlocutor's social status, whereas Americans display their annoyance to people regardless of their status (Chen et al., 2011). Females often produce a longer thread of complaints than males in Thai contexts (Rhurakvit, 2011). Moreover, Rhurakvit (2011) claims that due to the Thai norm of deference of younger people and/or those with a lower social status to elder people and/or those with a higher social position, Thai native speakers do explicitly direct complaints to younger people. Despite the same focus in Thai culture, Rhurakvit's claim seems questionable in its applicability for the present study due

to the difference in contextual situations chosen as a research site. Contextual situations can differ in people's actual communicative behaviour. In service encounters, the difference in age seems less influential than power of money and socio-professional roles of agents and customers in accordance with the primarily commercial goal of service encounters. Unlike the present study, Rhurakvit's empirical work is constructed based on questionnaires and focuses on everyday situations. As discussed, responses in questionnaires arise in what respondents think to do in simulated situations. Thus, they may not occur in actual situations. The present study is a challenge to prove these questionable claims since authentic service exchanges chosen as the main data can shed light on the way in which the complaints in a Thai commercial setting are launched, manifested and repeated over the course of an extended conversation through a diversity of (non-) linguistic resources. In addition, previous research in Thai contexts has revealed the significance of nonverbal behavior towards the meanings, interpretation and communication amongst Thai people, such as silence (Knutson, 2004), smiles (Knutson, 1994, 2004) and infrequent eye contact (Katz, 2008). As a result, written data such as questionnaires, as employed by Rhurakvit (2011), and audio-recorded service calls as deployed by Orthaber & Márquez-Reiter (2011) and Márquez-Reiter (2013), are unlikely to disclose all dimensions of the way in which complaints and the responses to them are constructed, developed and revisited because they cannot provide information regarding nonverbal behaviour. In contrast, video- and audio-recorded naturally occurring interactions used in this research can do so and seem to suit the discursive study of communicative behaviour in Thai contexts where nonverbal behaviour has played a vital role.

## **Background and Research Methods**

The video- and audio-recorded naturally occurring service encounter is part of a corpus of 80 spontaneous interactions between Thai agents and Thai and non-Thai customers which the author collected in 2010 as part of a larger-scale discursive study on face manifestation when articulating disagreements and rejections in Thai service encounters (Leelaharattanak, 2015). This excerpt from

a complaint, which lasted 15.27 minutes, was gathered at a hotel in Thailand by using two video-recorders and one mp3 recorder as the main instruments. The first camcorder focuses on the agents' behaviour, whereas the second one concentrates on the customers' actions. Consequently, it provides not only rich verbal data but also rich nonverbal and prosodic behaviour of the participants. Field-notes were conducted by the author as a passive observer who did not interrupt the ongoing interactions. Consent was given to me to record the data by both agents and customers. If any of the participants was reluctant for video- and audio-recording their interaction, they could withdraw their consent at any time. Moreover, to protect the participants' privacy, any personal information, such as the name of participants, was made confidential.

The video- and audio-recorded complaining excerpt examined here is a face-to-face conversation which took place in the reception area of a Thai hotel when the customer was checking out. The customer's transactionally-oriented purpose originally includes checking-out and her complaint which occurs later is unplanned, but expresses her concern about her preservation of benefits. Nevertheless, it occurs spontaneously when other activities, i.e. checking out of the target customer and checking in of another customer, were in focus. Moreover, it is a multi-party service encounter where both agents and customers are Thai.

The investigation of the video- and audio-recorded naturally occurring service encounter draws on Watts's notion of politic behaviour, which is constructed based on Goffman's notion of face, as Watts (2003) claimed. According to Watts (2003), *politic behaviour* is defined as (non-)linguistic behaviour that participants construct appropriately in line with social norms in ongoing interactions, i.e. non-salient behaviour, whereas *polite behaviour* as marked behaviour in excess of what is considered appropriate to the ongoing social interaction, i.e. salient behaviour. *Non-politic behaviour* is not part of the politic behaviour and is inappropriate and open to be interpreted as impoliteness. Watts (2003) proposes his adaptive concept of face defined as a basic conceptualized thought which causes a person to conduct politic behaviour or what is socio-culturally required with

regard to social norms. In addition, the examination of the selected data is also based on a range of resources from pragmatics (e.g. explicitness and implicitness).

The fact that only one video- and audio-recorded complaint interaction between Thai agents and customers was analysed may lead some readers to feel uncertain about the worthwhileness of this research because claims about characteristics of the complaint may be considered as being on thin ground. Nevertheless, the complaint examined unfolds over extended sequences of the authentic service encounter instead of that at the sentence level, because the responses continuously conducted by the participants are resisted by one another, thus extending the interaction and demonstrating an unexplored picture of the complaint context, in particular in an unplanned complaining situation. It can provide an insight into the introduction, elaboration and revision of a transactionally-prescribed complaint and responses to it over a long course of the prolonged interaction in a language where few research on complaints has been conducted from an interactional perspective. Therefore, it seeks to contribute to the knowledge of pragmatics during Thai service encounters.

Before the analysis, it may be relevant to describe some of the contextual information related to the participants in the selected complaint excerpt and relevant for understanding the chosen service encounter. The conversational excerpt relevant to the introduction and development of the complaint is part of a multi-party conversation which consists of at least two sub-conversations: four Thai customers (Customer 1, Customer 2, Customer 3 and Customer 4) and five agents (Agent 1, Agent 2, Agent 3, Agent 4 and Agent 5). The focused customer in Excerpt 1 is Customer 1, a Thai female customer, whose relative, Customer 4, comes to join the interaction later. Customer 2 and Customer 3 are another group of Thai customers who request service at the same time as Customer 1. The main agent, who talks to Customer 1 most and manages the critical situation, is Agent 2. Agent 1 and Agent 3 are female agents who do other jobs at the same time the complaint is launched and develops, as well as who participate in some parts of the long sequential turns. Agent 4 is a front office manager. Agent 5 serves other

customers while the complaint sequence is ongoing. Customer 1 wants to check out and pay for the rooms, whereas Customer 2 and Customer 3 are checking in. At the beginning of the conversation, which is not shown in this paper, Customer 1 is paying for the rooms with the extra charge for the mini bar. Whereas Customer 1 is waiting for Agent 2 managing the payment by credit card given by Customer 1 inside the office, Customer 1 notices that Customer 2 receives discounts by paying the rooms by credit card. First, Customer 1 is uncertain about what type of credit card is eligible. By asking Agent 2, Customer 1 determines that she is eligible to receive discounts. Unfortunately, it is too late because the payment process has been already finished. Consequently, the complaint is launched and then develops.

## Analysis

Customer 1 attempts to accumulate information which assists her in presuming that she can receive benefits by finding some information about the type of credit card which is eligible for discounts. Agent 2 explains the institutional rules behind the eligibility in order to erase Customer 1's claim for a discount. However, Customer 1 does not accept Agent 2's explanation and launches the complaint instead.

C = Customer (e.g. C1 = Customer 1)

A = Agent (e.g. A1 = Agent 1)

Excerpt 1       HSBC credit card

59               +C1 glances at C2 writing on the registration form.+

60               +A2 takes the credit card and a pile of paper from the right side of the registration desk, and then walks and stands opposite to C1.+

61       C1       บัตร เซ็นทรัล                               ได้ ลด       เพิ่มอีก หรือ ค่ะ  
61               card central (department store) can discount more Q-YN FPF  
61               *Central (Department store) card holders can get more discounts, can't they?*

- 62 A2 ตอนนี้ ตอนนี้ ยัง ไม่ มี มี แต่ ของ HSBC  
62 now now yet not have have just of HSBC  
62 *Now, there haven't been any other promotions yet, except for HSBC card holders*
- 63 C1 HSBC ลด อีก เท่าไหร่  
63 HSBC discount more how much  
63 How much of a discount do HSBC (holders) get?
- 64 A2 ตอนนี้ ก็ ห้อง อยู่ที่ 3200 \*กับ 3000 เอ่อ:: 3700 บาท  
64 now DM room be 3200 \*and 3000 er:: 3700 baht  
64 *Now, a room price is 3,200 and 3,000 er:: 3,700 baht*  
64 \* A2 looks at the information from a pile of paper put on her left near A1.--->>
- 65 C1 อ้าว ((dissatisfied face and voice)) อย่าง นี้ พี่ ก็  
65 AH ((dissatisfied face and voice)) CASE THIS KPS DM  
65 *AH ((dissatisfied face and voice)) so I HAVE AN HSBC CARD*  
66 มี HSBC ดี  
66 HAVE HSBC PCR
- 67 A2 อ้อ ต้อง แจ้ง ล่วงหน้า ก่อนชำระเงิน ว่า มี บัตร  
67 Oh must inform before pay that have card  
67 *Oh, (you) must inform (us) before making a payment that (you) had*  
68 เพราะว่า เรา จะ ทำให้เข้าไป ตั้งแต่ ก่อน เข้าพัก แล้ว อะ ค่ะ  
68 because we FTM do since before check in DM FCoq FPF  
68 *that card because we will deal with a discount before checking in*

