



**A COMPARATIVE GENRE ANALYSIS OF THAI AND
UK HOTELS' RESPONSES TO COMPLAINTS ON
TRIPADVISOR**

BY

MR. ATHIP THUMVICHIT

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017
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DISSERTATION

BY

MR. ATHIP THUMVICHIT

ENTITLED

A COMPARATIVE GENRE ANALYSIS OF THAI AND UK HOTELS'
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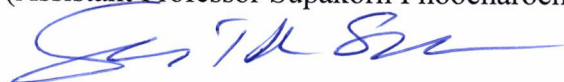
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ABSTRACT

This study compares responses to complaints (RTCs) of local Thai hotels and top UK hotels collected from TripAdvisor through the lenses of authors, genre analysts, and customers. The purposes of this study include: 1) to identify the communicative purpose of RTCs; 2) to address similarities and differences in move structure; 3) to investigate salient linguistic features; and 4) to find out characteristics of an effective RTC. To identify the communicative purposes of RTCs, four authors of RTCs were interviewed. As for move analysis, Panseeta and Todd's (2014) analytical framework was used as an initial coding scheme. Frequency of first-person pronouns (*we* and *I*) and recurrent word combinations were generated by AntConc. A set of questionnaire was then distributed to 30 regular hotel service consumers to highlight the desirable characteristics of RTCs.

Interviewing actual authors of RTCs revealed a variety of communicative purposes. Owing to the potential damage caused by customer-generated negative reviews, participants from local Thai hotels explicitly expressed concerns over the online image of their respective hotels.

Comparing 72 local Thai hotels' RTCs with 72 top UK hotels' RTCs yielded some significant differences between the two hotel groups, which are congruent with the interview data. That is, a 'genuine apology' and direct contact information

were offered much more frequently by top UK hotels, leading to the conclusion that such hotels are very intent on recovering clients. Linguistic analysis was performed using a corpus tool to initially generate lists of the most frequently occurred words and word combinations in each step. The guidelines for writing RTCs were developed based on some of the most frequently used word combinations among top UK hotels.

An analysis of *we* and *I* suggests that top UK hotels are less committed to conventional style, as they tend to be selective in their use of *we* and *I*. The excessive use of *we* among local Thai hotels indicated their conformity to conventional style.

As for customers' perceptions, participants' responses leaned towards top UK hotels' RTCs as they offer a 'genuine apology' and offer compensation, which play a leading role in recovering customers.

This study makes several significant methodological and pedagogical contributions to the fields of English language teaching (ELT) and business communication. The contributions will support teaching and learning about responses to complaints and other related genres, suggest a direction for future research, and benefit English language instructors, learners, material developers, and professional practitioners in the hospitality industry and other service industries.

Keywords: Business correspondence, Customer-generated reviews, Complaint responses, Genre analysis, Service recovery, TripAdvisor

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“If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, “Thank you” that would suffice”

-Meister Eckhart

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Symbols/Abbreviations	Terms
CoP	Community of Practice
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
eWOM	Electronic Word-of-Mouth
κ	Cohen's kappa
LSP	Languages for Special Purposes
NRS	New Rhetoric Studies
PA	Percentage Agreement
RTC	Response to Complaint
THHC	Thai Hotel Corpus
THRTC	Thai Hotel Response to Complaint
UKHC	UK Hotel Corpus
UKRTC	UK Hotel Response to Complaint
WOM	Word-of-mouth

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

This chapter discusses the rationale behind conducting this research, together with the ideas about the focused genre and its community members. The discussion also touches on the relationship between the genre and EFL learners and professionals' needs. Following this, the questions this research attempts to answer will be introduced.

1.1.1 Overview

In the old days, information was delivered only through word-of-mouth (WOM) and directly from producers. Although WOM is obviously powerful, its capability is limited to a very small group of potential consumers. On the other hand, the advertisements generated directly by producers are always viewed as biased in favor of their products or services.

Due to the growth in the use of the Internet, the way we communicate has abruptly changed, and information has become more accessible. Therefore, consumers and businesses seek to optimize this communication method to help them maximize their benefits. From a consumer's perspective, it serves them by offering information on products to help them make purchasing decisions. On a business's side, it allows them to spread their reputation more rapidly than using any other previous channels. The information published on social media potentially reaches a great number of people within a short period of time. Consequently, study involving social media has received more attention from scholars across multiple disciplines.

After the world was introduced to web 2.0, the way producers promote their products changed forever. Now peer-to-peer (P2P) marketing has become the most powerful promotional tool in the world of business. It is a promotional method in which the promotional information is generated by consumers to encourage potential consumers to buy products. A great example is the case of Amazon.com, one of the

largest online shopping websites, which people from around the world use as a marketplace to sell a wide variety of goods and services. The website allows buyers to write a review of the product they purchased. The reviews written by the buyers help potential customers make a purchasing decision. Nowadays, the buyers' experience of products is more valuable compared to the description provided by the businesses themselves. Online reviews play a vital role in online business society. Positive reviews can greatly benefit the business, whereas negative ones can damage the business reputation. Once the reviews have been published on the website, the messages can reach a great number of people interested in the product. According to Ante (2009), a 2008 survey indicates that 70% of Americans reported that they consult online customer-generated reviews before making purchasing decisions. As the online business is growing rapidly, the number of online shopping websites implementing customer-generated reviews is also increasing. Ebay.com, Rakuten.com, Newegg.com, and Etsy.com are among the renowned online shopping places where a countless number of customers' reviews are created. It is undeniable that the reviews that are written by pro-consumers receive more attention from potential consumers compared with the words from manufacturers, which most of the time reflect only on one side of products (Park & Kim, 2008). In other words, the pro-consumers' reviews are believed to deliver authentic experiences from the users' points of view, whereas manufacturers' words tend to be biased towards the products.

As mentioned, the reviews are capable of damaging businesses. The future of a particular product can be determined by the reviews published online. Thus, businesses pay a lot of attention to these kinds of messages, especially the ones done in a negative manner. When potential buyers discover negative ideas about a product, it will be judged as poor quality (Lee, Park, & Han, 2008). Subsequently, another closely related genre was created – responses to customers' reviews. This method is also known as 'online reputation management', 'webcare', and 'customer care'. Whenever the method is used to handle negative reviews, it is used to recover consumers. Online consumer-generated reviews and responses to the negative reviews are newborn genres which have been drawing attention not only from business scholars, but also from linguistic communities. These two genres are closely related, so they are considered to be in the same genre family. Although consumer-generated reviews have been studied

extensively in the discourse aspect (e.g., Skalicky, 2013; Jeong & Jeon, 2008), the number of studies on the latter is very limited (e.g., Zhang & Vásquez, 2014; Panseeta & Todd, 2014).

That is to say, there are a number of genre studies focusing on different types of text, but the research on responses to customers' reviews is very limited. Previously, one of the most notable genres with a clear communicative goal was a promotional letter. As its name suggests, a promotional letter shares a similar objective with an advertisement, which is to promote a product or service. However, responses to customers' reviews do not show a single communicative goal as they can try to achieve more than one communicative purpose in a response.

After the online review function was introduced, business management responded to the risk of negative consumer-generated reviews by making room for themselves to deal with the reviews. From the English Language Teaching (ELT) perspective, this genre is relatively new to both learners and professionals. In the old days, it was common that students who take an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course like business English were likely to be trained to deal with customers through letters or emails in different situations. Those were the tasks that the business major students were expected to perform once they have to deal directly with customers. Nevertheless, the email composing skills may not be transferred to the online responses setting where the sensitivity is stronger. Once an email is sent, only sender and receiver get to see the message. On the other hand, online responses to customers' reviews on websites are published and anyone can see them. As a university lecturer, I found that this genre needs to be emphasized in the field of ESP.

Due to the rapid growth cyber business, the space for businesses to interact with customers publicly is expanding. Based on my experience as an English lecturer in a hospitality school, a great number of students who have already graduated revealed that they had to deal with their customer publicly in both spoken and written contexts. The written tasks were found to be of greater concern among EFL learners. Although there are previous studies concerning speaking ability among EFL learners in hospitality industry, Wildes and Nyheim (2009) argue that errors or mistake in writing are less tolerable than oral production. Those students ended up struggling to complete the task required by their organizations. I received several emails from my former

students asking for advice on how to respond to customers' complaints on the websites. I then realized that this publicly written genre needs to be explored not only for the purpose of pedagogical implication, but also for business application.

However, language education is not the only focus of this study. As the title suggests, this dissertation is carried out in the comparative manner. The messages of 3-star hotels in Thailand are compared with those of 5-star UK hotels. The reason for selecting these two groups is to lift the quality of service provided by 3-star hotels in Thailand, where tourism is one of the main sources of income. In 2015, the *Thai Immigration Office and Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports* reported that the Thai tourism industry set a new record regarding total revenue. A significant increase of 23% from 2014 can be seen. International visitors were reported to contribute about 1.44 trillion Baht (42 billion USD). Therefore, I found it worth carrying out this study as it can help improve professional practices to keep up with the international standard.

My fast-growing curiosity in the characteristic responses to customers' reviews led me to genre analysis. The present study is an attempt to expand the existing framework of genre analysis to this online interactive text in particular for multidimensional understandings. I began my study with the concept of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and its relationship with the hospitality and tourism business, as explained below.

1.1.2 eWOM in the Hospitality and Tourism Business

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has always been a valuable source of information for consumers in this internet era. The method is considered as a form of communication between pro-consumers and potential customers. The impact of consumer-generated reviews on consumers' purchasing decisions and product sales has been a concern of businesses. This topic has also drawn attention from scholars of different disciplines. These scholars proved that the reviews have been playing a major role not only for a large number of people who participate in these genre activities, but also for the economics of businesses (Zhang & Vásquez, 2014). There is a quote by Cockrum (2011), a renowned marketing author, saying "under the old rules if you upset a customer, we were all told to expect that they would tell seven of their friends"; on

the contrary, one disappointed consumer these days “could potentially impact your business negatively in front of hundreds of prospects” (p. 2).

Since such technology has been recognized widely, eWOM has been considered as a method of communication among customers and between customers and businesses in competitive business sectors, especially in the hospitality and tourism industry. And one form of eWOM that has been utilized in the hospitality and tourism business is written reviews generated by proconsumers with the purposes of sharing travel experiences regarding hotels, tourist spots, and tourist related services. Pan, McLaurin, and Crotts (2007) state that such a method of communication is a vital source of information for tourists. In general, experienced travelers are allowed to share their travel experiences with other travelers in travel websites, which are marketplaces for hospitality and tourism businesses across the globe. Internet-based reviews generated by customers are considered as cooperative, participatory, consumer generated, dynamic, and filled with useful information. The reviews become even more valuable in the hospitality industry, because hotel services, for instance, are intangible and subjective. To put it differently, hospitality services are known to be ‘experience products’ and difficult for potential customers to picture (Zhang & Vásquez, 2014, p. 55). Clear examples of intangible hospitality services include hotel stays and tourist destination visits (on the contrary, ‘search products’ are touchable goods such as furniture and electronic devices, and descriptions of such products are found to be sufficient for prospective customers). This leads to difficulty in decision making among customers. Booking.com, Agada.com, and TripAdvisor.com are among those popular accommodation websites that allows customers to write feedback to help prospects make their decisions.

According to Zhang, Cracium, and Shin (2010), positive reviews generated by customers can significantly improve the reputation of businesses, and they discovered that the reviews generated by customers tend to be more up-to-the-minute, trustworthy, and entertaining than those offered by business owners. In the case of the hotel business, travelers may consult with customers’ reviews prior to booking. Positive reviews encourage prospects to make a booking, so this kind of information is beneficial to the businesses. On the other hand, negative reviews are found to be harmful to hotels’ reputations. The study conducted by Kim, Kim and Kim (2009)

points out that no matter how much the hotel tries to please its guests, still they are not perfectly satisfied. Complaints have always been part of the hotel business. Adverse experiences by guests can lead to negative reviews shared online. Negative reviews generated by customers occur frequently because of the intangibility of the services prior to a stay (Haywood, 1989). In this internet era, words are spread quickly, and negative reviews published online can be harmful to hotels' reputations. Nevertheless, many accommodation websites still allow customers to share their negative experience online for the sake of potential customers.

Like other businesses, no matter how hard hotels strive for perfection, still they inevitably face complaints from visitors, even among top hotels. However, the service providers do not view this issue as something that is out of control, but rather as opportunities and challenges for recovery. These days, hotel management can respond to customers' reviews publicly. PhoCusWright (2012), one of the most influential research authorities in the tourism industry, reveals the evidence that confirms the value of the responses to negative reviews. After surveying 2,800 users of travel websites that provide booking services and travel-related content, the study reported that 87% of respondents admitted they had positive attitude towards appropriate responses from the management. 70% of respondents revealed that aggressive responses from the management reduced the chance of booking. 62% of respondents said that the management response is the factor that affects their decision between two comparable hotels. These figures have increased from a previous survey, which means that the response is increasingly valuable. Panseeta and Todd (2014) note that many five-star hotels have representatives in senior positions to respond to negative reviews. This means that they are taking such matters seriously. Most of the experts in this business concur that responding to negative reviews can minimize damage to both former and potential guests. According to Zhang and Vásquez (2014), the percentage of management responses on TripAdvisor significantly increased from only 1% in 2008 to more than 10% three years later. It seems to be very fashionable for hotels to utilize the space given by accommodation websites such as TripAdvisor to recover their services.

1.1.3 TripAdvisor

One of the businesses known to utilize social media is the hospitality industry. To reach potential customers across the globe, travel related information is nowadays presented through social media. One of most recognizable sources of this kind of content is TripAdvisor. Based in Massachusetts, USA, TripAdvisor claims to be the world's largest travel community with over 300 million visitors each month, along with around 385 million reviews of almost 7 million service providers including hotels, restaurants, and tourist spots. The website offers many different types of travel-related services such as booking, hotel price comparison, and flight search. It is somewhat difficult to say whether TripAdvisor is a virtual community, social media, or a forum, but it is certain that its major function is gathering and publishing content generated by customers. To put it differently, TripAdvisor is equipped with many user-friendly functions, one of which is to provide potential customers with reviews generated by former customers. With this function, customers are asked to write feedback after their stays; once the reviews are published, other users can see them. Negative reviews are greatly beneficial to potential customers, but hotel management takes them as a huge challenge. As mentioned, the results of the survey proved how vital negative reviews are in this community. This may sound unfair for businesses which use the website as their regular marketplace.

However, one thing that makes TripAdvisor stand out from others is that the website gives space not only to customers to publish their reviews, but also businesses to respond to their customers' reviews. This function is unique, especially in this industry where words from customers are always important. A registered hotel on TripAdvisor, for example, can respond to each review shared by their customers.

As indicated by the results of recent surveys, the impact of eWOM on booking decisions is something that hotels can no longer ignore. Jeong and Jeon (2008) found that over 80% of users found customers' reviews on TripAdvisor.com trustworthy. This function of the site gives users some control over hotels' reputations. It also makes users more experienced and knowledgeable. On the other hand, it gives hotels the opportunity to retake control over their image. Hotels can use the space provided by TripAdvisor to interact with their customers. Once the reviews are posted by customers, hotels can simply reply to each of them. In this way, hotel management

may be able to regain trust from their customers. Presently, responding to negative reviews is very common among hotels across the globe. It has become a task that hotel representatives routinely perform.

It goes without saying that most of the studies on TripAdvisor are from the area of hotel and tourism management (e.g., Jeong & Jeon, 2008; O'Connor, 2010; Barcala, Díaz, & Rodriguez, 2010; Sparks & Browning, 2010; Weilin & Svetlana, 2012). As it plays a major role in this community, eWOM is one of the most popular aspects scholars attempt to explore. Within the field of linguistics, user-generated reviews receive attention as well. Some examples include Vázquez's (2011) research on discourse properties of 100 negative reviews generated by users, and Tian's (2013) investigation of the similarities and differences between Chinese and English accommodation reviews in terms of organizational pattern. Nevertheless, hotels' responses to user-generated reviews are relatively new in the field of discourse study. Up until this point, there have only been a few studies in this genre. One of them is Zhang and Vázquez's (2014) study, which investigated the generic structure of Chinese 4- and 5-star hotels' responses to negative reviews with a sample of 80. Similarly, Panseeta and Todd (2014) investigated the generic structure of Thai hotels' responses to negative reviews with a sample of 100. As one can see, each of the two studies focuses on only one single country (China and Thailand), as other studies on TripAdvisor have agreed. However, the findings of the previous studies are only limited to language form, and the identity of the genre in business communication is still ambiguous. In the present study, I attempt to explore hotels' responses to complaints (RTCs) as a genre in the views of both professionals and linguistics. The following section is devoted to an overview of business discourse and the application of genre analysis. From that point, this dissertation then continues with the applications of corpus linguistics in the genre studies.

1.2 Analyzing Business Genres

It is obvious that business activities are important and concern many people these days. The characteristics of business text have been discovered to be different

from other fields of communication (e.g., law, science, academics). Business discourse has its own unique linguistic features, some of which are pragmatic, lexicogrammatical, textual, and stylistic domains (Daniushina, 2010). Business discourse has been analyzed from various approaches in the field of applied linguistics: some of these include discourse analysis, register analysis, conversation analysis, and genre analysis. Defined by Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken (2013), business discourse is the way professionals communicate by oral production or writing in order to achieve a purpose. Other research has arrived with different terms for this communicative event. Breeze's (2013) research defines corporate discourse as the set of messages a business delivers to the world, its intended markets, or clients. The term also covers internal communication (e.g., company-to-employee, employee-to-employee). On the basis of such boundaries, this work's responses to complaints, for example, falls into corporate discourse territory, because it is the message from businesses to customers. As the amount of business activity increases, the fast-growing world of business communication can be seen. This has resulted in the expansion of theoretical frameworks in business communication, that is, such phenomenon has connected the knowledge of applied linguistics with studies of professional communication (Sarangi & Candlin, 2011). In *Corporate Discourse*, Breeze introduced three different dimensions of the study of business communication: first, the study is conducted in the perspective of professional development and this involves professionals in a particular area of business activity; secondly, the study is conducted within the field of applied linguistics; thirdly, the study focuses on ELT. The first model aims at improving professional practices, while the second model observes and interprets a language as it is in natural settings. The third model has to do with native and non-native speakers of English who are engaged in business communication in the international manner.

The first and third models sound very practical as they aim to shed some light on professional training and English language education. These two models are interrelated, because they both attempt to provide appropriate instruction for professionals and students. It is evident that many studies conducted recently concern pedagogical implications. Bargiela-Chiappini et al. (2013) confirm that the scrutiny of business texts not only informs us of language itself, but also aims at making a contribution to professional training and teaching. Due to the growing pressure and

competition in the world of business, operators have to adapt themselves to respond to new standards of each nation, and in some contexts, standards even shift internationally. In this regard, individual professionals coming from diverse backgrounds and regions have to build common ground of reference in order to achieve the communicative goal. The question is how to accelerate the realizations and provide insight into the production of a particular discourse, which allows professionals to conquer any difficulties in business communication. Thus, this dissertation took the notion of Bargiela-Chiappini et al. (2013) and the first and third model of Breeze (2013) as they are driven by pedagogical motivation and the desire to improve professional practices.

Such challenges have increasingly received attention from discourse researchers who later employed genre theory which mainly focuses on textual construction and styles in business contexts. The written texts composed by professionals are quite popular in the field of business communication where authors are required to recognize a situational context and select the right rhetorical choices to meet the community' expectations. This means that choosing the right option in the right situation leads to successful business communication. Exploring business genres raise professionals' awareness throughout the communities, and the competently-composed written discourse is compulsory in the modern business societies. Professional genres in business communication are characterized by their own communicative purposes to meet consumers' demands. With genre analysis, researchers are able to uncover the elements that shape genres to be the way they are, and they are allowed to get their hands on the authentic experience of professionals in diverse business areas. Swales (2002a) contends that, unlike previous frameworks (e.g., discourse, register, functional analysis), genre analysis does not support a 'one-for-all' theory, where rules of genres are typically applied in others belonging to the same family, but rather it was created to work with a specific discourse and context. Therefore, genre analysis has been increasingly used to seek understanding across the business community.

Bhatia and Bremner (2012) note that the rationale behind such advancements in discourse research is that communication is no longer all about making grammatically correct and rhetorically coherent texts, but rather it also has to

do with how members of a particular community manage to develop senses in professional texts. That is, business communication is much more than just mastering a language (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) in that context. Bhatia (1993, 2004) points out that it is crucial to understand why professionals of a particular business community communicate the way they do. To answer this question, it also requires the exploration of professional contexts with a specific perspective to understand the root of genres. This question, however, leads to in-depth investigation in surrounding elements of the communities, and that involves contributions from multidisciplinary approaches.

Genre analysis has been extensively used to analyze both academic and professional texts. Due to the complex nature of business contexts, genre model has turned multidimensional and involved a broad variety of perspectives (Bhatia, 2004). It can be inferred that business genre is so complex that it requires understanding of various aspects of the communities. Bhatia (1993) notes that to study business communication, it is important to draw on a wide variety of knowledge from different areas of both linguistics and business. Thus, the study of business texts moves beyond traditional organizational patterns and textualization to the level of professional contexts. To put it differently, not only knowledge of the language but also professional experience is required to achieve the best possible results. The cooperation between discourse researchers and experienced professionals can lead to more extensive and situational-based contributions to the study of genre. Recently, it can be seen that researchers have sought to understand the nature and purpose of genres by drawing knowledge from a variety of perspectives – institutional, ethnographic, textual, and socio-cultural concepts. These concepts employed in genre studies are placed in different layers of the interjectory of genre. In that sense, the operation of business genres does not occur solely with textual space, but they are also operated under strategical space where rules and individual styles vary. Therefore, business genre can be explored at different levels depending on the objective of the study.

This research aims to apply interdisciplinary approaches to gain insight into RTCs. I seek to explore surrounding elements that interfere textual construction. This means that it will require investigation in different levels of the text ranging from professionals' perspectives to linguistic features. The rationale behind

utilizing a multi-approach is that the complexity of business genre requires more than a single method for exploration. Besides the text itself, business genres have a lot to do with institutional, ethnographic, and socio-cultural aspects. In this case, macro-level study (context) is as important as micro-level study (linguistic elements). While focusing on macro-level, micro-level study cannot be left behind. To keep this research in focus, I will highlight those imperative features which are the major characteristics in communicative purposes and generic structure. With the application of such a framework in the investigation of RTCs, knowledge from both the hospitality industry and linguistics will be drawn on to address the question of why professional hotel representatives handle customers' complaints the way they do.

There are two main characteristics of business communication in the field of English as a lingua franca: (1) the idea is exchanged between people from different nationalities, and (2) properly understanding the message is essential (Carrió-Pastor and Skorczynska, 2015). When professionals have to deal with others from different countries, English is commonly used as a medium of communication. In this internet era, it can be seen that the amount of business communication activity is growing rapidly. A great example is email which is the most commonly used mode of communication in the corporate world. Thus, online communication is found to be unavoidable and it usually requires the interaction between native and non-native speakers of English.

In the hospitality and tourism industry, as I mentioned in the previous section, customers' reviews and the responses from businesses cannot be ignored as they have an impact on the future of the business. In addition, a comparative study concerning ELT and professional development is also a topic that interests many scholars. An example is the case of the hospitality industry, where English is typically used in an international manner. Having to deal directly with customers, hotels are expected to welcome guests who travel from different countries. That is, most of the hospitality and tourism related information is done in English to communicate with tourists from across the globe. There are studies of language and linguistics which made an attempt to connect the corporate world and its cultural diversity by looking into interaction and discourse. Chisnall (1975) notes that the relationship between cultural

awareness and business activities is unavoidable and trying to separate one from another can lead to undesirable results. It can be inferred that taking cultural differences into account while participating in the business communities is important. Holden's (1987) study analyzed 500 business texts which were written by Americans and non-native speakers. The texts cover various kinds of business activities such as marketing, advertising, and international business. The study discovered that non-native speakers overlooking the world's dominant language (English) may cause misunderstanding among native speakers (British and American). However, this seems to empower English speaking nations and result in the domination of a particular community. The distinctive aspects of non-native speakers' cultures should be explored and shown to others, otherwise professional registers would be absent in many non-native speakers' cultures (Swales, 2000). This theory is agreed with by Nickerson (2005), who adds that in the business community, non-native speakers' texts need to be studied close to the side of native speakers' texts. This approach allows researchers to enhance our understanding of English used in different business environments.

Despite a great number of studies focusing on native and non-native speakers of English, the number of comparative genre studies that swing away from the standard set by native speakers is very limited. Although my study is driven by pedagogical motivation, it does not flow with the native trend as other English varieties are equally valued. Thus, this study is positioned in the world of professionals. With that being said, the comparative genre analysis of RTCs between 3-star Thai hotels and 5-star hotels in the UK is a worthwhile move towards the goal and philosophy of this dissertation. It goes without saying that genre analysis has been extensively used and supported by multidisciplinary concepts. It plays a vital role in both pedagogical procedure and professional development. With the evolution of communication and technology, it is time to move beyond the old-fashion channel and embrace a new type of discourse like internet discourse. There is a great demand for further analysis in such community.

Based on Cheng's (2007) framework, genre analysis is classified into three main dimensions: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), New Rhetoric Studies, and systemic functional linguistics. These three schools are related to each other, but

they employ different approaches (see Table 1.1). These three schools of genre study are valued in different ways. This dissertation will be greatly influenced by the school of ESP, but to move beyond the language form, the school of New Rhetoric Studies is also necessary. Recently, there have been many studies of genre posited in the school of ESP. This school focuses on the language form, and the investigation of the contexts is always absent. Analyzing organizational pattern and linguistic aspects are necessary in genre study as it aims to shed some light on language education, but to learn the views of professionals, key characters in genre communities, and ethnographical methods should also be considered. By applying socio-cognitive perspective, it is expected that the rationale behind the language form. In other words, we will not be able to answer the question ‘why’, if we do not ask those who shape genres to be the way they are.

Table 1.1

Schools of genre study, adapted from Cheng (2007, p. 68)

Schools of Genre Study	Characteristics
ESP	Views genre as a discourse community, communicative events, and shared purpose, with an emphasis on language used in real-life manner (Bhatia, 1997). Uses genre analysis to produce pedagogical materials. Focuses on problems in ESP learning. Exploring organizational pattern is always one of the objectives. Employs corpus tools for analysis. Swales, Hyland, and Bhatia are among the notable representatives of this school.
New Rhetoric Studies	Treats genre with socio-cognitive perspective. Focuses on social context rather than form. Normally involves ethnographic approaches. Data from individual participants is important. Genre knowledge is connected with the context.

Schools of Genre Study	Characteristics
Systemic Functional Linguistics	Concentrates on both context and linguistics elements of genre (Derewianka, 2003). The scope is limited to elementary to high school texts. Used in Australian education.

The present research is set to explore the hotels' responses, as a genre, by employing several approaches such as move analysis and lexico-grammatical investigation. As far as the ethnographical data is concerned, interview is also part of this research. To learn about what distinguishes this business correspondence text from other genres, I look into the lexical choices and the purpose of the community. My study aims to connect the language form with the context of the genre.

Upon browsing through the institutional styles and structure, I discovered different patterns and various communicative functions the authors employed to achieve their goals. Despite being part of the business community, RTCs are considered genre in its own right. Thus, genre analysis is needed to uncover linguistic elements and the rationale behind the composition. The present study aims at exploring communicative functions and how the authors manage to fulfill their goals in such context. In the last few decades, several theories were proposed to support textual organization of diverse genres; for example, proposed by Swales (1990), move analysis was used to explore text-level organization of scientific articles. Swales' model was found to be fruitful in an academic manner. His Create a Research Space (CARS) model is very famous for its versatility in academic genres. As I aim to explore the specialized text in business communication, the framework proposed by Bhatia (1993) also receives my attention. The framework shed some light on the investigation of unfamiliar genres in the scope of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Languages for Special Purposes (LSP). RTCs on TripAdvisor are unique in their nature. That is to say, the rules and convention in other business texts may not be applicable to this genre. Business emails, for example, are closely related to this genre, but it requires more than just a broad framework to profoundly explore such specific content in which language is used to accomplish a distinct mission.

To explore both surrounding elements and internal factors of this text type, genre framework is compatible because of its contribution of rich linguistic information to specific conditions. Although business discourse studied previously has already employed various models including genre analysis, each business text is different in many ways. Thus, this dissertation is positioned within the trajectory of genre analysis, which is capable of providing data on the rationale, conventional structure, and linguistic features. Nevertheless, this claim will be lifted and proved as the study proceeds to Chapter 2, where earlier studies in the field of genre are discussed.

1.3 Corpus Linguistics

Applying corpus tools and frameworks in the process of analyzing texts give scholars an opportunity to identify linguistics elements hidden in a particular text (Reppen, 2010). As this dissertation aims to examine RTCs, a number of approaches will be used to examine the complexity of this genre. A corpus approach provides tremendous support for the analysis of text, especial in lexico-grammatical area, because it is able to generate text samples that are actually produced by the target authors. Corpus linguistics is so versatile that it can work with diverse linguistic areas (e.g., lexicography, stylistics). Without exception, invented by researchers in the field of ESP, genre analysis is found to be benefited by corpus linguistics. Whenever genre analysis aims to make a contribution to language education, corpus tools are employed to assist in developing learning materials for specific contexts: these include frequency analysis of a certain set of vocabulary and the way they are used. For instance, specialized corpora are built to examine the language that is actually used in a particular situation. This allows scholars to offer lessons and materials that respond to students with special needs (McEnery & Wilson, 2001).

So far, we have seen many types of corpora: general reference corpora (e.g., BNC, COCA), learner corpora, spoken corpora, and specialized corpora are among the corpus tools used in linguistic research. Different types of corpora are compiled for different purposes; for example, learner corpora, collections of texts produced by foreign language learners, are compiled to identify common errors and/or mistakes

among learners. They generate empirical data as the texts are actually the productions of the target group.

To meet the language demands of the changing world, scholars are expected to build corpora for special purposes. These corpora are known as specialized corpora. They are different from other corpora as they provide samples of the specific domain of a particular language. Sinclair (1994) notes that specialized corpora were created from the theory that the language used in a specific situation may not conform to a description of that language. The way people used language may vary depending on the contexts or situations they are in and the unique variation may only be restricted to a particular context or situation. Bowker and Pearson (2002) add that specialized corpora can be used to pinpoint those distinct elements that make the language used in a particular context differ from others.

There are plenty of specialized corpora compiled by researchers: some of these include PhD theses (Thomson, 2000), application letters and introduction to speeches (Henry & Roseberry, 2001), fund-raising letters (Upton, 2002), wedding invitations (Momani & Al-Refaei, 2010), most helpful reviews on Amazon.com (Skalicky, 2013), international business emails (Yue & Wang, 2014), instruction manuals for household appliances (Frutos, 2015), and business spam email (Naksawat & Akkakoson, 2015). As one can see, the types of corpora compiled for specific purposes are so diverse that they range from academic documents to manuals for household appliances. These specialized corpora were compiled to examine different linguistic features in different discourse areas. For instance, the corpora of application letters and introductions to speeches were compiled to highlight collocation of particular sets of words that occurred specifically in the genres. Skalicky (2013) explored rhetorical moves and identified types of reviews on Amazon.com. Frutos (2015) employed a corpus approach to find out the frequency of each communicative unit. Thus, building specialized corpus can greatly benefit studies of genre from different disciplines. As far as the language form and function are concerned, a specialized corpus should be compiled to examine linguistic features and provide support for move analysis.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research put an emphasis on one of the professional genres – RTCs. As discussed, RTCs play a vital role in both language education and the corporate world. Thus, gaining insight into RTCs helps language learners enhance their classroom experiences and professionals improve their practices.

Considering the influential roles and impacts of RTCs, the implication of this research can be very fruitful to the people who are expected to fulfill this task as part of their academic and professional practices. Since RTCs in this research are viewed as both language form and genre knowledge, there are four key components that would contribute to different areas of classroom teaching and professional practices. First, exploring communicative purposes and characteristics of RTCs leads to a better understanding of the goal and the context of RTCs. That is, understanding the genuine purpose of this genre allows students and professionals to capture the all-around idea hidden behind the language form. The second and third components have to do with the language form of RTCs. The results of move analysis and linguistic feature analyses can support potential authors with an organizational pattern and language used which reflect the strategies professional authors of RTCs conventionally employed to achieve their shared goal. Understanding the conventional structure and language-choices can raise language learners and professionals' awareness of the authentic form that the authors used to fulfill their communicative purposes.

The last component concerns customer satisfaction as it is the most important element in the successful hospitality business. That is, customer perceptions are taken into account to identify an effective RTC which is representative of the corpora. Once the desirable characteristics of an effective RTC are realized, they can be used as a manual for composing effective RTCs.

However, the benefit of genre analysis is not limited to the four components mentioned above. Since this study aims to propose the framework of RTCs, the findings can be beneficial not only to language learners and professionals, but also to other scholars with a desire to explore RTCs in different contexts, and to take the framework to further investigation.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

- 1) To identify communicative purpose(s) and characteristics of RTCs
- 2) To investigate the move structure of RTCs
- 3) To examine commonly used linguistic features of RTCs
- 4) To explore customer perceptions toward an effective RTC

1.6 Research Questions

Built around the research objectives, four main research questions were proposed. The following are the research questions this study attempts to address:

- 1) What is the communicative purpose(s) of RTCs?
- 2) What are the moves of this genre?
 - 2.1) What is the typicality of each move (*Obligatory, Coventional, Optional*)?
 - 2.2) Is there any significant difference between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels regarding application of steps used in RTCs?
 - 2.3) Is there any significant difference between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels regarding the frequency of each individual step used in RTCs?
- 3) What are the common linguistic features of local Thai hotels and top UK hotels' RTCs?
- 4) From customer perceptions, what are the characteristics of an effective RTC?
 - 4.1) Whose RTC is more effective, local Thai hotels' or top UK hotels'?
 - 4.2) Is there any difference between the perceptions of Thai and non-Thai guests of an RTC?

1.7 Definitions of Terms

Genre Analysis

This dissertation aims at exploring different dimensions surrounding the RTCs with genre perspective. Since genre analysis is the area that can involve a wide variety of approaches, it may vary depending on the purpose of the research. In the present study, genre analysis is carried out with the involvement of four different components including (1) the move structure, (2) word choices, (3) communicative purposes, and (4) readers' perceptions. These four components together serve as contributors to the questions of how and why the RTCs are written in the way they are.

Response to Complaint (RTC)

RTCs in this study refers to the responses to customers' negative reviews on TripAdvisor where the businesses are allowed to reply to customers' reviews. All RTCs were published on hotels' homepages in review sections. There are five different review sections on TripAdvisor ranging from *excellence* to *terrible*. In the present study, all the messages were gathered from *The terrible section*.

Complaint

Complaint in this study refers to a negative review posted in *The terrible section* on TripAdvisor. The complaints are publicly accessible.

3-star Thai Hotels

As the title of this dissertation suggests, there are two groups of texts collected for the analysis: those of 3-star Thai hotels and 5-star UK hotels. However, this does not mean that every RTC from 3-star Thai hotels or 5-star UK hotels qualifies to be the subjects. In this research, the term '3-star Thai hotels' refer to 3-star hotels that are located in Thailand and are not chained-brand. This means that they are not tied in with any hotel chain (e.g., Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, Hyatt Hotels Corporation). These kinds of hotels can be sought through the search input, *independent*, on TripAdvisor. In general, these hotels are owned by Thai people and operated by local Thai people. They are also known as local Thai hotels.

5-star UK Hotels

The term ‘5-star UK hotels’ refer to 5-star hotels located in the UK and classified as ‘luxury hotels’ on TripAdvisor. They can be sought through the search input, *Luxury*, on TripAdvisor. These hotels are recognized for their exceptional service quality offered to customers.

Hotels

In addition, the term ‘hotels’ used throughout this dissertation covers a wide variety of commercial accommodations that are available on TripAdvisor such as resorts, motels, and lodges.

Linguistic Features

The analysis of linguistic elements is one of the key parts of this research. Frequently used words, the first-person subject pronouns, *we* and *I*, and recurrent word combinations are the topics of analysis in the present study. Move analysis also involves linguistic feature analyses. Linguistic features also refer to salient word choices found in each communicative function.

Corpora

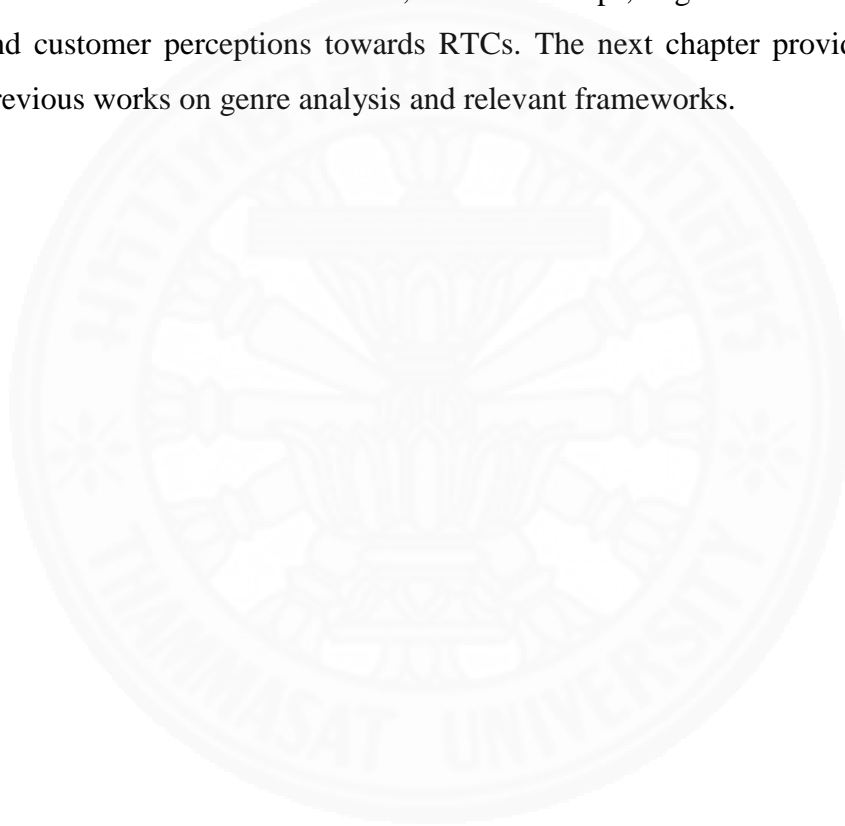
Corpora refer to collections of RTCs produced by local Thai hotels and top UK hotels. All the RTCs were gathered from the review section on TripAdvisor. THHC refers to the corpus of local Thai hotels’ RTCs, whereas UKHC refers to the corpus of top UK hotels’ RTCs. The RTCs from THHC are labeled as THHRTC followed by a number (e.g., THHRTC20), and the RTCs from UKHC are labeled as UKHRTC followed by a number (e.g., UKHRTC20)

Sub-corpora

Sub-corpora refer to collections of steps built to generate linguistic features for this study.