- 69 C1 HSBC 3000 เท่าไหร่ นะ 3700  
69 HSBC 3000 how much WS/P 3700  
69 *How much is it if I pay by HSBC card? 3,700?*
- 70 A2 3700 บาท ค่ะ ((smiles))  
70 3700 baht FPF ((smiles))  
70 3,700 baht ((smiles))
- 71 +A3 walks out of the office behind the front desk to take a pen and then write something on the document in her hand.+
- 72 C1 \*แต่ พี่ มี ถ้าม นะ แต่ ที่นี่ บอกว่า ไม่มี  
72 \*but KPS have ask WS/P but here say that not have  
72 \*But I (KPS) asked (you) but you (referring to 'the hotel') said that there weren't any promotions  
72 \*C1 makes the face serious and looks at A2 while speaking,--->
- 73 (.)
- 74 +A1 stops her job on the computer and pays attention to the ongoing interaction instead. A3 also stops doing her job and looks at the document being discussed between A2 and C1 instead.+
- 75 +A5 walks to the phone and answers it.+
- 76 A2 ((smiles and leans forwards when C1 finishes her utterance))



- 77 A1 \*°อันนี้ น่าจะ มี การถาม°  
 77 \*°this may have ask question°  
 77 \*°The question may be asked.°  
 77 \*A1 glances at A2 shortly and looks at the computer screen.---->>
- 78 C1 หึ ↑  
 78 huh ↑  
 78 huh ↗
- 79 A3 \*อันนี้ เป็น การอัปเกรด ให้ด้วย นะคะ  
 79 \*This is upgrade as well FPF  
 79 \*This is the way of upgrading the type of rooms as well  
 79 \*A3 stands up near A2 to take some documents while saying this sentence and then sits down on the chair.---->>
- 80 C1 อัปเกรด คือ (.) อัปเกรด คือ ยังไง  
 80 upgrade is (.) upgrade be how  
 80 *Upgrading is (.) what is upgrading?*
- 81 +A young lady (C4) walks to the reception desk and stands next to C1. C4 participates in the ongoing interaction.+
- 82 A3 ปกติแล้ว ห้อง superior นะคะ [จะ อยู่ที่ 3800 deluxe อยู่ที่  
 82 normally room superior FPF [FTM be 3800 deluxe be  
 82 *Normally a superior room costs 3,800 and a deluxe (room) costs*  
 83 4400 แต่ อันนี้ จะ ได้ ห้อง deluxe ใน ราคา 3800  
 83 4400 but this FTM get room deluxe in price 3800  
 83 *4,400, but in this (case) (you) will get a deluxe room for 3,800*
- 84 C1 [อะ แต่ ที่นี้ น้อง เค้า  
 84 [EH BUT DM KPJ NTP  
 84 [EH, BUT YOU (KPJ)

- 85           บอก ว่า ถ้า มี บัตร HSBC เนี่ย deluxe เหลือ  
85           SAY THAT IF HAVE CARD HSBC FP/E DELUXE REMAIN  
85           SAID THAT IF I HAD AN HSBC CARD, (IT) WOULD COST  
86           3700 ไช้มะ                   ((furious voice and face))  
86           3700 Q-YN (colloquial)? ((furious voice and face))  
86           3,700, WOULDN'T IT? ((furious voice and face))
- 87    A2       \*deluxe เหลือ 3700 ((slightly nods))  
87           \*deluxe remain 3700 ((slightly nods))  
87           \*A deluxe (room) costs 3,700 ((slightly nods))  
87           \*A2 stands while saying whereas A1 and A3 who stop working for a while  
          and listen to the ongoing talk between C1 and A2 sit on the chairs.--->
- 88    C1       อ่า ไช้มะ                   ที่นี้ พี่ ก็ มี บัตร HSBC  
88           AH Q-YN (colloquial) DM KPS DM HAVE CARD HSBC  
88           AH RIGHT? I (KPS) ALSO HAVE AN HSBC CARD  
89           ไม่เห็นบอก เลย ว่า ถาม แล้ว  
89           NOT TELL AT ALL THAT ASK ALREADY  
89           NO ONE TOLD (ME) (ABOUT IT). (I) HAVE ALREADY ASKED  
90           ว่า มี บัตร อะไร ลด ได้ ไหม  
90           THAT HAVE CARD WHAT DISCOUNT CAN Q-YN  
90           WHETHER (I) CAN GET A DISCOUNT WITH ANY CARD  
91           ทางคุณ ก็ บอก ว่า ไม่ มี ไม่ ได้ (เสียงดัง)  
          ((furious voice and face))  
91           YOU (PSP) DM TOLD THAT NOT HAVE NOT CAN  
          ((furious voice and face))  
91           YOU TOLD (ME) THAT NO CARDS OFFERED ANY PROMOTIONS  
          ((furious voice and face))

- 92 A2 --->ขอประทานโทษ อีกครั้ง [นะคะ เดี่ยว เช็ค ((smile voice))  
 92 --->ask for a pardon again [FPF FTM check ((smile voice))  
 92 --->May (I) ask for a pardon again (I) will check (it for you) ((smile voice))  
 92 --->A2 smiles and leans forward the head a bit with the two clasped hands  
 put in front of her stomach. Then, she smiles again.\*
- 93 C1 [บอก ว่า ราคา นี้  
 93 [tell that price this  
 93 [(you) told (me) that this  
 94 [ลด แล้ว ไม่สามารถ หือ ((dissatisfied voice))  
 94 [is discounted already cannot huh ((dissatisfied voice))  
 94 was a reduced price and (you) couldn't huh ((dissatisfied voice))
- 95 A2 [เพราะ ปกติ เพราะ ปกติ]  
 95 [because normally because normally]  
 95 [because normally]
- 96 +A4, a front manager, walks past the rear of the reception desk and stops  
 on the left of the reception desk. When he sees a Thai lady (C5) waiting to  
 be served, he reaches out his hand as a sign to ask for her card. Before he  
 considers the card, he glances at C1 who is making an ongoing complaint.+
- 97 C1 \*เนี่ย พี่ มี ที่นั่น อะ ไทยพาณิชย์ HSBC ((dissatisfied voice))  
 97 \*FP/E KPS have all FCoq Thai commercial HSBC ((dissatisfied voice))  
 97 \*YOU SEE, I (KPS) have all (credit cards)—Thai Commercial (Bank) HSBC  
 ((dissatisfied voice))  
 97 \*C1 opens her purse and shows her credit cards.-->
- 98 C4 ทุก แบงก์  
 98 every bank  
 98 Every bank

99	C1	กรุง ศรี
99		City Ayutt
99		<i>Ayuttaya City (Bank)</i>
100	C4	ทุก แบงก์
100		every bank
100		<i>Every bank</i>
101		+A4 sends C5's card to A3. Then, A4 pays attention to C1's ongoing complaint. A5 also does the same thing.+
102	C1	เออ ((เสียงไม่พอใจ))
102		Er ((furious voice))
102		<i>Er (=yes) ((furious voice))</i>
103	A2	ถ้ายังไง เดี่ยว เดี่ยว ถ้ายังไง เป็น โอกาส หน้า แล้วกัน นะคะ
103		so FTM FTM so be chance next DM FPF
103		<i>So (we) will (give you a discount) next chance, is it OK?</i>
103		*A2 smiles gently.--->
104		เดี๋ยว มี ราคา พิเศษ ก็ จะ ((smile voice))
104		FTM [have price special DM FTM ((smile voice))
104		<i>if there are special promotions (we) will ((smile voice))</i>
105	C1	[ก็ [พี่]
105		[so [KPS]
105		<i>[so I (KPS)]</i>
106	A2	[เดี๋ยว แจ้ง ให้]
106		[FTM let know to]
10	6	<i>[(I) will let (you) know]</i>