1.8 Chapter Summary

The present study involves various approaches to gain insight into the responses to customers' complaints and compares local Thai hotels' RTCs with top UK hotels' RTCs in order to identify the similarities and differences between the two variations. Four main questions were proposed to explore different dimensions of the genre ranging from macro to micro level. The four areas that this study focuses on include characteristics, moves and steps, linguistic features of the genre, and customer perceptions towards RTCs. The next chapter provides reviews of previous works on genre analysis and relevant frameworks.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the relevant literature to seek understanding of the key components making up this dissertation. The concepts of genre and other related areas such as corpus linguistics and business discourse will be reviewed as they will make ways for my study. This chapter starts with Swales' definition and concept of genre, as it allows this dissertation to position itself inside the area of genre and sheds some light on how hotels' RTCs can be defined as a distinct genre.

2.1.1 Key Concepts of Genre

The development of discourse analysis has drawn the attention of scholars from multidisciplinary. Previous discourse related researches showed that discourse analysis is capable of orientating itself to a variety of fields (e.g. sociology, philosophy, literature, psychology, linguistics, etc.). The application of discourse analysis allows researchers to investigate the hidden meanings of both spoken dialogues and written texts; in other words, it is well-known as the tool that can uncover meaning beyond the sentence level. In the area of linguistics, discourse approach has evolved together with four main factors: theoretical orientation concerning formalism of grammar; textual specification; application (e.g., teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes); and in-depth analysis (thin and thick description). According to Bhatia (1993), the fourth factor was considered the most vital element in the development. However, discourse analysis still lacked some explanation highlighting different types of discourse community, and conventional structure of the genre received very little attention. It can be inferred that the previous discourse analysis did not emphasize the distinctiveness of each genre and its organizational regularities. The difference of the genre concerned scholars, because more information and explanation are required to meet the needs of discourse communities. That is, previous discourse

models could not explain each genre clearly and analyzing textual organization (interactional analysis) was not efficient and was rarely seen in the investigation.

2.1.2 Definition of Genre

It is worth quantifying it because a clear view of the genre is the first step to genre analysis. Swales (1990) gave a clear definition of genre based on its potentials and its roles in discourse community:

Genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choices of content and style (p. 58).

This definition can be broken into pieces to elaborate the term, genre. First, genre is a class of communicative events, the members of which share a communicative purpose which aims to respond to the need of members in the community. A genre is mainly quantified by the shared goal. In other words, to be qualified as a genre, the goal(s) shared by the members needs to be found.

Second, “these purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre”. That is, the members use genres to recognize communicative purposes within the communities. The parent discourse community is not capable of realizing communicative goals, but the sub-community (established members) is able to do so. For example, hotels’ responses itself cannot be considered a genre, simply because the communicative purposes are absent. A number of genres can be found within the community of hotels’ responses. Responding to complaints and complements, for example, are different in a number of ways. There is a clear cut difference between the responses to negative and positive reviews, even though they belong to the same parent discourse.

Third, “this rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choices of content and style”. The realization of purposes

leads to the rationale which establishes genre. Take the hotels' responses as an example; hotels' responses to complaints are set to primarily apologize to guests and to save hotels' images. One of the rationales of this type of message is that the responses are more expected and the conversation is likely to continue. On the other hand, the rationale of the replies to positive reviews is that the message is not very expected by customers and the interaction seems to end after the reply. Then the rationale molds the textual structure, lexical choices and syntax. Following Swales' definition, Bhatia (1993) later confirmed and added that:

Most often genre is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purposes (p. 13).

Constraints mentioned here in this quote are developed from shared purposes of the community where rules and conventions of a particular genre are realized based on the contextualized and institutionalized goals shared by participants. In this way, personal style is not the only thing that distinguishes genres from one another, but rather situation and constraint play leading roles in shaping pattern and convention of genre. Therefore, besides utilizing individual techniques, one must follow the rules that are followed by the whole genre community.

Miller (1984) defines genres as conventional rhetorical activities in repeated situations. I found Miller's definition is similar to Swales'. The repeated situations occur when community members interact with each other by using certain strategies repeatedly to fulfill their goal. This means that the situations take place regularly and are handled by members in the community. Later Yates and Orlikowski (1992) came up with another similar definition: genre is an institution where members agree to use the same set of rules to interact within the organization. Genre is established based on the repetition and reproduction of strategies used to help members achieve their communicative purposes. The action is repeated by members in the community;

for example, hotel managers are responsible for regularly answering prospective customers' queries by sending an email. The rules are being developed, while the potential customers are being reproduced. In other words, building a solid foundation of a particular genre takes time; without recurrent situations, rules will never be identified. The participants are required to develop genre competence which allows them to meet the requirement of the community. They are required to master constraints of a genre; and these constraints are generally characterized by context and institution. That is the reason why previous studies emphasize the term "recurrent communicative action" as one of the key elements in defining genre. Yates and Orlikowski (1992) also add that the recurrent practices shed some light on future communicative events. Thus, the predictability of genre can serve as a tool for preparing prospective members of the community for the forthcoming communicative event. Prospective members are not restricted to professionals; students are the target group as well.

2.1.3 Discourse Community

Swales' framework of discourse community has been frequently used in previous studies. There are six components for defining aspects of a discourse community:

1. A discourse community has agreed with a widely set of shared goals;
2. There are mechanisms of inter-communication between members of a discourse community;
3. Participatory mechanisms are mainly used to convey messages and provide feedback;
4. A discourse community employs knowledge of one or more genres to fulfill its goal;
5. A discourse community has acquired specific lexis; and
6. There is a threshold level of members with appropriate amount of related content and professionalism.

(Swales, 1990)

In a study of written discourse in business communication, the discourse community is generally recognizable. Such community may comprise

business professionals who regularly engage in the activities. Generally speaking, it can be seen that the ultimate goal of business is to make profits, but still there are diverse institutional and personal goals. This is the area I am seeking to understand in this dissertation. The goals of business communication vary depending on what kind of activity professionals are engaged in. For hotels' RTCs, the goal may seem obvious to some people. However, institutional and personal goals have to be investigated. Learning the real goal of a particular community as a starting point may shed some light on the rationale behind the actions taken by professionals.

The mechanisms mentioned in (2) and (3) refer to the events that are manipulated by members to create an opportunity to interact with others and deliver information. The members in a business community may use emails, for example, to communicate with others. The emails help conversations run smoothly, which allows members to achieve their goal. Normally, we understand that genre is an accepted way of employing a set of language forms in a particular activity (Wodak, 2008). Therefore, in (4), it implies that a discourse community's expectations are directed by the genres as they are carried out within the community.

The specific lexis mentioned in (5) refers to a range of word choices employed by members. These choices may be limited to a specific context. Corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches are employed to examine lexical properties of hotels' RTCs. In the business community, novices are given opportunities to develop discourse competence and become professionals, as driven by the environment. In this sense, newcomers are automatically trained by pre-existing activities and events. Thus, the community is able to remain on the path to fulfill a bigger goal.

2.1.4 Community of Practice

According to Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), community of practice (CoP) is known as groups of people who participate in the same activity, share a problem and strive to achieve the same goal. It is also fair to say that a CoP is shaped by the participation of its members. This does not mean that members in the same CoP have to know each other. They are automatically placed in a CoP by their personal practices. For instance, representatives from many different hotels respond to their customers' complaints regularly. Responding to customers' complaints is a

practice that those hotels' representatives share. In the field of linguistics, a CoP is perceived as genre and the values that put the community together or divided them from each other (Johns, 1997). An excellent example given by Lave and Wenger (1991) is that as students start to be involved in a particular activity, they begin to learn the differences between communities. As they enter a community, they begin to realize its specialty.

A CoP is grown by a set of shared communicative goals. Members mutually accepted and followed a set of rules to carry out a certain task. According to Wenger (1998), the following are three essential aspects that define a CoP:

1. Mutual engagement;
2. A jointly negotiated enterprise; and
3. A shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time.

(p. 76-80)

Based on this framework, those professionals working in different companies could be considered as participants in the same CoP. For instance, staff from different hotels who regularly respond to customers' complaints on TripAdvisor belong to the same CoP. Although they may follow different sets of rules, they carry out the same task. Nevertheless, institutional differences can cause differences in communicative purposes. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) suggest that people in different workplaces may perform differently.

A CoP develops standards and builds genres which engage its members. What makes each CoP different from one another is the communicative goal. To fulfill different goals, distinct strategies are employed. In this sense, the CoP of hotels' RTCs is the place where members (hotels' representatives) are allowed to fulfill their shared goal. The members of this CoP regularly respond to customers' complaints. The language used in RTCs can also be seen as an identity of the CoP; it is built and developed over time. Even though it is not technical in nature, it can be different from other related genres.

2.1.5 Communicative Purpose(s)

As Bhatia (1993) defines genre as “a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified by and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs” (p. 13), communicative purposes is the term that is worth elaboration. It goes without saying that the communicative purpose plays a leading role in genre research, but the question is, how does the communicative purpose contribute to the establishment of genre? There are three elements that take part in this process: communicative purposes, moves, and steps. The communicative purpose reflects the scope and the direction of genre. For example, Huang (2015) studied the community of Brief Tourist Information Texts (BTI). The study initially highlighted the communicative purposes of BTI texts which fall into three areas: giving information, capturing attention, and persuading readers. That is, the authors of BTI share the same goals which are to (1) give information, (2) capture readers’ attention, and (3) persuade readers. These three purposes then lead to smaller elements (moves and steps) and mold a particular genre into a distinctive structure. Move and step are further discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 2.1

The summary of relationships between key elements in defining genre (Bhatia, 1993)



Due to the expansion of genre study, genre theory and the concept of communicative purpose seems to have become more complex than it used to be. Lieungnapar and Todd (2011) note that the communicative purpose is always identified solely based on the researcher's own intuition. This may be because of a lack of accessibility to practitioners, and this led to an argument that the findings in genre analysis did not reflect the real purpose, but the form and functions. Lassen (2006) argues that communicative purposes should not only be built on the text but also the context. One of Bhatia's (1993) seven steps in analyzing unfamiliar genre suggests that instead of just bringing in a description from one's perspective, the study should involve a specialist informant, who belongs to the CoP. The analyst may confirm the findings by consulting with a member who participates in genre activities routinely. The rationale behind this step is that even existing literature may not be enough to provide insight into a particular disciplinary community. Without the consultation with professionals in genre communities, there is no guarantee that the findings reflect the actual ideas of practitioners. Take ESP teachers as an example. They are assigned to teach the language used in a specific context which most of the time they are not familiar with, and they are expected to understand it even if they have no actual experience with the CoP. As a result, they end up building artificial knowledge which can only touch the surface of genre.

Nevertheless, using a specialist informant does not ensure flawless results. Final decisions on genre investigation are the responsibility of researchers. It is advisable that to use specialist informants, researchers have to meet certain criteria. To use a specialist informant, the researcher has to be familiar with major aspects of the conventions, learn to understand a particular genre from a specialist informant's perspective, and consult with those who are considered members of the CoP (Huckin & Olsen, 1984).

Previous researchers doubted the reliability of the use of specialist informants. Using only one specialist informant in each study may not be enough; two specialist informants should be considered to confirm each other's findings. As far as the validity is concerned, Selinker (1979) introduced several desirable characteristics of specialist informants, but only a few were adopted and adapted for genre analysis.

That is, the specialist informants are required to be competent and well trained for a particular practice, be willing to share information about the genre under investigation, and be able to elaborate on how they manage to accomplish the communicative purpose.

Therefore, to maximize the validity and reliability of data gathered from specialist informants, such guidelines should be taken into consideration. The use of specialist informants can start as early as in defining the communicative purpose process which has always been done by the researcher's intuition alone. The present study adopts the three criteria for choosing specialist informants who are requested to provide information regarding the communicative purposes of RTCs.

2.1.6 Describing Contexts

Members of the community play a vital role in defining the characteristics of genres. As mentioned, rules and distinctive aspects are the product of recurrent communication. And the ones who develop all that are the members themselves. In other words, genres are being developed and characterized by participants' interactions. In professional matters, this process takes place while participants carry out their day-to-day tasks. It is not something that one can set up just for the study, so genres need to be created in natural ways and settings. This is the reason why genre researchers can only study existing genres. Before one can explain the uniqueness of a genre, participants of the genre need to be initially identified. In addition to the identification of participants, the researcher has to also identify other elements of the genre. The surrounding elements can define characteristics and purposes of the genre as well. The speech community is typically characterized by the aspects of surroundings.

Bhatia (1993) notes that a 'good' genre study has to make an attempt to explore overall contexts of genres. It is important to assume that rules and conventions of different genres are not identical. The differences in cultural expectation, linguistic variation, professional settings, and academic conditions make the rules and conventions of genres different from one another. These rules and conventions are automatically perceived and applied by members of a community. In some cases, they are even explicitly implemented to ensure and/or confirm a standard. For example, some Thai universities may encourage students to use a particular citation

format in their thesis; then students follow this tradition which is later passed on to the next generation. Since this factor potentially affects genre formation, especially in the text level, the institutional based effects are viewed as a crucial piece of the jigsaw that can give the researcher a clearer picture of a genre phenomenon. In the present study, it is hypothesized that Thai 3-star and 5-star UK hotels implement different sets of rules in the production of customers' responses.

Researchers can make use of existing documents such as manuals, instructions, and literature, to generate data for the study. Investigation at the organization level may be necessary, if the interference is detected during the genre formations. These context levels (including individual styles) guide genre to different directions from one another. One may prefer to carry out the investigation by using existing evidence such as literatures, manuals, guidebooks, or anything that can provide information about these context layers; however, those documents may not offer a naturalistic piece of evidence. Collecting information from professionals allows researchers to gain insight into the authentic distinctiveness of a certain context. To give an example, a researcher can visit an organization and interview professionals regarding institutional rules and conventions. As far as the contexts are concerned, this study aims at understanding the contexts of 3-star and 5-star hotels; this may help gain insight into the rationale behind the text.

2.2 ESP-based Genre Analysis

The genre analysis model is designed to add insight into variation and conventional organization of genre. It was created to drive researchers towards the more specific details which are relevant to English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes, and English language teaching. From the language teaching perspective, it is more favorable to investigate linguistic form and function which co-occur in the very specific genres. Genre analysis was used to answer the question, "why are specific discourse-genres written and used by the specialist communities the way they are?" (Bhatia, 1993). Genre analysis was believed to provide information about linguistic form and function co-occurrence. In fact, these data are considered useful in many linguistic areas. For instance, Panseeta and Todd (2014) used genre model to

investigate linguistic features and conventional structure of five-star hotels' responses to complaint. The results of the study led to material development for a business English course. In this case, the result will not be transferred to other genres because the data can only represent a five-star hotel community. In other words, it is possible that the other hotel communities yield different outcomes. Such specification of the analysis has confirmed the progress of the early discourse analysis. This in-depth analysis can provide thicker description (compared with previous discourse series) of each genre community (Bhatia, 1993). However, thicker description requires more theories to support multiple aspects. It is suggested that genre researchers need theories developed by previous linguistic studies such as application, sociology, and psychology. In this respect, other mentioned related fields of linguistics are meant to vary a research's dimensions which as a whole give insight into a particular discourse genre.

Genre analysis paradigm is that each genre is different to some extent not only in the areas of linguistics, but also sociology and psychology. This is the main reason why the genre model was designed and employed by multidisciplinary professionals (Swales, 1990). Even mode and medium can differentiate genres in some ways (Gregory, 1967). For instance, the genre of hotels' responses through websites (written) can be very different from hotels' responses in person (speech). Although these two genres are closely related and belong to the same community, the users of the genres may employ different strategies to achieve their goals. In addition, the moment of producing language can also affect characters of genre. Texts produced at different times may be found using different styles. Thus, an analysis of genre taking place in different eras can be a topic of investigation. This confirms why genre analysis is needed. In fact, there are many different factors that differentiate genres from one another such as language, culture, and expectation. This results in a large number of genre analysis researches investigating similarities and differences between languages, cultures and institutions. To identify the similarities and the differences between two or more genres, many comparative genre analysis studies were conducted. Mehrpour and Mehrzad's study (2013) compares the community of business email written by Iranian and native speakers of English. The findings reveal that the two genres are different in lexico-grammatical level. This emphasizes the difference between the genres, even if it is sometimes very minimal. Genres in academic settings also receive attention, no less

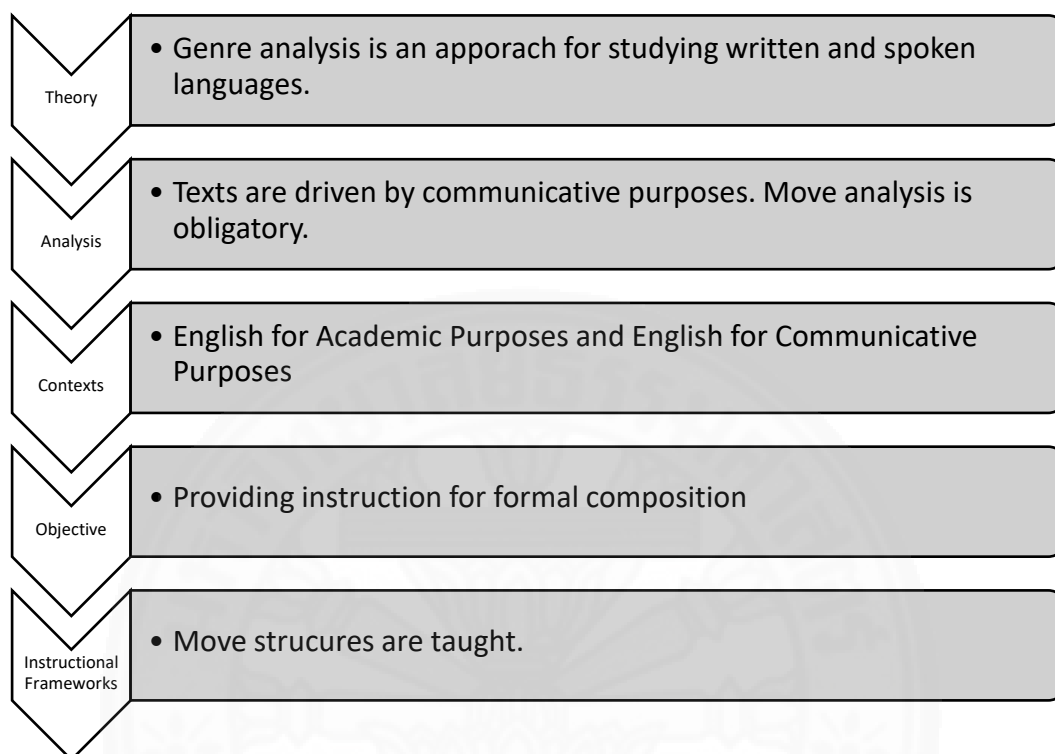
than in professional settings. In EAP perspective, a comparative study of English- and Chinese-medium journals in the use of hedge and boost in abstracts of applied linguistics articles by Hu and Cao (2011) has shown plenty of significant cultural, linguistic and genre-related distinctions.

Genre analysis is able to give more detail of a particular discourse community which is believed to be distinctive. The model allows scholars to gain insight into variation and schematic structures of each individual genre. With the purpose of analyzing a specific genre, the result of such study is limited to the one studied. This means that the result is not transferable to other genres, simply because even members of the same community can have much of a difference from each other. To get into details of a particular genre, previous researches from across multidisciplinary are essential, because the study of genre is not restricted to the linguistic field. As a result, this brings scholars from various disciplines to (re)explore the distinction of a genre by using diverse theoretical frameworks.

As mentioned in the first chapter (see Table 1.1), genre analysis is known to be operated by any of the three schools: ESP, New Rhetoric Studies, and Systemic Functional Linguistics. ESP school is set to inform English language instruction with an emphasis on language form used, especially in written texts, and classroom application. On the other hand, New Rhetoric offers another dimension of a genre. The framework focuses on the context level covering both academic and professional perspectives. Systemic Functional Linguistic, also known as Australian genre research, concentrates on the social processes and structural development taking place in a certain context. The present study is positioned primarily in the ESP school, because of its view of genre analysis as a gateway to the conventional structure that differentiates genres from one another. Genre placed inside the area of ESP is seen as communicative events (e.g., university lecture, letter of application, academic journal). In business communication, communicative events such as a promotional letter, a business negotiation, and a response to customer's complaint are something that professionals strive to achieve. Although genre analysis in the school of ESP has always been related with English taught in classrooms, it can also make a tremendous contribution to the world of professionals.

Figure 2.2

Key characteristics of genre analysis in the school of ESP (Hyon, 1996)



As I seek to explore the organizational pattern and lexical choices of RTCs, it is important to investigate the language used in this text and what makes it differ from other genres. According to Hyon (1996), figure 2.2 indicates the characteristics of genre analysis in ESP school which categorized into five main areas.

It is evident that genre analysis in the school of ESP is built around the ELT. The language form is prioritized. Previous researches have shown that genre analysis can be used to produce language learning materials for non-native students and professionals. The rationale behind placing this study in the area of ESP is that (1) this study aims at analyzing a written text type which plays important roles in university ESP courses and professional developments; (2) the conventional structure (moves) is one of the primary concerns as it sheds some light on how professionals organize the text; and (3) the ultimate goal of this project is to make a contribution to English classrooms and to improve professional practices.

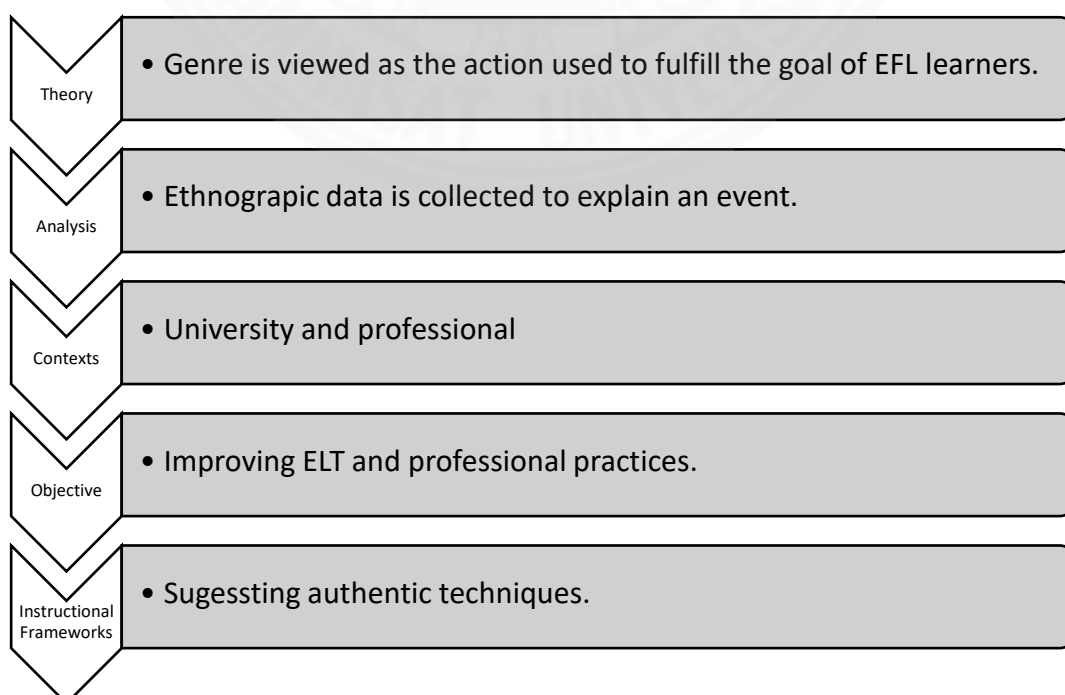
However, ESP-driven genre analysis seeks to explore the meaning of a particular genre through the use of language and rhetorical process, with little attention

paid to professional contexts, institutions, and other factors that go into the production. In this scope, the experience and perception of professionals who are considered the key participants are not taken into consideration. Up until now, we have seen so many studies of genre that were positioned in the ESP territory with the focus on language form alone. Genre analysis is not all about studying the final production of professionals. As far as the constraints of professionals' production and communication are concerned, the present study goes beyond the scope of ESP.

To do so, I partially take the notion of New Rhetoric Studies (NRS) framework as it expands this study. This method to analyzing genre takes a genre as a form of social interaction, recurrent situation, and situated cognition. NRS-driven genre analysis aims to add insight into a particular practice and event which involves ideologies, relationships between practitioners and their actions, and epistemologies. According to Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), it is crucial to connect the knowledge of genre with the members of the discourse community. Thus, the benefit of this method is its idea to work with practitioners to find out their genre knowledge. The following figure demonstrates the key characteristics of NRS.

Figure 2.3

Key characteristics of genre analysis in the school of NRS (Hyon, 1996)



As we can see, the field of NRS very much concerns about what professionals know and perceive of the text; this is what is actually missing in the school of ESP, where most of the attention is paid to formal organization. Although the present study is positioned mainly in ESP school, some notion of NRS is taken to help explore the rationale of the final product. The combination of these two approaches provides insight into hotels' RTCs as a complete genre in terms of organizational pattern, linguistic features, and participants' perceptions. Therefore, this study aims at exploring move and linguistic features as suggested by ESP school; participants' knowledge and perception are also the topic of investigation.

It can be seen that genre analysis is an approach that can involve more than one method to explore genre. In fact, different methods provide different views of genre. The combination of the two discussed approaches can lead to both academic and professional perspectives for better pedagogical process and material developments.

2.3 Move Analysis

An obligatory part of conducting genre analysis in Swales' (1990) and many other frameworks is to identify rhetorical organization, also known as 'Move'. Swales suggests that in order to explore conventional organization of texts, analyzing moves is necessary. Based on his definition, move is defined as a directional change in information. This definition covers a shift in purpose, topic, and content. In his genre analysis of the introduction part of research articles, he proposed the Creating a Research Space (CARS) model, which has been frequently mentioned by many researchers. This model was created based on the assumption that the authors of research articles tend to follow the conventional organization of the community in responding to (1) the challenge to find a space, and (2) to draw readers' attention to that space. This results in three different moves: *Establishing a territory*, *Establishing a niche*, and *Occupying the niche* (Swales, 1990). These three moves are then realized by sub elements which are referred to as 'steps' by Swales (1990), 'strategies' by Bhatia (1993), or 'sub-Moves' by Nwogu (1997). This dissertation uses the term 'step', because it has been used widely and has been recognized by researchers. Steps are employed to achieve a bigger goal (move).

Besides Swales' definition of move, it is also referred to as a section of texts that is characterized and constrained by communicative functions (Holmes, 1997). That is, the whole text can be divided into several different segments based on the communicative functions. One text may comprise more than one communicative function. The following figures are an excellent example of how a text is divided into different segments based on communicative functions.

Figure 2.4

Example of job application email

My name is XXX. I would like to apply for an English lecturer position in the Department of Languages at the University of XXX. I have just received my Ed.D in TESOL from the University of Columbia in New York, USA. I also did my M. A. in Applied Linguistics. I taught English in both Chinese and American universities for 5 years. I normally taught English to non-native speakers. The subjects of my instruction range from Foundation English to ESP courses. While I was working as a lecturer and studying, I managed to publish 5 research papers, most of which are classroom-based. My research interests include task-based learning, material development, and ESP. For more information regarding my experience and published articles, please see the attached files.

If you have any question, feel free to send me an email.

Thank you so much for your time.

Figure 2.5

Mapping Bhatia's (1993) framework of job application letter onto job application email (p. 122)

<p><u>Introducing Candidature</u></p> <p>My name is XXX. I would like to apply for an English lecturer position in the Department of Languages at the University of XXX. I normally taught English to non-native speakers. The subjects of my instruction range from Foundation English to ESP courses. While I was working as a lecturer and studying, I managed to publish 5 research papers, most of which are classroom-based.</p> <p><u>Establishing Credentials</u></p> <p>I have just received my Ed.D in TESOL from the University of Columbia in New York, USA. I also did my M.A. in Applied Linguistics.</p> <p><u>Offering Incentives</u></p> <p>My research interests include task-based learning, material development, and ESP. For more information regarding my experience and published articles, please see the attached files.</p> <p><u>Enclosing Document</u></p> <p>For more information regarding my experience and published articles, please see the attached files.</p> <p><u>Soliciting Response</u></p> <p>If you have any question, feel free to send me an email.</p> <p><u>Ending Politely</u></p> <p>Thank you so much for your time.</p>
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For the job application email in Figure 2.4, I used Bhatia's (1993) framework of job application letter, because the texts are identical and the only difference is the mode of communication. The job application email is divided into six moves. Each segment of the text falls into different boundaries of communicative functions which are represented by assigned code names: *Introducing Candidature*, *Establishing Credentials*, *Offering Incentives*, *Enclosing Document*, *Soliciting Response*, and *Ending Politely*. In other words, such code names represent the overall ideas of the scope of communicative functions. Previous genre studies have suggested that there must be a clear cut between each move, otherwise the result of coding may vary depending on individual opinions. The issue of boundaries and coding will be further discussed later in this section. The following section discusses the rationale behind conducting move analysis in genre study.

2.3.1 Significance of Analyzing Moves

Addressing the question of the significance of conducting move analysis is worthwhile as it is part of this study. Although hotels' RTCs is non-technical, it can be considered highly specialized text in which the authors are required to use more than just their language skills alone. That is, they have to meet the community's requirements, one of which is to meet the expectations of the audience (De Groot, 2011). Writing a specialized text receives a lot of attention, because additional strategies to general writing skills are required. That is, authors can no longer rely solely on their language and general writing skills. Upton and Connor (2001) note that understanding context, situation, and motivation is crucial, as it helps raise awareness of cultural differences in perceiving purpose and genre. One of the main objectives of this research is to inform students and professionals, especially non-native speakers of English, of move description in hotels' RTCs for better understanding.

2.3.2 Identifying Moves

Move structure represents the convention of a text; however, the definition of each move can be questionable. In some cases, the definition of moves is so subjective that it differs among people, and that leads to errors in coding process. The question is, is there any way that we can define the boundaries of moves more accurately and less subjectively? In some situations, boundaries could be established with physical evidences such as certain words and word combinations. For instance, the combination "*My name is*" (in Figure 2.4) cannot lead to something else but self-introduction. Spacing can also be used to set up boundaries. For example, *Ending Politely* (in Figure 2.5) in a job application letter and other business texts is always written separately from the main text. In this case, the function can easily be detected. Nevertheless, due to the great number of texts collected for genre study, the same move may show up in different places with different markers. Posteguillo's (1999) work suggests that fixed linguistic signals or other criteria may not be a good idea. Instead of relying solely on linguistic criteria to realize functions of a text, Kwan (2006) involves the approach that elicits cognitive judgement. This approach is supported by three common steps to move analysis:

1. Understand the 'big-picture' of general communicative purpose;

2. Differentiate the functions of each text segment; and
3. Search for functional and/or semantic themes to identify steps.

(Biber et al., 2007)

The first step is to capture the general purpose of the text. For example, the general communicative purposes of sale promotion letters are presented in the following figure.

Figure 2.6

Communicative purposes of sale promotional letters (Bhatia, 1993, p. 96)

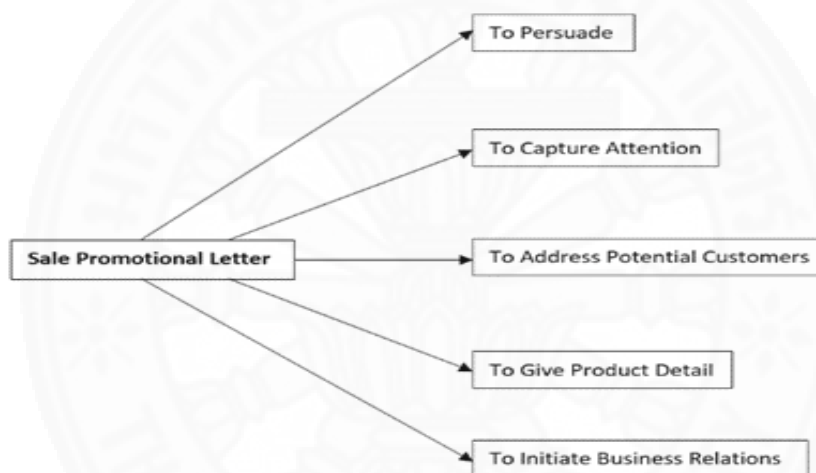


Figure 2.6 shows the general purposes that common sale promotional letters tend to serve. Keep in mind that those purposes are not yet moves. Once the overall purpose is identified, the next step is to work on different segments which may hold different functions. This step is known to be the most challenging task in move analysis, simply because it has to be done manually and reading across the corpus is required. It is also important to make sure the boundaries of moves do not overlap with each other. In some cases, researchers may adopt existing frameworks of other text types. Table 2.1 represents Bhatia's moves of sale promotional letters that authors used to achieve the above communicative purposes. The framework of sale promotional letters is a broad concept that can be applied in the text types which have the same or similar communicative purposes, such as standard bank letters.

Table 2.1

Moves of sale promotional letter (Bhatia, 1993, p. 97)

	Move
1	Establishing credentials
2	Introducing the offer
3	Offering incentives
4	Enclosing documents
5	Soliciting response
6	Using pressure tactics
7	Ending politely

The last step is to identify steps that together fulfill a move. For example, *Introducing the offer* (move 2), found to be the most vital part of the texts, is categorized into three steps: *Offering the product or service*, *Essential detail of the product or service*, and *Indicating value of product or service*. These three steps work under move 2. This, however, does not mean that all three steps are required in every text. Different authors or organizations may employ different steps to achieve the same communicative purpose.

Starting with a preliminary observation and pilot analysis is highly recommended. The findings of the pilot analysis are then refined until they are confirmed for purposes. After that, move structure with/without steps can be seen. Thus, the present study responds to the complexity of business text by adapting Biber's steps to move analysis, since it helps identify communicative functions that occur without a solid pattern and does not commit to linguistic criteria.

According to Biber et al. (2007), moves can occur with different lengths and frequencies. It is possible that some moves may be seen more often than others. In short, not every move appears frequently. The common move types are known as *obligatory*, whereas the ones that hardly occur can be marked as *optional* (Biber et al., 2007). Kanoksilapatham's (2005) study of biochemistry research articles sets the cut-off at 60%, which means that moves that appear at the frequency of 60% or

higher are regarded as *conventional*, while those appearing less frequently are *optional*. She justified that high point (60%) as it would be more productive for highlighting the distinction between two groups (*conventional* and *optional* moves) as her study attempted to find out which moves should be emphasized. On the other hand, fundraising letters, which are dynamic and persuasive in nature, may be categorized into three groups: *obligatory*, *typical*, and *optional*. After going through previous genre studies, there is no specific rule or number for categorizing and setting up a cut-off. It may be best to make the decision after the frequency of moves is analyzed.

2.3.3 Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches to Move Analysis

ESP-driven genre analysis strives to explore communicative functions that are generated by practitioners' communicative purpose. A CoP, as a whole, agrees to pursue such communicative purpose. That is, move analysis is mandatory in genre analysis in the area of ESP, since it focuses on moves and linguistic features of a particular text type. There are two approaches that have been employed to explore such elements in previous genre studies: top-down and bottom-up approaches. In top-down analysis, a researcher starts by identifying communicative purposes, moves, steps, and linguistic features, respectively. In bottom-up analysis, a researcher firstly explores linguistic features to draw boundaries of each move and step. (Lieungnapar & Todd, 2011)

Figure 2.7

Top-down processing

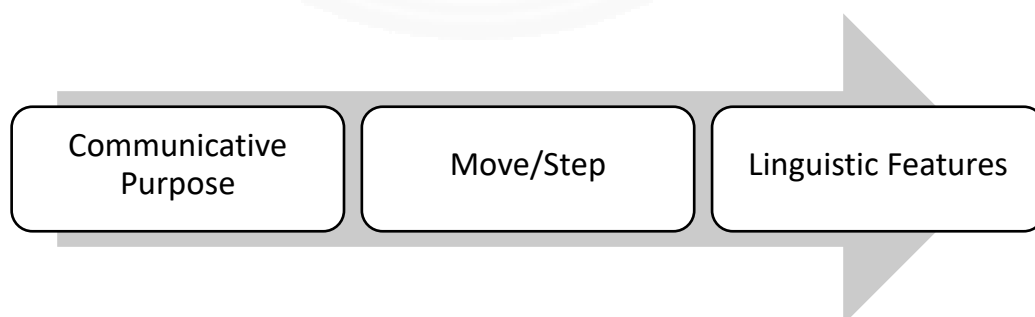
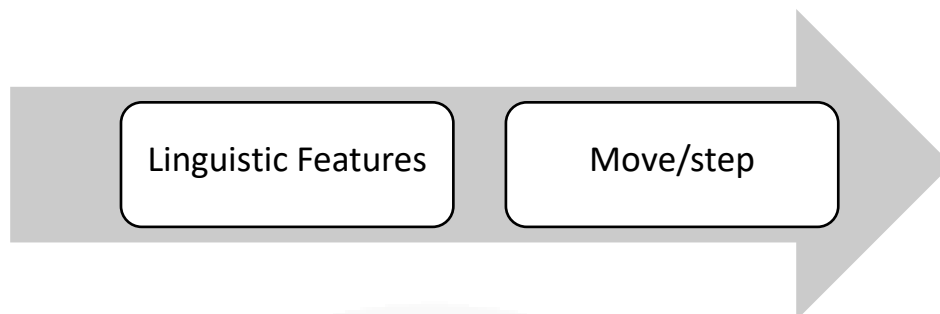


Figure 2.8

Bottom-up processing



Bhatia (1991) suggests that in top-down processing, it is important to understand genre in a situational context. To do so, participants' knowledge and/or experience should be taken into consideration, especially in the process of identifying communicative purposes, to gain insight into the question of why a particular text type is written (or spoken) in the way it is. Lieungnapar and Todd (2011) carried out the top-down analysis of 10 journal descriptions. They started their investigation by sending emails to several editors to ask for their opinions about the text type under investigation. The responses were found to be very helpful, because it helped them identify the real communicative purposes of the texts. For example, one of the communicative purposes was to inform potential authors of what they tend to publish.