- 107 C1 ทางคุณ นะ พุด เอง บอก ว่า ราคา นี้  
 107 You WS/P say oneself say that price this  
 107 *You said yourself that this*  
 108 ลด แล้ว ลด ไม่ได้ แล้ว  
 108 be discounted already be discounted cannot anymore  
 108 *was a reduced price and (you) couldn't give discounts anymore*  
 109 อะไร อย่าง นี้ ก็ ที่ บอก ว่า มี บัตร อะไร  
 109 something like this DM KPS say that have card what  
 109 *for something like this. I (KPS) asked whether other cards*  
 110 ลด ได้ อีก ไหม ((furious voice))  
 110 get discount can Q-YN ((furious voice))  
 110 *could be used for a discount ((furious voice))*  
 111 (.)  
 112 C1 3700 เอง ถ้า เป็น HSBC ((furious voice))  
 112 3700 only if use HSBC ((furious voice))  
 112 *It's only 3,700 if we pay by HSBC ((furious voice))*  
 113 A2 เออ ไม่ ไม่ พอดี เป็น ช่วง HSBC เพิ่ง  
 113 Er no no because be period HSBC (promotion) just  
 113 *Er no no because this is a period of the HSBC promotion which has been*  
 114 มา ไม่ ทราบ ว่า ที่ จอง ไว้ นาน  
 114 launch not know that KPS book already time long  
 114 *just launched (I) am uncertain whether you (KPS) have booked*  
 115 หรือยัง ค่ะ  
 115 Q-YN FPF  
 115 *a long time ago?*  
 116 +A4 says nothing and leaves out of the ongoing interaction whereas A5 comes to the place where A4 stood before and speaks in a soft voice to C5.+

- 117 C4 เมื่อวาน  
117 Yesterday  
117 Yesterday
- 118 C1 ก็ พี่ จอง วันศุกร์ พี่ เข้ามา เมื่อวาน  
118 DM KPS book Friday KPS check in yesterday  
118 *I (KPS) booked (last) Friday. I (KPS) checked in yesterday*
- 119 A2 พี่ หมายถึง อันนี้ พี่ จอง มานาน [แล้ว ใช้นิ่ม  
119 KPS mean this KPS book time long [already Q-YN  
119 *You (KPS) mean you have already booked (it) a long time ago, haven't you?*
- 120 C1 [ไม่ใช่ ((furious voice)) จอง  
120 [no ((furious voice)) book  
120 *[No ((furious voice)) (I) booked*  
121 วันศุกร์ เอง  
121 Friday just  
121 *(it) was (last) Friday*
- 122 A2 จอง เมื่อวันศุกร์  
122 Book Friday  
122 *(You) booked (last) Friday*
- 123 C1 เออ แล้วก็ เข้ามา เมื่อวาน วันเสาร์  
123 Er then check in yesterday Saturday  
123 *Er (=yes) then (I) checked in yesterday, (which was) Saturday*
- 124 A2 จอง หนึ่ง วัน [ล่วงหน้า  
124 Book one day [ahead  
124 *(You) booked a day ahead*

125	C1	[เออ]
125		[er]
125		[er (=yes)]
126	A2	จ้ัน เดี่ยว เรา เช็ค ชื่อ ไว้ให้ อีกครั้งนึ่ง
126		so FTM we check name for again
126		<i>So, we will put your name in the list again</i>
127	C1	เออ
127		er
127		<i>Er (=yes)</i>
128		(0.05) +A new customer walks into the scene and obstructs the identification of A2's nonverbal acts. A5 also does the same thing as that customer. Consequently, C1's nonverbal acts cannot be transcribed.+
129	A2	โอกาส หน้า เดี่ยว เรา จะ ลด ในส่วนของ
129		chance/time next FTM we FTM give discount in part of
129		<i>Next time, we will give (you) a discount for</i>
130		ค่า ห้อง และ ค่า อาหาร ให้ นะคะ ((smile voice and simpers))
130		price room and price food for FPF ((smile voice and simpers))
130		<i>a room and food ((smile voice and simpers))</i>
131	C1	แล้ว จะ จำ [ได้ หรือ ค่ะ ว่า
131		Then FTM remember [able to Q-YN FPF that
131		<i>will (you) be able to remember that</i>
132	A2	*[ใช้เป็น [ชื่อ เดิม ของ ((smile voice))
132		*[use [name sam of ((smile voice))
132		*[use the same name of ((smile voice))
132		*A2 hands a card to C1 and looks at a document put on the desk.-->>

- 133 C1 [แล้ว โอกาส หน้า จะ  
 133 [then time next FTM  
 133 [Next time, will you  
 134 จำ ได้ หรือ ค่ะ ว่า ครั้ง นี้ ไม่ ได้  
 134 remember able to Q-YN FPF that time this not PTM  
 134 *be able to remember that this time you didn't*  
 135 ลด ให้ พี่ นะ ((dissatisfied voice and laughs))=  
 135 discount [to KPS WS/P ((dissatisfied voice and laughs))=  
 135 *give me (KPS) a discount? ((dissatisfied voice and laughs))=*
- 136 A2 [จำ ได้ เลย ค่ะ ((simpers))  
 136 [remember can immediately FPF ((simpers))  
 136 *[(yes), (I will immediately) ((simpers))*
- 137 C1 =((laughs)) อย่างนั้น คุณ ต้อง [เร็คคอร์ด ไว้แล้วนั้น  
 137 =((laughs)) if so PSP have to [record as well  
 137 =((laughs)) if so, you (PSP) will have to record (it) as well  
 138 นะ ((dissatisfied voice and laughs))  
 138 WS/P ((dissatisfied voice and laughs))  
 138 *((dissatisfied voice and laughs))*
- 139 A2 [จำ ได้  
 139 [remember can  
 139 *[(I) can remember*  
 140 เลย นะคะ ((simpers))  
 140 surely FPF ((simpers))  
 140 *surely ((simpers))*
- 141 C1 เนี่ย \*คุณ จะ เอา ก็ บัตร พี่ มี ทั้งหมด เลย  
 141 FP/E \*PSP FIM want how many card KPS have all DM  
 141 L(KPS) *have all of the cards you (PSP) (perhaps) want*  
 141 \*C1 opens her purse and shows all of her credit cards.---->>



- 142           แล้ว ทางคุณ บอก ว่า ไม่มี ((laughs))  
142           and PSP    say   that no ((laughs))  
142           *and you (PSP) said that none of cards (offered any discounts) ((laughs))*
- 143           (0.04) +C1 puts the document into the handbag whereas A2 bows the face  
              and clasps the hands together in front of the stomach.+
- 144    C1        โท ถ้า HSBC เหลือ 3700 เอง  
144           Oh if HSBC remain 3700 only  
144           *Oh, if (I use) HSBC (it) remains only 3,700*
- 145           (.)
- 146           +A4 comes back and stands near the reception desk to invigilate the  
              ongoing complaint.+
- 147    C1        ตอนนี้ มี บัตร เดียว  
147           now there is card only  
147           *Now, there is only one card*
- 148           +A2 nods and slightly smiles while C1 is saying.+
- 149    A2        ถ้า เป็น ช่วง โปร       สั้นๆ       นี้ นะคะ  
149           if mean period pro(motion) short short this FPF  
149           *If (you) mean a short-term promotion*
- 150           (0.03) +A2 bows the face and clasps the hands together in front of the  
              stomach whereas C1 takes off the glasses and folds them on the hand.+

- 151 C1 พี่ ยัง ถาม เลย ว่า H อะไร อะไร แล้ว SCB  
151 KPS also ask DM that H what FCoq what about SCB  
151 I (KPS) also asked H what H what about SCB?  
152 ถ้า เป็น SCB จะ แพง กว่า  
152 if be SCB FTM expensive more  
152 if (it) is SCB, (it) will be more expensive
- 153 (.)
- 154 C1 ไซ้ มะ แล้ว ทำไม \*ที่ ที่ถูก คุณ  
154 Right Q-YN (colloquial) then why \*thing cheap PSP  
154 Right? why didn't you (PSP) tell (me) about cheaper things?  
154 \*C1 puts her glasses case in her  
handbag.--->  
155 ไม่ บอก ((furious voice and dissatisfied face))  
155 not tell ((furious voice and dissatisfied face))  
155 why didn't you tell (me)? ((furious voice and dissatisfied face))
- 156 \*((simplers))  
156 \*A2 bows the face and herself a bit.--->
- 157 (0.06) +A2 clasps the hands and slightly looks around the area. Then, she collects the documents put on the desk. C1 collects the purse into the handbag.+
- 158 C1 \*พูด ถึง ว่า บัตร พวกนี้ ลด ค่า ห้อง  
158 \*Talk about that card this discount price room  
158 \*Regarding these cards, they are used to discount rooms  
158 \*C1 zips up her purse.--->>  
159 เวลา พวกเสริม เตียง เสริม เตียง ก็ จะ เป็น ราคา  
159 about extra bed extra bed DM FTM be price  
159 About extra beds (you), will be charged for everything in

- 160 ปกติ เท่ากัน หมด  
 160 normal same all  
 160 *normal prices*
- 161 A2 (°ค่ะ ((nods)) ราคา ปกติ°)  
 161 (°FPF (=Yes) ((nods)) price normal°)  
 161 (°Yes (it's) ((nods)) a normal price°)
- 162 (0.02) +C1 manages things in the handbag and does not look at A2.+  
 163 A2 กราบ ขอประทานโทษ อีกครั้ง นะคะ  
 163 DM/C ask for pardon again FPF  
 163 *Please accept my deepest apologies again*
- 164 (.) +C1 does not have eye contact with A2 while A2 makes apologies.+  
 165 +A4 comes to talk to C1.+  
 166 A4 คุณผู้หญิง ได้รับ น้ำ หรือ ยัง ครับ ((smile voice))  
 166 Lady (You) have drink Q-YN yet FPM ((smile voice))  
 166 *Madam, have you had a drink yet? ((smile voice))*
- 167 C1 \*ไม่ ค่ะ จะ กลับ แล้ว ค่ะ  
 167 \*No FPF FTM go back soon FPF  
 167 \*No, I am going back soon  
 167 \*C1 does not look at A4 and her face seems to be dissatisfied, or even angry.--->>

- 168 A2 \*กราบ ขอประทานโทษ อีกครั้ง นะคะ  
168 \*DM/C ask for pardon again FPF  
168 \*Please accept my deepest apologies again  
168 \*A2 puts her palms together in front of her chest and bends slightly the head forwards.--->>
- 169 +C1 does the same “wai” as A2 does to A2 at the same time as A2 does ((dissatisfied face))+



Figure 1: Customer 1, who turns her back on the camera, is projecting the forthcoming complaint to Agent 2, who faces the camera and is in the middle of the three agents, at line 72 in Excerpt 1

### Searching for Being Legitimized

In (1), once it is clear that by acting as an overhearer (Goffman, 1976) of the conversation and actions between Customer 2 and Agent 1, Customer 1 acknowledges that Customer 2 receives a discount due to her credit card. However, she does not articulate the complaint as a first reaction when acknowledging someone receiving the discount. She suspends this action in favour of searching for sufficient information for her legitimacy of her eligibility for a discount. Instead, Customer 1 shifts to a new topic unrelated to the ongoing activity, i.e. checking out, by asking a yes-no question. At line 61, Customer 1 searches for her eligibility for a discount

by fishing for potential information in relation to what she is looking for through the yes-no question. In doing so, Customer 1 randomly names a credit card, i.e. the Central Department Store credit card. In addition, despite receiving a beneficial response from Agent 2 in line 62, i.e. HSBC credit card holders are eligible for the price reduction, Customer 1 seeks further related information before launching her complaint in line 63 by asking about the reduced price of rooms that the eligible card will receive when holding a HSBC credit card. Searching for sufficient information regarding the discount reception allows her to bolster the contribution to her claim about her legitimacy of the discount eligibility in line 63.

By using the helpful information received from the two adjacency pairs at lines 61 and 64, she implicitly requests the discount and simultaneously launches the complaint at line 65-66 through the claim about her eligibility for a discount due to the fact that she was an HSBC credit card holder. In so doing, the implicit complaint is initiated by the token “อ้าว” /ǎaw/ (ah) produced by increasing the intensity level. The use of the token “ah” allows the complainant to shift the mood of the interaction into a potentially critical one. This response cry “ah” (Goffman, 1983) suggests the speaker’s strongly negative moral-affective stance or her state of marked natural discomfort (D’Hondt, 2011; Goffman, 1983) towards an incident in the flow of the talk, i.e. her absence of receiving a discount. The increase in loudness also emphasizes her oppositional thought and her negative emotional stance towards the prior information (LaPlante & Ambady, 2003; Stadler, 2006). It is marked, elicits Agent 2’s attention and potentially causes Agent 2’s negative interpretation to Customer 1’s utterance. In addition, Customer 1’s negative facial expression, which evolves from the movement in the mouth and eye areas which indicates strain-exertion (Ekman & Friesen, 1969), intensifies her negative emotional state. Then, she implicitly claims her eligibility for the discount by announcing that she is an HSBC credit card holder. Customer 1 uses the kinship term “พี่” /phîi/ (elder sibling) as a self-reference. It is a pseudo-kinship term (Khanittanan, 1988), which signals her attempt to reduce the distance between herself and Agent 2 (Hoonchamlong, 1992; Smyth, 2002). However, at the same time, it indexes her effort to claim her social power over Agent 2 since, in general, Thai younger people

must be respectful of the senior ones in Thai society (Knutson, 1994; 2004). In other words, in the conflictive situation, Customer 1's use of the kinship term “พี่” /phîi/ (elder sibling) seems to indicate her effort to exercise power over Agent 2, rather than to minimize the distance. Furthermore, the sentence particle “ั้” /dì/ at the end of line 66 reflects Customer 1's negative emotion and potentially carries the implicature regarding the complaint (Kummer, 2005; Moerman, 1973; Noss, 1964). Through these mixed verbal and nonverbal means, Customer 1 claims her legitimacy, manifests her discontent with her failure to receive a discount, despite being an HSBC credit card holder, and then implicitly requests the situation be corrected. This verbal and nonverbal behaviour is likely explained by her desire to protect her commercial benefit and due to her service dissatisfaction. According to Watts (2003), Customer 1's claim of the legitimacy for the discounts at lines 65-66 is can be interpreted as non-politic behaviour and threatens Agent 2's face because she concentrates exclusively on her transactional benefits instead.

To sum up, Customer 1's implicit launch of the complaint is technical, well-prepared at the beginning by searching for sufficient information to be legitimized for the discounts instead of the explicit and sudden complaint when acknowledging her failure to receive a discount. By asking questions over several exchanges, she can formulate her gradually-built implicit complaint with strong evidence according to her viewpoints.

## Developing and Responding to the Complaint

In (1), when Agent 2 acknowledges Customer 1's dissatisfaction at lines 65-66, she attempts to delegitimize Customer 1's implicit complaint, to transfer the responsibility based upon the lack of awareness that Customer 1 has in connection with the statutory rights for the discount to Customer 1 (Márquez-Reiter, 2005) and then implicitly rejecting Customer 1's implicit request to correct the problem by proceeding to explain the institutional rules (Márquez-Reiter, 2008) behind the provision of the discount at lines 67-68. In doing so, Agent 2's token “oh”, as initiated at line 67, conveys not only the acknowledgement of information but also a potentially argumentative stance (Schiffrin, 1984). Although Customer 1

deploys the first person pronoun “พี่” /phîi/ (elder sibling) as a self-reference, Agent 2 omits the self-reference when elaborating her response. This may suggest that Agent 2 does not reciprocate the customer’s change of the pronoun format (Márquez-Reiter, 2013) in this critical situation. The zero pronoun (Hoonchamlong, 1992; Palakornkul, 1975) appears at line 67 to reserve the social appropriateness and the socio-professional distance, and manifest face. That means that if referring to Customer 1 as the kinship term “พี่” /phîi/ (elder sibling) (which reflects friendliness and interpersonal relationship) as Customer 1 claims, it is unrelated to the ongoing critical situation which signals disaffiliation between the agent and the customer. In general, the pronominal form parallel with the metaphoric kinship term (Agha, 2005) “พี่” /phîi/ (elder sibling) is the kinship word “น้อง” /nóng/ (younger sibling). Instead, Agent 2 employs the plural pronoun “เรา” /rao/ (we) as the self-reference at line 68. This use of the plural pronoun “เรา” /rao/ (we) may be explained by the fact that she is restricted to the institutional rules which she is obligated to undertake on the behalf of the hotel. This means that it is neither her who does not give Customer 1 the discount, nor the institution’s fault. Instead, it is Customer 1 who breaks the rules and is not eligible for the discount. It also indicates that she implicitly refuses to provide a remedial action. According to Watts (2003), the implicit refusal of providing a remedial action through the explanation about the institutional rules can be interpreted as politic behaviour since she is concerned about her institutional role, i.e. the avoidance of explicit confrontation in the potentially conflictive situation (Burgers et al., 2000), and to her institutional regulations, i.e. she must not give a discount when the customer does not conform with the institutional rules. Moreover, by explaining the institutional rules as a defensive means, Agent 2 can revive her institutional face and the institutional image in the light of Customer 1’s accusation at line 65-66.