Then, the responses were categorized into different groups based on key words to identify a list of possible communicative purposes presented by the editors. After that, move structure was formed based on the communicative purpose. The cut-off point was set at 100%. That is, moves that appeared in every text were marked as *obligatory*, while those that appeared less than 100% were considered *optional*. In top-down processing like this, it is typical that linguistic feature analysis is carried out lastly.

On the other hand, in bottom-up processing, genre is seen distinctive because of its linguistic features. Moves can be analyzed through qualitative and quantitative linguistic feature analyses. Researchers rely mainly on linguistic areas such as keywords, verb phrases, tenses, and themes to generate a move structure for a particular text type. In typical bottom-up move analysis, the researcher initially

generates keywords and their frequency by using concordancing software. Similar linguistic features identified are then grouped together to generate a move structure.

According to Lieungnapar and Todd's (2011) work, where top-down and bottom-up approaches were compared, the findings of the two approaches are different. In top-down approach, moves are built around the communicative purposes which are confirmed by professionals who are familiar with a particular text type. In bottom-up approach, moves are built around linguistic features, and researchers pay very little attention to a CoP. The present study, which values the knowledge and experience of professionals, aims to develop moves from the authentic rationale behind each function of hotels' RTCs. Thus, top-down approach seems to be suitable for this study.

2.4 Corpus Linguistics in Genre Analysis

Currently, analyzing a great number of texts is made possible by the corpus approach. One of the advantages of employing a corpus approach in genre analysis is that it allows researchers to identify the linguistic features that determine organizational pattern and language use in a particular text. Up until now, we have seen many genre studies using a corpus approach to provide empirical data for better understanding of a particular genre. Some examples are listed in the following table.

Table 2.2

Examples of corpus approaches used for analyzing genres

Researcher	Topic	Feature	Size of Corpus	Field
Holmes (1997)	Research articles (discussion)	Move	30 texts	Science, history, politics, sociology, etc.
Glendhill (2000)	Research article (introduction)	Phraseology	150 texts	Cancer article

Researcher	Topic	Feature	Size of Corpus	Field
Upton and Connor (2001)	Job application letters	Cultural differences	153 texts	Business
Santos (2002)	Business letters of negotiation	Move and word-choice	117 texts	Business
Upton (2002)	Direct mail letters	Move	242 texts	Business
Groom (2005)	M.Ed theses	Feedback	60 texts	Education
Ding (2007)	Personal statements of purpose	Move and word-choice	30 texts	Dentistry and medicine
Bruce (2008b)	Research articles (method)	Cognitive analysis	60 texts	Physical and social sciences
Skalicky (2012)	Product reviews	Move	142 texts	Business
Mehrpour and Mehrzad (2013)	Business emails	Move	Two sets of 60 texts	Business
Zhang and Vásquez (2014)	Responses to customers' complaints	Move and word-choices	80 texts	Business

It is evident that corpus linguistics can be applied in genre analysis to explore various aspects of texts. According to table 2.2, rhetorical structure (move) and lexical choices are among the most famous areas that can be identified by a corpus tool. On the other hand, some analysts tend to move beyond the traditional genre study by applying corpus linguistics to find out cultural differences, for example. The size of corpora also varied ranging from 30 to almost 250 texts. It is obvious that the number of texts used in corpus-related study is much higher than in traditional qualitative studies, where texts are analyzed manually. The table also shows that the use of corpus in genre study is not limited to any particular field. In this section, the uses of a corpus tool in move analysis and linguistic feature investigation will be discussed, as the two domains are selected to be part of this dissertation.

Biber et al. (2007) highlight five major differences between a corpus-based and traditional move analysis as follows:

1. The corpus-based approach allows a larger size of data collection;
2. A corpus program computationally identifies frequency;
3. With some well-designed criteria for move identification, a corpus tool can identify moves;
4. Each move can be analyzed independently for its distinctive features; and
5. Patterns of occurrences can be uncovered.

A corpus approach makes identifying conventional linguistic features of each move possible. In the old days, there were many studies that pre-selected linguistic features and manually analyzed them. Such pre-selected linguistic features limited the scope of study. With a corpus tool, it is possible to reach different features that co-occur and contribute to communicative purposes. Previous studies suggested that it is more worthwhile to let a corpus approach drive the study to many different features that differentiate each move from one another, rather than only those that are pre-selected. This suggestion responds to the theory saying that each move should be identified through different variations of language used by practitioners. Once each move has been identified, different sub-corpora can be compiled to explore the linguistic features

of each individual move. In the study of direct mail letters by Biber et al. (2007), for example, each move was analyzed for the use of stance devices and the rates of occurrences were then compared between moves. They discovered that modals of prediction/volition were most frequently used in *Offer incentives* (move 4), and modals of possibility/permission/ability were most frequently used in *solicit response* (move 3). This kind of analysis allows researchers to identify similarities and differences between moves and address how each move differs from one another. The distinctive linguistic features found also more strongly support the definition of the boundaries of each move.

In addition to linguistic feature identification within each move, a corpus tool can help identify frequency of move appearance and the overall length of each move. Thus, the usefulness of this function is that moves can now be categorized into different groups (e.g., *obligatory*, *conventional*, *optional*). This aspect of move analysis is found to be very informative, especially when the purpose of the study is to make a contribution to language teaching and learning. More frequent moves should be emphasized, while the *optional* ones, as its name suggests, can be considered as choices. The following table is an example of how a corpus tool is used to identify the frequency of move appearance and the length of each move.

Table 2.3

Moves of 60 biology research article introductions (Kanoksilapatham, 2005, p. 290)

Move	Frequency of Appearance	Number of Words
1. Announcing the importance of the field	100%	29,243
2. Preparing for the present study	66.66%	2,463
3. Introducing the present study	100%	6,949

Table 2.3 indicates how frequent each move appears in the texts. Thus, 100% means the moves (1 and 3) appear in every single text in the corpus of 60 biology research articles. Since the cut-off was set at 60%, the three moves realized in the

introductions of biology research article are considered *conventional*. In addition, the number of words indicated in each move shows which move is lengthier than the other and which move covers the largest part of the text. This leads to further exploration of the differences.

This does not mean that applying a corpus tool in move analysis will make the study quantitative. That is, even with a corpus tool, move analysis still must rely very much on cognitive judgement, especially in the processes of move identification, drawing the boundaries of moves, and coding. These processes should be carried out manually. Then, a corpus will play a vital role in linguistic feature analysis.

2.5 Analyzing Linguistic Features

As the investigation goes on, a smaller picture of genre starts to display. While the study of contexts is known as macro study, the study of linguistic features is considered micro study. In the study of language in genres, a researcher may commit on certain linguistic areas or let the investigation generate remarkable features. In this section, I discuss two different divisions of analyzing linguistic features: lexico-grammatical features and textualization.

2.5.1 Lexico-grammatical Analysis

Analyzing lexico-grammatical features is normally done through a quantitative process these days. Most of the time, the features that are frequently detected in the texts are tagged to be the topic(s) of discussion. To illustrate, the genre analyst may prefer to explore the use of present simple tense, for example, in business emails, because this tense aspect is found to be predominantly applied in the texts. The quantitative process mentioned above is carried out by using a corpus tool to generate data for the study. The quantitative analysis of lexico-syntactic properties generates empirical evidence to support and/or reject an assumption. Unlike the previous steps which aims to capture the reason why genres are constructed the way they are, the study of linguistic features is conducted to explore the textual construction process.

After the size of the data has been identified, a researcher then may pre-select linguistic aspects which are significantly preferred by authors or speakers.

The target linguistic elements may be found to play a key role in genre construction. Abbasian and Tahririan (2008) performed such an investigation in discourse and format analysis of e-mails; the study compared the emails written by EFL teachers to those of biology professionals. The linguistic investigation includes tense types and voices, and personal pronouns. The uses of tense types (past and present) and voice (active and passive) were counted to find out frequency. In a comparative study like this, the researcher can compare a particular linguistic feature used between two representative databases.

However, the study of linguistics in genre analysis is not limited to grammatical features. Lexical choices are commonly studied in genre analysis. A great example of lexical analysis is Abbasian and Tahririan's comparative study. The study examined the use of subjective pronouns in two groups of participants as part of lexical analysis. The statistical process emphasizes the frequency of subjective pronouns used in the texts. This empirical examination allowed the researchers to find out the similarities and the differences between two corpora in terms of frequency of preferable word choices.

Even though the frequency analysis of lexico-grammatical choices in genre offers empirical data, this kind of linguistic feature analysis informs very little about how certain linguistic features occur in a particular text type. In this case, the purposes of genre construction are ignored. It may inform us 'which one' but not 'why'. Bhatia (1993) notes that touching on surface linguistics features does not guarantee sufficient data which can be used to explain how participants manage to achieve their communicative purposes.

2.5.2 First-Person Pronouns: *We* and *I*

According to Schmidhauser's (2010) definition, pronouns are words that are used to replace nouns or noun phrases. Another influential one is from Nordquist (2010) who defines pronouns as words that substitute for a unit that is being referred to such as people, ideas, things, and animals. In English, pronouns are always used and they perform several functions in day-to-day conversations. Manning (2005) notes that one key function of pronouns is to simplify the communication; and that makes the communication a lot easier. In this regard, it can be seen that people tend to

adjust the way they use language to fulfill their own purposes and interests. Thus, there is always space for researchers to carry out an investigation on linguistic conventions which may address the question of how pronouns are used differently.

English for business is known for its normalization and formality. Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) state that pronouns have to be used selectively in business contexts; thus the users have to understand the convention of a certain text type in order to use pronouns. Nevertheless, this does not mean that pronouns have to be used sparingly in business communication; like any other context, they are considered essential and allow users used to produce language more easily and naturally (Manning, 2005).

Casan-Pitarch (2015) investigated the use of pronouns on banks' webpages and found that each pronoun has different effects on readers' perception. For instance, personal pronouns (e.g., *I*, *we*, *he*, *she*) express the author's involvement and claim for responsibility. In business documents, plural forms of pronouns are used more frequently than singular forms of pronouns (Casan-Pitarch, 2015). This theory was backed up by Fortanet-Gomez (2009) who notes that plural forms of first-person pronouns (e.g *we*) imply the involvement of all members of the organization. In other words, plural forms of first-person pronouns are used to claim responsibility on behalf of the organization, not an individual (Beard, 2000). This means that such pronouns may assure customers that they are dealing with an organization not a person.

On the contrary, the singular form (e.g *I*) is found to be unusual in business text types. Casan-Pitarch (2016) adds that organizations typically try not to have one single person represent the whole organization. Once the singular first-person pronoun like *I* is used, the receiver may interpret that the user tries to place himself/herself above the receivers and that may damage the sense of unity (Klijunaite & Nauseda, 2010). This means that in the world of organizations, in terms of subject first-person pronoun, *we* is more preferable than *I*, because it promotes a sense of community and allows users to represent the organization as a whole.

Nonetheless, what previous research presented does not parallel the reality. It is evident that the subject first-person pronoun, *I*, is still in use these days in business contexts. My preliminary observation of the RTCs shows that both *we* and *I* were used frequently. Appropriate instruction of the use of these two terms in business

writing is underrepresented. Since first-person subject pronouns are difficult to avoid in any writing situation, it is worth learning how authors use them differently, especially in business contexts wherein the first-person subject pronoun may have an impact on readers' perception of a company.

2.5.3 Recurrent Word Combinations

For decades scholars have paid attention to the study of frequent word combinations. Formulaic sequences (Wray, 2000) and phraseology (Granger & Meunier, 2008) are among the terms that were frequently used to refer to different text types of multi-word combinations. After the development of corpus tools, the study related to word combinations has gained more weight of importance and has been carried out extensively.

Recurrent word combinations can also be recognized as lexical bundles (Biber & Conrad, 1999), clusters (Scott, 1997a), recurrent sequences (De Cock, 2004), lexical chunks (Ishikawa, 2009), or multi-word constructions (Liu, 2012). These terms share a mutual definition as strings of words occurring repeatedly in the same register. The present study used the term recurrent word combination simply because it is non-technical and recognizable. Unlike idiomatic sequences or other multi-word combinations, recurrent word combinations discussed here do not have to be complete grammatical units (e.g., *I would like, thank you for, sorry for any*). Any string that has been used repeatedly by writers/speakers can be qualified as a recurrent word combination. However, there has not yet been a definite answer to the question of what constitute a 'string' and how frequent these 'strings' must appear to be qualified as a recurrent word combination. Up until this point, there is still no universal agreement on these regards. Thus, it can be seen that researchers coined different definitions that would fit the contexts and purposes of their studies. For instance, Biber and Conrad (1999) refer to a lexical bundle as a recurrent sequence between three or more words that show up in real-word language, and it can take oral or written forms. As far as the frequency is concerned, the frequency cut-off point varies from one study to another; for example, in Biber, Conrad, and Cortes' (2004) study, a recurrent word combination must occur 10 times per million words, while in the case of Cortes (2002), a recurrent word combination must occur 20 times per million words. It can be inferred that researchers follow different notions that will match with the situation of the study.

The advantage of recognizing the strings is that the process is objective, and can gather commonly used word combinations. This could not be done manually or intuitively. Thanks to the development of corpus software, it is a lot easier these days to generate a list of chunks from a corpus. With just a few clicks, a list of recurrent word combinations will be identified, and researchers can expect that the combinations generated by a corpus tool are able to represent their data.

The framework of recurrent word combination has been applied to explore different text types such as textbooks (Biber et al., 2004), academic writing (Chen & Baker, 2010), and students' essays (Ebeling, 2011). The boundary of recurrent word combination study is not limited to academic disciplines. Due to the rapidly growing interest in language for specific purposes, the framework of recurrent word combinations was expanded and covered other text types in the world of professionals such as EU online news (Jablonkai, 2009) and business meetings (Allen, 2016).

Realizing recurrent word combination has been proved to be very beneficial in many ways. There are two main applications of the notion of recurrent word combination – pedagogy and text type discrimination. In this regard, the study of recurrent word combinations that are so prevalent in a particular text type can make both practical and theoretical contributions to the areas of language teaching and learning and applied linguistics. Practical in the sense that it informs students and instructors of commonly used language with no attachment to grammar and theory in a way that it may shed some light on the characteristics of a particular text type (Kazemi et al., 2014).

It is undeniable that recurrent word combinations are widely recognized for its usefulness in language learning. Mastering the knowledge and application of a broad range of formulaic language allows students to achieve natural and real-world language. According to Conkling and Schmit (2007), language learners strongly depend on formulaic language in order to naturally produce speech. Therefore, formulaic language should be considered as enhancing the language learning experience. Kazemi et al.'s (2014) study of the impact of teaching lexical bundles to EFL students found that teaching fixed strings of words in EFL classrooms improved students' writing skills, and they also suggest that language educators should give more importance to the application of fixed strings of words in the classroom.

Recurrent word combinations are also used as a text type discriminator. Since each text type is distinctive in terms of language form, text types can be differentiated by using the prevalent linguistic features. In this way, identified recurrent word combinations can be the major characteristics of a genre as they make it different from others. For example, Studds and Barth (2003) differentiated three corpora of fiction, belle letters, and academic writing, by using what they called ‘chain’ which refers to recurrent word combinations. They discovered that chains of words can accurately discriminate text types. To put it differently, there is a list of recurrent word combinations that distinctively occur in a particular text type. This implies that discourse communities develop their own conventional multi-word units which are used within the community.

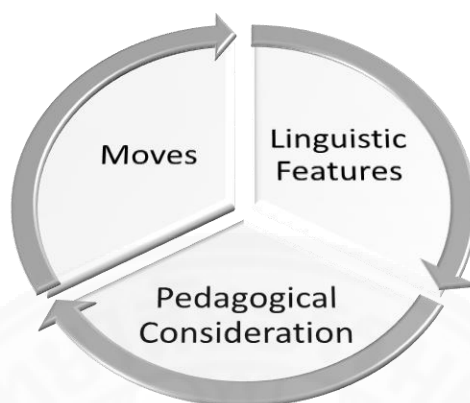
The application of recurrent word combinations is most of the time ignored in traditional classrooms where importance is always given to grammar and lexis (as an individual) instructions. Using a corpus tool to generate frequently used strings of words can be very beneficial to both language learners and scholars as they deliver unobserved forms of real-world language use.

2.6 Genre Research on RTCs

Although the study of business related and digital discourse has been carried out extensively over the past decade, the amount of genre research on RTCs is very limited. The purpose of this section is to reviews the relevant approaches used in previous research to explore RTCs as a genre. This will also help identify research gaps and the position of the present study. The relevant studies are divided into different focus areas as shown in Figure 2.7 and they will be discussed in these scopes: moves, linguistic features, and pedagogical. Keep in mind that up until now, there are only a few studies that focus on RTCs in particular.

Figure 2.9

Focused areas of research on RTCs as a genre



2.6.1 Moves of RTCs

Unlike RTCs, the research article (e.g., abstract, introduction) community contains models that can be applied across the disciplines. For example, Swales' CARS model can be applied in many different fields of research introductions. The communicative purpose is the key here. If the text types share the same or similar communicative purposes, one may be able to use the same model of analysis. Another example is the general communicative purposes of sale promotional letters which are to persuade and capture readers' attention. These communicative purposes are also served in many other business text types such as tourist destination information, product brochures, and even fundraising letters, but of course not RTC. Responses to customers' complaints do not share the communicative purposes with other business genres that have already been studied. The previous studies of RTCs did not investigate the organizational pattern based on communicative purposes. That is, none of them paid attention to the real communicative purposes of RTCs.

In Zhang and Vásquez's (2014) genre analysis of RTCs on TripAdvisor, the data were limited to only one country, China. 80 responses to negative reviews were collected from 4- and 5-star hotels located within four major cities in China. They employed Biber et al.'s (2007) model for move analysis. Ten moves were

identified. Their findings indicated that the organizational pattern of RTCs seems to be very strong, which means that authors tend to follow this pattern to achieve their goal. They also concluded that though this text type was viewed as a new genre, it tends to follow the convention of business correspondence.

Table 2.4

Moves of RTCs (Zhang & Vásquez, 2014, p. 58)

Move	Frequency (N)
1. Express gratitude	73
2. Apologize for sources of trouble	68
3. Invitation for a second visit	66
4. Opening pleasantries	64
5. Proof of action	63
6. Acknowledge Complaints/Feedback	53
7. Refer to customer reviews	50
8. Closing pleasantries	49
9. Avoidance of reoccurring problems	26
10 Solicit response	24

However, my preliminary observation on two groups of data (Thai 3-star and 5-star UK hotels) shows that move patterns of these two group can be different (see UKHRTC and THHRTC in the first chapter). It is possible that their move structures only represent the convention of 4- and 5-star hotels in China. Zhang and Vásquez's move structure was then adopted by Yaemwannang and Pramoolsook (2017) to analyze 60 RTCs of 4- and 5-star hotels in Bangkok. In their study, two additional moves were identified: *Refer to positive comments* and *Explanation of an issue*. The emergence of new moves implies that hotels located in different regions employ different strategies when responding to customers' complaints on TripAdvisor.

Another genre study of RTCs was carried out by Panseeta and Todd (2014). In their study, the target group is 5-star hotels in Thailand. 100 RTCs were collected from 20 different 5-star hotels in Thailand. Five moves were identified with some steps within each move. Their move structure provides much more detail in terms of sub-division within each move and step and its sequences and seems to be flexible compared with the previous study.

Table 2.5

Moves of RTCs (Panseeta & Todd, 2014, p. 10-11)

Move	Step
1. Opening (M1)	S1. Salutation
	S2. Greeting
2. Acknowledging feedback (M2)	S1. Expressing gratitude (and/or)
	S2a. Re-stating the complaint (or)
	S2b. Expressing concern about the complaint
	S3. Apologizing for the unpleasant incident
3. Dealing with complaints (M3)	S1. Explaining causes of the incident (and/or)
	S2. Reporting investigation or corrective action
	S3a. Soliciting direct contact (or)
	S3b. Promising to improve service
4. Concluding remarks (M4)	S1a. Expressing gratitude second thanks (or)
	S1b. Expressing second apology (and/or)
	S2. Asking for a return visit (and/or)
	S3. Soliciting direct contact
5. Closing (M5)	S1. Signing off
	S2. Signature
	S3. Job title

Nevertheless, neither one of these two organizational patterns are directly employed as a starting point in the present study, because those moves identified are not built on the communicative purpose. Thus, the present study aims to build its own framework, which has to be based on the authentic communicative purpose and previous literature.

2.6.2 Linguistic Features of RTCs

The previous studies of RTCs mentioned earlier explored different aspects of RTCs. The use of personal pronouns in business documents has been studied extensively, since they play a vital role in presenting authors. Zhang and Vásquez (2014) examined personal pronouns preferred by the authors. Both frequency of subject and object pronouns were identified. They discovered that plural personal pronouns appeared far more frequently than singular personal pronouns. The authors, most of the time, present themselves as an organization rather than individuals. That is, they do not personally claim responsibility for customers' bad experiences. The findings have been confirmed by previous studies indicating that first-person plural pronouns are used more frequently in business related documents. Bread (2000) notes that first-person plural pronouns are used to share responsibility between the users and the other who are in the same organization. When the information is delicate or uncertain, first-person plural pronouns can be considered to diminish responsibility. This can imply that dealing with customers' complaints involves delicate information, as it may help recover services.

Table 2.6

Frequency of subject and object pronouns in RTCs

(Zhang & Vásquez, 2014, p. 58)

Rank	Tokens	Pronouns
6	269	We
8	186	Our
9	131	Us
15	92	I
63	26	My

Rank	Tokens	Pronouns
70	24	Me

The present study aims to examine the first-person pronouns, *we* and *I*, since these two pronouns can inform us of the hotel representatives' stance when dealing with customers' complaints. The comparison between 3-star Thai hotels and 5-star UK hotels will shed some light on the use of first-person pronouns in two different contexts. As discussed in the previous section, frequency analysis tells us very little about how a certain word is used in the text.

Thus, the present study examines the first-person pronouns within the texts. The motivation behind this analysis is that the uses of *we* and *I* in business contexts is still ambiguous and they were found to be used interchangeably, especially among EFL learners. This analysis may help explain the uses of such pronouns.

2.6.3 Pedagogical Consideration

Doing move analysis has been known to help potential authors (e.g., EFL learners, professionals) to understand the rhetorical organization of a particular text type. On the other hand, linguistic feature analysis helps identify the actual lexical choices. It does inform us about the frequency and the pattern of certain linguistic features; however, how to put them into practice is still ambiguous. Designing a tangible material based on genre analysis has been overlooked.

Following their move analysis, Panseeta and Todd (2014) examined recurrent expressions. The authors may employ different rhetorical styles, but it seems that the number of recurrent word combinations used in the text type is limited. That is, they are likely to use only a group of recurrent word combinations which appear in formal business documents. For instance, "*Thank you for taking the time to*" appeared frequently (N = 17) in Acknowledging feedback (move 2). This can imply that such a bundle is common at the beginning of the responses. Then, lists of frequently used expressions and words were made into an instruction manual for EFL learners and professionals.

The main purpose of their research was to develop teaching material to support the instruction of hotel and business English. Since handling customers'

complaints has always been the task that students are expected to perform in my business English course, I found the material they developed very helpful and informative. The handout not only provide guidelines for the conventional structure, but also the common expressions and lexical choices. While recognizing conventional structure is always viewed as an important aspect for writing, the common expressions and lexical choices should be put into practice as well (Panseeta & Todd, 2014).

2.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the literature surrounding my research questions are surveyed with genre perspectives. Since genre analysis is multidimensional in nature, there are various theories and frameworks discussed; this includes general ideas about genre and its community, move analysis, and corpus linguistics. I utilized Bhatia's (1993) notion on the use of informant specialists, who can provide information regarding the communicative purpose. Ethnographic data is collected through interviews, and the criteria for selecting practitioners are adopted. The top-down approach is used as it values the communicative purposes on which move analysis is based. I also used Biber et al's (2007) framework of corpus-based move analysis to work on each move individually. This technique allows me to identify linguistic features that make each move different. As far as the linguistic features of RTCs are concerned, the first-person pronouns, *we* and *I*, and recurrent word combinations are pre-selected as subjects for this research. However, the analysis of linguistic features is not limited to those pre-selected ones. This research also employed the corpus-driven approach in which other linguistic features can be explored without prior assumptions (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Having a corpus tool driving through the corpora may help identify other linguistic features that are useful for EFL learners and professionals.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are only a few studies (e.g., Zhang & Vásquez, 2014; Panseeta & Todd, 2014, Ho, 2017) that have extended genre analysis of professional writing to describe Response-to-complaint (RTC), especially in the hotel context. None of them has made an attempt to conduct a comparative analysis of the texts produced between organizations that offer different degrees of personal services. The present study seeks to uncover gaps between 3-star Thai hotels and 5-star UK hotels to help EFL learners enhance their business writing skills and professionals improve their practices. Thus, to meet the expectations of this study, the hotel representatives who are authors were interviewed for the communicative purpose(s) and the texts were analyzed respectively.

This research was divided into four parts in accordance with the research questions. First, the shared communicative purpose was investigated. The data drawn from the RTC authors concerning the shared communicative purpose, can shed some light on the study of move. Second, move analysis was conducted to identify moves and linguistic features that make them different from one another. Third, I examined the use of first-person subject pronouns, *we* and *I*, and recurrent word combinations. Fourth, I investigated customer expectations to find out their ideal responses to their complaints.

Choosing data obtaining instruments has to be based on the appropriacy of the instrument to the purpose (Morrison, 1993). Thus, to carry out the above-mentioned investigations, it is essential to select accurate tools. In this chapter, the methodology of corpus compilation and selection of participants will be discussed.

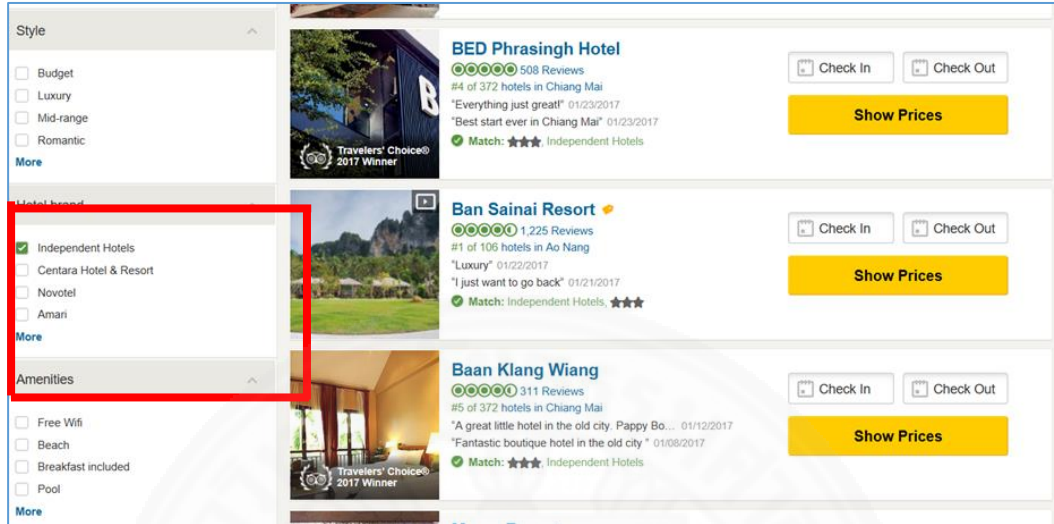
3.2 Corpus Compilation

All the RTCs used in the present study were obtained from TripAdvisor. Since the purpose is to compare between the practices of two groups of hotels, two corpora were compiled for this comparative analysis: (1) 3-star Thai hotel corpus and (2) 5-star UK hotel corpus.

3.2.1 Corpus of 3-star Thai Hotels' RTCs

Since part of this research is devoted to investigating Thai context in particular, one of the datasets was obtained from hotels in Thailand. There are a great number of hotels in Thailand, so it was necessary to narrow down the scope. The rationale behind choosing 3-star hotels is that the majority of this type of hotels are owned and operated by Thai people. 1-star and 2-star hotels were not chosen, simply because I found it rare for them to respond to customers' complaints on the website. However, searching for 3-star hotels in Thailand results in a large number of 'chained-brand hotels' (e.g., Novotel, Sheraton, Marriott) which are known to be owned by non-Thais. I excluded these hotels, because they do not represent 'local Thai hotels'. Fortunately, TripAdvisor offers various user-friendly functions for different kinds of activities, especially for searching hotels. One of them allows users to choose the brand of hotels. In the search box, there are many selections, one of which is 'independent hotels'. An independent hotel is defined as a hotel that is owned and operated independently. This means that it is not related to a hotel chain. Therefore, the result of this search is likely to give a list of 3-star local Thai hotels. Again, the word 'hotel' mentioned in this study covers all kinds of accommodation on TripAdvisor (e.g., resort, motel, hostel).

Figure 3.1
‘Hotel brand’ searching function on TripAdvisor



After refining the search criteria (Thai, 3-star, and independent hotel), the number of hotels was narrowed down to 229. In other words, these hotels represent local Thai hotels. Unlike chained-brand hotels (e.g., *Mandarin Oriental*, *The Peninsula*, *The St. Regis*), some of their names are Thai transliterated into English (e.g., *Ban Sainai Resort*, *Baan Klang Wiang*, *Bussaba Bangkok*). I then went through each hotel’s homepage in the website to collect the texts. In each homepage, there is a *traveler rating* section, where users can find reviews generated by customers and responses from the hotel. The review section is classified into five different rates ranging from *excellent* to *terrible*. To make sure that the responses are written to handle purely negative reviews, I chose *the terrible section* as a source of data. It is likely that the reviews posted in this section are purely negative.



Figure 3.2
Traveler rating section on TripAdvisor



It is worth noting that not every hotel responds to customers' reviews, especially in *the terrible section*. 106 of the 229 hotels did not respond to complaints in *the terrible section* and 6 of them did not have any customers' reviews in *the terrible section*. Thus, 122 hotels that neither respond to complaints nor have a review written in *the terrible section* were removed from the list. At this point, there were 117 hotels that could still meet the requirement and provide 117 RTCs written by 117 different authors. Although there could be several responses in one hotel, only one response was collected. In the case that there is more than one RTC in a hotel, the most recent ones were selected. The rationale behind this is that a hotel tends to use only one representative to respond to customers' reviews, and I found that the messages from the same hotel seem to be identical, because they may have been written by the same author.

Figure 3.3

Example of a customer's review and its response in review section, TripAdvisor

 Reviewed February 6, 2016  via mobile

ZERO STARS, worst hotel I've seen for a long time

Where to start is the problem ,I booked late and missed rooms at best western soi20 so I thought I'd give this place a chance similar price , the official pictures are nothing like the reality , walls dirty with scuff marks , furniture broken and chipped paint everywhere , bathroom furniture is unreal ,towels filthy and worn out , air con vent with years of dirt and dust untouched , filthy glass in lifts , dirty towels & linen left in corridors and the best bit was the live rock band 30 metres away till 3am , I slept in my headphones because the music was that loud outside , staff good but whoever owns this dirty uncared for hotel needs to sell up , if the management reply like the last few reviews please don't say we will try harder because it's a lie , I've just read past reviews and you have done nothing about the other poor reviews , JUST AVOID THIS HOTEL AT ALL COSTS , better same priced options available .

[Show less](#)

Stayed: February 2016, traveled on business

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC.

[Redacted]

this review

Responded February 28, 2016

Dear [Redacted]

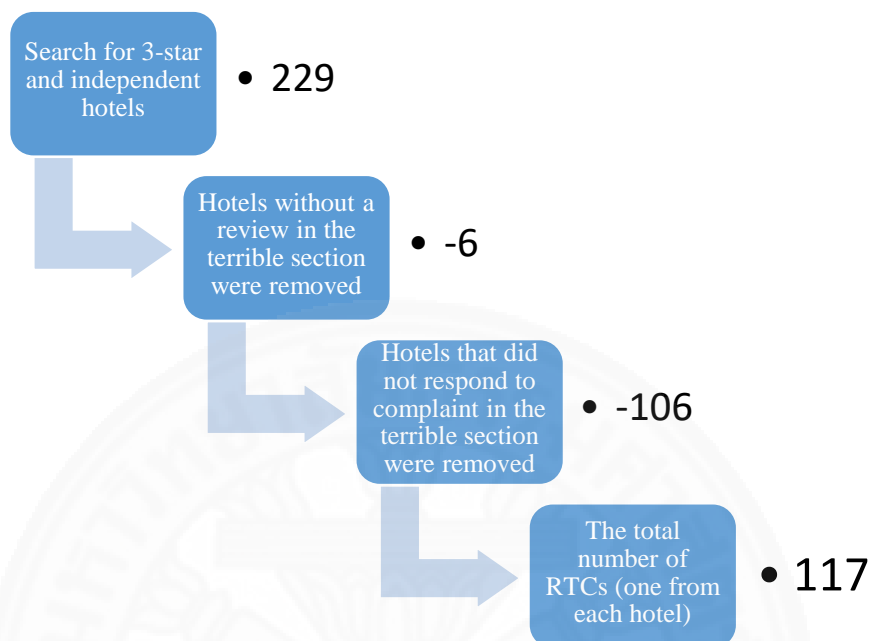
How very disappointing to hear you did not have the most fantastic time with us. We strive to provide excellent service to each of our guests. We will for sure be getting your feedback back to management so that the details you've mentioned can be looked into further. We value your opinion.

Only one response can be enough to represent a particular hotel. All examples presented in this research are original in spelling and format, but authors' names and positions were anonymized for ethical reasons.

I now have a corpus comprising 117 hotels' responses to negative reviews, with a total of 23,709 words. The average number of words of the texts is 202 words. Nevertheless, this was not yet the final dataset of the Thai hotel group. Before moving any further, I had to build a corpus of the UK hotel group. After that, the following step is to build two comparable corpora which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Figure 3.4

Process of developing a corpus of 3-star Thai hotels' RTCs



3.2.2 Corpus of 5-star UK Hotels' RTCs

Since the present study is driven by comparative analysis, another corpus was compiled. The aim of this study is to shed some light on the differences between the responses written in English with different corporate practices and standards. In this research, a 3-star Thai hotel is considered as one with local standards, and a 5-star UK hotel is viewed as one with international standards for which this study aims to prepare EFL learners and professionals. Being able to provide the service of 5-star hotels can benefit any kind of hotel. According to Panseeta and Todd (2014), 5-star hotels have to live up to their customer expectations by assigning experienced representatives to handle customers' complaints, and thus their responses can reflect professionalism, which is something that EFL learners and professionals have always been strived for.

In the hospitality and tourism industry, English has always been the medium of communication between international travelers and service providers; this includes on TripAdvisor.com, where English is used as a medium of communication, especially in the review section. For this reason, I had to choose a country where English is used as a native language; this includes (but is not limited to) United States

of American, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, and United Kingdom. Although English is known to play a central role as a lingua franca, there are different varieties of English (e.g., American English, British English). Instead of gathering texts from different countries, only the UK was chosen to represent native speaker English because, according to TripAdvisor's *2016 Travelers' Choice*, London was ranked number one in the world's top 25 tourist destinations. Thus, British standards and practices could be a reason for London's popularity over other cities in English speaking countries. This leads to my decision to use the texts from 5-star hotels in the UK as subjects for this research.