It is noticeable that the delegitimization of the customer’s complaint through explanations of the institutional rules or routines as a masking work (Márquez-Reiter, 2008) is generally found when the agents want to reserve the institutional benefits. In line 77, Agent 1 responds to Customer 1’s explicit complaint developed and threatening the agents’ institutional face to delegitimize Customer 1’s

verbal attack and support Agent 2, although she is not a direct interlocutor of Customer 1. After a short pause in line 73, Agent 1 engages Customer 1 instead of Agent 2 and then elaborates the response in a low intensity level while glancing at Agent 2 shortly. Agent 3 does the same thing in line 79 to respond to Customer 1's question conducted through the token “หึ” /hú/ (huh) produced in a high pitch. She attempts to explain to Customer 1 the commercial benefit that Customer 1 received without the HSBC credit card. Agent 1 and 3's verbal and nonverbal behaviour signals their concern for both their institutional roles (i.e. helping Agent 2 to protect the institutional benefit) and their social norms that they should follow (i.e. avoiding the explicit confrontation towards the customer). Moreover, all of the agents tend to be patient (Burgers et al., 2000) and avoid expressing their negative feelings, even though the customer expresses both negative verbal and nonverbal acts at line 65-66.

Customer 1's reiteration of the enquiry regarding the reduced price for the HSBC credit card holder at line 69 may be justified by the fact that she wants to delay the response to Agent 2's defensive stance and that it potentially signals her word-selection process. Her complaint is developed explicitly in line 72. In formulating the source of the complaint, Customer 1 accuses the hotel of being at fault (Márquez-Reiter, 2005) for the ongoing trouble due to the hotel's failure to reveal crucial information (Márquez-Reiter, 2013). She thus launches a direct complaint and threatens the agent's institutional face, as observed, among others, by using the reported speech (Bangerter et al., 2011) regarding the past event which indicates her concern about the discount promotion before checking in. Simultaneously, her explicit complaint at line 72 reflects her effort to delegitimize Agent 2's explanation of the institutional rules. In doing so, at line 72 the explicit complaint is initiated by the semantically contrastive conjunction “แต่” /tææ/ (but) preceding her re-grounding the complaint as an offensive stance against the institutional rules, i.e. she sought the information about the credit card promotion before checking-in but was provided with the incorrect information. The self-reference “พี่” /phîi/ (elder sibling) at line 72 reflects Customer 1's effort to exercise power over Agent 2. The inclusion of the term “ที่นี่” /thîi nîi/ (here) which here seems



to function as the second person plural form equivalent to “you” in English (or the hotel staff members) displays the complainant’s rejection of personalization and her avoidance of the explicit indication of a person who provided the wrong information. The observed use of this inclusion assists Customer 1 in staying of any fault with regard to the unit allocation, protecting her from being verbally challenged if she indicates the wrong person and then making Agent 2 in her role as institutional representative responsible for the ongoing trouble. In addition, according to the field-note and the partial capture from the camcorder, not only verbal behaviour is used to display the developed complaint but also nonverbal acts are. Figure 2 presents Customer 1’s negatively emotional facial expression in line 72.



Figure 2: Customer 1, who faces the camera, displays the anger when developing the complaint at line 72 in Excerpt 1

Customer 1 expresses her anger through her face and gazes unfriendly at Agent 2 by withholding the physical movement in the mouth and eyes, which facilitates anger affective displays (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). This nonverbal behaviour aggravates her verbal complaint. According to Watts (2003), Customer 1’s explicit complaint at line 72 is open to be interpreted as non-politic behaviour because her verbal and nonverbal means threaten Agent 2’s professional face. They indicate that the customer focuses exclusively on her commercial benefits, rather than interpersonal relationship, and displays negative feelings. The empirical evidence supporting that Customer 1’s explicit complaint in line 72 threatens the agent’s professional face is found when Agent 1 and Agent 3 attempt to restore their

professional face by delegitimizing Customer 1's claim for the discount through the explanations in line 77 and 79.

The significance of exploring nonverbal behaviour in considering the complaining act in service encounters is supported when seeing the agent's reaction towards the complainant. Without any verbal behaviour, Agent 2's smiles in line 76 function as a silent response to Customer 1's explicit complaint. Figure 3 shows Agent 2's smile and forward lean at line 76.



Figure 3: Agent 2, who faces the camera and stands beside Agent 1, who is sitting, smiles and leans forwards after Customer 1 finishes the accusation at line 76 in Excerpt 1

Agent 2's smile as shown in Figure 3 is described as a small open smile without the raised cheek in a short duration (Ochs et al., 2010). This type of smiles is regarded as a polite smile, or false, social, masking or controlled smile, which potentially indicates the actor's concealment of the feeling and the patience to the prior complaining utterance for sociability and solidarity (Drahota et al., 2008; Hess et al., 2002; Schmidt et al., 2003) in the potentially conflictive situation. The fact that Agent 2 leans forwards with the hands put in front of her stomach is likely to be involved with the expression of her positive feeling (Mehrabian, 1972), such as her deference in accordance with her lower socio-professional position than Customer 1 in the current interaction. According to Watts (2003), Agent 2's smile and forward lean are potentially regarded as politic behaviour since they can be seen as an indicator of her awareness of the institutional role which entails her to maintain solidarity, display deference towards the customer and minimise the confrontation. Like the provision of explanations in line 67-68, a smile seems to function as

a defensive stance towards the customer's accusation, which potentially redresses a chance of the customer's elaboration of the further aggressive complaint.

Nonverbal acts also aggravate the complaint developed by the complainant. Prosodic and nonverbal acts can be employed as a device supporting the verbal complaint. At line 84-86 Customer 1's interruption of Agent 3's unfinished utterance through the token “อะ” /ʔà/ (eh) signals her explicit disagreement with Agent 3. Like in line 64 where Customer 1 calls the attention and launches the complaint, an increase in the intensity level (i.e. *EH BUT YOU SAID THAT IF (YOU) HAD AN HSBC CARD..., AH RIGHT? I (KPS) ALSO HAVE AN HSBC CARD...*), the use of the negatively emotional tone of voice relevant to prosodically marked display of outrage (i.e. *((furious voice))*) and the affective facial displays of anger (i.e. *((furious face))*) in lines 84-86 and lines 88-91 are employed to aggravate the explicit complaint. They have the significant involvement with the insight of impoliteness and threat of losing face (LaPlante & Ambady, 2003) to Agent 2 and Agent 3. They signal Customer 1's strong emotional expression in light of the agents' explanations about the institutional rules and their job routine given in lines 82-83 and 87. In addition to those nonverbal and prosodic acts, although they are in the conflictive situation, Customer 1 attempts to get the agent to affiliate with the complaint from the agents through a colloquial yes-no question “ใช่่มะ” /chây má?/ (tag question) which potentially makes trouble for the agents, who cannot explicitly say no to this question. She also insists on her legitimacy of receiving the discount by thrusting on the agents responsible for this trouble as institutional representatives by reporting the indirect speech (Holt & Clift, 2007) of the present ratified participant (Goffman, 1976) (i.e. Agent 2) and the speech of the unit allocation (i.e. *the plural second person form “ทางคุณ” /thaaŋ khun/ (YOU (PSP))*). Moreover, it is observed that Customer 1 aggravates her verbal complaint through prosodic and nonverbal means, in particular through a furious and dissatisfied voice and angry face, throughout the ongoing complaining exchange, i.e. in lines 94-95, 102, 107-110, 112, 120-121, 137-138 and 154-155. Figure 4 shows Customer 1's dissatisfied face occurring in lines 154-155.



Figure 4: Customer 1, who faces the camera with a cross-body bag, displays the unpleasantness when aggravating the complaint by using a dissatisfied face and voice at lines 154-155 in Excerpt 1

According to Figure 4, Customer 1, who is lowering her head, expresses her unpleasantness by withholding the physical movement in the mouth and eyes, which facilitates affective displays of anger (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). Her anger supporting her verbal complaint produced in a furious voice in line 154-155 is narrated by the lowering of her eyebrows and the tightening of her lips (Ekman & Friesen, 1976). This negative prosodic and nonverbal behaviour conducted by the customer can be interpreted as a supporting device which threatens Agent 2's face because Customer 1's angry facial expression and dissatisfied voice get the attention of other people around the area where the complaint takes place. It indicates Customer 1's concern about the agent's commercial benefits, rather than the interpersonal relationship.

Prosodic and nonverbal acts are employed to not only aggravate the complaint but also redress it. After Customer 1 directs her outrage towards the provided service through both verbal (i.e. the elicitation of Agent 2's affiliation with the complaint by using the colloquial yes-no question “ใช่่มะ” /chây má?/ (tag question)) and nonverbal acts (i.e. furious voice and face) in lines 88-91, Agent 2 is restricted to the institutional rules and the social norms by making apologies as a response to Customer 1's service dissatisfaction. In doing so, Agent 2 carefully elaborates an apology using a pleasant voice through the elevated lengthy

apologetic term “ขอประทานโทษ” /khǒw prathaan thoôt/ (literally begging for punishment deferentially) which implicates Agent 2’s modesty to Customer 1 at line 92. The verbal apology also potentially reflects the agent’s acceptance of the fault on behalf of the hotel. The prosodic and nonverbal features play a vital role in the elaboration of the verbal apology to the complaint and in the pragmatic meaning of the verbal act (Rhurakvit, 2011). Agent 2 not only smiles before and after uttering the apology produced with a pleasant voice, but also leans forwards in a modest manner.