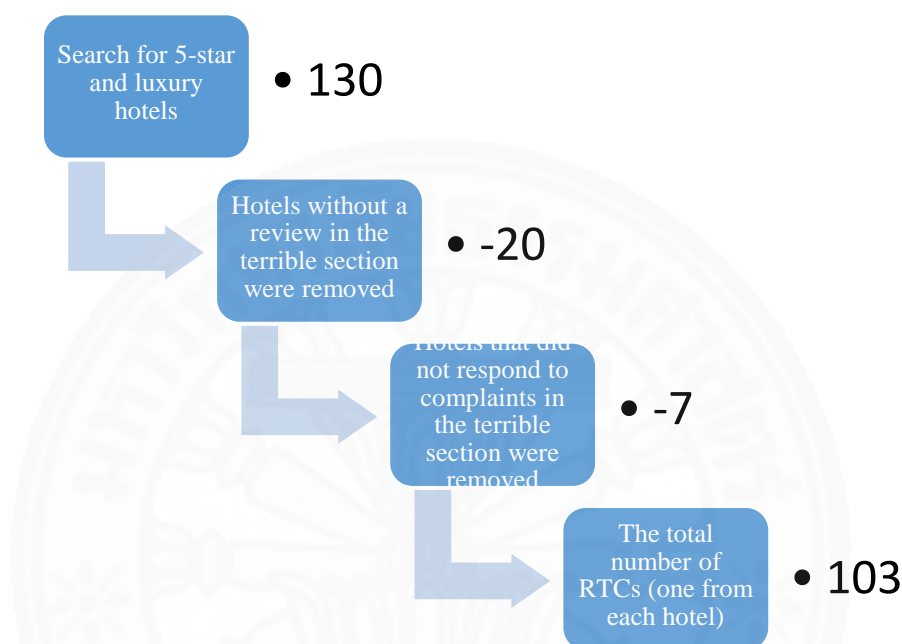
Due to the fact that the process of developing the corpus of 5-star UK hotels is similar to that of the corpus of 3-star Thai hotels, which has been discussed already, only differences are highlighted in this section. First, I started by using the filter to identify the target hotels. The first search was for 5-star hotels, and there were 142 hotels in the UK that fell into this category. As far as the quality of services and professionalism are concerned, choosing the hotels with service of the highest possible standard is beneficial. There is a quote that says "a good teacher sets really high expectations, but lets a student think he can reach them. That's most motivating for students." 5-star hotels may somehow guarantee 5-star services, but moving beyond five stars will guarantee better quality of services. There was another useful filter that allows me to search for different hotel styles (e.g., *best value*, *budget*, *mid-range*, *family-friendly*, *luxury*). I selected *luxury* as an additional filter. Luxury hotels are famous for their quality of services. The result shows 130 hotels that fell into both categories (5-star and luxury). Again, I then visited each hotel's review section, and similarly the responses were gathered from the *terrible section*.

While browsing through the homepages of each hotel, I found that 20 of the hotels had no review posted in the *terrible section* and 7 hotels did not respond to complaints in the *terrible section*. Thus, failing to provide RTCs disqualified them from the dataset. At this point, I had a list of 103 hotels with 103 RTCs generated from different authors. The total of 103 RTCs resulted in a 14,493-word corpus with an average number of words of 140. Since this research aims at comparing between two comparable groups of hotels, the number of texts should be the same and the size of

each corpus should be similar. In the following section, I discuss the process of developing two comparable corpora for this study.

Figure 3.5

Process of developing a corpus of 5-star UK hotels' RTCs



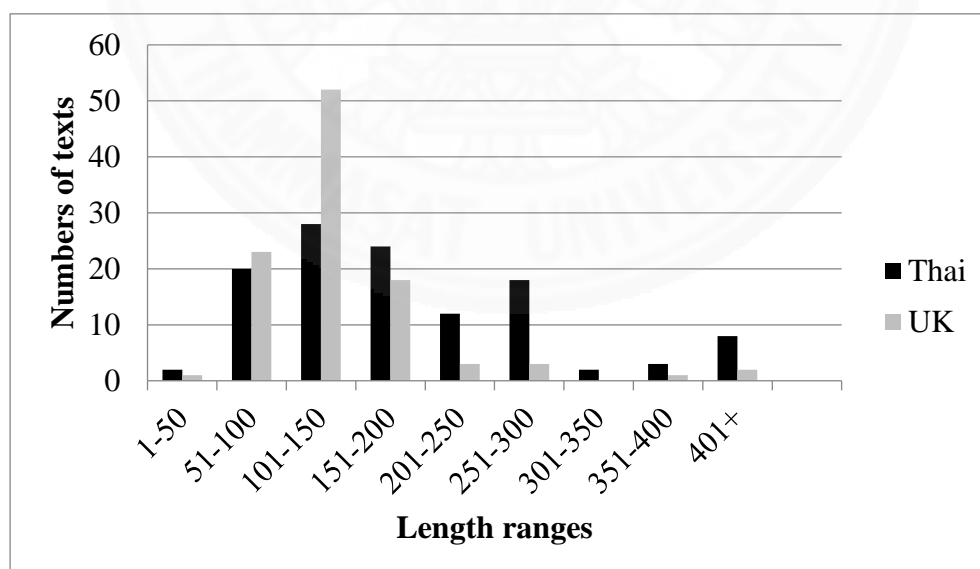
3.2.3 Compiling Comparable Corpora

There are some challenges in developing two comparable corpora for this study. Up until this point, I had 117 RTCs of Thai hotels and 103 RTCs of UK hotels. As far as the number of texts is concerned, the two corpora should have the same number of texts. Also, the gap between the numbers of words is great with a 9,216-word difference. I followed the previous comparative genre studies keeping the amounts of Thai and UK hotel texts identical and keeping the size of the corpus comparable to facilitate the statistical analysis and comparative study. To do so, first, I categorized the texts into nine different length ranges: 1-50 words, 51-100 words, 101-150 words, 151-200 words, 201-250 words, 251-300 words, 301-350 words, 351-400 words, and above 400. Each of the texts would fall into one of these length ranges. Table 3.1 and Figure 3.6 compare the numbers of texts in different length ranges.

Table 3.1
Numbers of texts in different length ranges

Length range (words)	Thai (N)	UK (N)
1-50	2	1
51-100	20	23
101-150	28	52
151-200	24	18
201-250	12	3
251-300	18	3
301-350	2	0
351-400	3	1
400+	8	2
Total	117	103

Figure 3.6
Numbers of texts in different length ranges



In the UK hotel corpus (UKHC), Table 3.2 shows that the majority of texts fell into the 51-100, 101-150, and 151-200 length ranges with 23, 52, and 18 texts, respectively. In other words, around 90% of the texts fell into the length range of

51-200 words and almost 50% were in the range of 101-150. Only one text fell into 1-50 and a few texts fell into other length ranges. Similarly, in the Thai hotel corpus (THHC), 72 of 117 texts fell into the 51-200 length range. It can be seen that the length range of 51-200 is very common in RTC composition. Before finalizing the dataset, I read through the lengthier texts just to confirm that leaving them out of the dataset would not affect the result of move analysis. I discovered that constructing lengthy messages (above 200 words) results from the lengthy reviews written by customers. For example, some customers share several points of their unpleasant experiences with the hotels, and hotels have to respond to each point that the customers brought up. This results in lengthy texts where each point is mentioned. As far as move analysis is concerned, this kind of text did not contribute any new feature. In short, some moves were found to repeat themselves to make sure that all the points that customers mentioned were addressed. Thus, they were excluded from the dataset.

At this stage, the size of THHC and UKHC were reduced to 72 and 93 texts respectively. Again, the numbers of texts need to be deliberately identical and the numbers of words needs to be roughly similar to facilitate statistical analysis in move and linguistic feature. Differences in the size of corpora can affect the frequency of moves and linguistic features. For example, a particular move in one corpus may appear more frequently than in another corpus because of the differences in the numbers of texts and words. However, there was a challenge in building two comparable corpora for this study. I did try randomly eliminating 21 texts in UKHC to reduce the number of texts down to 72 which was set as a goal, but still there was a big gap between the numbers of words of the two corpora. I decided to randomly exclude 21 texts from the range of 100-151, simply because the greatest difference in the numbers of texts was in this range with a 24-text difference. Thus, I randomly excluded 21 texts from UKHC in the range of 101-150. The numbers of texts in THHC and UKHC were now identical with 72 texts in each and they represent the typical RTCs in both classes of hotels. A total of 72 texts in THHC results in a 9,250-word corpus, while a total of 72 texts in UKHC results in an 8,757-word corpus. These final datasets were used for comparative move analysis and linguistic feature analyses.

Table 3.2

Numbers of texts in the final datasets

Length range (words)	Thai (N)	UK (N)
51-100	20	23
101-150	28	31
151-200	24	18
Total (Number of texts)	72	72
Total (Number of words)	9,250	8,757

All the word counts in this study were initially done through the *Word Count* function of Microsoft Word and I then confirmed the findings by checking *Word Tokens* results in AntConc 3.4.4w. The word counts started from the first word of the messages, even in the case that the authors address the reviewers at the beginning as shown in THHRTC02 (figure 3.7):

“Dear....”

(THHRTC02)

The word count ended with the last word of the messages. Some messages might end with the author’s name, position, and affiliation as shown in THHRTC02 (Figure 3.7):

“(Hotel’s name)”

(THHRTC02)

All the messages were original, but the authors’ names were concealed and replaced with “XXXX”. The following figures are examples of the texts extracted from the two corpora.

Figure 3.7

Example of the RTC in THHC (THHRTC02)

Dear XXXX

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your comments with us of your recent stay.

Your feedback about the breakfast, Coffee & Tea qualities are well noticed and we are sad to hear that these were below your expectation and below what we wish to serve. This comment is shared already with our Food & Beverage Team and our Executive Chef for further improvement.

In regards to your remarks pertaining to our room facilities and noisy from the unplanned activities from outside the resort, please rest assured, we are taking steps to help ensure problems will do not occur in the future.

Sincerely yours,
XXXX
Hotel Manager
(hotel's name)

Figure 3.8

Example of the RTC in UKHC (UKHRTC05)

It was very disappointing to hear about your experience. At (hotel's name) we strive for 5 star service in every facet of the business. This said, I am perplexed to say the least that one of our staff members would not have taking your call, or indeed have said that we would not call you back. All of our staff are trained to assist with reservations, and such would have certainly tasked one of the senior staff members of staff to call a guest back should they not have been able to assist them for any reason.

I would very much appreciate your feedback, and would welcome it. Please feel free to email me, at (emil address)

3.2.4 Size Issues

Although the present study relies very much on qualitative approaches, the data were also involved in quantitative analysis with the application of a corpus tool. It is evident that there are a great number of studies in the field of applied

linguistics that use big-name corpora for referencing. The British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) are among those well-cited corpora. As their names suggest, these corpora are made up of millions of words and they tend to represent different varieties of the language. Typically, this kind of corpus comprises samples of both written and spoken texts from a variety of source (e.g., academic books, fictions, letters, students' essays, newspapers).

However, this does not mean that every corpus used in applied linguistic research has to be that big. The size of the corpus varies depending on the objective of research. In fact, the corpus that is made up of only one genre like hotels' RTCs corpus will be a lot smaller than those with multiple sources. It is argued that a smaller specialized corpus is recommended, because it provides opportunities to gain insight into language form in a particular context (Flowerdew, 2004a; Handford, 2010; Koester, 2010). This implies that when comparing a large corpus with various text types with a smaller one built for a specific purpose, researchers can focus only on the text type they intended to study. In addition, building up a corpus for a particular study enables researchers to customize it to serve their specific purposes. According to O'Keefe, McCarthy, and Carter (2007), it is beneficial to have a compiler as a researcher who is familiar with the context. This can balance the qualitative analysis by researchers and quantitative findings generated by a corpus tool.

The connection between a corpus and a particular context is essential, especially in ESP research, where the data generated by small-scale specialized corpora informs teaching and learning a language for specific purposes (Tribble, 2002). In genre research, researchers often compile their corpora which are customized for a particular study. For example, Panseeta and Todd (2014) customized their corpus by gathering only 5-star hotels' RTCs. In this way, the findings of their study can represent business professionalism, which is the purpose of their study; this results in a small corpus with 15,901 words. On the other hand, Zhang and Vásquez (2014) investigate the same text type (hotels' RTCs on TripAdvisor.com), but their corpus is noticeably smaller with only 9,405 words. The sizes of the corpora are different because the purposes are different. Zhang and Vásquez's study aims at identifying representative of Chinese hotels. They justify that the country is undergoing unprecedented degrees of internal

tourism. There is no absolute model for building a corpus. It is important to have a clear objective first, and a corpus should be compiled based on that objective.

3.3 AntConc

There are various types of tools that can support corpus analysis, but the users have to be certain about what aspects of the language they propose to investigate (Anthony, 2013). The common corpus tools include lemmatizer, word lister, and concordancer. According to Francis and Kučera (1982), a lemmatizer is used to analyze every form of words as a bundle of lexical forms with the same root and the same word class varying in inflection and/or spelling. A word lister is capable of creating a list of words on which researchers can perform simple statistical analysis; for example, it can give a total number of tokens of the corpus, and the list of words can be rearranged in different way to make it easy for users to find what they are looking for (Bowker & Pearson, 2002). Besides having the ability to generate a list of words and the frequency of each individual word (like word lister), a concordancer can also be used to see how each word occurs in its context. This information is demonstrated through the function called Key Word in Context (KWIC). In addition, other aspects of data can be generated by the current version of the concordancer (e.g., clusters, collocates).

However, the usefulness of a corpus tool is not restricted to those features. Different programs may offer different functions for analyzing a corpus. Some of the most frequently investigated features in ESP research are presented in the following table.

Table 3.3

Examples of common features investigated in ESP research

Feature	Description
Collocation	Two or more words (usually two words) that co-occur in a more or less fixed string
Recurrent word combination	The string of words that recur above a certain degree

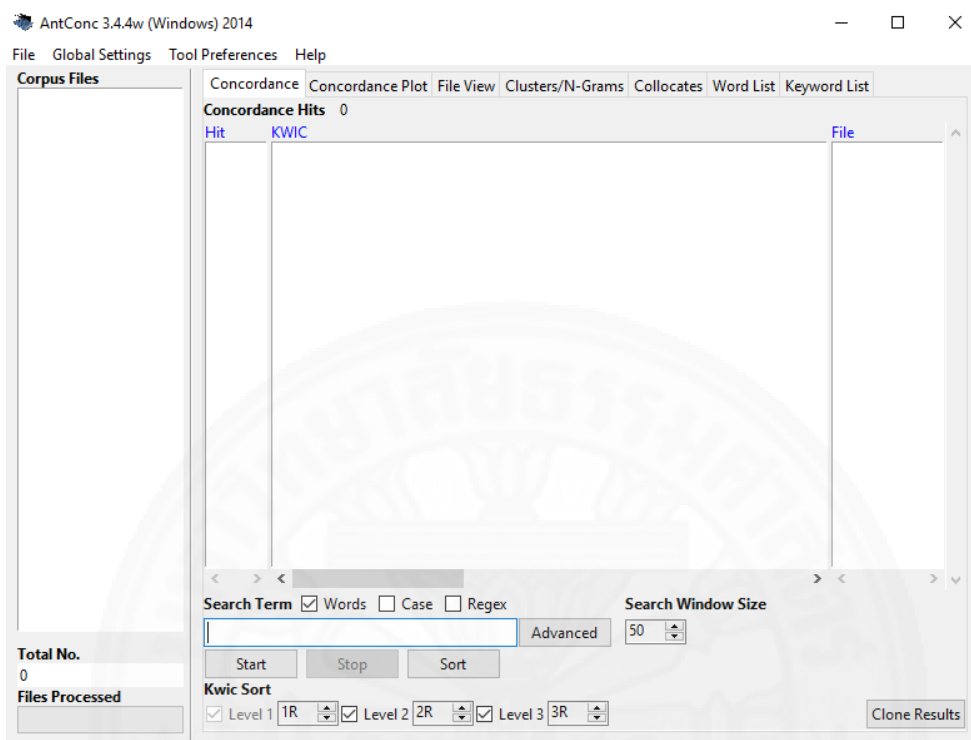
Feature	Description
Word choice	The words that occur in certain contexts

There is an issue regarding the cost of the program. While many researchers may be sponsored by their organization for access to an expensive corpus toolkit such as WMatrix® or WordSmith Tools, some self-funding researchers find the prestigious program unaffordable.

For the present study, I chose AntConc version 3.4.4w (the latest version for Windows). Having been created and developed by Laurence Anthony, AntConc is a standalone program designed specifically for corpus analysis. Thanks to its creator, this program is free for everyone and available of three major operating systems – Windows, macOS, and Linux. AntConc has been used in many studies in the field of applied linguistics. AntConc and WordSmith Tools are among the most used programs for analyzing texts (Tribble, 2012). Both of them are known for their speed, and they are easy to operate. Although the creator of AntConc admits that WordSmith Tools performs slightly faster than AntConc, the difference is very minimal.

The latest version of AntConc has six differences functions, but only three of them were used in this study: *Word list*, *Concordance*, and *Clusters/N-grams*. *Word list*, as its name suggests, is used to generate a list of words that occur in the texts and the frequency of each word. *Concordance* shows how a particular word occurs in the context. This function allows researchers to see the patterns and surrounding elements of each individual word. *Clusters/N-grams* is used in this study to generate recurrent word combinations across the corpora; for instance, the entire corpus is scanned for the recurrent word combinations with a certain number of words (N). This ‘N’ can be customized to serve the purpose of the study (e.g., 3 words, 4 words).

Figure 3.9
User interface of AntConc 3.4.4w



3.4 Communicative Purpose(s) and Characteristics of RTCs

This research draws on interview data to learn about the context of RTCs. Asking professionals for their perceptions of the tasks they perform regularly is not something new these days in the field of applied linguistics. Instead of relying on one's intuition, expert members should participate in the study of genre to provide in-depth information about a particular genre. An excellent example of an investigation of professionals' perceptions is Beaufort's (1997) study of writing in the workplace. The office workers were interviewed several times regarding their writing experiences. The validity of data is controlled by making sure that the participants were actually involved in all the activities of this genre (e.g., writing, reading).

Before the interviews were scheduled, I had to identify the desirable characteristics of the participants. I followed Beaufort's (1997) notion of choosing participants as it can help control the validity of data. The selected participants are those who regularly respond to customers' negative reviews on TripAdvisor.com. As far as

their competence is concerned, at least one year of experience on the genre was required to make sure that they are not novice members.

3.4.1 Authors of RTCs

There is no absolute number of participants; it depends on factors such as time constraints, accessibility to the qualified participants, and ethical reasons (Baker & Edwards, 2012). For the present study, two groups of participants were needed: the representatives of 3-star independent hotels in Thailand and 5-star luxury hotels in UK. These hotels were identified by TripAdvisor. The number was settled at two for each group. A minimum of one year of experience as an author of RTCs was required for both groups of participants. Two local Thai hotels and two top UK hotels were randomly selected. Once all the hotels were identified, I visited their homepages on TripAdvisor to confirm that they responded to their customers' reviews in *the terrible section*.

3.4.2 Interviews

This present research employed two approaches to collect data from participants: synchronous and asynchronous. The participants from the Thai hotels were interviewed in person, whereas the participants from the UK hotels were given a set of questions to be completed at the place and time convenient to them, through email because of the geographical distance.

As for the Thai hotel group, they were initially contacted by telephone and informed briefly about the project. Then, the information sheet (see Appendix A) was sent to them through email. Once they decided to participate, the date and time were arranged at their convenience. The interviews were conducted at their offices. The letter of consent (see Appendix A) was given to them before the interviews started. A digital voice recorder was used to audio record the interviews and the files were saved in MP3 format as it can be recognized by most computers. Since the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, the topics were not restricted to the interview questions I prepared.

The representatives from UK hotels were initially contacted through email with an attached information sheet. For the sake of convenience, they were given an electronic link which would take them to an online questionnaire built on Google

Form. Before participating, the participants were informed of the nature and purposes of the present study and reassured that their identity and affiliation would be kept anonymous. The participants were encouraged to use their mother tongue to express their thoughts. The questions were developed on the basis that they aim to elicit the authors' perceptions towards the RTCs. The interview questions were divided into two sections: author's background and perception sections (see Appendix B). The perception section of the interview comprised six main questions. The questions revolved around their communicative purpose of the genre.

3.4.3 Analyzing Interview Data

The interview data were analyzed and grouped into different themes. The themes were captured from the interviews. Interview summaries were created separately in Word documents. The overall picture of themes was initiated by notes taken during the interviews and interview summaries. The theme structure and coding system developed as more data were coded. After the coding was completed and the themes representing the data collected from the interviews were identified, the data were recorded to confirm the findings.

3.5 Analyzing Moves of RTCs

The present study employed top-down approach for analyzing moves of RTCs. Unlike bottom-up approach, where the analysis begins from the linguistic signals, top-down approach starts with a general idea about the text type, and the analytical model is developed mainly from the content of texts. This study was set to start by defining the genre and investigating its communicative purpose(s) to learn about the overall rationale behind the organization pattern. Then moves were identified based on the communicative purpose and content of the texts. Thus, top-down approach was chosen as it values the authors' knowledge and is driven by content rather than salient linguistic features which were examined separately after each move was identified. The communicative purpose and content, intention, and function lead to move identification (Santos, 2002).

This research followed the analytical steps proposed by Biber et al. (2007) as a framework to explore RTCs. The rationale behind this selection is that it is a

common procedure carried out to analyze moves. Biber et al. (2007) suggests that there is no absolute route to move analysis, so such procedures can be adjusted to serve the purposes of this study. This model starts with understanding the general communicative purposes of the texts. To do so, the authors of RTCs were interviewed about the purposes of the genre. I found it essential to actually ask expert members, because the communicative purposes are likely to be recognized by the expert members who regularly compose the text. Expert members appear to be more knowledgeable in the genre than novice.

Once the communicative purposes were identified, drawing on Swales' (1990) move analysis, I read through the texts multiple times until I was able to identify clear functions of each segment of the texts. This was the most challenging step, because each boundary of moves has to be precise. Thus, I used Panseeta and Todd's (2014) move categories of RTCs as the basis for identifying moves of RTCs and as a starting point. Since their framework does not fully represent the products of 3-star Thai hotels or 5-star UK hotels, I left some space open for adjustment as new moves could be identified and some moves could be removed.

The next step was to see whether there is any sub-function within each move. This sub-function is known as 'step' by Swales (1990) or 'strategy' by Bhatia (1993). I used the term, step, in this study, because it can be easily recognized and has been commonly used in previous genre related studies (e.g., Santos, 2002; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Skalicky, 2013). The steps with the same functional theme fulfil the wider function of each move. This does not mean that every move needs steps nor is every step needed in every text. Different people and/or situations may employ different steps to achieve the same goal.

As seen in previous studies, moves and steps can be found in different locations in different texts, and therefore my study will not conform to a pre-formed organization. To put it differently, my study is not concerned with the sequence of moves and steps; moves were presented in sequential order in the typical organization of the texts just for convenient purposes. Different authors may use different strategies to achieve the same goal, and this may result in different rhetorical orders. Individual writing styles are very much valued in my study, so rigid sequential order was not imposed here.

After move categories were assigned with clearly distinctive boundaries, I then ran a pilot coding with another coder. This procedure was carried out manually. Move categories and boundaries were discussed and refined until we reached the agreement, leading to the final protocol used to code moves and steps of the texts.

3.5.1 Validity Issues

We cannot deny the fact that move analysis does require tremendous human cognitive ability which may lead to issues relating to validity and reliability. In fact, subjectivity is inevitable, especially in the qualitative aspects of research. To strengthen the validity of this study, as mentioned above, I used the findings from previous research. Panseeta and Todd's (2014) moves of RTCs was used as a starting point for move analysis. Their moves were identified based on content and linguistic features. Their framework was subject to be adjusted as new communicative units emerged in the current datasets. An external rater was invited to assist in coding the texts. When encountering a difficult decision in labeling a move or step, a discussion was conducted until agreement was reached. Agreement between the two parties helps reduce subjectivity in data analysis.

3.5.2 Reliability Issues

Once the move structure has been discovered, it is time to analyze the texts across the corpus. As mentioned in the previous section, genre analysis involves many individual judgments, especially in move analysis. It requires well-defined boundaries and coding criteria which allows raters to consistently identify functions of texts. However, it is very difficult to examine the consistency by having a researcher do all the coding alone. Thus, a reliability check has been suggested for the analysis. The concept is to check whether others agree with the definition of each move and whether they arrive at the same result after the discourse components are identified (Biber et al., 2007). One of the most common methods is to use rate of agreement as a tester. The data should be coded twice by the researcher and another qualified rater. The results of coding from the two raters are then compared for the rate of agreement. If there is any disagreement, discussion will be required.

Sawaki (2016), nevertheless, raises some concerns about such a reliability check. Since coding involves cognitive processing and decisions of raters,

the results may not respond to what Swales called theory of prototype which concerns the actual rationale of the production. No matter how many raters are involved in the analysis, it does not guarantee that the results will reflect the truth about genre. Prototypical knowledge is something that can only be acquired through experience of genre; it cannot be quickly learned just for temporary coding.

The second issue has to do with the validity of identification of move components. It is true that involving more than one rater and testing the results repeatedly can help ensure consistency in coding. However, reliability and validity are different. The analysis may have reliability but not validity. Having strong inter-rater reliability only informs that more than one rater concurs with the coding. It is possible that all the raters participating in the coding falsely concur with the results. If that is the case, only one rater coding repeatedly (intra-rater reliability approach) is probably sufficient to ensure consistency in coding. Sawaki (2016) adds that due to the fact that performing a full inter-rater reliability check is quite demanding, it is not frequently seen in move analysis these days. Some researchers may not be in a position to have someone else do the coding manually.

This study used both intra- and inter-rater reliability checks to confirm the consistency of coding. Once the coding protocol was implemented, I myself went through each RTC several times to code moves and steps. Doing this several times allowed me to check the internal reliability. Inter-rater reliability check was also used to investigate the degree of agreement between different individuals. Crookes's (1986) study of research articles was the first move-based study known to use raters with linguistic sophistication, but it is reported that having language competence is not enough for this task. Kanoksilapatham (2005) then used another rater with expertise in a focused area, a Ph.D. candidate in biochemistry. However, RTCs are non-technical in nature and thus expertise was not required. Thus, another person who has a strong background in business discourse and ample experience in teaching business English was invited to serve as an external rater for this study.

Nevertheless, meeting such requirements still may not be enough to make sure that the selected rater can perform the coding. Kanoksilapatham (2005) carried out a training session to prepare the rater for the coding task. She made sure that the rater understood the coding scheme and knew how to code a sample text. Then the

rater had to practice coding some random texts. Differences in coding decisions were handled through discussion. It is always best to have a training session to prepare the extra rater, because not everyone knows and understands the coding system, which varies from one study to another. Thus, I followed Kanoksilapatham (2005) by training the rater before performing the task. That is, a two-hour training session was conducted to prepare the rater for the coding scheme and then we practiced coding some random texts. Apart from the training session, a coding rubric was developed to support the other rater. The coding rubric provides the other rater with brief descriptions and extract samples (See Appendix C).

The main purpose of using an inter-rater approach is that it reflects the extent to which the data used for the analysis can represent variables measured. To put it differently, inter-rater reliability check is the measurement of the extent to which raters assign the same unit to the same categories. While there are plenty of approaches which are able to run an inter-rater reliability check, the traditional percentage agreement (PA) is the simplest approach to examine inter-rater reliability. PA allows researchers to identify the number of agreements on coding decisions (Biber et al, 2007). Cohen (1960) does not recommend using PA because of its inability to assess the chance of agreement among raters. He then introduced *Cohen's kappa*, the statistics that offer more information on inter-rater reliability. Cohen's kappa, κ , is commonly used in move-based studies (e.g., Crooke, 1986; Henry & Roseberry, 2001; Kanoksilapatham, 2005). According to Capozzoli, McSweeney, and Sinha (1999), Cohen's kappa is proposed to measure the possibility of agreement among two or more raters (as cited in Biber et al, 2007). Although there are several versions of kappa (e.g., Cohen's kappa, Scotti's pi, Fleiss' multi-rater kappa), they are slightly different. While Cohen's kappa is applicable to two raters, Fleiss' multi-rater kappa is used when there are three or more raters (Gwet, 2011). Since the present study involves only two raters, Cohen's kappa was chosen to measure inter-rater reliability of the move coding of each RTC.

Similar to other correlation measurements, the reliability of kappa ranges from 1 to 0. While $\kappa = 1$ means that the raters agree with each other on every decision, $\kappa = 0$ means there is no agreement among raters. For example, Kanoksilapatham's (2005) study of biochemistry research articles shows $\kappa = 0.93$ in the

introduction part of the articles. This can be interpreted to mean that the chance of agreement among the raters is considered to be high. Issues regarding boundary markers and/or suitability of raters may result in low scores. Hartman (1977) notes that there has not been absolute degree for the measurement, but Gelfand and Hartman (1975) note that an acceptable score should be above 0.6 (as cited in Yaakob, 2013). Statistical Package for the Social Scientists (SPSS) was used for the data analysis as it is commonly used for statistical analysis in scientific research.

However, coding 140 texts by hand seems to be too demanding for the other rater. I again followed Kanoksilapatham (2005) by selecting only 25% from each corpus. The other rater had to code 36 randomly-selected texts, and each of the texts contain up to 11 steps. Thus, all communicative functions were drawn from each text to perform an inter-rater reliability test.

3.5.3 Typicality of Moves

Typicality of communicative units refers to the degree of necessity that each move holds in a particular communicative event. Typicality analysis is considered one of the most important components in the genre study because of its contribution to language teaching and learning. Gaining insight into the typicality of moves allows prospective members of a discourse community to capture the necessity of each individual communicative function. As discussed in Chapter 2, in general, moves can be categorized into three different kinds based on their typicality in the text – *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional* moves. The typicality of each move can be identified through frequency analysis, which provides the information regarding how frequently each move occurs in the text. That is, the typicality of each move is determined based on its frequency of occurrence. However, using frequency data alone is not enough to justify each type of move. Thus, the present study divided moves of RTCs into three kinds based on (1) their frequency of occurrences and (2) relevant studies, which help define the terms *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional*. The cut-off points were decided after the frequency analysis and discussion of relevant studies.

3.5.4 Comparative Analysis

Steps, also known as sub-functions, are the strategies the authors used to fulfill their communicative purposes. The present study aims at investigating the similarities and differences of steps used by local Thai hotels and top UK hotels' RTCs.

The comparative analysis was mainly performed through statistical tests. Once the frequency of each step was identified, a side-by-side comparison was made. As far as the overall application of steps is concerned, a chi-square analysis was run on the frequencies cross tabulated to find out whether there is any significant difference between steps employed by local Thai hotels and top UK hotels.

Then, the focus was moved to individual steps. In order to investigate probable difference in each strategy between the two groups of hotels, twenty chi-square tests, as nonparametric tests, were performed on each pair of frequency counts for each single step realized in THHC and UKHC. Again, the tests were processed by SPSS. The significance level of .05 was used for both tests to indicate statistically significant differences between the two groups. It is important to note that the significance analyses performed here help make sure that the differences in the frequency analysis between the two corpora do not randomly occur.

3.5.5 Pilot Study: Move analysis

The move analysis carried out in this study started by using Panseeta and Todd's (2014) analytical model to ensure the efficiency of the application of the model, I conducted a pilot study employing such a model with the corpora of RTCs collected from TripAdvisor. During the coding process, the analytical model could be modified as a new move emerged or the pre-identified move was absent in the current sample. Be reminded that the analytical model developed by Panseeta and Todd (2014) does not focus on cross-divisional and cross-cultural perspectives. Therefore, the emergence of new communicative functions and the absence of the pre-identified communicative functions were plausible. The purposes of this pilot study are to preliminarily explore the communicative functions of the texts, and to examine and modify the existing framework. The frequency of identified moves and steps and the difference between the two datasets were not yet highlighted here.

3.5.5.1 Text Selection

As mentioned in the previous section, the final datasets comprise two 72-text corpora (72 Thai hotels' RTCs and 72 UK hotels' RTCs). THHC represents the RTCs produced by 3-star local hotels in Thailand, whereas UKHC represents the RTCs produced by 5-star top hotels in UK. In this pilot session, I randomly drew 10 texts from THHC and 10 texts from UKHC, so there were 20 RTCs

in this pilot study. These 20 made up the sub-corpora with 1,396 words in THHC and 1,326 words in UKHC. The following table indicates the randomly selected texts and their code names which are numerically ordered.

Table 3.4
Randomly selected texts for pilot study

No.	THHC	UKHC
1	THHRTC02	UKHRTC03
2	THHRTC05	UKHRTC07
3	THHRTC12	UKHRTC10
4	THHRTC13	UKHRTC12
5	THHRTC16	UKHRTC16
6	THHRTC24	UKHRTC27
7	THHRTC54	UKHRTC37
8	THHRTC57	UKHRTC42
9	THHRTC59	UKHRTC44
10	THHRTC65	UKHRTC48

3.5.5.2 Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, I used the move structure of RTCs proposed by Panseeta and Todd (2014) (see Table 2.9) as a coding scheme at the beginning of the analysis. The coding scheme was modified as a new move emerges or the pre-identified move was absent. With this move structure, the RTCs were characterized with five moves and several steps within each move representing the common organizational structure of the text type. I read through the corpora to identify the communicative functions of each unit. This trial session was carried out without a reliability check (e.g., inter-rater, intra-rater) which would be used in full-data analysis. I did seek a consultation with an expert once I experienced ambiguity in coding and

defining the emerging communicative functions. This pilot study did not yet touch on the linguistic features of each move, but rather new communicative units were highlighted. The communicative purposes were not examined at this point either.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, this study's move analysis employed Biber et al's (2007) coding framework to identify communicative units of RTCs. Thus, each move and step were identified based on the functions they performed in the texts. However, the move structure of RTCs presented here is subject to be changed as all the RTCs in the two corpora were analyzed in the following chapter.

3.5.5.3 Results and Discussions

At the completion of the move analysis, the move structure of RTCs developed by Panseeta and Todd (2014) was modified in accordance with the current datasets and the current study's framework. The results of the pilot study presented here reported new features and modified units after the trial session. After the analysis of the 20 RTCs from the two corpora, I was not able to identify some communicative units with the current corpora even with the employment of the previous framework. Thus, they were taken as new communicative units. On the other hand, some of the units that were totally absent from the corpora were removed from the list of codes, or adjusted accordingly to the current datasets. The move structure is presented as follows.

Table 3.5

Pilot study's move structure of RTCs

Move	Step
1. Opening (M1)	Salutation (M1Sa)
	Greeting (M1Sb)
2. Acknowledging feedback (M2)	Expressing gratitude (M2Sa)
	Valuing feedback (M2Sb)
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (M2Sc)
3. Stating hotel's commitment (M3)	

Move	Step
4. Dealing with complaints (M4)	Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa)
	Reporting action taken/investigation result (M4Sb)
	Apologizing for the error (M4Sc)
5. Concluding remarks (M5)	Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa)
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sb)
	Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)
	Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)
	Promising to improve service (M5Se)
6. Closing (M6)	Sign off (M6Sa)
	Signature (M6Sb)
	Job title (M6Sc)
	Contact information (M6Sd)
	Affiliation (M6Se)

There were six moves identified with sub-functional units. The term, step, used in the present study, refers to the strategy the authors used to fulfill the larger communicative function (move). Except for move 3 (M3), *Stating hotel's commitment*, the authors were found to employ different strategies to perform different communicative functions. The following section discusses the differences between Panseeta and Todd's (2014) move structure and this pilot analysis of move structure of RTCs.

(1) New Communicative Units

There were some new communicative units that emerged during the analysis. These units have not been identified by the previous research. *Stating hotel's commitment* (M3) was identified as a move for the current datasets. It

was tagged as a stand-alone move because I found that it did not fulfill any other pre-identified moves. This move was considered when the authors made an attempt to confirm their hotel position. The authors stated their hotel's goal or standard to reassure customers that the customer's experience did not reflect their quality of services they offer to customers

“At (hotel's name) we strive for 5 star service in every facet of the business.”

(UKHRTC05)

“I can assure you it is not the norm & runs contrary to the usual high standards we hope & expect to deliver.”

(UKHRTC07)

Contact information (M6Sd) was tagged as part of *Closing* (M6). This move is very similar to *Opening* (M1), because they both are commonly found in formal business letters or emails. This move is always located at the last part of the messages and written separately from the previous moves. M6Sd was tagged because it was evident that authors added either personal or corporate contact information which came in the form of telephone numbers and email addresses.

“Kind Regards

XXXX

Guest Services Manager

(email address)”

(THHRTC33)

However, the contact information provided here is different from *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd). If it is provided at the end without prior expressions asking reviewed to make a contact, it is considered M6Sd.

Similar to M6Sd, *Affiliation* (M6Se) was discovered in the current datasets and considered as part of M6. It was found located at the end of the RTCs along with other related details (sign-off, an author's name, position, contact information). The authors simply add the name of the hotel before closing the reply.

“Sincerely yours,

XXXX

Hotel Manager

(hotel's name)”

(THHRTC02)

(2) Adjusted Communicative Units

Despite the discovery of new communicative units, there were units that were adjusted in accordance with the current datasets. According to Panseeta and Todd's (2014) move structure, there are four steps in *Acknowledging feedback* (M2), one of which is *Re-stating the complaint* (M2S2a). This step was used when authors would re-state the topic of the complaint (Panseeta & Todd, 2014). It was found that this step did not operate on a stand-alone basis. It was true that the authors might mention a particular topic of the complaint when *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc) was employed, but there was no clear-cut difference between these two steps. The following is an example of how M2S2b operates.

“It was very disappointing to learn that you felt that you have not been treated as a loyal Marriott Rewards Elite Member during your time with us.”

(UKHRTC44)

Based to Panseeta and Todd's move structure, two steps could be identified from UKHRTC44 – M2S2a and M2S2b. These two steps were not physically separated; they were in the same sentence. The phrase, *“It was very disappointing to learn that”*, was tagged with M2S2b and the phrase after, *“you felt that you have not been treated as a loyal Marriott Rewards Elite Member during your time with us.”*, was tagged with M2S2a. Nevertheless, there were some issues relating

to M2S2a. First, in the present study, the customers' reviews to which RTCs responded were not gathered for the analysis. In this case, it is still too soon to conclude that "*you felt that you have not been treated as a loyal Marriott Rewards Elite Member during your time with us.*", for example, is a response to an actual complaint.

Second, the description they provided for this step did not cover the scenario where the authors mention about the overall experience a customer had. The example below shows that the author addressed the overall experience the customer had with, "*you didn't enjoy your last stay.*". It was uncertain whether the overall experience like this can be counted as M2S2b, because it was not a certain problem a customer has.

"I am sorry to hear that you didn't enjoy your last stay."

(UKHRTC16)

Keeping this move may mean more subjectivity in the coding process, and thus I decided to adjust it by adding this unit to the unit that it depends on, M2Sc.

Apologizing is one of the most crucial elements in RTCs. In Panseeta and Todd's (2014) move structure, the only unit that performs this function is *Apologizing for the unpleasant incident* (M2S3). This step serves as a sub-functional unit in *Acknowledging feedback* (M2). However, I found that there were different communicative units that could perform this function. In this pilot study, different varieties of apologizing were classified into different steps performing different functions in RTCs. Table 3.5 shows three communicative units that perform this function – *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc), *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc), and *Expressing regret/concern/apology (2)* (M5Sb). M2Sc and M5Sb were adapted from *Expressing concern about the complaint* (M2S2b) and *Expressing second apology* (M4S1b), respectively. Based on the current datasets, these two steps performed identical functions. The only difference is that M5Sb refers to the event where the authors express regret, concern, or apology for the second time. An example of M5Sb is as follows.

“Once again we apologise for your inconvenience!”

(THHRTC16)

The apologizing elements added to M2Sc refers to the event where markers of apology such as *sorry* and *apologize* were used without mentioning any unpleasant experience in particular. Although the markers of apology were used, this does not mean that hotels admit their mistakes or failures. Thus, it was considered part of M2.

“We are sorry that it hasn’t been very convenient for you”

(THHRTC13)

“I regret that our team did not meet your expectations on this occasion.”

(UKHRTC48)

Another unit that perform this function is *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc), which was moved from M2 to M4. M4Sc was used when the authors made an apology for a particular incident. This step is slightly different from M2Sc, even though similar markers (e.g., *apologize*, *sorry*) were used. This step emerges when the authors admit the mistake or failure. Instead of apologizing for customers’ overall experience, the authors highlight an area of mistake or failure.

“First of all i would like to apologize regarding the scooter, my staff made a mistake with the price, my apologize.”

(THHRTC59)

In THHRTC59, the author admitted that it was staff’s mistake with the price, so the expression of apology (*“my apologize”*) was used. The author highlighted the mistake they actually made.

3.5.5.4 Conclusion

The results of the pilot analysis of 20 RTCs from the two corpora (THHC and UKHC) demonstrates that there were six moves and several steps within each move with the exception of M3. The number of moves and steps slightly went up, because some new communicative units emerged and some communicative units were adjusted.

Three new communicative units discovered in the current datasets include M2, M6Sd, and M6Se. The units that can perform the apologizing functions were placed in M2, M4, and M5. An actual apology (when hotels admit their mistakes or failure) was considered a sub-unit of M4. The names of some units were also adjusted to make it easier to recognize with non-technical words. The differences between the original and this pilot study's move structure mentioned here may be caused by the differences in the type of data. Thus, the framework was slightly modified to suit the current datasets. However, the move structure presented here can only represent the sub-corpora built only for the pilot session. It is important to note that such move structure is subject to be changed at the completion of the full-data analysis of 144 RTCs.

It can be concluded that Panseeta and Todd's (2014) move structure can be employed to identify communicative functions of RTCs in the current datasets, but I had to expand and adjust the framework to ensure that it would cover every unit in the current datasets. Therefore, the adapted framework presented here were used as a starting point for the actual move analysis.

3.6 Analysis of Linguistic Features

While the previous components of this research concentrated on describing RTCs employing genre analysis to identify the communicative purpose and organizational pattern, corpus analysis was also conducted to explore common linguistic features found in RTCs. A corpus tool can provide empirical evidence regarding the authors' actual productions. Gledhill (2000) states that the combination of genre and corpus analysis is capable of uncovering recurrent patterns across a sample of texts. Apart from analyzing the most frequently used words in general, first-person

pronouns (*we* and *I*), and recurrent word combinations were also selected as specific linguistic features.

The methodology in this study is similar to previous genre studies using a corpus tool to identify particular linguistic features. AntConc 3.4.4w was chosen as it can generate a list of frequently used words and word combinations which are the focused areas of this study. The analyses of linguistic features performed here were done in comparative manner; that is, similarities and differences between THHC and UKHC are mainly focused on.

3.6.1 Analysis of Frequently Used Words

Before moving into specific areas of linguistic features, frequently used words across the corpora were examined. The analysis was operated under *Word List* function of AntConc 3.4.4w where frequently used words were generated based on frequency of word counts. Then, the most frequently used words were spotted and discussed for the similarities and differences between the two corpora. Once the words were identified, *Concordance* function was used to investigate how they occur in the contexts. The rationale behind this analysis is to capture the overall picture of how these words characterize this genre. In addition, the corpora were broken down into different sub-corpora representing each communicative unit. The corpus of *Salutation*, for example, were compiled along with other corpora of each step. These sub-corpora were used to provide additional information regarding how a particular feature plays a role in each communicative unit.

3.6.2 Analysis of *we* and *I*

Given that the use of *we* and *I* is still ambiguous in business writing and they are found to be used interchangeably, this study makes an attempt to explore how the representatives of Thai and UK hotels used such pronouns by examining empirical evidence. Once the wordlists were generated, I then highlighted the occurrences of *we* and *I* specifically. The use of these first-person pronouns in a Thai sample were compared with that of a UK sample in terms of frequency and pattern of occurrences. The frequency was identified again by *Word List* function of AntConc 3.4.4w. Firstly, the frequency of *we* and *I* was identified in both corpora, then the frequency counts of *we* and *I* were compared both within and between the corpora.

Then, the frequency of *we* and *I* in each sub-corpus was investigated. Again, chi-square tests were employed to confirm significant differences. With regard to their patterns of occurrences, *Concordance* function was used to generate examples of how they occur in the texts. In this study, examples of the use of focused linguistic features were also drawn from this function in the form of concordance lines.

3.6.3 Analysis of Recurrent Word Combinations

Following the analysis of the first-person pronouns, recurrent word combinations were examined. Again, AntConc 3.4.4w was used to generate the findings. I used *Clusters/N-grams* function as it allows me to customize the length of the recurrent word combinations that this study focused on. I followed Altenberg's (1998) definition, taking those strings occurring more than once in the identical form. That is, any word combination that occurs more than once would be qualified.

Each sub-corpus was examined independently for its own recurrent word combinations. AntConc was configured to capture 2- and 3-gram. Although such configuration might provide meaningless combinations mainly comprising function words (e.g., *in the, for the, again, to us as, that you did*), the results were then filtered for combinations which contain content words.

Unlike previous sections of this paper, the analysis of recurrent word combinations does not focus on class variation, but rather the recurrent word combinations identified in THHC and UKHC altogether create solid guidelines for novice authors and language learners.

3.7 Investigation of Customer Perceptions

The key to success in the hospitality industry is to meet the customers' needs and to ensure their satisfaction, which are mostly related to personal services (Loizos & Lycourgos, 2005). The hotels that manage to satisfy their guests are able to obtain an advantage over their competitors. The space given by TripAdvisor allows registered hotels to recover their services. As discussed in Chapter 1, RTCs are capable of bringing back customers after their unpleasant experiences with the hotels. The success or failure of RTCs depends on the level of customer satisfaction. In other words,

satisfying customers is the key to success in responding to customers' complaints. Thus, understanding customer satisfaction regarding RTCs can provide useful information on the desirable characteristics of RTCs that can be used to help both EFL learners and professionals to improve their practices. In addition, the research on customer expectations of RTCs have either been underrepresented or overlooked.

3.7.1 Participants

The present study was carried out in both cross-divisional and cultural manners, so the investigation of customer satisfaction was carried out in accordance with the previous analyses. There were two groups of participants including 15 Thais and 15 non-Thais. To be qualified for the Thai group, the participants must have been born in Thailand and have some experience of hotel stays. For the non-Thai group, the participants were those who have no Thai citizenship, and have some experience of staying at hotels. The non-Thai participants could provide international tourists' perspectives. In addition, the person must have sufficient English competency, because the text samples were originally written in English. Again, the target participants were recruited from a well-known hospitality school. Since the school offers exclusive priority booking with a discount to its employees, many of the instructors and staff were familiar with services offered by different classes of hotels. I was able to identify 15 Thais and 15 non-Thais, both former and current instructors and staff, who often booked hotels for work and vacations.

Therefore, the samples included staff from the hospitality school, both males and females, with the age above 18. A total of 30 questionnaires were distributed to the target participants. The questionnaire was constructed in English. The non-Thai participants were instructors who used English as a medium of instruction, so the English version of the questionnaire would not be a problem. Once a list of participants was ready, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to each participant, and was collected immediately once it had been completed. Thus, the return rate was 100%.

3.7.2 Questionnaire

This study used a self-administered survey questionnaire to elicit relevant data from the selected samples. I used a questionnaire instead of interviews

because some questions take time to be addressed. There are three main parts of the questionnaire: (1) general information regarding experiences as hotel guests, (2) comparison of RTCs, and (3) expectations from an RTC. The first part of the questionnaire concerns prior experience as a hotel guest. Those with some experience with hotel services were likely to provide useful information for this study. The second part of the questionnaire employed open-ended items and a multiple-choice item to address customer perceptions towards local Thai hotels' and top UK hotels' RTCs. In this section, participants were given two comparable RTCs (one from local Thai hotels, and the other from top UK hotels). The given RTCs represent typical models of the genre. Since there were different degrees of customers' complaints, I selected two RTCs that concerned similar issues that customers experienced to ensure that they were comparable, and then they were asked to describe each of the response (see Appendix E). In addition, they were also asked to identify the one(s) that satisfies them (if any). The selection of RTCs in this part revolved around the findings of previous research questions (characteristics of RTCs and move analysis). The last section of the questionnaire gave participants some space to describe their expectations of RTCs.

3.7.3 Analyzing Questionnaire Data

Since there are three sections in the questionnaire, each section was analyzed differently depending on the purposes. The first section was designed to ensure that the participants have some experience with services provided by hotels. At minimum, staying at a hotel three times a year was required, and thus any participant who failed to meet this requirement would be excluded from the study. This section was also used to confirm the nationalities of the participants as they were divided into two groups – Thai and non-Thai. In the second section, the responses needed to be read through to identify which representative RTC is more satisfying. This section did not yet concern a cross-divisional nor cultural dimension of the genre, and thus, all the responses were analyzed as a whole.

In the last section, the responses from the two groups of participants were compared with one another to identify the similarities and differences. The answers to the open-ended question were manually coded for different themes. The

coding system emerged as the data were read through several times. The data were re-coded to ensure the clear cut between each theme.

3.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 elaborated on the methodology employed to address the research questions. The chapter started with the compilation of the two corpora. The challenges in making the corpora comparable were addressed. As far as the characteristics of the genre are concerned, the process of recruiting participants and collecting data were described. The framework for move analysis and the result of the pilot study were reported. Further methodological detail on linguistic feature analyses was revealed. To learn more about the customer perceptions, the dissertation also used questionnaires as a tool to collect data from experienced consumers. Table 3.6 is a summary of research methodology. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings.

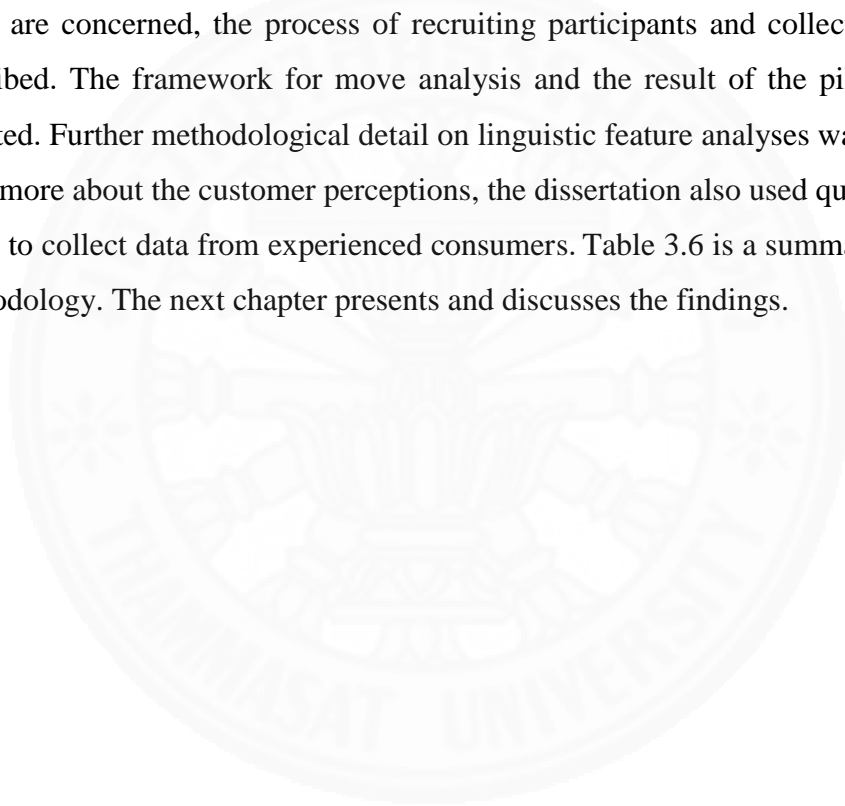


Table 3.6

Summary of research methodology

Research Questions	Instruments	Stats/Data Analysis	Sample
1. What is the communicative purpose(s) of RTCs?	Interview	Thematic analysis	Four authors of RTCs
2 What are the moves of this genre? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the typicality of each move? b. Is there any significant difference between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels regarding application of steps used in RTCs? c. Is there any significant difference between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels regarding the frequency of each individual step used in RTCs? 	Panseeta and Todd's move structure (as a starting point)	2. Swales' (1990) move analysis, Cohen's kappa, κ (inter-rater reliability test) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Frequency analysis and reviewing relevant literature b. Chi-square test (cross tabulated) c. Chi-square test (nonparametric) 	2. The other rater

Research Questions	Instruments	Stats/Data Analysis	Sample
<p>3. What are the common linguistic features of local Thai hotels and top UK hotels' RTCs?</p> <p>a. Which first-person pronoun (<i>we</i> and <i>I</i>) is more frequently used, and how are the two pronouns used differently?</p> <p>b. What are the recurrent word combinations used in RTCs?</p>	<p>AntConc (a corpus tool)</p>	<p>a. Chi-square test</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>4. From customers' perspectives, what are the characteristics of an effective RTC?</p> <p>a. Whose RTC is more effective, local Thai hotels' or top UK hotels'?</p> <p>b. Is there any difference between the expectations of Thai and non-Thai guests of an RTC?</p>	<p>Questionnaire</p>	<p>Thematic analysis</p>	<p>30 experienced customers</p>

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the analyses proposed in Chapter 3, and thus it is divided into four different sections. The first section discusses the data gained from interviewing the representatives of the Thai and the UK hotels. This section aims to address the first research question, which concerns the communicative purpose and characteristics of hotels' RTCs. To answer the second research question, the second section presents the results of move analysis, and the similarities and differences between the two corpora are highlighted. The next section shows the results of linguistic feature analyses of first-person pronouns (*we* and *I*) and recurrent word combinations (2- and 3-gram). The last section draws on customer perceptions towards an effective RTC to answer the last research question.

4.2 Communicative Purposes

This section unveils themes that are realized in the interview data. By looking at the responses in the bio data section of the interview, it has been confirmed that the participants met all the requirements to take part in this study. For the Thai hotel group, this study drew on recordings and notes taken during the interviews to analyze themes. For the UK hotel group, the answers were gathered from Google Form and saved in separated Word documents. The data were organized into two areas – authors' backgrounds and the characteristics of the genre – which correspond to the interview questions. Again, the interview questions can be found in Appendix B. The results of this thematic content analysis show the authors' perceptions towards RTCs as a genre. This section begins with the report on the authors' background which are followed by the reports on the characteristics of RTCs as a genre. It is worth noting that due to the differences in nature between the semi-structured face-to-face interviews (Thai hotels) and questionnaire interviews (UK hotels), the participants from Thai

hotels provided more detailed information as follow-up questions were asked when interesting issues emerged.

4.2.1 Authors' Background

This section reports the biographical information of the participants. Since their names are kept confidential, they were replaced by the codes –THHP (for the participants from Thai hotels) and UKHP (for the participants from UK hotels). At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were asked to provide their biographical data. There are six areas of bio-data that were touched on (see Appendix B). The following table shows an overview of the participants' background.

Table 4.1

Overview of the participants' biographical data

Participant	Age	Experience (years)	L1	Ethnicity	Highest Education
THHP1	31	9	French	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's degree
THHP2	36	12	Thai	Asia	Master's degree
UKHP1	41-45	16-18	English	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's degree
UKHP2	46-50	16-18	English	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's degree

4.2.1.1 Age

As reported in the table above, the ages of participants were between 31-50. It is evident that responding to customers' complaints is not a task that novice employees or trainees would be allowed to perform.

4.2.1.2 Experience

The participants were also asked how many years they have worked in the hospitality industry. All of them have at least 9 years of experience in this business. To be more precise, it was reported that UKHP1 and UKHP2 have

worked in this field longer with 16-18 years. This level of experience can be found in job advertisements for hotel management positions (e.g., general manager, operational manager). In the hospitality industry, management positions require a great deal of experience. According to PayScale, more than 50% of general managers in the USA, for example, hold upwards of 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry. This piece of evidence corresponds to what appears in the corpora. Based on my preliminary observation and the pilot study, there are a number of authors who closed the replies with their names (M6Sb) and job titles (M6Sc) and it can be seen that it is common for the representatives in management positions to respond to customers' complaints themselves. In the pilot study, twelve of the authors closed the messages with their job titles and all of them were identified as working in management positions.

*“Kind regards,
General Manager”*

(THHRTC05)

“Warm regards,

XXXX

General Manager”

(UKHRTC27)

This implies that a customer complaint is taken seriously as it is handled by representatives from a senior position.

4.2.1.3 Ethnicity

As presented in Table 4.1, both of the participants in the UK hotel group are Caucasian. The Thai hotels were found to employ a Caucasian and an Asian to do the task.

4.2.1.4 First Language

Both of the participants from the Thai hotels are non-native speakers of English, whereas both of the participants from the UK hotels are native speakers of English. This may be due to the fact that English is the only universal

language of hospitality, and thus top hotels might prefer native speakers of English to handle customers' complaints. Local Thai hotels were found to use people from different L1s.

4.2.1.5 Education

All the Caucasian participants hold a bachelor's degree which is the minimum requirement for the hotel management positions. The only Asian participants holds a master's degree.

4.2.2 Authors' Responses

After interviewing the four participants, six topics were identified based solely on the responses to the interview questions: 1) genre knowledge development, 2) differences between public and private RTCs, 3) attitude towards customers' complaints, 4) challenges in responding to customers' complaints, 5) communicative purposes, and 6) institutional policy.

4.2.2.1 Genre Knowledge Development

This section reports how participants develop knowledge required for the genre. The information relating to genre knowledge development was elicited with the first question, *How do you learn how to respond to customers' complaints?*. This question was employed to address how the participants learn to respond to customers' complaints.

The ways the two participants from local Thai hotels develop knowledge and sense of the genre are similar. THHP1 said:

“At the beginning, I do it by myself. I reply the way I think I have to reply. But sometimes TripAdvisor does some online courses you can join. You watch like a video or something. They teach you how you should be able to reply. I also go on Google and read the articles about what to say and not to say.”

(June 26, 2017; Face-to-face interview)

It can be seen that THHP1 learned to respond to customers' complaints by himself. It is interesting to learn that TripAdvisor offers online training courses to help hotel representatives prepare for customers' reviews. I then browsed through the internet to

learn more about these courses and found one that is related to RTC, called *Managing your online reputation with TripAdvisor*. Offered by TripAdvisor and Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, this course provided guidance and practices on ways to monitor and improve hotels' images. In addition to the online course, THHP1 used Google as a tool to access useful information about appropriate responses to customers' complaints. Once inserting the key words like 'respond to customers' complaints' in the search bar, the result showed that there are various web pages that present guidance on ways to respond to customers' complaints. The first ten lines of the search result are presented as follows:

1. *11 Tips on How to Handle Customer Complaints*
2. *How to Respond to Customer Complaints*
3. *Five Quick Scripts for Responding to Customer Complaints*
4. *Respond to a Complaint*
5. *How to Respond to Customer Complaints*
6. *How to Write a Good Response to a Client/Customer Complaint*
7. *How to Handle Customer Complaints Via Social Media*
8. *Customer Complaint Response Letter Template*
9. *Responding to Complaints*
10. *Listen Up: How to Respond to Customer Complaints*

Similarly, THHP2 learned to handle customers' complaints by himself. He said:

“It was very difficult at first. I learned a lot by myself. Everything can be found on the internet. I read others' responses on TripAdvisor. I adapted their messages. Internet helps me a lot. I always use Google to get what I need to know.”

(August 11, 2017; Face-to-face interview)

Apart from Google, THHP2 read others' posts on TripAdvisor. Zhang and Vásquez (2014) note that the number of hotel responses on TripAdvisor was only around 1% in

2008, but this figure climbed sharply in the next few years to over 10%. According to Zhang and Vásquez (2014), there were more than 150 million reviews generated on TripAdvisor. This means these days, there are millions of hotel responses which can be a reliable source of learning for hoteliers.

The two participants from top UK hotels explained that they both received training on customer satisfaction and handling customers' complaints was one of the topics. UKHP1 stated:

“We once had a short training course in customer satisfaction management. We were trained to be ready for a variety of problems associated with customer satisfaction.”

(Received July 12, 2017; Questionnaire interview)

Customer satisfaction management is prioritized among top hotels, so internal training services are provided for their staff to ensure top quality of services. UKHP2 added that:

“This job is fairly sensitive, so we have an in-house customer handling training program once every few years.”

(Received July 20, 2017; Questionnaire interview)

Their responses suggest that top hotels maintain their service quality by continuously arranging a training program. This feature was not mentioned by the Thai hotel group, so a follow-up question was sent to one (THHP1) of the two participants from the Thai hotels to confirm whether they have internal training or not. It was confirmed that he did not have any internal training course related to handling customers' complaints.

4.2.2.2 Differences between Public and Private RTCs

This section discusses the difference between responding to customers' complaints publicly (e.g., TripAdvisor) and privately (e.g., email, letter). Although THHP1 and THHP2 mutually agreed that there is a clear cut difference between public and private RTCs, their answers are different. THHP1 stated:

“Definitely, it’s different. When you reply online where it is publicly available, you don’t want to blame the guests and I don’t like to explain too much. If I answer the question in private, I can go very deep about the details. For example, if the guest complains about something that he did, I cannot say that in public. In public, I remain a little vaguer and apologize. I will go much deeper into the details in private.”

(June 26, 2017; Face-to-face interview)

THHP1’s response suggests that responding in public is more sensitive than in private. He preferred to remain calm and try not to say too much about the problem. He also implied that it is for the sake of customers. It is believed that by doing that, the hotel’s image will remain secure. This type of response can be seen in THHC and UKHC. The following figure is an example of the response that THHP1 mentioned during the interview.

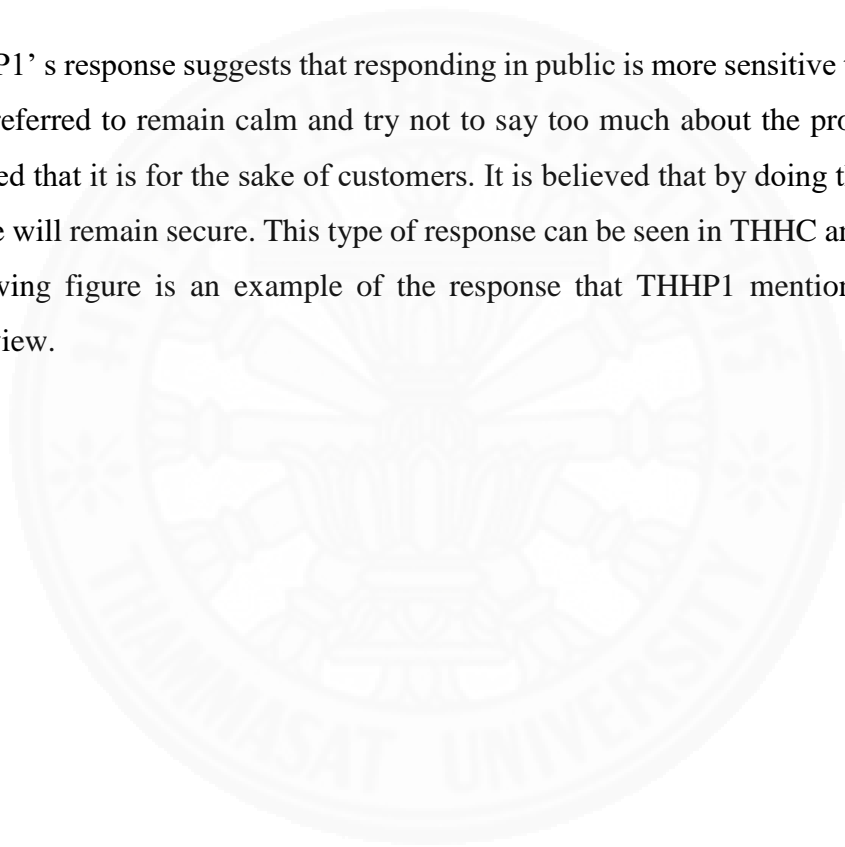


Figure 4.1

Example of how the author avoids providing detailed information (THHRTC14)

Dear XXXX,

We would like to thank you for choosing (hotel's name) as your accommodation choice during your recent stay in Phuket.

Your feedback is extremely valuable to us as it helps us improve the quality of our service and facilities to better meet your needs. We have taken your comments into consideration, please be assured that your feedback is important to us and we will be taking the necessary steps to action on your comments.

We would like to welcome you again. Should you require any assistance, please feel free to contact us directly: (email address)

Warm Regards,
XXXX
General Manager

It can be seen that the author of the THHRTC14 did not try to go into detail, but rather he/she left direct contact information, so they could take the issue further through private conversation.

THHP2, however, gave opposite information. He mentioned:

“They are different. For example, on TripAdvisor, we have to be careful because other people can read the comments posted by our guests who sometimes discredit our hotels for no reason. I have to explain, because other people may misjudge us. I have to defend our hotel image. If it is our fault, I will definitely apologize. In a private conversation, I do not

explain as much as I do on the web. Sometimes I just apologize just to end the problem.”

(August 11, 2017; Face-to-face interview)

THHP2’ response suggests that it is important to provide detailed information about a customer’s complaint publicly. That is, it is an opportunity for the hotel to clarify the issue raised by its guest. It is also suggested that the hotel not provide detailed explanations through private conversations.

The responses from UK hotels are similar to that of THHP1.

UKHP1 replied:

“We don’t usually go into detail on the website. I prefer including my personal contact information in my reply when further discussion is needed. In general problems are solved through email.”

(Received July 12, 2017; Questionnaire interview)

UKHP1 reported that even though detailed information was not provided, personal contact information could be given to the guest. Similar to THHP1 and UKHP1, UKHP2 notes that the hotel tries not to comment on every aspect of customers’ complaints. In this way, the hotel can avoid discrediting its customers and arguing in public.

It is interesting to learn that three (THHP1, UKHP1, and UKHP2) of the participants shares perspectives on the differences between public and private responses to customers’ complaints. In general, the customer’s issue was not mentioned in the message in detail. The rationale behind this is to save hotels’ and customers’ images. However, as UKHP1 said, contact information was included in the message to assure customers that the hotel wanted to learn more about customers’ issues in a private conversation.

4.2.2.3 Attitude towards Customer’s Complaints

To understand how the authors feel about their customers’ complaints, the participants were asked to express their attitude towards customers’ complaints. This section discusses the participants’ answers to the third question. All

four participants interviewed showed a positive attitude towards customers' complaints. They explicitly expressed that customers' complaints allow them to improve their service quality. THHP1 said:

“As a manager, I have to take ownership of this complaint. It reflects our standard. If a customer complains, it can mean that I didn't train my staff well enough. It is a good learning experience, so I can make my service better in the future.”

(June 26, 2017; Face-to-face interview)

His comment suggests that customers' complaints can reflect staff's performance and can be a good source for learning, and thus service quality can be improved. THHP2 added that without customers' complaints he would not know the weakness of the hotel and what needs to be improved. He also suggests that in the hospitality business, it is important to keep improving service quality.

Similarly, the participants from UK hotels were optimistic about customers' complaints. UKHP1 stated:

“Listening to our clients is very important. Their complaints help us learn more about the weakness of our business. Customer opinions should never be ignored.”

(Received July 12, 2017; Questionnaire interview)

UKHP1 explicitly suggested that customers' comments should always be taken into consideration. Based on UKHP2's response, customers' complaints are viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat. The findings presented here concur with Crie and Ladwein (2002) who found that without customers' complaints, organizations will not be able to correct their mistakes.

4.2.2.4 Challenges in Responding to Customers' Complaints

This section discusses what authors believe to be their challenges when they respond to customers' complaints. The participants were asked, *What is the most challenging thing about responding to customer complaints on*

TripAdvisor?. All the participants seem to experience a common challenge which has to do with misleading information.

As reported in previous sections, customers sometimes published misleading information which creates difficulty for hotels. While THHP1, UKHP1, and UKHP2 tried to avoid confrontation in public, THHP2 preferred to clarify instantly. Dealing with misinformation published by their customers was reported to be the most difficult thing when responding to customers' complaints. THHP1 said:

“There is a saying “the customer is always right”, sometimes you know that they are wrong. They may complain about something that is not the hotel’s fault. In public, you cannot ignore this kind of complaint and dealing with it is very challenging.”

(June 26, 2017; Face-to-face interview)

Similar answers can be seen in THHP2, UKHP1, and UKHP2’s responses. They all admitted that dealing with misinformation is difficult. UKHP2 stated:

“As a matter of fact, customers are not always right, but we cannot blame them. Taking full responsibility of the situation where customers are at fault is difficult. Many times, I have to consult with my supervisor before taking any action.”

(Received July 20, 2017; Questionnaire interview)

4.2.2.5 Communicative Purposes

When the participants were asked what they are trying to achieve by responding to complaints, their responses implied that there are two communicative purposes – customer service recovery and business image protection. THHP1 said:

“The thing that I want to achieve is to give confidence to other guests. The future guests who are deciding to come here will read the reviews

and see the complaints of the guests. It is my chance to communicate with the future guests.”

(June 26, 2017; Face-to-face interview)

According to THHP1’s response, image protection is prioritized over customer service recovery. Due to the fact that negative comments on TripAdvisor can severely damage a hotel’s reputation, the hotel has to protect itself from these threatening comments by taking this opportunity to communicate with potential customers.

Similar to THHP1, THHP2 noted that it is important to manage a hotel’s reputation, and the hotel has to show its potential customers that the issue is always taken seriously. Based on the responses of THH1 and THHP2, it can be concluded that image protection is their communicative purpose.

On the other hand, the responses from the UK side are slightly different. Although image protection was mentioned as a major purpose, the top priority was given to existing customers, as UKHP1 stated that “we want to satisfy our customers and to make sure they come back”. In addition, THHP2 also mentioned that “it is important that our guests feel better”. Their responses imply that the existing customers are prioritized, and thus the communicative purpose highlighted here is customer service recovery.

Table 4.2

Summary of communicative purposes of RTCs

Participants	Communicative Purposes
THHP1	Image protection
THHP2	Image protection
UKHP1	Customer service recovery
UKHP2	Customer service recovery (primary) Image protection (secondary)

Service recovery has been studied extensively by previous studies. According to Bell and Ridge (1992), service recovery refers to any action that

intends to change a customer's feeling of being disappointed to satisfaction. It is widely regarded as the ultimate goal for an organization dealing with service failures. Successful service recovery not only brings back customers but also positively changes their behavior (Bailey, 1994).

4.2.2.6 Institutional Policy

The last question of the interview concerns any policies and procedures that the authors must follow when they respond to customers' complaints. THHP1, THHP2, UKHP1 reported that there was no specific rule they must follow, but it is compulsory for them to reply to guests' comments. As mentioned throughout this study about how important customers' reviews are in social media, hotels are taking this matter seriously, as confirmed by the participants.

However, UKHP2 mentioned the only institutional policy that may affect how RTCs are composed. UKHP2 stated that "we try not to enforce any policy against our guests.". This implies that when the hotel responds to negative reviews, policies and procedures are not mentioned. By enforcing policies against its customers, the chance to recover customer services will be slimmer. This policy concurs with the findings from the previous questions. Hotels which prioritize customers' images and satisfaction may conserve detailed information which may turn against their customers.

4.2.3 Summary of Interview Data

The exploration of RTCs as a genre in the present study starts with members of the discourse community whose contributions address one of the umbrella questions of why the authors of RTCs write the way they do. This first part of the study aims to answer the first research question concerning communicative purposes and other characteristics of RTCs. After the participants were interviewed, six topics were highlighted as they represent different aspects of the genre.

The first topic has to do with how the authors develop a sense of the genre. The participants from Thai hotels admitted that they learned to handle customers' complaints by themselves. The online course, Google, and TripAdvisor were their main sources of learning. On the other side, the participants from UK hotels reported that they were specifically trained to manage customer satisfaction in different areas, one of which concerns customers' complaints.

The authors reported that to some degree, the ways they cope with private and public complaints are different. According to the responses, two types of RTCs were identified. Three of the participants preferred to keep the message short. That is, detailed information is not included. This type of RTC is mainly used to apologize to customers without providing further information, but rather the representatives tend to leave their personal contact information to take their conversation into a private zone. The other type is lengthier, because detailed information is included. Representatives may provide all relevant information concerning the issue raised by their customers.

All the participants have shown positive attitudes towards the customers' complaints. Although it was reported that customers' complaints, especially on social media, can severely damage business reputations, they are viewed as an opportunity to improve service quality. The challenge of responding to customers' complaints lies within the fact that customers are not always right. Dealing with biased and false information was found to be very challenging for the authors.

To answer the first research question: *What is the communicative purpose(s) of RTCs?*, the authors were asked what they try to achieve by replying to customers' complaints on TripAdvisor. The findings of interview data analysis indicate that there were two communicative purposes – customer service recovery and business image protection. Due to the fact that comments posted on social media can go viral quickly, local Thai hotels seem to put prospective customers before existing customers. As a result, they have to protect their hotel image, which may affect future guests' purchasing decisions.

However, in the case of top UK hotels, the satisfaction of existing customers is prioritized over future customers. However, this does not mean that they ignore their image on social media, because one of the participants from UK hotels explicitly showed some concerns about their future customers. As for the institutional rules, one of the participants suggested that hotels should try not to include hotel policy in the RTCs. This aspect of RTCs corresponds to earlier comments which indicate that detailed information should be conservatively presented.

The interview data presented here is not regarded as objective truth. It represents some authors' belief and perspective. The present study draws on author

interview data as a means to explore and understand the characteristics of RTCs which provide an explanation of reasons for why RTCs are written in the way they are. The investigation of the discourse community is considered as macro-level study providing insight into the genre.



Table 4.3

Summary of interview data

Topic	THHP1	THHP2	UKHP1	UKHP2
Genre Knowledge Development	1) Online course 2) Google	1) Google 2) TripAdvisor	Internal training	Internal training
Differences between Public and Private RTCs	Detailed information is not provided in public.	Detailed information is provided in public.	Detailed information is not provided in public.	Detailed information is not provided in public.
Attitude towards Customers' Complaints	Customers' complaints help improve services.	Customers' complaints help improve services.	Customers' complaints help improve services.	Customers' complaints help improve services.
Challenges in Responding to Customers' Complaints	Dealing with misinformation.	Dealing with misinformation.	Dealing with misinformation.	Dealing with misinformation.
Communicative Purposes	Image protection	Image protection	Customer service recovery	Customer service recovery (primary) Image protection (secondary)
Institutional Policy	-	-	-	Not to enforce the policy against customers

4.3 Moves of RTCs

This section presents and discusses the results of the move analysis of 144 RTCs (72 Thai hotels' RTCs and 72 UK hotels RTCs). After analyzing all the RTCs with Panseeta and Todd's (2014) five moves of RTCs on a preliminary basis, a total of six moves were identified as each of them performs a distinctive function in the RTC. Several steps were also identified as strategies the authors used to fulfill larger communicative functions. These moves and steps were coded according to their functions rather than word-choices. For instance, the word *apologize* can be marked as *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc) or *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc). Thus, as discussed in Chapter 3 (in the pilot study section), it was coded based on its content, function, and surrounding units. That is, to identify each move and step, it was necessary to manually read through the corpora: each RTC was analyzed individually. The frequency of each unit occurring in the corpora is also presented and discussed here. The presentation of frequency data would decide the cut-off points between move types – *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional* moves. Since there are no specific criteria for the division of these move types, it was decided that the cut-off points would be identified based on the results of frequency analysis and relevant studies.

The present study also concerns the word-choices preferred by the authors of RTCs, even though they are not considered the main indicator of communicative functions. Sub-corpora of each move and step were compiled to generate frequently used words as they determine how frequently each word occurs.

Therefore, this section is divided into three parts. It begins by describing each move and step. Then the frequency of each move and step is presented. The reliability check result is also illustrated in this part. The last part involved the use of the corpus tool to generate word-choices of each move and step.

4.3.1 Descriptions of Moves and Steps of RTCs

The result of the pilot study indicates six moves representing different functions. In the analysis of 144 RTCs of both THHC and UKHC, there is a minor adjustment in the coding scheme. Thus, the move structure presented in the pilot section was slightly adjusted as a new communicative function has emerged in M3.

Several steps were realized in each move as they represent strategies the authors used to perform communicative functions. For example, there are two steps realized in *Opening* (M1) – *Salutation* (M1Sa) and *Greeting* (M1Sb). To start the message, an author may perform M1Sa, M1Sb or both. It is possible to identify one step but not the other. They may or may not mutually occur in the text. In this sense, an author may use just one step to fulfill a function.