Figure 5: Agent 2 smiles before uttering an apology to Customer 1, on the far left side, at line 92 in Excerpt 1

Slightly similar to her prior smile in line 76, Agent 2’s smile at line 92, as shown in Figure 5, is narrated as a small open mouth with tense lips and no raised cheek for a short duration (Ochs et al., 2010). This type of smile is accounted as a polite smile (Ambadar et al., 2009; Drahota et al., 2008; Hess et al., 2002) which masks her feeling and indexes her patience to Customer 1’s face-threat. Agent 2’s slightly forward lean with the two clasped hands placed in front of the stomach potentially signals her (masking) positive attitude (Mehrabian, 1972), her deference towards Customer 1 and her emotional control in this critical situation. Both the deferent apologetic expression and the supporting prosodic and nonverbal acts (i.e. polite smile, forward lean and smile voice) are potentially accounted as politic

behaviour in connection with Watts (2003) because they indicate that Agent 2 is concerned about her professional role and conversational behaviour that entail her to avoid the explicit confrontation, manage and maintain the emotional stance, the friendliness and interpersonal relationship with the customers during the interaction in the potentially conflictive situation (Bitner et al., 1990; Price et al., 1995; Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2011). According to the prosodic and nonverbal behaviour of the agent and the customer in several turns, i.e. lines 72, 76, 84-86, 88-91, 92, 94-95, 102, 107-110, 112, 120-121, 137-138 and 154-155, it is likely to say that the study of interpersonally sensitive activities such as complaints and disagreement in Thai culture where nonverbal acts have had played a vital role in the interlocutor's positive and negative perception on the speaker (Knutson, 1994, 2004) should be conducted by employing instruments which provide both verbal and nonverbal data, such as naturally occurring interactions video- and audio-recorded, rather than written responses.

In addition, the explicit expression of apologies, such as in line 92, is likely to be a rare occurrence (Márquez-Reiter, 2005) in service encounter contexts since it can place the service site (i.e. the hotel) in a position of undisputed fault and may provide the customer with a chance of receiving compensation (Márquez-Reiter, 2005). Nevertheless, the explicit apology made by Agent 2 in line 92 may result from her shift in linguistic strategies used to respond to Customer 1's outrage. Her explanation of the institutional rules in line 67 and her smile in line 76 are not accepted by Customer 1, who aggravates the complaint over several turns. Agent 2's explicit deferent apology also reflects her awareness of her lower socio-professional status in accordance with Thai social norms, where people with a lower social position need to be modest (Knutson, 2004). Preceded by the apologetic term, Agent 2 attempts to express her alignment to Customer 1 to mitigate the face-threat and re-construction of the damaged alliance by offering an examination of the problem at the end of line 92.

Additionally, throughout the interaction the pseudo-kinship term “พี่” /phîi/ (elder sibling), which indicates Customer 1's effort to exercise power over the agents,

is deployed as her self-reference, such as in lines 72 and 91. It is noticeable that at the beginning of the conversation, such as in lines 61, 63, and 69, Customer 1 omits the second person pronoun when asking questions. Then, she refers to Agent 2 by using the pseudo-kinship term “น้อง” /น้อง/ (younger sibling), which is parallel to her self-reference “พี่” /phîi/ (elder sibling) in line 84. Nevertheless, the explicit complaint is further aggravated when the shift in the pronominal term occurs. Instead, Customer 1 refers to the agents by using the second person pronoun “ทางคุณ” /thaaŋ khun/ (you (plural second person pronoun)) and “คุณ” /khun/ (you (singular/plural second person pronoun)) in several turns, i.e. in lines 91, 107, 137, and 141. This indicates the unparalleled use of the pronominal forms, which is potentially marked behaviour and has an impact on the hearer’s perception. According to Khanittanan (1988), Palakornkul (1975) and Sodsongkij (2006), the inappropriate use of pronominal forms is associated with the speaker’s intentional mood. The customer’s self-referent form in lines 72 and 91 is usually used in informal situations, whereas the second person pronoun in lines 91, 107, 137, and 141 reflects the customer’s definition of the present situation as formality and signals her negative stance (Khanittanan, 1988; Palakornkul, 1975; Smyth, 2002) when used in an unparalleled way. To sum up, the shift in the use of the pronominal terms during the ongoing situation involving a complaint is likely to be marked, potentially causes the interlocutor’s negative perception and threatens his/her face in accordance with Watts’s (2003) politic behaviour.

In conclusion, in developing the complaint, Customer 1 acknowledges the institutional rules explained by Agent 2, i.e. the provision of the information about credit card holding before checking-in. However, she shifts the fault to the agent by bridging the recent information that she receives from cloaking the enquiries to Agent 2 to elaborate her counter argument against the agent in the effort to persuade them of the validity of her claim (Márquez-Reiter, 2005) and subsequently make their explanations unfounded. Moreover, to make her emotional counter argument, Customer 1 indexes the agents’ retrospective failure of their institutional roles as being good service providers, the impartial accounts (Márquez-Reiter, 2005) that the hotel caused to her, and emphasizes her eligibility for the discount

through both verbal and nonverbal acts. While the customer exercises her power over the agent as a money holder in this commercial situation and then expresses the explicit complaint for her commercial benefits which entails her to be less concerned about face-saving, the agent restrains her feelings and is concerned about her institutional role and rules. Therefore, to restrain her emotions, the agent instead often uses prosodic and nonverbal acts (i.e. smiles and a pleasant voice) when elaborating a response to the complaint.

### Reaching Closure

Agent 2 shifts the linguistic strategies used to respond to and redress Customer 1's explicit complaint (i.e. giving the explanation of the institutional rules in line 76, an explicit apology and an expression of deference through smiles, a pleasant voice and a deferent gesture in line 92). However, Customer 1 continues developing the complaint for a repair by accusing the agents of the poor service provided regarding the incorrect provision of information through both (non)verbal and prosodic means, i.e. lines 88-91 (ทางคุณก็บอกว่าไม่มีไม่ได้ (YOU TOLD (ME) THAT NO CARDS OFFERED ANY PROMOTIONS) produced in a furious voice and face), lines 93-95 (the use of a dissatisfied voice), line 97 (the sentence particle “เนี่ย” /nîa/, which expresses the customer's mild irritation (Noss, 1964; Moerman, 1973; Smyth, 2002)), and line 102 (the answer “yes” produced in a furious voice). This enables her to maintain her accusation of the agent's professional responsibility and to potentially damage the agent's professional face because of the (non)verbal and prosodic features which potentially contain negative meanings, as explained. Agent 2 attempts to bring the alliance back into the interaction, to reach closure and simultaneously to implicitly reject the provision of any compensation for the reservation of the institutional regulations at lines 103-104 and lines 129-130. In doing so, she removes the account with respect to a person who must take responsibility for this problem—either the institution's fault or Customer 1's fault—out of the focus and manages the interaction into closure via the sentence initiator “ถ้ายังไง” /thâa yaŋŋay/ (so), followed by offering a non-material repair and promising a provision for future action (i.e. “โอกาสหน้า” /lookàat nâa/ (next time) (line 103)).



Getting involved in the customer's accusation of providing wrong information provision seems to be a sensitive issue for face-threat and is also difficult to prove. Instead, the promise of the future action provision at lines 103-104 indicates that Agent 2, who implicitly rejects the provision of the discount at this time, is restricted to the institutional policies and also considers the avoidance of conflict with the customer, as well as the maintenance of the interpersonal relationship during the ongoing interaction. Moreover, through a gentle smile and the use of a pleasant voice, Agent 2 conceals her feeling after her face is threatened by Customer 1's prior utterances over several turns and indexes her patience against Customer 1's (non) verbal threat.

While Agent 2 is attempting to bring the relationship back into the conversation, Customer 1 rejects to accept the harmony again. Instead, she reiterates the institutional fault to force A2 to agree with the complaint and hopefully to receive compensation at lines 107-110. Customer 1 positions herself as a reporter and the agent as a recipient. The account is flavoured with elements oriented to looking for affiliation through the repeated reported speech (Holt & Clift, 2007) produced in a furious voice (i.e. ทางคุณนะ พูดเองบอกว่าราคาขึ้นแล้ว (You said yourself that this was a reduced price and (you) couldn't give discounts anymore)) and ลดไม่ได้แล้ว ที่บอกว่า มีบัตรอะไรลดได้อีกไหม (I asked whether other cards could be used for a discount)).