As far as the move sequence is concerned, it was found that the structure of RTCs are flexible. That is, one move can appear before or after another move. It is also possible that the steps of a move can occur separately with other steps from a different move located in between. Thus, the move structure presented below does not represent the move sequence of the whole corpora. To put it differently, the move structure presented here only illustrates the typical location of each move and step. The analysis of the corpora made it possible to represent this genre as the structure (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Move structure of hotels' RTCs

Move	Step
1. Opening (M1)	Salutation (M1Sa)
	Greeting (M1Sb)
2. Acknowledging feedback (M2)	Expressing gratitude (M2Sa)
	Valuing feedback (M2Sb)
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (M2Sc)
3. Positioning hotel brands (M3)	Stating hotel's commitment (M3Sa)
	Confirming hotel's standard (M3Sb)
4. Dealing with complaints (M4)	Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa)
	Reporting action taken/investigation result (M4Sb)

Move	Step
	Apologizing for the error (M4Sc)
5. Concluding remarks (M5)	Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa)
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sb)
	Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)
	Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)
	Promising to improve service (M5Se)
6. Closing (M6)	Sign off (M6Sa)
	Signature (M6Sb)
	Job title (M6Sc)
	Contact information (M6Sd)
	Affiliation (M6Se)

Table 4.5

Comparing the move structure of RTCs with previous studies

Zhang and Vásquez (2014) (arranged by frequency)	Panseeta and Todd (2014) (arranged by sequence)	Present study (arranged by typical location)
1. Express gratitude	1. Opening	1. Opening
2. Apologize for sources of trouble	2. Acknowledging feedback	2. Acknowledging feedback
3. Invitation for a second visit	3. Dealing with complaints	3. Positioning hotel brands
4. Opening pleasantries	4. Closing remarks	4. Dealing with complaints
5. Proof of action	5. Closing	5. Concluding remarks
6. Acknowledge Complaints/Feedback		6. Closing

Zhang and Vásquez (2014) (arranged by frequency)	Panseeta and Todd (2014) (arranged by sequence)	Present study (arranged by typical location)
7. Refer to customer reviews		
8. Closing pleasantries		
9. Avoidance of reoccurring problems		
10. Solicit response		

4.3.1.1 Opening (M1)

As shown in Table 4.4, *Opening* (M1) was the first move that has been realized in the corpora. As its name suggests, *Opening* serves as a starter for the messages. This move is used to establish the relationship between the hotel representative (author) and the customer who posted a negative review on the website. It can be found at the very beginning of the messages. There are two steps realized in this move: *Salutation* (M1Sa) and *Greeting* (M1Sb). It was found that the authors might use one or both of the steps to fulfill the move.

(1) *Salutation* (M1Sa)

Salutation in RTCs is governed by the same principle of business letters and emails. The purpose of this step is to address reviewers. This step can be seen in both formal and informal writings. *Salutation* confers the situations where the author addresses the reviewer. To perform this step, the author has to mention the name of reviewer in order to address and show respect to the reviewer. The following are some examples of *Salutation* (M1Sa) detected in the corpora.

“Dear

(THHRTC17)

Dear was found to be frequently used across the corpora. In fact, this is the same one that is commonly used in formal business writings where an appropriate salutation is

very important. It implies that the RTCs can be considered as a formal business writing even if they are posted on social media. That is, the author uses *Dear* followed by the reviewers' names. According to Doyle (2017), *Dear* is so versatile that it can be appropriately applied in diverse circumstances, whether you know the recipient or not. This means that *dear* can be used to address someone even in social media.

Normally, the term *Dear* is followed by the recipient's real name (first name, full name, or last name), but on TripAdvisor, the reviewers are allowed to create their personal 'username' which is displayed when the reviewers published their comments and did other activities on the website. The reviewers' real names are not likely to be seen. Thus, the reviewers can only be addressed through the usernames they created.

In the world of business, one may have seen different ways that people use *Dear* in messages. For example, if the sender is not sure about the gender of the recipient, "*Dear Sir or Madam*" can be considered. "*To whom it may concern*" is used in business related correspondence where there is no specific recipient. Since the RTC is sent specifically to the reviewer whose username is displayed in the message, those varieties of the ways *Dear* is used are absent from the corpora.

A less formal way of addressing the reviewer can be seen as well. The author may address the reviewer without using *Dear*.

"XXXX" (the reviewer' username)

(UKHRTC42)

Be reminded that "XXXX" in the examples throughout this study was used to replace the reviewers and the hotel representatives' identities. While *Dear* is considered a standard and basic convention of formality in business openings, addressing a recipient without using *Dear* seems to occur only in informal situations. It is possible that some authors may take business correspondences on social media less formally than on other channels of communication (e.g., email and letters). This style of addressing can only be seen in UKHC.

Another way of addressing the reviewer found in the corpora was to use *Hello*.

“Hello Sir,”

(UKHRTC10)

“Hello” in UKHRTC10 was found in the exact same location as the previous salutations mentioned above. The term *Hello* is likely to be used more frequently in spoken texts than written texts. To confirm this theory, BNC is used as a reference corpus. The result indicates that *Hello* (or *hello*) occurred 45 times in *S_meeting*, a spoken corpus, and 16 times in *W_email*, a written corpus. These two sub-corpora were chosen for the comparison because they cover business related events. Nonetheless, Green (2015) notes that it is perfectly fine to address the recipient by using *Hello* or *Hi* in business-to-client messages.

In UKHRTC10, the author addressed the reviewer with the term *“Sir”* instead of his username which, in many cases, is not the actual name of the reviewer. In formal business letters or emails, *Sir* and *Madam* are used to politely address the recipient whose name is unknown. The combination of the more casual term, *Hello*, and the formal one, *Sir*, implies that some authors may not take RTCs to the actual level of business correspondence in terms of formality. In Santos’s (2002) pattern of business correspondences, this function is the fifth step called *Addressing and greeting the addressee*, which is part of the first move, *Establishing the negotiation chain*. This implies that traditional private and online public business correspondences share some features.

It can be seen that this step could also be realized through its physical appearance which is separated from the main text. To put it differently, this step could be simply identified, as it was physically separated from the body of the text. The following figure shows how *Salutation* is written separately.

Figure 4.2

Example of how *Salutation* occurs in the text (THHRTC2)

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for sharing your experience with me and I am truly disappointed to learn that your stay was unsatisfactory. The points you have raised in regards to the Air conditioning, hot water, smell from cigarette and Shuttle service has surely raised concerns in which your comments has been shared with my team.

Please accept our apologize for what you have experienced and I still hope that we will have a chance to welcome you here again.

Sincerely Yours,

XXXX
Front Office Manager

(2) *Greeting* (M1Sb)

Another step that serves *Opening* is *Greeting* (M1Sb). While *Salutation* mainly aims to address reviewers, *Greeting* is used to establish the identity of the hotel. That is, the author reveals their hotel's identity to confirm that the response is composed on behalf of the business. In other words, the response represents the hotel, not individual staff.

“Warmest Greeting from (hotel's name)”

(THHRTC26)

“*Greeting from*” seen in THHRTC26 is used to begin this step and is followed by the name of the hotel that the reviewer has stayed in.

“*Sawadee & Greetings*”

(THHRTC54)

In THHC, one of the authors even used the term “*Sawadee*” which is a Thai greeting. This term is well-known and used among tourists travelling in Thailand as it performs a basic function, greeting. The result of the corpus analysis indicates that this step only occurred subsequent to M1Sa, and thus, it can be inferred that prior to representing the hotel, addressing is needed. Spacing is used to divide these steps into two different functions.

“*Dear XXXX,*

Warmest greetings from (hotel’s name)”

(THHRTC68)

4.3.1.2 Acknowledging Feedback (M2)

Acknowledging Feedback (M2) is used to signify to the customers that their comments are acknowledged and to make references to the customers’ reviews. Hayes (2017) comments on this function that it is very important to stay engaged with clients and let them know that all feedback are well taken care of. It was found that this move serves several functions in the RTCs. The authors informs the reviewer that their messages are well-received and expresses their willingness to accept the complaints. This move mirrors Zhang and Vásquez’s (2014) sixth move, *Acknowledge complaints/feedback*, and Panseeta and Todd’s (2014) second move in terms of the function it performs in the text. However, in the present study, there are three steps within this move – *Expressing gratitude*, *Valuing feedback*, and *Expressing regret/concern/apology*. These steps were used as strategies by the authors to acknowledge customers’ complaints.

(1) *Expressing gratitude* (M2Sa)

One of the strategies the authors frequently employ to explicitly show the acceptance of customers' complaints is *Expressing gratitude*. Despite the complaints filed by customers, hotels have to express their gratitude.

"Thank you for your review."

(UKHRTC3)

"Thank you for taking the time to share your experience with others regarding you stays at (hotel's name)"

(THHRTC70)

As mentioned in the previous interview section, the participants tended to have positive attitudes towards the RTCs as it helps them learn about their weakness and areas that are needed to be improved.

This step also covers the circumstance where the authors take the opportunity to thank customers for choosing their hotels.

"Thank you very much for choosing us for your precious vacation"

(THHRTC68)

"May I thank you for staying at (hotel's name) during your recent visit and taking your time to share your stay experience."

(THHRTC69)

As far as the location is concerned, this step, similar to the M1, tends to appear right after the first move, with or without a space in between.

Figure 4.3

Example of how *Expressing gratitude* occurs in the text (UKHRTC19)

Dear Guest,

Thank you very much for your review and comments you have shared. All feedback we receive is of utmost importance to us and only through your words we can learn and improve. Our General Manager, messaged you already to find out hopefully more details of your stay to be able to assess your review. I truly hope we can restore your faith in us in the near future and invite you back to stay with us again.

Warm regards,

XXXX
Operations Manager

(2) Valuing Feedback (M2Sb)

To acknowledge customers' feedback, the author may reassure the reviewer that his/her complaint is very important and it will definitely be taken seriously. That is, hotels raise the value of customers' feedback to show their willingness to solve the problem and improve.

“All feedback we receive is of utmost importance to us and only through your words we can learn and improve.”

(UKHRTC19)

“Receiving feedback from guests is helpful, because it provides us with the opportunity to make changes and improve in areas that are important to our guests’ satisfaction.”

(THHRTC4)

This step can be found in two positions – at the beginning or ending parts of the text. At the beginning part of the text, this step precedes or follows the other step that serves the same function.

Figure 4.4

Example of how *Valuing Feedback* occurs at the beginning part of the text (UKHRTC29)

Thank you for your review. Feedback both positive and negative is essential for us to achieve the high standards we aim for. I am so saddened to hear you found your experience disappointing. I wish I had the opportunity to discuss the issues with you in person. Should you wish to contact me direct please telephone me at (telephone number) or you may contact me via e-mail at (email address)

Kind Regards

XXXX

Figure 4.5

Example of how *Valuing Feedback* occurs at the ending part of the text (UKHRTC29)

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for writing a detailed review about your recent stay at (hotel's name).

Please accept my sincere apologies for the shortcomings you had encountered during your stay with us. I can only assure you that your poor experience is not something that usually happens as our guest satisfaction is of vital importance to us. We as a hotel definitely had no intention of making any guests' feel as though there was no guest care on the agenda.

Once again thank you for all your valuable comments as **these are of great importance to us and allows us to monitor and improve our service continuously.** We hope to be able to welcome you back to restore your faith in us.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX
General Manager

(3) *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc)

Another way to fulfill the second move is to express regret, concern, or apology (M2Sc). That is, the author uses expressions of regret, concern, or

apology to assure the reviewer that the complaint filed by a customer really concern him/her.

“It makes us sad to read that we did not meet your expectations....”

(THHRTC13)

“We were disappointed to learn that on this occasion we failed to meet your expectations”

(UKHRTC26)

“....so I can only apologise that it did not live up to your expectations on this occasion.”

(UKHRTC22)

Different expressions can be seen in the extracts presented above. While the term “*sad*” in THHRTC13 is consider an expression of regret, the term “*disappointed*” is perceived as an expression of concern. This step also includes the circumstance where the expression of apology (e.g., apology, apologize, sorry) is used to apologize for inconvenience or not meeting customer expectations.

Compared with Zang and Vásquez’s and Panseeta and Todd’s (2014) studies, the term apology or apology is labeled as in a standalone move and step, *Apologize for sources of trouble* (Move 2), *Apologizing for the unpleasant incident* (M2S3), respectively. The function of apology expressions realized as M2Sc of the present study is different from the previous studies. That is, when markers of apology such as *sorry* and *apologize* are used without mentioning any unpleasant experience, they are considered *Expressing regret/concern/apology*. This sub-function commonly appears early in the text.

Figure 4.6

Example of how *Expressing regret/concern/apology* occurs in the text (UKHRTC28)

Thank you for taking the time to review your recent stay with us.

I am sorry your stay was not as enjoyable as previous stays with us. I have spoken with the team with regards to this issue and I understand you refused the offer to change rooms when the night team were unable to prevent the detector from beeping. I am disappointed this issue was not addressed upon departure from the hotel to your satisfaction and I will ensure this matter is reviewed with the team to ensure we improve. We have contacted you directly with regards to this situation and look forward to your response.

4.3.1.3 Positioning hotel brands (M3)

This is the only move that has been adjusted from the move structure of the pilot study. Besides being labeled as a standalone communicative function, this move delivers more than just a mission statement. Brand positioning is one of the integral components in marketing. According to Van Riel and Bruggen (2002), brand positioning refers to a systematic strategy to build and maintain one's positive image. Normally, brand positioning strategies are commonly known for their effectiveness in establishing competitive advantages; however, they are also beneficial in obtaining the purposes of the organization. It is commonly known as the conceptual place a business wants to take over in its target customer's mind: it shapes how customers perceive a business. In this sense, brand positioning is an important method in creating positive image among customers.

It is discovered that this strategy is used even in the RTCs. Despite negative comments, the author attempts to build a positive mental image about the hotel. This move, in RTCs, plays a vital role in reputation management as it spreads a positive message about a hotel across the community. There were two steps realized

in this move – *Stating hotel's commitment* (M3Sa) and *Confirming hotel's standard* (M3Sb).

(1) *Stating hotel's commitment* (M3Sa)

Stating hotel's commitment (M3Sa) was not mentioned in the previous research on RTCs. This move takes place when the author explicitly states what the hotel is trying to achieve. In this way, it helps hotels confirm their position and standard.

“At (hotel's name) we strive for 5 star service in every facet of the business.”

(UKHRTC32)

“We strive to provide an exclusive service experience for every guest”

(THHRTC32)

As seen in UKHRTC32 and THHRTC32, the authors inform the customers of their hotels' commitments. Such commitment is also known as a 'mission statement' which has previously been explored as a discourse by Swales and Roger (1995). In their study, mission statements are described as 'carrier of ideology' which can be seen in persuasive messages employed to draw stakeholders in line with the company's desire. This implies that the use of mission statements makes RTCs become persuasive in nature. According to Breeze (2013), mission statements refer to a short key statement of the business's *raison d'être*, which always contains references to its aspirations and achievements. Mission statements are considered one of the key components in the corporation. Thus, they are used to firmly secure the company's position and identity. This implies that mission statements can potentially influence the company's image. Apart from conveying message to customers, Breeze (2013) adds that they also played a vital role in creating team spirit among staffs.

In the case of RTCs, it was found that the mission statement seems to focus the hotel's goal, and the hotel's identity is confirmed by mentioning the name and what the hotel is trying to achieve. For example, top hotels in UK

distinguished themselves by mentioning the quality of services they strive for – “*we strive for 5 star service*” (UKHRTC32).

Figure 4.7

Example of how *Positioning hotel brands* occurs in the text (THHRTC23)

Dear XXXX

Since it is our philosophy to constantly improve all details of our hospitality and to make our guest's experience as enjoyable as possible we appreciate that you took the time to share your experience on TripAdvisor with us. Please accept our sincere apologies for the inconvenience caused during your holiday.

I am certainly disappointed that your stay was not all that it could have been. I would like to apologise on behalf of the hotel and its team for your stay.

(2) *Confirming hotel's standard* (M3Sb)

Confirming hotel's standard (M3Sb), as its name suggests, is employed to confirm the hotel's standard despite the negative feedback it received. The hotel may take this opportunity to create its positive image by stating that the incident the customer experienced does not reflect the actual performance of the hotel.

“I can only assure you that comments of this nature are extremely rare and certainly not representative of our usually excellent levels of customer care and guest feedback.”

(THHRTC48)

“I can assure you it is not the norm & runs contrary to the usual high standards we hope & expect to deliver.”

(UKHRTC7)

In UKHRTC7, again, the hotel confirms its standard with the terms “*high standard*”. The word “*assure*”, was employed to perform service recovery. In this scenario, the hotel tried to inform the customer and public that it was not typical for them to deliver poor service.

Figure 4.8

Example of how *Confirming hotel’s standard* occurs in the text (UKHRTC30)

Dear XXXX,

I am very sorry to read your comments regarding being charged twice. **This is certainly not the experience reflective of (hotel’s name).** I have escalated your review to our finance team to ensure this doesn't happen again.

I do hope you enjoyed your stay apart from the mistake with payment and that you will change your mind and we have the opportunity to welcome you back to the hotel in the near future.

4.3.1.4 Dealing with complaints (M4)

Dealing with complaints (M4) covers the key part of the RTCs as it plays a leading role in both image protection and service recovery. As its name suggests, this move is employed to handle customers’ complaints. It was found that hotels involve a variety of sub-functions to fulfill this move. The result of the analysis shows three different steps the authors use to handle customer’s complaints – *Explaining causes of the incident* (M4Sa), *Reporting action taken/investigation result* (M4Sb), and *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc).

(1) Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa)

This step can be seen when the author makes an attempt to explain what caused the incident. That is, the author brings different kinds of

information which is related to the incident into play. This can be as simple as stating what happened. The author may depict another side of the story to inform the customer that there is a reason behind the action.

“...May I explain regarding to your comment as cleaning the pool, we got information from the guest who used the pool has lotion in the water, so our staff has to clean immediately.”

(THHRTC7)

“Over the last 25 years there have been a number of changes at the hotel as you correctly say.”

(UKHRTC53)

On the other hand, in some cases, the author may draw on hotels' policies, orders, rules, regulations, regular practices, and related information which led to the unpleasant experience. This is what UKHP2 referred as 'policy enforcement against customers'.

“However our hotel has "joiner free" policy but the maximum occupancy must not exceed the room limitation.”

(THHRTC19)

“At the moment there has been the construction in our hotel since May 2008 and it is supposed to be finished before October....”

(THHRTC3)

In the extract of THHRTC19 presented above, the author informed the reviewer and the public of the policy to reduce damage caused by the complaint. Another example can be seen in THHRTC3 where the author provided related information which somewhat helps recover the hotel's image and reputation. Thus, this step plays a vital role in image recovery, because it supplies information that mitigate the damage done by complaints.

However, this step can also be viewed in the negative way. The reviewers and the public may perceive it as excuses hotels try to make to cover up their faults. As suggested by UKHP2, policy enforcement against customers should be avoided. It was found that policy enforcement is not common among top UK hotels, which concurs with the UKHP2's response as he/she stated that "we try not to enforce any policy against our guests."

As the author can draw on a broad range of information and ideas to address the incident, there is no specific marker in realizing this step, and thus it requires reading and understanding the context thoroughly to capture this sub-function.

Figure 4.9

Example of how *Explaining causes of the incident* occurs in the text (THHRTC42)

Dear XXXX,

It is regrettable that you experience this during your holiday here. All your comments are important to us in order for us to improve our services. The resort is on the side of a mountain thus rooms and bungalows are built around it. It needs lot of steps to reach the room and some people are having difficulty walking around the property. Thank you for noticing that the resort is in good location which is just few steps away from the beach and all the shops and restaurant. We wish we can serve you again here. Thank you for taking time reviewing our resort.

(2) Reporting action taken/investigation result (M4Sb)

Reporting action taken/investigation result (M4Sb) is used to report what hotels have done to address the incident. Once the action has been taken, the hotel informs the reviewer of the update of the situation and/or what they have done

so far about the incident. This includes the information related to the action hotels have taken and the result of the investigation.

“The points you have raised in regards to the Air conditioning , hot water , smell from cigarette and Shuttle service has surely raised concerns in which your comments has been shared with my team.”

(THHRTC65)

“We have taken your comments regarding the noise from the corridor very seriously and we are currently working on solutions to resolve this noise issue.”

(UKHRTC59)

As seen in the extracts above, the authors report the actions they have taken to address the incidents. It can be as simple as passing on the feedback to responsible staff (THHRTC65). In UKHRTC59, the hotel informed the reviewer that they working on the solution to ensure no repeat of the incident. It implies that both of the authors (THHRTC65 and UKHRTC59) admitted that it was their hotels' fault without having to wait for an investigation, the hotels accepted the comments and were willing to solve the problems.

Some incidents, however, are more complicated. Investigation may be required before hotels can take any action.

“The investigation was taken place with the involved department to....”

(THHRTC50)

“I did investigate what had happened and apparently this was triggered due to a request for a higher category of room at a discount rate.”

(THHRTC33)

In the extracts above, it can be seen that hotels explicitly showed that they have already put some efforts into addressing the incidents. Unlike

Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa) where hotels rely solely on related information, in M4Sb, it requires more than that of M4Sa (e.g., hotels' policies, regular practices, etc.). Some incidents demand investigation to learn what actually happened. However, in some cases, the authors decided to respond to the reviews before taking any action. In this regard, the author informs the review of what he/she is going to do to address the incident.

"....our chef will be invited to review all menu items with particular emphasis on our guests comments."

(THHRTC41)

".... we will discuss your comments with our senior management."

(UKHRTC57)



Figure 4.10

Example of how *Reporting action taken/investigation result of the incident* occurs in the text (UKHRTC10)

Hello Sir,

Thank you for your feedback relating to your experience in booking your August holiday here at (hotel's name).

As we tried to explain on the phone, we made a genuine mistake in offering you such a high level of discount during our peak month of trade. As a new business at the time of your booking we had not set up clear procedures regarding discounts. **This has now been sorted out with a packages and last minute offers section on our website.**

(hotel's name) remains absolutely committed to delivering the highest levels of customer service in a friendly, relaxed setting as is reflected in the vast majority of the reviews from people who have stayed with us.

Regards
XXXX

(3) *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc)

In *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc), the author admits that it is the hotel's fault and apologizes to the customer. According to the research conducted by Nottingham School of Economics, University of Nottingham (2009), unhappy clients tend to be more willing to forgive the company that apologizes rather than the company that monetarily compensates. That is, 'a genuine apology' can increase the chance of service recovery.

Expressions of apology may be employed to inform the customer that the hotel is taking responsibility for the situation. That is, the hotel

explicitly makes an apology for the incident that was actually caused by the hotel not the customer.

“We apologise for the incomplete airport transfer. There is no excuse for this....”

(THHRTC18)

“I'm sorry your complaint was not properly addressed at the time.”

(UKHRTC71)

In the extracts provided above, both hotels admitted that the incidents were their fault, and thus they apologized. It is noticeable that along with the expressions of apology, the hotels mention the incidents that they apologized for – *“the incomplete airport transfer”* (THHRTC18) and *“your complaint was not properly addressed at the time.”* (UKHRTC71). In THHRTC18, the author even confirmed their failure by stating *“There is no excuse for this....”*.

In the previous studies of RTCs, all expressions of apology were realized as *Apologize for sources of trouble* (Zhang and Vásquez's move 2) and *Apologizing for the unpleasant incident* (Panseeta and Todd's step 3 in move 2). In other words, all the expressions of apology identified in the RTCs were perceived to perform only one function which is to apologize customers for the incident. Nevertheless, the present study views these expressions differently as they can perform different functions in the RTC. Therefore, this step is different from *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc). Although expressions of apology can be identified in both steps, by restating of the incident, only M3Sc is considered as the step used as 'a genuine apology'. That is, apart from the expressions of apology (e.g., sorry, apologize), the elements surrounding such expression makes this step different from M2Sc, where the indicator of the admission of fault is missing. Thus, this step has to be realized not only through the expressions of apology but also the surrounding elements which add the sense of admission of fault.

Figure 4.11

Example of how *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc) is realized in the text.
(UKHRTC18)

Thank you for sharing your review of (hotel's name). I am naturally disappointed that the experience did not deliver to the high standards we are renowned for and pride ourselves on. In line with Scottish law, (hotel's name) is a completely non-smoking establishment and we have a duty to follow up all concerns regarding this law. I am truly sorry that we were mistaken on this occasion and that this detracted from what should have been a relaxing break. I will be sure to share your feedback regarding the regretful challenges you had with the restaurants to the relevant managers, and once again I apologise that these experiences were below your, and our, expectations. Should you return to (hotel's name) in the future, please contact our Guest Relations team directly who will be pleased to assist with your reservation and ensure your return experience is everything you hoped.

In UKHRTC18, M4Sc was identified through both the expressions and context. The author used the term “*sorry*” as an expression of apology, which was followed by the admission of guilt indicated by the term “*mistaken*”. On top of that, the author went on and stated “*I will be sure to share your feedback regarding the regretful challenges you had with the restaurants to the relevant managers....*”. Such statement confirms the admission of fault. Once those components are put together, it can be concluded that the author admitted that it was the hotel's fault, and he/she apologized for it. Thus, to realize this step, it requires reading through and understanding the whole message.

4.3.1.5 *Concluding Remarks* (M5)

Concluding Remarks (M5) has to do with how the author wraps up the message. This move is employed to finalize the message. In general, the final paragraph was devoted to this move, which characterizes the end of RTC. In business correspondence, it is suggested that the author leave the reader with a positive impression of both the author and the message; this component can even be noticed in RTCs. In this regard, ending the RTC with a positive impression can promote service recovery and image protection, which are the main communicative purposes of this genre, and thus ending the RTC with this move helps the hotel fulfill the communicative purposes more completely. In addition, it also determines the future relationship between hotels and customers as it contains elements that shed some light on future interactions. There are five steps realized in this function – *Expressing gratitude* (2) (M5Sa), *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (2) (M5Sb), *Asking for a return visit* (M5Sc), *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd), and *Promising to improve service* (M5Se). In general, these steps are located at the ending part of the text as they aim make a conclusion and prepare to end the message.

(1) *Expressing gratitude* (2) (M5Sa)

Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa) can be seen not only in RTCs but also in general business correspondence. This step is similar to *Expressing gratitude* (M2Sa) discussed earlier. Before closing the message, the author may express his/her second gratitude in order to create the last positive impression.

“Once again we appreciate to your kind comment and feedback to our service....”

(THHRTC5)

“Thank you once again for taking the time to write your review....”

(UKHRTC2)

As seen in the extracts presented above, the second-time gratitude looks very much like the first-time gratitude (M2Sa) except for the fact that it has been expressed for the

second time. Expressions of gratitude (e.g., *thank you*, *appreciate*) do not belong exclusively to M2Sa, but rather they can also appear in M5Sa.

This step can simply be identified through the second-time markers like “*Once again*” (THHRTC5). Apart from such marker, it looks exactly like the first-time gratitude, where the author explicitly expresses gratitude for the comment, for example.

However, this does not mean that all the second-time gratitude identified in the present study’s corpora are equipped with a second-time marker. Once the second-time marker is not presented, this step will look identical to M2Sa. In this case, this step can be realized through the understanding of the content and its location. This step, in general, appears in the last part of the RTC along with the other steps in this move. The following figure is an example of how this step occurs without a second-time marker.

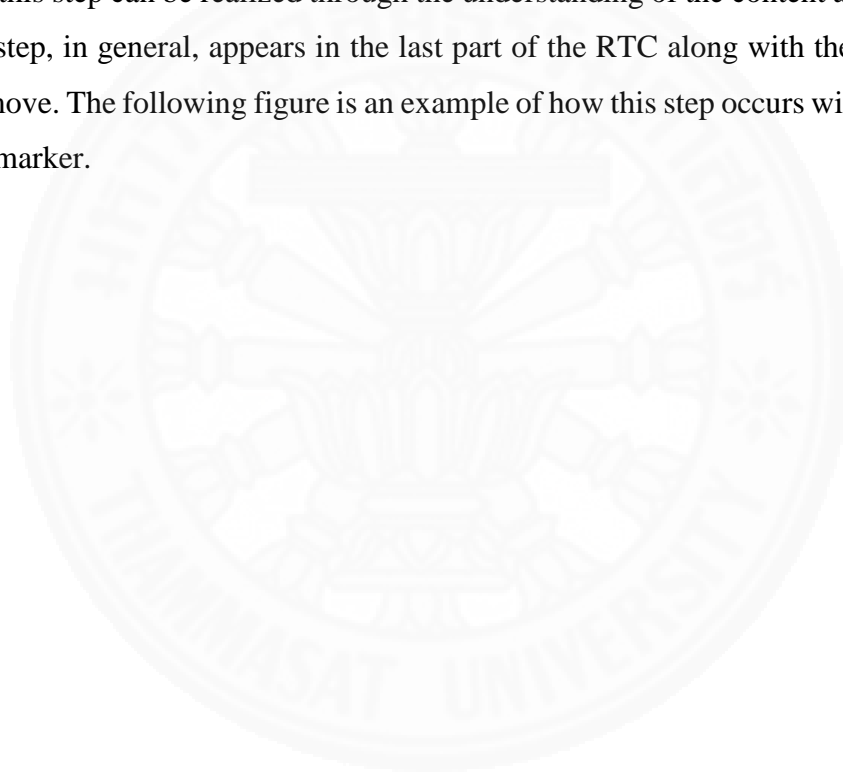


Figure 4.12

Example of how *Expressing gratitude* (2) occurs without a second-time marker (THHRTC19)

Dear XXXX,

Greeting from (hotel's name).

Thank you for your feedback and on behalf of the entire team I hope that you will accept my sincere apologize for this, and allow us the opportunity to show you that the level of service you experienced during your recent stay is not indicative of the high standards at our hotel as you can read in the majority of the reviews that we get from our guests.

As I did immediately investigation next morning, Your reservation with Booking.com are Economy room (1 person) and Standard twin room (2 persons), the total occupancy is limited only 3 persons, However our hotel has "joiner free" policy but the maximum occupancy must not exceed the room limitation. This is the reason why our night staff didn't allow you and your friends took another 3 joiners (total 6 persons) into the rooms. I do really have to apologize that we couldn't fulfill you this request.

Thank you for this such feedback, we learn from each guests review how we can better ourselves – and our guests' experiences!

XXXX

Figure 4.12 shows that the expression “*Thank you*” was used twice, once at the top part and the other time at the bottom part of the message. The following elements are very similar: both expressions of gratitude were used to show appreciation towards the

customer's feedback. Although the second-time marker is absent, it is obvious that the expression of gratitude was used twice in different parts of the message. In this regard, they are realizable even without a second-time marker.

(2) *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (2) (M5Sb)

As is the case with the divergence between M2Sa and M5Sa (Expressing gratitude), *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (2) (M5Sb) is the counterpart of *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc). After M2Sc is employed early in the message, the author concludes the message with an identical expression.

“Once again we apologise for your inconvenience!”

(THHRTC16)

“....and once again I apologise that these experiences were below your, and our, expectations.”

(UKHRTC18)

It can be seen that this case is similar to the case of M5Sa where the second-time marker may be used to indicate that the expression has been made for the second time. In the extracts of THHRTC16 and UKHRTC18, the second-time marker *once again* was used to make the expression of apology sincerer as it is repeatedly used by the author. Since this step takes on the form of M2Sb, the expression of apology identified here is not considered ‘a genuine apology’. To take responsibility for the incident, the hotel has to restate the incident and admit that the incident is its fault.

Figure 4.13

Example of how *Expressing regret/concern/apology (2)* occurs in the text (THHRTC69)

Dear XXXX,

May I thank you for staying at (hotel's name) during your recent visit and taking your time to share your stay experience.

We are deeply sorry to learn that you experienced difficulties with the air-conditioning in the guest room. It was most unfortunate and truly regrets the inconvenience caused to you.

At the moment, our rooms have been recently renovated. This include installing up new fan coil and motor units for the air conditioning. Meanwhile we are checking all alter rooms to ensure no guest will be inconvenienced in this way. **Once again, our sincere apologies to you and your family.**

We do hope that we will have the pleasure of welcoming you back in the future, so that we are able to remedy the poor impression created on this occasion.

Best Regards,
The Management Team

(3) Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)

To wrap up the message, the author may try to convince the customer to give his/her hotel another chance after the applications of previous moves

which altogether strive to recover services. The author may encourage a return visit by showing the desire to welcome the customer again.

“We do hope that (hotel’s name) will still have a next chance to welcome you again soon in the future.”

(THHRTC50)

“....the team is keen on welcoming you back”

(UKHRTC37)

The extracts above show that the hotels explicitly express a desire to see the customers again.

Figure 4.14

Example of how *Asking for a return visit* occurs in the text (THHRTC12)

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for taking the time to post a review on TripAdvisor following your recent visit. We value your feedback and we are sorry to hear about your experience. Rest assured we have taken these comments on board and I would like to get in touch to discuss this further with you, if you are able to share your contact details with me directly on (email address). I do hope you will give us another opportunity to welcome you back at which time we will spare no effort in providing you with the perfect visit.

XXXX

Director of Food & Beverage

(4) *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd)

Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd) is realized in the conclusion part of the message. This step firmly serves the two main communicative purposes – image protection and service recovery. As for the image protection, hotels try to take the issue out of public view by offering private channels of communication. This step also creates an opportunity to recover the relationship between hotels and customers. That is, they insist on taking responsibility for the incident. The author simply asks the customer to contact him/her directly through telephone or email, and thus a phone number and/or an email address are included in this step. The direct contact given to the customer is the only concrete evidence which can confirm that the hotel is willing to take responsibility.

“.....would invite you contacting me directly via (email address)”

(THHRTC56)

“If you should like to contact me at the Inn on (email address) or (email address) I would be grateful.”

(UKHRTC17)

Figure 4.15

Example of *Soliciting direct contact* occurs in the text (UKHRTC49)

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for taking the time to write this review.

I would like to offer my most sincere apologies that you were made to feel patronised in any way during your arrival or that a member of my team came across as rude.

I would like to ask you to contact my Front of House Manager at your convenience to discuss this in more detail. He can be contacted by email, on (email address).

(5) *Promising to improve services (M5Se)*

The last step to perform the function of concluding remarks is *Promising to improve services (M5Se)*. This step is used to ensure service quality improvement. The author, right before closing the message, makes a promise to improve the area of service that the customer complains about, and for the last time, the author reassures that the unpleasant experience will not occur again.

“....we are doing our utmost to eliminate these challenges for the future.”

(UKHRTC6)

This step may co-occur with *Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)*. For example, the author combines M5Sc with M5Se to assure that the customer will receive a better experience if he/she returns to the hotel. In this case, M5Se adds a strong sense of service recovery to M5Sc, and that makes the statement even more convincing.

“We do hope that we will have the pleasure of welcoming you back in the future, so that we are able to remedy the poor impression created on this occasion.”

(THHRTC69)

“I do hope you will give us another opportunity to welcome you back at which time we will spare no effort in providing you with the perfect visit.”

(UKHRTC12)

Figure 4.16

Example of *Promising to improve services* occurs in the text (THHRTC8)

Thank you for your feedback. We are dismayed to learn that your recent stay with us was marred by a lack of attention, and we extend a sincere apology.

This is very atypical feedback for us to receive as we take great pride in our passionate staff and exceptional service and offerings we tend to provide.

With that in mind, I take your comments with the utmost seriousness.

Please be assured we will do everything we can to make certain an experience of this nature never happens again.

Thank you once again for your feedback and we do hope to connect with you.

Respectfully

XXXX

4.3.1.6 Concluding remarks (M6)

Closing (M6), as its name suggests, has to do with how the author close the message. As mentioned in the *Opening* (M1), RTCs took on the style and format of formal business correspondence, which is, in general, opened and closed in a conventional fashion. The following are the steps that are realized in this move. Unlike the previous move presented in this section, the sequence of the steps presented in Table 4.4 reflect the actual pattern of this move in RTCs. However, this does not

mean that the author has to use all the steps to close the message. Each of the steps is employed according to the communicative motivation.

(1) Sign off (M6Sa)

As with traditional business correspondence, Sign offs could be found throughout this study's corpora. Traditionally, closing the message with a sign off shows the author's respect and/or appreciation for the reader. Although there are plenty of sign offs out there ranging from informal to formal ones, the authors of RTCs prefer semi-formal and formal sign offs to flow with the convention of business correspondence.

"Yours sincerely."

(THHRTC32)

"Warm regards,"

(THHRTC49)

"Best wishes,"

(UKHRTC45)

(2) Signature (M6Sb)

Closing the letter or email with the author's name is very common in the world of business. The rationale behind this is that the reader can identify the author. Although the author responds on behalf of his/her hotel, his/her personal name can be included in the closing part. In addition, the author's name can also be used as a reference in future discussion. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the identities of the authors of the RTCs collected for this study will not be revealed, and thus the extract of this step will not be presented here.

(3) Job title (M6Sc)

To provide more details about the author, his/her job title is added. Apart from the author's name, his/her position may be included for future reference. As with the previous step in this move, including the author's position is also

very common in business correspondence as it helps identify the author more easily. It can also be used for future references.

“Executive Assistant Manager”

(THHRTC57)

“Hotel Manager”

(UKHRTC56)

(4) Contact information (M6Sd)

The author may leave contact information in the closing part of the RTC. This step is different from *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd), where the contact information is always included. What makes them different is that the contact information in M6Sd is left without encouraging the reviewer to contact them. Apart from the contact information, other expressions were detected here. This element can be seen in formal business letters or email.

(5) Affiliation (M6Se)

The last step of this move is *Affiliation* (M6Se). The author may include his/her corporate affiliation in the closing part of the message. This step was not mentioned in Panseeta and Todd’s (2014) study, but this step can be seen in business correspondence. In Santos’s (2002) study of business letters, affiliation included in the final part of the message is realized as *Company credentials* (step 4 in move 4). The following is an example of how this step occurs in the RTC.

“Sincerely yours,

XXXX

Hotel Manager

(hotel’s name)”

(THHRTC2)

*“Best regards,
(hotel’s name)”*

(THHRTC71)

In the extract of THHRTC71, the author’s personal name, job title, and contact information are skipped. It is possible that the author intended not to make the response sound personal. In this way, the message does not represent the author’s individual perspective.