Despite her prior effort of ending the complaint and affiliating with Customer 1 through the promise of a future action, Agent 2 acknowledges Customer 1's maintenance of the complaint as a remedy after the customer gives a disaffiliative response in lines 107-110. As a result, she alters her linguistic strategy, from a defensive one to an offensive one. She raises a new issue regarding the period of time when Customer 1's reservation of the hotel room was made in order to delegitimize Customer 1's request for the discount in lines 113-115. To initiate the new issue, she calls attention via the hesitation marker “เออ” (er) combined with the dispreferred response “ไม่ ไม่” (no no) and then justifies the period of time when the HSBC promotion is launched. This enables Agent 2 to elaborate the upcoming question to offset Customer 1's claim for the discount. The yes-no question is

formulated in form of the semi-formulaic (Watts, 2003) reported predicate “ไม่ทราบ ว่า” (be uncertain) (line 114). It signals that Agent 2 is concerned about social roles and norms which require the agent to be patient and maintain interpersonal harmony with the customer. However, the illocutionary force of this question includes Agent 2’s confutation against Customer 1’s claim. Nevertheless, Agent 2 fails to delegitimize Customer 1. Thus, she re-uses the defensive device through the same (non)verbal strategies, i.e. the promise of a future repair made with a pleasant voice with a simper (i.e. “โอกาสหน้า” /ʔookàat nâa/ (next time)), in line 129-130). However, it is challenged by Customer 1 through the yes-no question “หรือ” /rǔw/ which functions as an implicit disagreement (Locher, 2004) with Agent 2’s offer of the future repair at line 132. The use of the negatively affective voice relevant to Customer 1’s anger display and disaffiliative laughter (Glenn, 2003) helps to intensify her challenge on Agent 2’s given promise (i.e. “โอกาสหน้าจะจำได้หรือคะ” (Next time, will you be able to remember?). This enables Customer 1 to express ridicule to portray Agent 2’s given promise as an illogical and unfounded repair (Márquez-Reiter, 2005).

Despite the use of various (non)verbal strategies, as presented, Agents fails to close the complaint and to affiliate with the customer. Finally, silence and pauses (lines 143, 145, 153 and 157) are chosen as a defensive tool that Agent 2 deploys to end the ongoing outrage, preserve the institutional regulations, avoid explicitly confronting Customer 1 and redress her damaged face. Since silence causes the interlocutor’s insecure feeling about what the actor is thinking and feeling and is vague in meaning (Karl, 2011; Nakane, 2006; Sifianou, 1997), Agent 2 becomes more powerful than Customer 1 during the interaction (Watts, 1997). Moreover, silence elaborated with a modest gesture (i.e. bowing the face and putting the hands in front of the stomach (line 143, 150, 157) with an occasional simper (line 156)) helps break down Customer 1’s repeated accusation of the hotel’s fault (lines 144, 151-152, and 154). It also assists Agent 2 in expressing her resistance, masking her emotion in an effort to manage the interpersonal relationship during the interaction and protecting her, and Customer 1, from face-loss. Furthermore, silence indexes that Agent 2 implicitly rejects to provide the material repair in response to Customer

1's complaint. According to Watts (2003), Agent 2's exercise of silence is potentially seen as politic behaviour since through it Agent 2 can play an institutional role as an employee who must be restricted to the hotel regulations and as an institutional representative who must avoid explicit conflicts with the customer and maintain her emotional status in the potentially critical situation. Due to the lack of any verbal responses from the agent, which can cause unstoppable arguments, Customer 1 finally ends the complaint without receiving any material remedy.

To sum up, Customer 1's reiteration of institutional fault over several turns functions as a mainly offensive strategy in effort to stop Agent 2 bringing the complaint sequence to closure and to get Agent 2 to provide the material repair. In contrast, Agent 2 attempts to end the complaint sequence through a variety of (non) verbal strategies and to affiliate with Customer 1. It is noteworthy that the promise of a future repair is unlikely to be efficient in the closure of the complaint, whereas silence helps Agent 2 orient the complaint to the end. This phenomenon seems to be related to the idea that silence is a virtue in a Thai context (Knutson et al., 2002; Knutson, 2004): Thai subordinates are expected to keep silent as a response to superiors. According to the difference in occupational roles, the agent is considered subordinate in Thai culture (see details in section 5). Silence is elevated amongst Thai people since it has the involvement with the expression of deference as a consequence of Buddhism (Kummer, 2005) and varies in pragmatic meanings, such as the concealment of feelings, approvals and rejections (Jaworski, 1993; 1997; Jaworski & Stephens, 1998; Lemak, 2012).

## Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

This paper sheds light onto what extent a complaint is carefully elaborated upon before being launched. Unlike a commercial complaint via telephone, the customer in the selected excerpt has not prepared the information vital to the complaint before the interaction starts. In this case, before launching the complaint, it is significant to collect the sufficiently crucial evidence supporting her elaboration of the complaint for compensation through the question sequence. This signals that sufficient and reasonable evidence seems to be vital to finely articulate a complaint.

The fact that the Thai customer strongly concentrates on commercial benefits, i.e. the best service/product for his/her money, entails him/her to be less concerned about the agent's face and the smooth negotiation of the interaction. His/her focus of the commercial benefits results in an explicitly developed complaint which potentially threatens the agent's personal and professional face. In contrast, the Thai agents are restricted to their institutional roles, i.e. they avoid explicitly confronting the customer, maintain an interpersonal relationship with him/her and restrain their feelings. This rationale arises in the agents' suspension of the explicitly aggressive arguments against the customer's complaint. This behaviour seems to be derived from Thai culture and the universal concept of the customer-agent relationship. The hierarchical system has a significant impact on Thai culture (Holmes & Tangtongtavy, 1997; Klausner, 1997) under the belief in Buddhism (Taylor, 1997; Wiriaseabpong, 2015). Thai people are taught to take into account social status, which differs in accordance with a variety of variables, such as age, education and occupations: People with the higher status are elevated above those with the lower one. The agent is socio-professionally expected to serve the customer's need and satisfaction (King, 1995). Consequently, the commercial relationship between the agent and the customer is likely to be unequal and dominate their communicative behaviour. At this point, agents are likely to be considered socio-economically subordinate when considering the customer-agent relationship and the role of occupations in the Thai hierarchical system. Therefore, the agents' behaviour in the selected interaction involving a complaint is predicable in accordance with Thai culture. The agents are concerned about their interpersonal relationship with the customer; they elaborate responses to the complaint carefully. They avoid explicitly confronting the customers throughout the complaining situation. However, they are aware of their institutional rules which require them to reserve the hotel benefits; so, they infringe upon the customer's needs.

Both the customer and the agents employ a variation of (non)verbal strategies to articulate the complaint and respond to it carefully in a single turn. The customer makes an accusation of the hotel being at fault or challenges the hotel's offer for a remedy through mixed (non)verbal and prosodic features in

a single turn. Those verbal acts include the markedly unparalleled use of the pronominal forms, the yes-no question (e.g. “หรือ” /rǔw/ and “ใช่มะ” /chây má?/ (tag question)), which is employed to challenge the agent and get the agent to affiliate with the customer, and the report of someone’s statements regarding the past event (Bangerter et al., 2011; Holt & Clift, 2007). On the other hand, the agents delegitimize the customer’s complaint by using mitigating devices, i.e. giving explanations (Márquez-Reiter, 2008; 2013), and end the ongoing arguments by making apologies and giving a promise of a future repair. The customer’s complaining utterances are intensified through prosodic features, i.e. various tokens which express the speaker’s negative emotions (e.g. “อ้าว” /ǎaw/ (ah), “อะ” /ǎ/ (eh) and “เนี่ย” /niá/ which expresses the customer’s mild irritation (Noss, 1964; Moerman, 1973; Smyth, 2002)), the use of a furious and angry voice and an increase in the intensity level when elaborating the complaint. The agent also redresses her response to the complaint by producing it in a pleasant voice.

In addition, nonverbal behaviour has also played a crucial role in aggravating and redressing the complaint, restraining the speaker’s emotions, as well as reaching the closure of the complaint in the face-to-face commercial complaining situation. The customer expresses anger and dissatisfaction via his/her furious face and disaffiliative laughter (Glenn, 2003), whereas the agents maintain their interpersonal harmony by smiling, silence and pauses in a modest gesture when articulating utterances during the conflictive situation. The finding regarding the significance of nonverbal features implicates that complaints in Thai culture should be investigated in the holistic viewpoint, i.e. (non)verbal and prosodic features. This claim is derived from the fact that the presence and absence of nonverbal behaviour has an impact on positive and negative meanings of a person’s communicative behaviour in Thai culture; for example, silence (Knutson, 1994; Leelaharattanak, 2015; Phukanhana, 1995) and smiles (Knutson, 2004). Therefore, the study of complaints in Thai contexts should not be conducted by using written responses (e.g. Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs)) or pure audio-recording of the natural data. DCTs provide a narrower range of strategies than those revealed in natural data because of the restricted choices provided in the DCTs, whereas the pure audio-recording of the natural data provides

vocal features; for instance, loudness, laughter and tone of voice (Health, 2004) but lacks the viewpoint of non-vocal and kinetic features, such as smiles, space and gesture. Instead, the mixed use of the research instruments, i.e. video- and audio-recordings of the natural data and field-notes, can provide a clearer insight into Thai people's elaboration of complaints during Thai service encounters. Naturally occurring interactions video- and audio-recording provide for the availability of relevant details which make the analytic task possible, e.g. facial expressions and the documentation of the active relevant arrangement of bodies, objects and spaces (Mondada, 2006; 2008), and a demonstration of the sequence of events (Howitt & Cramer, 2005).

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that (non)linguistic strategies are employed interchangeably over several turns of conversation in a face-to-face complaint in Thai commercial interactions and the complaint is elaborated changeably in accordance with the previous turns. Disputes in a complaint sequence are difficult to terminate, implying the sequential continuity of arguments (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990). Thus, the speaker in the complaint sequence deploys more than a strategy to achieve his/her communicative goal. Like the agent in the selected excerpt, the speaker may also use a strategy, change to another strategy, and then return to employ the old strategy. Therefore, it is unlikely to conclude the complaint pattern occurring in face-to-face service encounters.

Finally, the results of this study are likely to contradict Drew and Holt's (1988) study whose objective was to report idiomatic expressions in English used in orderly sequential positions where the speaker is making a complaint. Like the present study, Drew and Holt (1988) conducted their study by using naturally occurring interactions. However, the findings of their study revealed that participants in complaining situations in English employ idiomatic and other formulaic, figurative expressions when formulating, summarizing and closing the complaint. In contrast, the data in the present research indicated that the complaint is formulated by using its supportive circumstantial details to disaffiliate the hearer (i.e. the agent) and is closed via silence to affiliate with the complainant. The findings of the

difference in formulating and closing the complaint between Thai and English critical situations contribute to the awareness of Thai and English people's appropriate responses to a complaint for the maintenance of harmony when people from those countries interact each other in a conflictive situation.

## Practical and Pedagogical Contributions

This research not only contributes to the academic perspectives but also to the practical and pedagogical perspectives. It can serve as a sample case employed in teaching both language and communication and management fields in Thai contexts. First, for teaching and learning language and communication fields, the present study provides an insight into the way in which the complaint is carefully formulated before being launched, (non-)verbal and prosodic strategies used to elaborate the complaint by the customer and to respond to it by the agent in a Thai commercial setting, as well as the rationale behind communicative behaviour of both the customer and agents. Before presenting this audio- and video-recorded case to the students, the instructor may ask them to discuss the questions regarding the complaining situation. The discussion may start from predicting, analyzing and summarizing the linguistic pattern potential to occur, potential (non-)verbal and prosodic devices, and the formulation of the complaint to compare those strategies and the articulation of the complaint in Thai service encounters with those in different Thai interactions and with those in different countries. The students may be reluctant to respond to the latter question due to their lack of insight into the way in which people in other countries behave when elaborating and confronting conflictive situations. Therefore, to bridge this gap, the instructor's study of the formulation of the complaint in various countries is likely to be essential. Furthermore, for someone interested in studying politeness theories and their applicability to the real data, the present research also contributes to the evidence indicating that Watts's theory of politeness behaviour is likely to be applicable to the analysis of Thai people's communicative behaviour. Watts's notion of politeness behaviour has never been employed in research with respect to politeness in Thai contexts. In contrast, other theories of politeness, in particular Brown and Levinson's (1987), have been

applied as an analysis tool in most studies about politeness in Thai settings, including Phukanchana (1995), who investigated strategies of expressions of disagreement in Thai culture, Panpothong (2004), who examined responses to expressions of gratitude and Hongladarom and Hongladarom (2005), who studied politeness in Thai computer-mediated communication. The findings of the present research regarding the applicability of Watts's notion to Thai contexts can be used to teach comparatively the effectiveness of the applicability of Watts's theory and other politeness theories.

Second, the present study can be applied in teaching management fields, i.e. consumer behaviour and organisational behaviour in a Thai business context for both Thai and non-Thai people. After watching the examined audio- and video-recorded complaining excerpt, the instructor may ask the students the discussion question regarding the (in)appropriate behaviour that the agent needs to be concerned about in the conflictive situation: What he/she should do and should not do in Thai service encounters. The instructor can employ this research as a sample that demonstrates the way in which the agent should behave to maintain the interpersonal relationship between the agent and the customer in Thai service encounters and simultaneously to protect the benefits of his/her professional institution in accordance with his/her responsibilities. Moreover, this research can be also useful to teach both Thai and non-Thai people cross-cultural communication by comparing it with non-Thai people's communicative behaviour in business contexts.

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## Appendix: Transcription Conventions

Table 1: Transcription conventions (Verbal acts adapted from Jefferson (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Howitt & Cramer, 2005) and multimodal acts adapted from Mondada (2008))

[ ]	Square brackets are used when two (or more) speakers are talking together. The speakers are given different lines and the brackets should be in line where the speech overlaps.
=	Equal signs ordinarily come in pairs—one at the end of a line and another at the start of the next line or one shortly thereafter. They indicate that there are no identifiable pauses between the two (latching) when the two lines are produced by different speakers, and that there was a single, continuous utterance with no break, which was broken up in order to accommodate the placement of overlapping talk.
(.)	A dot in brackets indicates a micropause—a noticeable but very short pause in the speech.
(0.6)	The numbers-in-brackets sign is placed to indicate the length of a pause between words.
:	Colons are used to indicate the prolongation of the sound just preceding them. The more colons, the longer the stretching.
.	The period refers to a falling intonation contour.
,	A comma indicates continuing intonation.
?	A question mark indicates rising intonation.
° °	Words between signs ° are spoken more quietly by the speaker.
WHAT	Capitals indicate that the word(s) is (are) louder than the surrounding words.
↑ ↓	The up and down arrows are used to indicate substantial movements in pitch. They mark out of the ordinary changes, i.e. sharper intonation which rises or falls than would be indicated by combinations of colons.
> <	Words between > and < signs are speeded up.
< >	Words between < and > signs are slowed down.

((sniff))	Double parentheses indicate the transcriber's description of nonverbal acts or events, rather than representations of them.
()	Words in brackets are the analyst's best guess as to somewhat inaudible passages.
<u>Under</u>	Underlining indicates emphasis such as on a particular syllable.
* *	delimit one participant's actions
+ +	delimit other participant's action descriptions
*--->	gesture or action described continues across subsequent lines
*--->>	gesture or action described continues until and after excerpt's end
--->*	gesture or action described continues until the same symbol is reached
>>--	gesture or action described begins before the excerpt's beginning

Abbreviations indicating grammatically-prescribed linguistic features of the Thai language

DM	= Discourse marker	FTM	= Future tense marker
PTM	= Past tense marker	Q-WH	= WH question
Q-YN	= Yes-no question		



Table 2: Abbreviations indicating semantically and socially-prescribed linguistic features of Thai language

Thai	Abbrev.	Definition
Pronominal reference terms indicating the hearer's age (1) older than the speaker (2) younger than the speaker	KPS KPJ	a Kinship Pronoun Referring to a Senior a Kinship Pronoun Referring to a Junior
ครับ /khráp/	FPM	a Final Particle used by Males and expressing politeness
ค่ะ /khà?/ ค่ะ /khà?/	FPF	a Final Particle used by Females and expressing politeness
นะ /ná?/ นะ /nâ?/	WS/P	a Word added to the end of a Sentence to soften it, emphasize, or make it Polite; OR requesting politely
สิ /sì/ ดี /dì/	PCR	a Colloquial Particle used to (1) emphasize or indicate a Request; (2) emphasize an invitation or a complaint
ง่ะ /ŋà?/ ล่ะ /lâ?/ อ่ะ /?à?/ /há?/ ฮะ	FCoq	an informal and a Colloquial Final particle placed at the end of a phrase or a sentence, usually a question or a statement, to indicate familiarity
คุณ /khun/	PSP	A Polite Second person Pronoun which expresses the distance between interlocutors
เค้า /kháw/	NTP	A Neutral Third person Pronoun
เนี่ย /ní?/	FP/E	A Final Particle used to refer back to something previously known, but expresses a certain sense of surprise at something truly new, and not previously relevant in context. It also refers to indicate Emphasis.