4.3.2 Inter-rater Reliability Analysis

This study employed the inter-rater reliability approach as it helps measure the consistency of the coding process. Besides the researcher, the texts were coded by another well qualified rater in order to confirm the reliability of the coding framework. As suggested by previous studies (e.g., Kanoksilapatham, 2005, 2007), Cohen’s Kappa, κ , was used to measure the percentage of agreement between the raters. 25% of the texts were randomly selected from each of the corpus, which resulted in 18 texts from THHC and 18 texts from UKHC. The following table presents the lists of the texts that were given to the other rater.

Table 4.6

Lists of the texts coded by the other rater

	THHC	UKHC
1	THHRTC6	UKHRTC10
2	THHRTC8	UKHRTC11
3	THHRTC11	UKHRTC14
4	THHRTC12	UKHRTC16
5	THHRTC14	UKHRTC19
6	THHRTC17	UKHRTC22
7	THHRTC26	UKHRTC26
8	THHRTC30	UKHRTC30
9	THHRTC32	UKHRTC34
10	THHRTC39	UKHRTC42

	THHC	UKHC
11	THHRTC43	UKHRTC46
12	THHRTC45	UKHRTC49
13	THHRTC49	UKHRTC52
14	THHRTC53	UKHRTC57
15	THHRTC 56	UKHRTC60
16	THHRTC60	UKHRTC62
17	THHRTC65	UKHRTC67
18	THHRTC67	UKHRTC72

All steps in the form of extracts were drawn from each text presented above, and thus 261 communicative units (N=261) were extracted from the texts and used for the inter-rater reliability analysis. The following tables present the result of inter-rater reliability analysis generated by SPSS under *Kappa* in *Crosstab: Statistics*.

Table 4.7

Processing summary of inter-rater reliability generated by SPSS

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Researcher *	261	100.0%	0	0.0%	261	100.0%
The other rater						

Table 4.8

Result of inter-rater analysis generated by SPSS

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Kappa Agreement	.921	.017	53.507	.000
N of Valid Cases	261			

As indicated in Table 4.8, the inter-rater reliability between the two raters was found to be $\kappa = .921$. As stated in Chapter 3, $\kappa = 1$ indicates 100% agreement between the two raters. As suggested by Gelfand and Hartman (1975), the acceptable score is above .6. With that being noted, it implies that the inter-rater reliability of the present study coding scheme is strong, because almost all the sub-functions (N=261) were mutually agreed by the two raters. This implies that the coding framework of the present study is reliable, and subjectivity in coding was not likely to occur during the analysis.

4.3.3 Frequency of Moves and Steps

After the move structure has been identified and confirmed for its inter-rater reliability, once again each of the RTCs in the THHC and UKHC was read through to identify the frequency of each communicative unit. This section presents and compares the frequency of moves and steps realized in THHC and UKHC. Based on the results of the frequency analysis, the cut-off points for *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional* moves were also decided upon and discussed here. As mentioned earlier, there is no absolute specification for each of the cut-off points; that is, the percentage ranges of *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional* moves vary from study to study. Thus, the cut-off points were decided after the proportion of each communicative unit in the corpora had been revealed.

4.3.3.1 Definitions of *Obligatory*, *Conventional*, and *Optional* Moves

Generally, the terms *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional* moves are defined based solely on the numbers of occurrences which are presented as the result of frequency analysis. Without a vivid definition, some previous genre studies used these terms in a non-literal manner. The necessity degree of each communicative unit has not been defined clearly. The difference in the degree of necessity implies that these terms have to be defined as they inform prospective authors of the significance of each move. Thus, the present study draws on relevant literature and the frequency of moves to define the terms *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional* and create the cut-off points, which together inform the degree of necessity for each move. The following table illustrates the frequency of moves in RTCs.

Table 4.9
Frequency of each move in the datasets

Move	The number of occurrence		
	THHC (N = 72)	UKHC (N = 72)	Total (N = 144)
Opening (M1)	62 (86.1%)	41 (56.9%)	103 (71%)
Acknowledging feedback (M2)	68 (94.4%)	70 (97.2%)	138 (95.8%)
Positioning hotel brands (M3)	26 (36.1%)	42 (58.3%)	68 (47.2%)
Dealing with complaints (M4)	61 (84.7%)	65 (90.2%)	126 (87%)
Concluding remarks (M5)	67 (93%)	70 (97.2%)	137 (95.1%)
Closing (M6)	54 (75%)	59 (82%)	113 (78%)

(1) Obligatory

According to Xiao and Cao's (2013) study of moves in research article abstracts composed by native and non-native speakers of English, *obligatory* communicative units are those that appear at 90% or above in the corpora. Cheung (2008) created a stronger criterion with the minimum of 95.6% as it is the highest frequency that could be identified in the corpus. Apart from the frequency of moves, no additional information was added to explain their decisions.

Tessuto (2015) describes an *obligatory* move as a communicative unit that appears in every text within a particular dataset. This means that the cut-off point for the *obligatory* move was set at 100%: lower than 100% will result in disqualification. Henry and Roseberry (1998) note that *obligatory* moves are required to fulfill the communicative purpose. As its name suggests, this kind of move is considered extremely necessary to achieve the communicative purpose and complete the text. As far as the pedagogical implication is concerned, instructors, and learners should be informed about the necessity of the move as it is an integral part of the text

composition. The present study considers Tessuto's (2015) definition of *obligatory*, because it is well justified and corresponds to the purpose of moves which are to achieve a particular communicative purpose.

Due to the nature of public and online business correspondence, RTCs are considered an open-ended text where a distinctive convention has not yet been fully developed. As seen in the previous section in this chapter, the pattern of RTCs are fairly flexible. For example, some authors apply the convention of business letters or emails as they aim to achieve similar purposes, while others do not follow such convention strictly. As a result, there is no move that occurs in every single text in the datasets. If I followed Tessuto's (2015) definition, there would be no move that is qualified for the term *obligatory*. However, there are two moves that occurs in almost every text in the datasets. Table 4.9 illustrates that *Acknowledging feedback* and *Concluding remarks* occurred in 95.8% and 96.5% of all RTCs respectively in the two corpora combined. The cut-off point of 100% for *obligatory* has to be slightly adjusted in conformity with the nature of open-ended text and the fact that the online RTC is a newly established genre. Therefore, the cut-off point was decided at a compromise of 90% which is the minimum percentage of these moves. In this regard, in the combination of THHC and UKHC, *Acknowledging feedback* and *Concluding remarks* are the only moves that are labeled as *obligatory*. The difference between the two corpora can be seen in *Dealing with complaints* which is considered *obligatory* among top UK hotels and only *conventional* among local Thai hotels. Such findings are congruent with the interview data in that top UK hotels are strong-willed to recover their clients. Hotels may use *Dealing with complaints* to increase their chance of service recovery.

(2) Conventional

Conventional moves, also known as *typical* or *quasi-obligatory* moves, refer to moves that frequently occur but are not as frequent as *obligatory* moves. They are commonly employed by community members to achieve their communicative goals. In other words, it is typical to see them being realized in a particular dataset. As with the case of *obligatory* moves, there is no absolute cut-off point for *conventional* moves. Cheung (2008) sets the cut-off point at 59.3% as it corresponds to her dataset of sales letters. Tessuto (2015) uses the term *quasi-obligatory*

moves to describe the moves that occur from 83% to 88%. The cut-off points can vary widely from one dataset to another. In some cases, *conventional* moves are not presented. In Yang's (2015) study, for example, *obligatory* and *conventional* moves are integrated under the term *obligatory* moves, which in this case, refers to the moves that occur more than 60% in the dataset. It implies that *conventional* moves support the fulfillment of the communicative purposes: it is important, but, unlike *obligatory* moves, not compulsory to meet the communicative purposes. Thus, the present study defines *conventional* moves as the ones that frequently occur, and the cut-off point was set at 70% and upwards. This means that the moves that occur between 70% and 90% (the cut-off point for *obligatory* moves) are labeled as *conventional* moves. In the combination of THHC and UKHC, *Opening, and Concluding remarks* are considered *conventional* moves. As far as the difference is concerned, the separation of the corpora results in the disqualification of *Opening* of UKHC. This move is not typical among top hotels in UK.

(3) Optional

Optional moves, as its name suggests, are the moves that are available to be chosen. They do not occur as frequently as *obligatory* and *conventional* moves. According to Henry and Roseberry (1998), *optional* moves are extra communicative units added by writers or speakers to fulfill communicative purposes more effectively. As with *obligatory* and *optional* moves, the operationalization of *optional* moves varies from one study to another. In Shi and Wannaruk's (2014) study of research articles in agricultural science, *optional* moves refer to the moves that occur less than 60%. What seems to be obvious is that *optional* moves are the least frequent compared with *obligatory* and *conventional*, and the term *optional* is meant to cover the rest of moves that do not meet the frequency requirement of either *obligatory* or *conventional* moves. Since the present study set the cut-off point for *conventional* moves at 70%, *optional* moves would be the moves that occurs less than 70%. Therefore, *Positioning hotel brands* is the only *optional* move in the combined dataset. In THHC alone, *opening* is also considered an *optional* move as it occurs less than 70%. The following tables present the categorization of moves realized and the typicality of moves in RTCs.

Table 4.10

Categorization of moves in RTCs

Typicality	Cut-off Point (%)
Obligatory	90.00% and above
Conventional	70.00% - 89.99%
Optional	0.01% - 69.99%

Table 4.11

Typicality of moves in RTCs

Move	Typicality		
	THHC	UKHC	Combined
Opening (M1)	Conventional	Optional	Conventional
Acknowledging feedback (M2)	Obligatory	Obligatory	Obligatory
Positioning hotel brands (M3)	Optional	Optional	Optional
Dealing with complaints (M4)	Conventional	Obligatory	Conventional
Concluding remarks (M5)	Obligatory	Obligatory	Obligatory
Closing (M6)	Conventional	Conventional	Conventional

4.3.3.2 Comparison between THHC and UKHC

This section discusses the similarities and differences of the frequency of steps between THHC and UKHC. After the identification of moves and steps and the inter-rater reliability, each of the corpus were analyzed for frequency of each move and step. To gain insight into the ways of how the two groups respond to customers' complaints, the present study compares the frequency of steps, which are the strategies the authors employed to achieve the communicative purposes. The following table and bar chart compare the frequency of steps in THHC and UKHC.

Table 4.12

Comparison of frequency of steps in THHC and UKHC

Move	Step	THHC		UKHC		Total	
		Frequency (N = 72)	Percentage	Frequency (N = 72)	Percentage	Frequency (N = 144)	Percentage
Opening (M1)	Salutation (M1Sa)	54	75%	40	55.5%	94	65.2%
	Greeting (M1Sb)	9	12.5%	1	1.3%	10	6.9%
Acknowledging feedback (M2)	Expressing gratitude (M2Sa)	54	75%	55	76.3%	109	75.6%
	Valuing feedback (M2Sb)	14	19.4%	16	22.2%	30	20.8%
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (M2Sc)	52	72.2%	59	81.9%	111	77%

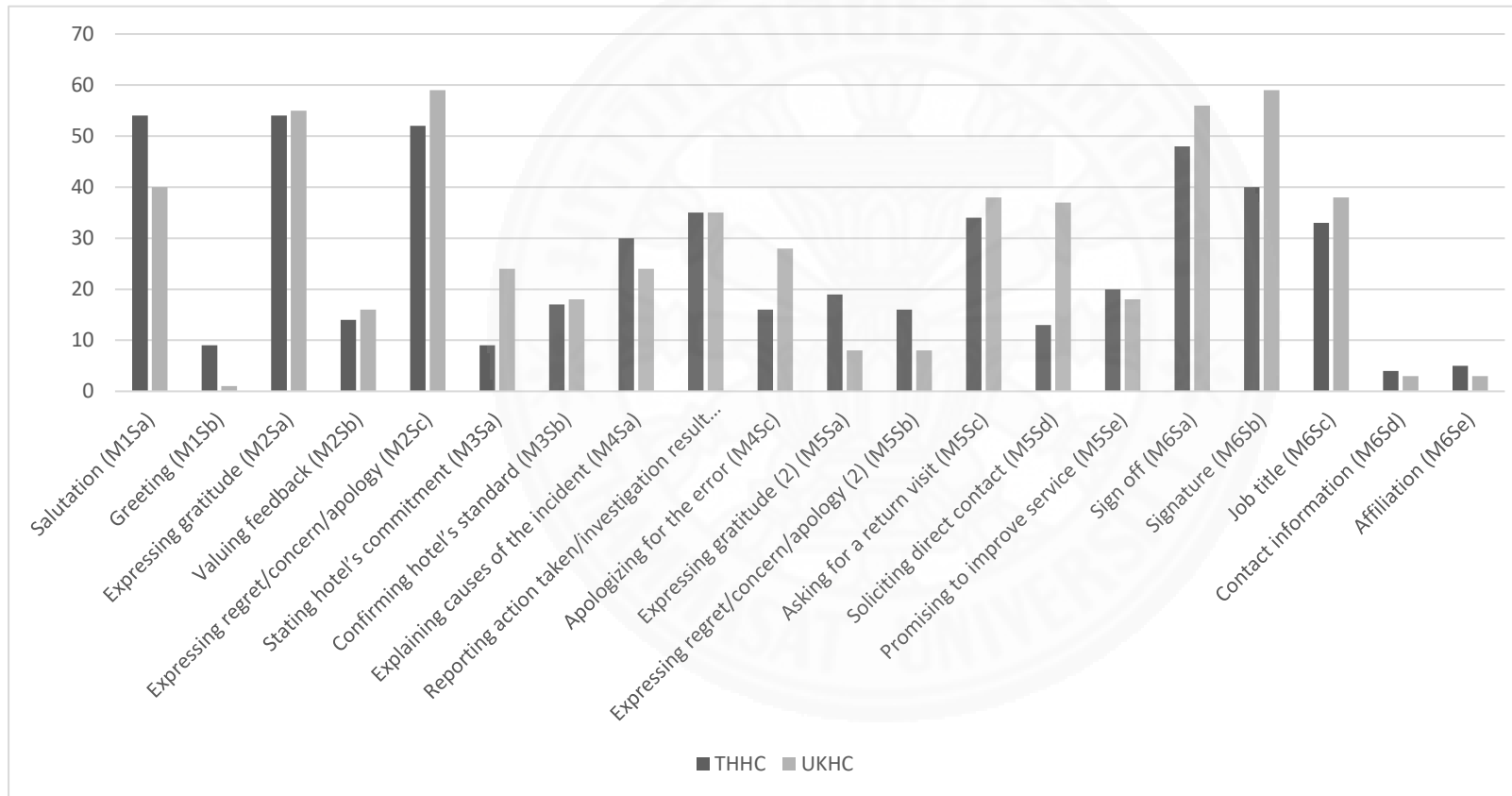
Move	Step	THHC		UKHC		Total	
		Frequency (N = 72)	Percentage	Frequency (N = 72)	Percentage	Frequency (N = 144)	Percentage
Positioning hotel brands (M3)	Stating hotel's commitment (M3Sa)	9	12.5%	24	33.3%	33	22.9%
	Confirming hotel's standard (M3Sb)	17	23.6%	18	25%	35	24.3%
Dealing with complaints (M4)	Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa)	30	41.6%	24	33.3%	54	37.5%
	Reporting action taken/investigation result (M4Sb)	35	48.6%	35	48.6%	70	48.6%
	Apologizing for the error (M4Sc)	16	22.2%	28	38.8%	44	30.5%
Concluding remarks (M5)	Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa)	19	26.3%	8	11.1%	27	18.7%

Move	Step	THHC		UKHC		Total	
		Frequency (N = 72)	Percentage	Frequency (N = 72)	Percentage	Frequency (N = 144)	Percentage
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sb)	16	22.2%	8	11.1%	24	16.6%
	Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)	34	47.2%	38	52.7%	72	50%
	Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)	13	18%	37	51.3%	50	34.7%
	Promising to improve service (M5Se)	20	27.7%	18	25%	38	26.3%
	Sign off (M6Sa)	48	66.6%	56	77.7%	104	72.2%
Closing (M6)	Signature (M6Sb)	40	55.5%	59	81.9%	99	68.7%

Move	Step	THHC		UKHC		Total	
		Frequency (N = 72)	Percentage	Frequency (N = 72)	Percentage	Frequency (N = 144)	Percentage
	Job title (M6Sc)	33	45.8%	38	52.7%	71	49.3%
	Contact information (M6Sd)	4	5.5%	3	4.1%	7	4.8%
	Affiliation (M6Se)	5	6.9%	3	4.1%	8	5.5%

Figure 4.17

Comparison of step frequency between THHC and UKHC



The *Frequency* presented in Table 4.12 represents the number of RTCs in which a particular step has been realized, and the *Percentage* indicates the percentage of the total number of texts. In the overall picture, the frequencies fluctuated widely. Some steps occurred consistently in over 100 texts in the two corpora combined, while some were extremely rare. Although there are some steps within each move, one step could be more preferred than the others. For instance, in *Opening* (M1), *Salutation* (M1Sa) was much more preferred than its counterpart, *Greeting* (M1Sb). As with the case of *Closing* (M6), the authors more frequently preferred *Sign off* (M6Sa), *Signature* (M6Sb), and *Job title* (M6Sc) to fulfill the communicative purposes rather than *Contact information* (M6Sd) and *Affiliation* (M6Se), which were rarely used in RTCs. The differences range from 1 (*Expressing gratitude*) to 24 (*Soliciting direct contact*) occurrences. According to the data, *Expressing regret/concern/apology* is the most frequently used step with 72.2% and 81.9% in THHC and UKHC respectively. The least frequently used step is *Contact information* (M6Sd) occurring in less than one ten of the two datasets combined.

It can be seen that the differences in the frequency can be noticed across the move structure. The degrees of differences vary from one step to another. *Salutation*, for example, is a convention of formal and semi-formal business correspondence. According to Table 4.12, this step occurred frequently with over 65% in the two corpora combined. This implies that addressing recipients is very common even in the online business correspondence. Although the frequency of this step in the two corpora combined is relatively high, a significant difference can be seen between the two corpora. This step occurred more in THHC than UKHC; that is, three quarters of local Thai hotels in the dataset employed *Salutation*, whereas only around half of top UK hotels in the dataset open the messages with this step. On the other hand, the only step that has the exact same number in both corpora is *Reporting action taken/investigation result* (M4Sb) with 35 appearances (48.6%) in each of the corpora. Apart from that, the frequencies are somewhat different.

However, the differences presented above had not yet been confirmed by statistical analysis. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the present study's comparative analysis also concerns the statistically significant difference between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels both in terms of step application across the move structure and each step. Thus,

multiple chi-square analyses were carried out to investigate the probable difference. A chi-square test was initially run on the frequencies cross tabulated between the steps used in THHC and UKHC. Table 4.13 indicates the result of a cross tabulated chi-square analysis generated by SPSS.

Table 4.13

Result of a cross tabulated chi-square analysis generated by SPSS

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	42.242 ^a	19	.002
Likelihood Ratio	44.139	19	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.169	1	.075
N of Valid Cases	1090		

a. 5 cells (12.5%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.35.

As presented in Table 4.13, the value of chi-square is 42.242 at 19 degrees of freedom, and the significance value is .002, which is less than the alpha value of .05. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels in terms of step application, $X^2 (19, N=1090) = .002, p < .05$. The findings suggest that there is a difference between the frequency of the steps employed by local Thai hotels and top UK hotels in RTCs. However, the result above only represents the overall picture of how the two groups of hotels applied steps.

To investigate the statistical difference in each step between THHC and UKHC, twenty chi-square tests were run. The following table presents the result of the test.

Table 4.14

Results of chi-square tests on each step generated by SPSS ($p < .05$)

Step	X²	Asymp. Sig.	Significant difference (p < .05)
Salutation (M1Sa)	2.085	.149	No
Greeting (M1Sb)	6.400	.011	Yes
Expressing gratitude (M2Sa)	.009	.924	No
Valuing feedback (M2Sb)	.133	.715	No
Expressing regret/concern/apology (M2Sc)	.441	.506	No
Stating hotel's commitment (M3Sa)	6.818	.009	Yes
Confirming hotel's standard (M3Sb)	.029	.866	No
Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa)	.667	.414	No
Reporting action taken/investigation result (M4Sb)	.000	1.000	No
Apologizing for the error (M4Sc)	8.963	.003	Yes
Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa)	4.481	.034	Yes
Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sb)	2.667	.102	No
Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)	.222	.637	No
Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)	11.520	.001	Yes
Promising to improve service (M5Se)	.105	.746	No

Step	X ²	Asymp. Sig.	Significant difference (p < .05)
Sign off (M6Sa)	.615	.433	No
Signature (M6Sb)	3.646	.056	No
Job title (M6Sc)	.352	.553	No
Contact information (M6Sd)	.143	.705	No
Affiliation (M6Se)	.500	.480	No

It can be seen that most of the steps are not used differently in terms of frequency. 15 out of 20 steps give no statistically significant difference between the two corpora; five steps that are statistically different between the two corpora include *Greeting* (M1Sb), *Stating hotel's commitment* (M3Sa), *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc), *Expressing gratitude* (2) (M5Sa), and *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd).

A significant difference in the first move can be noticed in *Greeting* (M1Sb). It goes without saying that this step was not preferred by the vast majority of hotels in both groups. However, nine of ten of its appearances are in THHC. This means some local hotels in Thailand still prefer this strategy to open the messages, even though it is very rare for top UK hotels. As it can be seen in Table 4.11, *Opening* (M1) is considered *conventional* among local Thai hotels, but only *optional* among top hotels in UK. In other words, it is relatively typical for the authors of local Thai hotels to follow the convention of traditional business correspondence, but it is not very common among the authors of top hotels in UK. The figure below is an example of how top UK hotels respond to a customer's complaint without *Opening*.

Figure 4.18

Example of how top UK hotels respond to a customer's complaint without *Opening* (UKHRTC68)

I am so sorry to read of your disappointment. We have a variety of rooms at (hotel's name) some with and some without air conditioning to meet our guests preferences. If you are planning a return please do call the team and we will ensure you are allocated an air conditioned room. We have invested heavily in the wi-fi at (hotel's name) and am again sorry to hear you had problems connecting to the internet. We know that this is important to our guests and will ensure the service is working to its full potential. Kind regards XXXX

As presented in the figure above, the author started the message without addressing or greeting the reviewer; the message began with *Acknowledging feedback* (M3). It is also possible to end the message with a sign off followed by the author's signature, even without an addressing or greeting element. In UKHRTC68, the author ended the message with "*Kind regards*" and his/her name. It can be interpreted that local Thai hotels tend to be more concerned with the conventions of business correspondence.

There is no statistically significant difference within *Acknowledging feedback* (M2). As shown in Table 4.9, this move occurred most frequently in the datasets, with 95.8% of the texts in the two corpora combined, which makes this move *obligatory*. There is a similar pattern in the strategies application between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels, and thus, there is no statistically significant difference in the frequencies of *Expressing gratitude* (M2Sa), *Valuing feedback* (M2Sb), and *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc) between the two corpora with the p values of .924, .715, and .506 respectively.

In *Positioning hotel brands* (M3), there are two steps realized in RTCs; *Stating hotel's commitment* (M3Sa) and *Confirming hotel's standard* (M3Sb).

The findings show that *Stating hotel's commitment* was used more frequently in UKHC. In THHC, only nine of the texts were realized with this step, while the figure is doubled in UKHC. It is possible that declaring mission statements are part of the top hotels' culture. This phenomenon makes sense, because stating commitment to deliver five-star services, which is one of the selling points, can recover and sustain a hotel's image.

The statistically significant difference can also be seen again in the frequency of *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc). It has been revealed that this has been expressed more frequently in UKHC. The findings show that this step was detected in 22.2% and 38.8% of the texts in THHC and UKHC respectively. The frequency of UKHC is almost twice as much as THHC's is. As mentioned in the earlier section, this step is viewed as an 'actual apology' as it delivers some sense of admission of fault. Although taking responsibility for an incident is not very common as it appears in less than 50% of the texts in two corpora combined, it was found that this strategy occurred more frequently among top UK hotels with almost 40% of the texts in UKHC.

While *Expressing gratitude* (M2Sa) and *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc) are very common in the datasets, wrapping up the message with such steps is not frequently seen. It was found that *Expressing gratitude (2)* (M5Sa) and *Expressing regret/concern/apology (2)* (M5Sb) were used in less than 20% of the texts. That is, the authors may employ *Expressing gratitude* and/or *Expressing regret/concern/apology* without *Expressing gratitude (2)* and/or *Expressing regret/concern/apology (2)*. A significant difference was, however, found in the former. Local Thai hotels seem to use *Expressing gratitude (2)* more frequently than top UK hotels with 26.3% and 11.1% respectively, and the chi-square analysis gave the significant value of .034.

It is worth mentioning that concluding a message with expressions like *Expressing gratitude (2)* and *Expressing regret/concern/apology (2)* is common in traditional business correspondence. Although the steps like *Salutation*, *Greeting*, *Expressing gratitude (2)* and *Expressing regret/concern/apology (2)* serve some purposes and support fulfillment of communicative goals, the true rationale behind using such strategies is that they represent the conventions of traditional business correspondence. Thus, the assumption that the conventions of traditional business correspondence are of more concern among local Thai hotels is stronger with

the findings presented above. That is, local Thai hotels tend to follow such conventions even in online RTCs.

The greatest difference between the two corpora was found in the use of *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd): the gap is largest in the move structure. It was found that about half of the top UK hotels selected for this study showed the intention to connect with reviewers in the future; this step appears only in 18% of the texts in THHC. This creates a significant difference between the two groups with the significance value of .001, which is the least in the present study's move structure. It can be interpreted to mean that future interactions between the reviewers and the hotels are more likely to occur in top UK hotels, which are expected to deliver top-quality services to customers. This step is one of the most practical steps realized in RTCs, because it takes the conversation between the two sides further. This step offers the business side the opportunity to recover services and image and signifies that they are willing to solve the problems. This step can reflect the quality of services the hotel provides to its customer. In this sense, the frequency of this step's occurrence correlates with the quality of services hotels offer to their customers.

Leaving a sign off and name is common in general business correspondence. The findings indicate that these elements have also been typically used in RTCs with 72.2% for *Sign off* (M6Sa) and 68.7% for *Signature* (M6Sb) in the two corpora combined, which makes the steps two of the most frequently used in the datasets. Top UK hotels have been found to leave a sign off and author's name more frequently than local Thai hotels do. As with the case of *Sign off*, it was discovered that more than three quarters of the texts in UKHC have this strategy, while it has been identified in 66.6% of the texts in THHC. The similar pattern can be seen in the case of *Signature* which occurs in more than 80% of the texts in UKHC and around 55% of the texts in THHC. However, the chi-square analysis provided no significant difference between both steps. If these figures are compared with their companion *Salutation* and *Greeting* in *Opening* (M1), it implies that they may not co-occur in the same text. For instance, one text may contain *Salutation*, but not *Sign off*.

4.3.4 Summary of Move Analysis

This second fold of this research aims at addressing the second research question and its sub-questions. To answer the umbrella question in this fold,

what are the moves of this genre?, move analysis was performed. The present study's move analysis began by presenting a description and boundary of each communicative unit as it was realized through the function it performs in the texts. To capture the function of each communicative unit, reading through each individual text is required. That is, it is important to delicately understand the context to gain insight into each communicative unit. Thus, each text was manually analyzed. Although they perform distinctive functions, they were used to achieve the same communicative purposes. Six moves were realized with some steps within each (see Table 4.4). This move structure is different from the original one built by Panseeta & Todd (2014) as a new move and some new steps emerged during the full data analysis. The move structure represents how local Thai hotels and top UK hotels respond to customers' complaints publicly, because it was shared by the two groups of hotels. It is important to note that the final move structure, presented in this chapter, is slightly different from the pilot's one as more texts were analyzed. The only new move that emerged here is *Positioning hotel brands* (M3), and there are two steps realized in this move: *Stating hotel's commitment* (M3Sa) and *Confirming hotel's standard* (M3Sb). This communicative function is completely absent from the previous study. Another major adjustment is the application of expression of apology used throughout the corpora. This expression was divided into three steps serving different functions, but the only one that is considered as performing 'a genuine apology' is *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc). Unlike *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc) and *Expressing regret/concern/apology (2)* (M5Sb), this step explicitly displays a sense of admission of fault.

As stated in Chapter 1, there are three sub-questions in this fold. The first sub-question concerns the typicality of each individual move. To address this question, the first step was taken by defining the categories of typicality – *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional* moves. Since there are no fixed definitions for these terms, previous relevant studies and frequency counts of each move were taken into consideration when deciding the typicality of each move. The cut-off points were then identified based on the definition and frequency counts. *Acknowledging feedback* (M2) and *Concluding remarks* (M5) are considered *obligatory* moves as they were the most frequently occurred moves in the move structure. *Opening* (M1), *Dealing with complaints* (M4), and *Closing* (M6) are labelled as *conventional* move and the title

optional move is given to *Positioning hotel brands* (M3). Comparing the move typicality of THHC and UKHC shows that they are the same, except for *Opening* (M1) which is labeled *conventional* in THHC but only *optional* in UKHC. The application of M1 indicates the strong influence of traditional business correspondence. Thus, it implies that local Thai hotels tend to adopt the pattern of traditional business correspondence as it formalizes their responses. On the other hand, top UK hotels tend to move away from this formality which does not serve a significant function in the messages.

The second and third sub-questions in this fold deals with the similarities and differences in terms of the application of steps both as a whole and an individual. To address the question of whether there are significant differences between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels regarding application of steps used in RTCs a cross tabulated chi-square test was performed, and the findings suggest that there is a significant difference between the two groups regarding the application of steps. It implies that local Thai hotels and top UK hotels employ different strategies to achieve the communicative purpose.

The third sub-question of whether there is any significant difference between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels regarding the frequency of each individual step used in RTCs was addressed by performing twenty chi-square tests across the move structure. Significant differences could be seen in five steps – *Greeting* (M1Sb), *Stating hotel's commitment* (M3Sa), *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc), *Expressing gratitude* (2) (M5Sa), and *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd). Although these steps showed significant differences, the spotlight has only been put on *Apologizing for the error* and *Soliciting direct contact*, which play leading roles in achieving service recovery. Moreover, the greatest differences can be found in these steps. Top UK hotels were found to employ these steps more frequently than local Thai hotels. It implies that such differences could be due to the variability in the class of hotels. Top five-star hotels are well-known for the high quality of services they provide to their customers, and thus, it is typical for them to do their best to take care of their existing customers rather than potential ones.

It, however, does not mean that the rest are not fulfilling the communicative purpose. Their roles in RTCs are just not as crucial as *Apologizing for*

the error and *Soliciting direct contact*. There is no doubt that *Greeting* and *Expressing gratitude* (2), for example, to some extent strive to achieve the communicative purposes, but, on the other hand, they may be used as conventions of traditional business correspondence. Up until this point, several elements surrounding this genre have been explored in accordance with the top-down approach starting from general characteristics to communicative functions. Then, the focus shifts from macro to micro level. The following section presents and discusses the language use in RTCs.

4.4 Linguistic Features of RTCs

One of the vital parts of this paper is the analysis of linguistic features, which provide a better insight into RTCs as a genre. As stated in Chapter 3, this fold draws on empirical data to understand the actual language used by the authors of RTCs. Linguistic features are known to play a leading role in characterizing a genre as they represent the language community members actually use to fulfill communicative purposes. In accordance with the third research questions, there are three areas that will be touched on here – most frequently used words, first-person pronouns (*we* and *I*), and recurrent word combinations (*Clusters/N-grams*). That is, this research was divided into three parts as each of the areas were discussed individually to address the research questions. As far as the similarities and differences are concerned, the information presented and discussed here takes into account the variation of hotel classes.

4.4.1 Frequently Used Words in RTCs

The first section of this fold presents and discusses results of the wordlist analysis of the two corpora. *Word List* function in AntConc 3.4.4w was used to generate wordlists, which are presented in frequency raking order. Then, the top frequently used words in the two corpora were placed in the contexts using *Concordance* function to explore how these words occurred in the texts. The following table demonstrates the wordlists of 30 words in the two corpora generated by AntConc 3.4.4w. The wordlists of 100 most frequently used words can be found in Appendix D.

Table 4.15

Top 30 words from wordlists of THHC and UKHC generated by AntConc 3.4.4w

Rank	THHC		UKHC	
	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
1	the	323	to	377
2	to	311	the	298
3	you	253	you	293
4	we	248	your	228
5	your	209	and	203
6	and	199	I	197
7	for	162	we	185
8	our	149	that	158
9	that	143	of	135
10	in	115	our	133
11	with	99	for	130
12	of	94	with	121
13	I	80	in	107
14	a	79	a	96
15	have	77	have	88
16	is	77	this	87
17	on	72	us	77
18	not	71	not	74
19	are	69	on	62
20	us	67	are	61
21	this	64	is	60
22	stay	60	thank	60
23	thank	60	as	58
24	it	54	would	56
25	hotel	53	sorry	53
26	as	52	at	52

Rank	THHC		UKHC	
	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
27	at	46	experience	52
28	again	44	am	50
29	will	44	regards	49
30	can	41	very	48

The results of processing the wordlists of THHC and UKHC indicate that the top 30 words are similar, but not identical. As can be seen, the wordlists presented here comprise many function words, the words that are used to fulfill grammatical purposes rather than the lexical meaning of a sentence (e.g., *the*, *of*, *am*). It is very common to notice function words in any corpus as they are used frequently in any context. Be reminded that the words displayed in Table 4.15 represent both uppercase and lowercase. For instance, *the* can also refer to *The* (with the capitalized *T*).

As with the case of THHC, *the* is the most frequently used word followed by *to* and *you*. These words are also in the top three in UKHC, but the rank ordering is slightly different. There are several personal pronouns in both wordlists and the most frequently used pronoun in both corpora is *you* with 253 tokens in THHC and 293 tokens in UKHC. There is no doubt that the pronoun *you* used throughout the RTCs refers to the reviewers. Once *Concordance* was run on the word *you*, it was found that this personal pronoun was used in many communicative units, especially the ones that occurred frequently (see Table 4.15). The following figures demonstrate the first 30 concordance hits of *you* in THHC and UKHC.

Figure 4.19

30 concordance hits of *you* in UKHC

We are sorry to hear that *you* had an unsatisfactory stay with us. You stayed that you had an unsatisfactory stay with us. *You* stayed with us on the 15th November and orange juice - fried rice or fried noodle Should *you* choose to stay with us in the future us in the future we feel confident that *you* will have a pleasant stay with us. Dear stay with us. Dear Dr.John K., Thank *you* very much for taking the time to share for this inconvenience cause. Dear Tay K, Thank *you* for taking the time to submit a review 92 satisfaction. I am truly sorry to read that *you* were disappointed with your stay and that you you were disappointed with your stay and that *you* felt our staff are bad attitude, and I , I would like to share some information with *you* that we do provide spare keys to our at the restaurant, but with the cost and *you* can order from our staff any time you you can order from our staff any time *you* want. Please accept my apology and be assured . We look forward to the opportunity of welcoming *you* back in the future. Warm regards, Phitchanu 2015 which was quite a long time ago , as *you* can see our improvement from other esteemed re and facility defect in the past. We assure *you* the best attention at all times, we remain. regards, General Manager Dear OzwizaRd I, Thank *you* for writing review regarding your recent stay we value your feedback. By telling us what *you* liked about your stay and how we can about your stay and how we can improve, *you* are helping us deliver a superior experience f are helping us deliver a superior experience for *you* and other guests in the future. Our rooms are normal size. Regarding the prices of THB 1000 *you* are in heart of Bangkok. You dont get of THB 1000 you are in heart of Bangkok. *You* dont get hotel in this price this location this location in high season. We are glad *you* still like our staff like all guest. Thanks Bob Singh Manager Dear Khun Joeyjoyjoy Thank *you* very much for your review and for taking apologize for any disappointment or inconvenience *you* might have experienced. I appreciate your cand clean the pool). I am very sorry that *you* felt disappointed and I assure this is not this is not a typical experience. Again, thank *you* for stayed with us and please accept our guests know the truth! Dear Peter T, Thank *you* for taking the time to write your comments rely apologize for all the unpleasant experienced *you* had with us. Please ensure that I have guest credit payment and to train staff once *you* have charge guest credit card in advance, need reoccurrences in the future. Once again, thank *you* for stay with us and your feedback. We your feedback. We hope this matter not spoil *you* for the next visit to Arcadia Suites Bangkok

Figure 4.20

30 concordance hits of *you* in UKHC

FizzFan We were so sorry to read that *you* had experienced problems when trying to make a forming their opinion about Apsley House. Thank *you* for your review. We were so sorry to of the standards we strive for and which *you* can rightfully expect from us at the Connaught much welcome the opportunity to discuss this with *you* further and invite you to contact me via to discuss this with you further and invite *you* to contact me via the Executive Office. With indeed have said that we would not call *you* back. All of our staff are trained to rk@chester-residence.com Dear adelmanda, Thank *you* for taking the time to share your experience us. I was truly sorry to hear that *you* were disappointed with your stay. We are curre same time, I was glad to read that *you* enjoyed Scarfes Bar and the central location. that we will have the opportunity to welcome *you* back to the hotel in the hope that egards, Matthias Roeke Dear AprilBBlu, Thank *you* for taking the time to write following your for your experience & the delay. I can assure *you* it is not the norm & runs contrary to grade 2 listed property. However size regardless, *you* should never have been kept waiting for cockta would be delighted to discuss the mater with *you* in more detail at your convenience. You can with you in more detail at your convenience. *You* can reach me on 01225355333, or by email on .co.uk I look forward to hearing from *you*. Yours sincerely, Brian Benson Guest Relations guests here at Coworth Park. As discussed with *you* personally on departure, I do apologise that t event did not meet your expectations, and that *you* expected the event to be more formal. Each this was not the kind of evening that *you* both were anticipating and I do hope you you both were anticipating and I do hope *you* will allow us the opportunity to welcome you you will allow us the opportunity to welcome *you* back to Coworth Park on some future occasion. h Park, Dorchester Collection Thank *you* for taking the time to post a detailed at Corinthia Hotel London. Please may I assure *you* that I am deeply concerned about the various your feedback with my respective teams did offer *you* the reassurance that you were seeking at the spective teams did offer you the reassurance that *you* were seeking at the time. Please let me that we will have the pleasure of welcoming *you* back in the not too distant future, when as M Fischer, General Manager Hello Sir, Thank *you* for your feedback relating to your experience phone, we made a genuine mistake in offering *you* such a high level of discount during our . Regards Neil and Zoe I am so sorry *you* did not enjoy your visit for afternoon tea, home with them so I am also sorry *you* were given a less than acceptable response per

It was typical for the authors to use the term *you* in M2Sa, M2Sc, M5Sc, and M5Sd. Since *you* occurred in the frequently used steps, its frequency counts are high in accordance with the high frequency of those steps. Such empirical data also help confirm the frequent occurrences of the steps.

Apart from function words and pronouns which prevail the rank ordering in the two corpora, there are several words that carry lexical meaning in the

charts. The term *thank* was found to be used frequently in THHC and UKHC with the exact same counts, 60 tokens. There is no doubt that *thank* typically occurred in the second most frequently used step, M2Sa, as it is a common marker in expressing gratitude. Comparing THHC with UKHC also shows that apart from function words, there are some words that occurred frequently in one corpus but not the other. The words *hotel*, *stay*, and *again* can only be seen in the chart of THHC, while the words *sorry*, *experience*, and *regards* can only be seen in UKHC. Some of these words occurred frequently in accordance with the frequency of steps identified previously. For example, the term *again*, that is in the top 30 frequently used words in THHC, is one of the signal words for M5Sa and M5Sb, which were realized more frequently in THHC. Another great example is the case of the term *regards*, which is in the top 30 frequently used words in UKHC. This term is a signal word for the realization of M6Sa, which occurred more often in UKHC. This corpus analysis can be considered a quantitative approach which can somewhat help confirm the results of the move analysis where subjectivity is inevitable.

In addition, this section also involves sub-corpora of each step in both corpora. That is, sub-corpora representing all the steps were compiled. In the present study's linguistic feature analyses, these sub-corpora were used as one of the main sources to provide information regarding how a particular linguistic feature is used in different steps. The following table shows the sizes of each sub-corpus.

Table 4.16

Sizes of sub-corpora

Sub-corpora	THHC (token)	UKHC (token)
M1Sa	138	90
M1Sb	64	2
M2Sa	806	679
M2Sb	293	277
M2Sc	1000	1242
M3Sa	194	471

Sub-corpora	THHC (token)	UKHC (token)
M3Sb	399	364
M4Sa	1685	983
M4Sb	1279	1076
M4Sc	305	625
M5Sa	183	71
M5Sb	184	90
M5Sc	631	728
M5Sd	310	819
M5Se	366	280
M6Sa	94	116
M6Sb	90	127
M6Sc	79	91
M6Sd	4	8
M6Se	16	10
Total	8,120	8,037

Due to the exclusion of some irrelevant communicative functions, the total numbers of tokens were slightly less than the ones presented in Chapter 3. Comparing between the sub-corpora of THHC and UKHC shows that, in general, the sizes of each sub-corpus are similar; however, it can be seen that the number of tokens in each sub-corpus vary. The smallest sub-corpus is the sub-corpus of M6Sd followed by the sub-corpus of M6Se. On the other hand, it is clear that M4 is the lengthiest communicative function covering most parts of the texts.

The sub-corpora were then examined for their wordlists which characterize each step. The *Word List* function was again used to generate frequently used words of each step. To capture linguistic features that distinguish the steps from one another, function words and pronouns were excluded. The following table illustrates the top five frequently used content words of each step in THHC and UKHC.

Table 4.17

Top five frequently used content words in each step

Sub-corpora	THHC	UKHC
M1Sa	Dear	Dear
	guest	guest
M1Sb	Greeting	Hello
	Greetings	-
	Warmest	-
	Warm	-
M2Sa	thank	thank
	time	taking
	feedback	time
	taking	review
	recent	feedback
M2Sb	improve	feedback
	feedback	guests
	guests	comments
	important	assure
	service	improve
M2Sc	stay	sorry
	sorry	experience
	apologize	disappointed
	inconvenience	read
	disappointed	stay
M3Sa	guest	guests
	provide	service
	service	provide
	strive	experiences
	best	aim
M3Sb	guests	assure

Sub-corpora	THHC	UKHC
	comments	experience
	hotel	guest
	service	high
	standard	service
M4Sa	hotel	guests
	rooms	unfortunately
	night	rooms
	price	booked
	booked	tables
	room	team
	check	taken
	guests	comments
M4Sb	hotel	assist
	already	currently
	apologize	sorry
	sorry	apologies
M4Sc	made	apologise
	offer	please
	failed	accept
	thank	thank
M5Sa	again	again
	feedback	feedback
	appreciate	time
	experience	comments
M5Sb	again	again
	apologize	apologies
	please	sorry
	accept	accept
	inconvenience	apologise

Sub-corpora	THHC	UKHC
M5Sc	hope	hope
	again	welcome
	future	future
	welcome	opportunity
	opportunity	again
M5Sd	contact	contact
	directly	discuss
	please	directly
	stay	further
	email	please
M5Se	please	ensure
	assured	experience
	ensure	service
	improve	team
	best	future
M6Sa	Regards	Regards
	Best	Kind
	sincerely	Warm
	Kind	Best
	Warm	sincerely
M6Sb	-	-
M6Sc	-	-
M6Sd	-	-
M6Se	-	-

As can be seen in Table 4.17, there are similar wordlists of each sub-corpus between THHC and UKHC. For example, in M5Sc, the top five frequently used words found in THHC are identical to those in UKHC even though the rank ordering is slightly different. This similarity can be noticed throughout the findings, so this means that the two communities shared lexical features to perform communicative functions.

Such findings can also confirm clear cuts between steps as each of them has its own set of words. For instance, the term *apologize* could only be found in M2Sc, M4Sc, and M5Sb all of which serve an apologizing function in RTCs. At this point, the steps were more vividly distinguished by their distinctive functions and lexical features. The analysis of wordlists of each sub-corpus carried out here help confirm the identities of each step.

This section only gives an overall picture of the most frequently used words and addresses differences between the two corpora, and the sizes of each sub-corpus compiled for further analyses. In the following sections, proposed linguistic areas are discussed based on the evidence generated by AntConc 3.4.4w.

4.4.2 *We* and *I* in RTCs

As proposed in Chapter 3, one of the target linguistic features is the application of the first-person pronouns *we* and *I*. It can be noticed that these two terms were used frequently in this genre as they were presented in the top 30 frequently used words (see Table 4.15). This section aims to address the first sub-question of the third fold regarding the differences in frequency and usage between the two groups of hotels. While *we* commonly refers to an organization as a whole, it can also refer to a business-and-customer as a whole. Nevertheless, the latter *we* was not found in the corpora. Thus, the term *we* discussed here refers only to a hotel. Again, AntConc 3.4.4w was employed as the main tool for analyzing the words.

Table 4.18

Frequency of *we* and *I* in THHC and UKHC generated by AntConc 3.4.4w

Corpus	<i>We</i> (tokens)	<i>I</i> (tokens)	Total (tokens)
THHC	248	80	328
UKHC	185	197	382
Difference	63	117	180

Table 4.18 shows that *we* and *I* occurred frequently in RTCs. It was found that the first-person subject pronouns were used more often in UKHC hotels with 382 tokens in total, while 328 tokens were identified in THHC. To confirm that those

differences did not occur by chance, chi-square tests were run on both pronouns with the significant level of .05. The following tables show the results of chi-square tests on *we* and *I*.

Table 4.19

Result of chi-square test on *we* in THHC and UKHC generated by SPSS

Test Statistics

	Corpora	FrequencyWe
Chi-Square	9.166 ^a	9.166 ^a
df	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.002	.002

Table 4.20

Result of chi-square test on *I* in THHC and UKHC generated by SPSS

Test Statistics

	Corpora
Chi-Square	49.419 ^a
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

As can be seen, there were statistically significant differences between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels in terms of use of *we* and *I* with the significant value of .002 and .000 ($p < .05$) respectively.

Once looking closer into each individual corpus, it was discovered that there is a considerable difference between the words, as *we* was used much more frequently in THHC. On the other hand, in UKHC, the frequency of *we* and *I* are similar with 185 and 197 tokens respectively. To internally investigate the statistically probable difference within each corpus, again, chi-square tests were run on *we* and *I* for each corpus.

Table 4.21

Result of chi-square test on *we* and *I* in THHC generated by SPSS

Test Statistics

	Pronouns
Chi-Square	86.049 ^a
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table 4.22

Result of chi-square test on *we* and *I* in UKHC generated by SPSS

Test Statistics

	Pronouns	PronounsUK HC
Chi-Square	.377 ^a	.377 ^a
df	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.539	.539

As with the case of local Thai hotels, the result of chi-square tests presented in Table 4.19 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the use of *we* and *I* with the significant value of .000 ($p < .05$). It implies that *we* was more preferred than *I* when it came to a first-person subject pronoun. Representatives from local Thai hotels are likely to represent themselves as a hotel by using the term *we* rather than as an individual with the term *I*. On the other hand, it was discovered that in UKHC, *we* occurred almost as frequently as *I* did. The chi-square test has confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference between them. In this sense, both *we* and *I* were used as a first-person subject pronoun in RTCs.

Up until this point, some differences in terms of the use of *we* and *I* as a first-person subject pronoun have been revealed based on the quantitative evidence. Since this study also concerns about how they are used differently, further investigation was carried out to learn more about those differences. Sub-corpora of each step were

used to provide data. In this vein, there are twenty sub-corpora representing each step in each corpus. Then, the frequency of *we* and *I* in each sub-corpus was generated. The following tables illustrate the frequency of *we* and *I* in the sub-corpora of THHC and UKHC.

Table 4.23

Frequency of *we* and *I* in the sub-corpora of THHC and UKHC

Step	THHC		UKHC	
	<i>We</i> (token)	<i>I</i> (token)	<i>We</i> (token)	<i>I</i> (token)
M1Sa	0	0	0	0
M1Sb	0	0	0	0
M2Sa	11	5	6	4
M2Sb	9	1	9	4
M2Sc	38	24	29	51
M3Sa	11	0	19	2
M3Sb	9	2	8	8
M4Sa	42	9	26	11
M4Sb	38	8	26	26
M4Sc	13	9	19	21
M5Sa	6	1	0	1
M5Sb	8	1	2	4
M5Sc	40	4	23	24
M5Sd	5	11	7	38
M5Se	18	5	11	3
M6Sa	0	0	0	0
M6Sb	0	0	0	0
M6Sc	0	0	0	0
M6Sd	0	0	0	0
M6Se	0	0	0	0
Total	248	80	185	197

Based on the findings presented in Table 4.23, there are several striking features worth mentioning in this section. Due to the nature of M1 and M6 where complete sentences are not needed, the first-person subject pronouns were completely absent from these moves. In THHC, it can be noticed that *we* outnumbers *I* in almost every step, except in M5Sd. It can be explained that M5Sd can involve personal contact information, and thus the authors more often represent themselves as individuals rather than organizations.

“...but if you would like to email me more details at (email address) I would very much like to look into it.”

(THHRTC16)

“Therefore, I would really like to get contact with you so I can gain a better understanding to some of the experiences you had during your stay.”

(THHRTC46)

I was also much more preferred among the authors of top UK hotels when it came to soliciting direct contact, with 38 frequency counts.

“I’d be delighted to personally talk through your feedback, could I ask that you contact me directly on (email address)”

(UKHRTC52)

“I have sent you a direct message with my contact details as I would welcome the opportunity to discuss your stay in more detail.”

(UKHRTC71)

On the other hand, unlike the case of local Thai hotels, *I* was used more frequently than *we*. Mixed results can be seen in the sub-corpora of top UK hotels where the preferences of *we* and *I* differ from one step to the other. That is, *we* was used more often in M2Sa, M2Sb, M3Sa, M4Sa, and M5Se, and *I* was more frequently used in M2Sc, M4Sc, M5Sa, M5Sb, M5Sc, and M5Sd. It is interesting to learn that three of

the steps where *I* was used more frequently involve expressing feelings and apologies (M2Sc, M4Sc, and M5Sb). In this regard, feelings and an apologies can be expressed by an individual. This shows the author's intention to take care of the matter personally. That is, the uses of *I* in such expressions makes the messages sound more personal and sincere as it shows that feelings expressed in the messages are his/hers.

"I was disappointed and very sorry to read after your recent stay with us."
(UKHRTC2)

"I am so sorry you did not enjoy your visit for afternoon tea,"
(UKHRTC11)

"I am truly sorry that we were mistaken on this occasion and that this detracted from what should have been a relaxing break."
(UKHRTC18)

"I'm so sorry that we missed this but I'm very keen to resolve this for you."
(UKHRTC52)

In UKHRTC18 and UKKHRTC52, it can be seen that *I* was used with the expression of apology "*sorry*" followed by *we* which was used to admit the mistakes ("*mistaken*" and "*missed*"). The first-person pronoun *we* was used here because the author did not make the mistake himself/herself, and thus *we* was used to share responsibility with the mistake made by an individual staff member. It can be learned from the excessive use of *I* with these steps that *I* could be used to express an apology as it delivers some sense of personality and sincerity. On the other side, the excessive use of *we* can be seen among local Thai hotels' authors in these three steps. This implies that the community of local Thai hotels still follows traditional styles of business correspondence even in this newly established genre.

Nevertheless, apart from M2Sc, M4Sc, M5Sa, M5Sb, M5Sc, and M5Sd, still, *we* was more preferred, especially in M3Sa, and M4Sa. The excessive use of *we* in these steps seems to be reasonable, considering that they represent hotels'

identities rather than individuals. For instance, M3Sa has to do with the organization's goals, and thus it is more appropriate to use *we* as a first-person subject pronoun as it represents the whole organization.

“We aim to provide guests with the most comfortable and relaxing experiences.”

(UKHRTC35)

“We always strive to exceed our guests expectation.”

(UKHRTC41)

A similar pattern can be seen in M4Sa where *we* was excessively used as a first-person subject pronoun. This step has to do with explaining causes of the incidents which frequently involve an organization's policies and factual information about the organization. Thus, it is reasonable to use *we* rather than *I*.

“....we have 32 bedrooms and 32 tables in the restaurant....”

(UKHRTC1)

“....we did not explain our charges more clearly on check in.”

(UKHRTC65)

The authors from local Thai hotels tend to conform with the traditional fashion in which *we* is commonly used as a first-person subject pronoun as it promotes senses of unity (Klijunaite & Nauseda, 2010). However, the findings of top UK hotels presented here contradict the traditional fashion, especially in the steps that involve the authors' own feelings and action. The applications of *I* in these steps, nonetheless, deliver some sense of honesty and sincerity.

4.4.3 Recurrent Word Combinations in RTCs

Another area of linguistic feature that this study touches on is recurrent word combinations, well known as lexical bundle. As defined in Chapter 2, a recurrent word combination refers to a string of words used repeatedly in a particular

text type. The extent to which they re-occur seems to vary from study to study. The present study took Altenberg's (1998) notion describing recurrent word combination, as its name suggests, as strings of words that occur more than once in a particular text type. In this sense, any string that occurs more than once in RTCs would be considered a recurrent word combination.

The present study investigates recurrent word combinations in RTCs. As mentioned in Chapter 3, *Clusters/N-grams* function of AntConc 3.4.4w was used as a data generator identifying recurrent word combinations in each step. That is, the sub-corpora built earlier were again used as they represent each step. As far as the length of recurrent word combinations is concerned, the configuration of 2- or 3-gram was applied in each sub-corpus. The configuration of 2-gram was used in steps in which a 3-word recurrent word combination is completely absent. The following tables present top five most frequently used recurrent word combinations in each step in THHC and UKHC. 4-gram and lengthier word combinations were not investigated, because they rarely occurred in the corpora.

Table 4.24

Recurrent word combinations of each step in THHC generated by AntConc 3.4.4w

Step	Recurrent Word Combination	Frequency
Salutation (M1Sa)	-	-
Greeting (M1Sb)	<i>Greeting from</i>	7
Expressing gratitude (M2Sa)	<i>thank you for</i>	33
	<i>your recent stay</i>	12
	<i>taking the time</i>	10
	<i>you for taking</i>	10
	<i>for sharing your</i>	9
Valuing feedback (M2Sb)	<i>your feedback is</i>	4
	<i>important to us</i>	4
	<i>as it helps</i>	3
	<i>it helps us</i>	3

Step	Recurrent Word Combination	Frequency
	<i>extremely important to</i>	3
Expressing regret/concern/apology (M2Sc)	<i>would like to</i>	8
	<i>stay with us</i>	6
	<i>to hear that</i>	6
	<i>did not meet</i>	5
	<i>during your stay</i>	5
Stating hotel's commitment (M3Sa)	<i>excellent service to</i>	2
	<i>provide excellent service</i>	2
	<i>strive to provide</i>	2
	<i>to provide excellent</i>	2
	<i>we strive to</i>	2
Confirming hotel's standard (M3Sb)	<i>as you can</i>	2
Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa)	<i>at the same</i>	3
	<i>on the island</i>	3
	<i>we try to</i>	3
	<i>before check in</i>	3
	<i>our rooms are</i>	2
Reporting action taken/result of investigation (M4Sb)	<i>in the future</i>	6
	<i>many guest check</i>	3
	<i>we have taken</i>	3
	<i>during your stay</i>	3
	<i>handling credit card</i>	3
Apologizing for error (M4Sc)	<i>we would like</i>	3
	<i>would like to</i>	3
	<i>apologise for this</i>	2
	<i>no excuse for</i>	2
	<i>like to apologize</i>	2

Step	Recurrent Word Combination	Frequency
Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa)	<i>thank you for</i>	8
	<i>again thank you</i>	5
	<i>again for your</i>	3
	<i>thank you again</i>	3
	<i>you again for</i>	3
Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sb)	<i>accept our apologize</i>	2
	<i>apologize for any</i>	2
	<i>for any inconvenience</i>	2
	<i>once again we</i>	2
	<i>our apologize for</i>	2
Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)	<i>to welcome you</i>	11
	<i>in the future</i>	10
	<i>welcome you back</i>	9
	<i>we do hope</i>	7
	<i>look forward to</i>	6
Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)	<i>care of you</i>	2
	<i>feel free to</i>	2
	<i>free to contact</i>	2
	<i>hesitate to contact</i>	2
	<i>if you have</i>	2
Promising to improve service (M5Se)	<i>in the future</i>	3
	<i>please be assured</i>	3
	<i>we are constantly</i>	2
	<i>assured we are</i>	2
	<i>be assured we</i>	2
Sign off (M6Sa)	<i>Best regards</i>	15
	<i>Kind regards</i>	7
	<i>Yours sincerely</i>	5

Step	Recurrent Word Combination	Frequency
	<i>Sincerely yours</i>	4
	<i>Warm regards</i>	3
Signature (M6Sb)	-	-
Job title (M6Sc)	<i>General manager</i>	11
	<i>Hotel manager</i>	5
	<i>Front office</i>	3
	<i>Resident manager</i>	3
	<i>Resort manager</i>	3
Contact information (M6Sd)	-	-
Affiliation (M6Se)	-	-

Table 4.25

Recurrent word combinations of each step in UKHC generated by AntConc 3.4.4w

Step	Recurrent Word Combination	Frequency
Salutation (M1Sa)	-	-
Greeting (M1Sb)	-	-
Expressing gratitude (M2Sa)	<i>thank you for</i>	44
	<i>taking the time</i>	25
	<i>the time to</i>	25
	<i>for taking the</i>	24
	<i>you for taking</i>	21
Valuing feedback (M2Sb)	<i>assure you that</i>	4
	<i>of utmost importance</i>	3
	<i>improve our service</i>	2
	<i>important to us</i>	2
	<i>guest feedback is</i>	2

Step	Recurrent Word Combination	Frequency
Expressing regret/concern/apology (M2Sc)	<i>I am sorry</i>	11
	<i>stay with us</i>	8
	<i>sorry to read</i>	7
	<i>you did not</i>	7
	<i>disappointed to read</i>	6
Stating hotel's commitment (M3Sa)	<i>aim to provide</i>	2
	<i>all our guests</i>	2
	<i>comfortable and relaxing</i>	2
	<i>with the most</i>	2
	<i>to provide guests</i>	2
Confirming hotel's standard (M3Sb)	<i>assure you that</i>	3
	<i>can assure you</i>	2
	<i>certainly not the</i>	2
	<i>expect to deliver</i>	2
	<i>level of service</i>	2
Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa)	<i>we do not</i>	3
	<i>I understand you</i>	3
	<i>did not have</i>	2
	<i>at the time</i>	2
	<i>we have a</i>	2
Reporting action taken/result of investigation (M4Sb)	<i>in order to</i>	3
	<i>we are currently</i>	3
	<i>we have taken</i>	3
	<i>are currently working</i>	2
	<i>I would like</i>	2
Apologizing for error (M4Sc)	<i>please accept our</i>	4
	<i>sorry that we</i>	3

Step	Recurrent Word Combination	Frequency
	<i>the lack of</i>	3
	<i>I am sorry</i>	2
	<i>deepest apologies for</i>	2
Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa)	<i>thank you for</i>	4
	<i>thank you again</i>	3
	<i>again for taking</i>	2
	<i>taking the time</i>	2
	<i>for your feedback</i>	2
Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sb)	<i>again please accept</i>	2
	<i>and once again</i>	2
	<i>Once again I</i>	2
	<i>please accept our</i>	2
Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)	<i>to welcome you</i>	17
	<i>welcome you back</i>	17
	<i>you back to</i>	13
	<i>the opportunity to</i>	11
	<i>in the future</i>	8
Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)	<i>look forward to</i>	7
	<i>to discuss this</i>	7
	<i>in more detail</i>	6
	<i>the opportunity to</i>	6
	<i>contact me directly</i>	5
Promising to improve service (M5Se)	-	-
Sign off (M6Sa)	<i>Kind regards</i>	22
	<i>Warm regards</i>	8
	<i>Best regards</i>	5
	<i>Yours sincerely</i>	4
	<i>Best wishes</i>	3

Step	Recurrent Word Combination	Frequency
Signature (M6Sb)	-	-
Job title (M6Sc)	-	-
Contact information (M6Sd)	-	-
Affiliation (M6Se)	-	-

As presented in Table 4.24 and 4.25, each step seems to have its own distinctive set of recurrent word combinations. The uses of recurrent word combinations by local Thai hotels and top UK hotels is similar when comparing step by step. Recurrent word combinations are completely absent in some steps simply because they involved personal information such as name, job title, and contact information. Apart from move analysis, which earlier distinguished the steps based on the functions they perform in the texts, the steps were further distinguished by their own linguistic properties, which confirm their identities in this genre. To put it differently, the combination of move and linguistic feature analyses makes each communicative function distinctive not only in the way they function but also the way they are composed.

However, the identification of recurrent word combinations presented here is still ambiguous when it comes to pedagogical implication. As can be seen, many of the recurrent word combinations identified here look incomplete even with content words. Although generating recurrent word combinations of each step is a great way to capture its distinct linguistic features, the pedagogical implication of such combinations is questionable. Chen and Baker (2010) compared the uses of recurrent word combinations in native-speaker and non-native speaker academic writing, and they suggest that it is necessary to support quantitative analysis with qualitative analyses which expands the analysis by looking into concordance lines. Thus, the recurrent word combinations identified were qualitatively analyzed. At this time, the surrounding elements (e.g., collocates, concordances) were taken into consideration. To produce the guidelines that represent high-profile services, some of the most

frequently occurred recurrent word combinations from UKHC were taken. That is, the recurrent word combinations were browsed through to produce common expressions which are more complete and applicable to general contexts of RTCs. For those steps in which a recurrent word combination was absent, the frequently used words identified in the previous section were used to support this manual examination. The following table presents guidelines for writing RTCs. Be reminded that the results presented represent both corpora as a whole, so the class variation was not focused on here.



Table 4.26

Guidelines for writing RTCs

Move	Step	Expression		Example
Opening (M1)	Salutation (M1Sa)	<i>Dear + reviewer’s name</i>		<i>“Dear XXXX,”</i>
Acknowledging feedback (M2)	Expressing gratitude (M2Sa)	<i>Thank you for (taking the time to write/share) your feedback/comment/review/experience</i>		<i>“Thank you for taking the time to share your experience with us”</i>
	Valuing feedback (M2Sb)	<i>All guest feedback is important/valuable</i>		<i>“All feedback we receive is of utmost importance to us and only through your words we can learn to improve.”</i>
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (M2Sc)	<i>I am sorry/disappointed to hear/read that</i> [Expressing regret/concern]	+ customer’s overall experience	<i>“I am sorry to hear that you didn’t enjoy your last stay.”</i>
	<i>I would like to apologize for</i> [Expressing an apology]	<i>“I would like to apologize for any inconvenience”</i>		

Move	Step	Expression		Example
Positioning hotel brands (M3)	Stating hotel's commitment (M3Sa)	<i>We aim to</i>	+ hotel's commitment	<i>"We strive to provide excellent an exclusive service experience for every guest"</i>
		<i>We strive to/for</i>		
	Confirming hotel's standard (M3Sb)	<i>The level of service you experienced</i>	+ defamiliarize the incident	<i>"...the level of service you experienced during your recent stay is not indicative of high standards at our hotel..."</i>
		<i>I can assure you that your experience</i>		
Dealing with complaints (M4)	Explaining causes of the incident (M4Sa)	<i>Regarding + topic of complaint</i>	+ <i>We (do not) have +</i> policy [Policy enforcement]	<i>"Our hotel has "joiner free" policy but the maximum occupancy must not exceed the room limitation."</i>
			+ providing related information [Explaining causes]	<i>"We recently changed over to a new website during April...."</i>

Move	Step	Expression		Example
	Reporting action taken/result of investigation (M4Sb)	<i>We have taken</i>	+ action taken [Reporting action taken]	<i>“We have taken your comment regarding the noise from the corridor very seriously and we are currently working on solutions to resolve this noise issue.”</i>
		<i>We are currently</i>		
		<i>Please be assured that</i>		
		<i>In regard to + result of investigation</i> [Reporting result of investigation]		<i>“In regards to your room, according to our records, you booked your room through TripAdvisor and did not request a non-smoking room.”</i>
Apologizing for error (M4Sc)	<i>I would like to apologize for</i>	+ topic of complaint	<i>“There is no excuse for the arrogance your enquiry</i>	
	<i>Please accept my deepest apologies for</i>			

Move	Step	Expression		Example
		<i>There is no excuse for</i>		<i>was met with and for that I would like to apologise”</i>
Concluding remarks (M5)	Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa)	<i>Again, thank you for (taking the time to write/share)</i>	<i>+ your feedback/comment/review/ experience</i>	<i>“Again, thank you for sharing your experience with us....”</i>
			<i>+ staying with us</i>	
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sb)	<i>Again, I am sorry that</i>	<i>+ customer’s overall experience</i>	<i>“Again, please accept my sincere apologies for the issues you experience during your stay”</i>
		<i>Again, please accept our apologies for</i>		
Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)	<i>It would be our pleasure to</i>	<i>+ welcome you back to + hotel’s name</i>	<i>“We hope to have the opportunity to welcome you back to (hotel’s name)”</i>	
	<i>We hope to have the opportunity to</i>			
Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)	<i>I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you further</i> [Calling for an opportunity]		<i>“I would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you</i>	

Move	Step	Expression		Example
		<i>Please contact me directly at</i>	+ author's direct contact information [Giving direct contact]	<i>further and invite you to contact me via the Executive Office."</i>
	Promising to improve service (M5Se)	<i>I can assure/ensure that</i>	+ promising to improve	<i>"... I can assure that we are doing our utmost to eliminate these challenges for the future."</i>
Closing (M6)	Sign off (M6Sa)	<i>Kind/Warm/Warmest/Best regards</i>		<i>"Kind regards,"</i>
		<i>(Yours) sincerely</i>		
	Signature (M6Sb)	Author's name		-
	Job title (M6Sc)	Author's job title		-
	Contact information (M6Sd)	Author's direct contact information		-
	Affiliation (M6Se)	Author's affiliation		-

The guidelines presented above were developed from empirical data which are the frequently used expressions produced by actual authors of top hotels. Although there are many different variations of expressions in the steps, a set of frequently used expressions were identified. The guidelines, however, only inform potential and novice practitioners of the lead expressions which are commonly used in this genre. Relying solely on the lead expressions does not guarantee success in responding to customers' complaints. That is, the guidelines were only developed to be used as a gateway connecting the conventional pattern and word choices with distinct situations an author has to deal with. In M4Sa, for example, the author has to decide whether to report an action taken or a result of an investigation and choose a suitable expression. Authors are still required to take into account the situations they have to deal with and inject their personal styles of handling customers' complaints, which may be shaped by personal beliefs and institutional policies.

4.4.4 Summary of Linguistic Feature Analysis

The third fold of this research has to do with the linguistic feature analysis which aims to address the third set of research questions concerning the general common linguistic features, *we* and *I*, and recurrent word combinations respectively. As for the question, *What are the common linguistic features of local Thai hotels and top UK hotels' RTCs?*, a corpus tool was used to generate frequently used words (see Table 4.15). As expected, the wordlists were prevailed by function words. With regard to content words, the findings concur with the frequency of steps in the corpora as the frequently used words are the key markers of the frequently used steps.

The division of sub-corpora adds insight into distinct features of each step. The findings illustrate that each step has its own lexical features, except for those performing similar functions. Although there are some words that appear in more than one step (e.g., *guests*, *service*, *hotel*), each step holds its own set of words that is used as key markers to perform its sub communicative function. For instance, the terms *provide*, *strive*, and *aim* are only identified in M3Sa. The results confirm the identities of each step, because they help confirm that these steps are different not only in terms of the functions they perform in the texts but also in the way they were constructed. As far as the class variation is concerned, local Thai hotels and top UK hotels tend to share wordlists in each step. Similar set of words can be found across the corpora; for

example, in M2Sa, the two groups of hotels share four out of five words in the wordlists – *thank*, *time*, *feedback*, and *taking*. The wordlist analysis was then followed by analyses of pre-selected areas of linguistic features.

The first area of linguistic features concerns the similarities and differences between the frequency and application of the first-person pronouns, *we* and *I*. *We* was much more frequently used than *I* in the Thai hotel group with a significance test confirming the difference, whereas there is no statistically significant difference between the frequency counts of *we* and *I* in the UK hotel group. It is surprising to learn that *I* was much more preferred in the UK hotel group than in the Thai hotel group. Further analysis suggests that *I* was more preferred as a subjective pronoun to express feelings, make an apology, and solicit direct contact. The use of *I* makes the message sound more personal and honest rather than *we* which can be found in traditional business correspondence.

The second area of linguistic features deals with recurrent word combinations in RTCs. Recurrent word combinations were identified in each sub corpus. The findings confirm that each step has its own linguistic features as each of them elicit distinctive recurrent word combinations. The guidelines for writing RTCs were then developed based on the findings of the wordlists and recurrent word combination analyses (see Table 4.26). Such guidelines reflect expressions top hotels' representatives commonly used to construct RTCs, and they are applicable to different types of situations. However, only lead expressions were identified in each step, meaning that more details are still required to deal with different situations.

4.5 Customer Perceptions towards RTCs

The last fold of this research is the investigation of customer perceptions towards RTCs. As proposed in Chapter 3, this section draws on customer perceptions to shed some light on characteristics of effective RTCs. Since customer satisfaction is a crucial factor in successful quality management in the hospitality industry, investigating customer perceptions will give insight into the elements that shape effective RTCs to achieve communicative purposes. This section presents and discusses the results of the investigation of customer perceptions towards RTCs.

4.5.1 Questionnaire Development

A questionnaire was developed as a tool to elicit data on how customers view RTCs (see Appendix E). As stated in Chapter 3, there are three parts in the questionnaire – participants’ background information, comparison of RTCs, and an open-ended question. As for the first part, participants were asked to declare their age and hotel experience (frequency).

The second part is the key feature of this questionnaire as it directly aims to capture desirable characteristics for RTCs. In this part, a representative RTC from each corpus was mainly used for data elicitation. This part of the questionnaire was developed based on the findings of move analysis which captured communicative functions and differences between RTCs produced by local Thai hotels and top UK hotels as confirmed by a statistical analysis that there is a difference between the two groups of hotels in terms of step application (see Table 4.13). Thus, the differences in step application were used to seek representative texts from each group. The following table highlights the steps that were used differently between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels.

Table 4.27

Steps used differently between local Thai hotels and top UK hotels.

Step	Preference
Greeting (M1Sb)	Local Thai hotel
Stating hotel’s commitment (M3Sa)	Top UK hotel
Apologizing for the error (M4Sc)	Top UK hotel
Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sa)	Local Thai hotel
Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)	Top UK hotel

As seen in Table 4.27, there are five steps that were highlighted in the comparative analysis. *Greeting* (M1Sb) and *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (2) (M5Sa) are significantly more preferred by local Thai hotels, whereas *Stating hotel’s commitment* (M3Sa), *Apologizing for error* (M4Sc), and *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd) are more preferred by top UK hotels. These sub communicative functions were

used as criteria for selecting a representative RTC of each corpus. To be more precise, the representative RTC from local Thai hotels will contain *Greeting* and *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (2) which will be absent from the representative RTC of top UK hotels, and vice versa.

As far as the comparability is concerned, negativity degrees of complaints the representative RTCs dealt with, the tone, and the length of the RTCs had to be comparable. THHRTC11 was selected as the representative of local Thai hotels' RTCs, while UKHRTC42 was selected as the representative of top UK hotels' RTCs. Information that would lead to the identification of authors and his/her affiliations was replaced with XXXX. In this section, the participants were asked to read and describe each of the selected RTCs in a few words based on how they feel about the RTCs. After that, they were asked to identify the RTC(s) that satisfy them with four choices given – *Response A* (THHRTC11), *Response B* (UKHRTC42), *Both*, and *Neither*. Then, they had to identify specific expressions (e.g., sentence, phrase, and word) that satisfy them with a brief explanation. The last section of this questionnaire aims to address customer expectations of hotels' responses. The participants were asked to describe desirable characteristics of an RTC.

4.5.2 Responses from Participants

The questionnaire was given to 15 Thai and 15 non-Thai participants. All the participants had some experience with hotel services as they reveal in the first section of the questionnaire. The following discusses the findings of section two and three of the questionnaire.

4.5.2.1 Perceptions towards Local Thai Hotels' and Top UK Hotels' Responses

After reading *Response A* (local Thai hotel) and *B* (top UK hotel), they described their perceptions in a few words. It emerges that the participants lean towards the RTC of a top UK hotel as most of them, regardless of nationality, showed positive attitude towards it. Some of their responses are as follows:

“Response B is helpful”

“Response B appears to be more personal”

“Responder seems to care”

“Attentive”

“Better”

On the other hand, mixed responses can be seen in the *Response A* section. Some of their responses are as follows:

“Response A is a little bit disappointing”

“Not really care”

“Response A is okay”

“Too vague”

“Response A sounds impersonal and more like a standard template”

While a few of the participants perceived *Response A* as acceptable (“Okay”), most of them tended to perceive it negatively. One of the participants even described it as “a standard template” which confirmed what has been discussed earlier. Local Thai hotels’ managements are likely to follow the style of traditional business correspondence, and that makes their messages sound impersonal. This style of business writing may explicitly deliver some sense of unity and formality, but it does not play any role in achieving service recovery, which is the ultimate goal of RTCs.

The participants were then asked to identify the response(s) that they are satisfied with by choosing one of the four choices given – *Response A*, *Response B*, *Both*, and *Neither*. The findings concur with the previous section’s findings. 24 participants are satisfied only with *Response B*, and four participants are satisfied with both responses. The rest reported that neither of the responses satisfy them.

The participants were then asked to identify the specific expressions that satisfy them. The following table reports expressions that satisfy participants.

Table 4.28
Expressions that satisfy customers

<i>Response A (local Thai hotel)</i>			<i>Response B (top UK hotel)</i>		
Expressions	Step	Freq.	Expressions	Step	Freq.
<i>“I am very concerned”</i>	M2Sc	2	<i>“I am extremely sorry”</i>	M2Sc	3
<i>“We always welcome feedback”</i>	M2Sb	1	<i>“I apologise that your complaint was not graciously handled”</i>	M4Sc	6
			<i>“Please accept our deepest apologies”</i>		2
			<i>“allow us the opportunity to redeem ourselves”</i>	M5Sc	6
			<i>“Contact me directly on”</i>	M5Sd	15
			<i>“I can personally oversee your next stay”</i>		7

The expressions reported here align with the previous section since most of them are in *Response B*. These expressions reflect steps the authors employed. *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc) was highlighted by a few participants in both responses; *Apologizing for error* (M4Sc) and *Asking for a return visit* (M5Sc) were selected by some participants. *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd) was found to be the most influential factor affecting satisfaction, reported more frequently than other steps.

Along with the identification of such expressions, the participants were encouraged to briefly explain why the expressions they identified are satisfying. One participant who selected *“allow us the opportunity to redeem*

ourselves”, “*Contact me directly on*”, and “*I can personally oversee your next stay*” stated:

“The expressions make me feel that the hotel really feels sorry about what had happened by asking the customer to contact directly. If I were the customer, I would contact the responder and maybe give them a second chance.”

Giving a direct contact and asking for a second chance seem to be very effective because these two steps imply that that customers will receive special care from the hotel on their return visit. Another participant who selected the same expressions noted:

“I think I will receive better services next time. The hotel really wants to gain customer’s trust and is willing to improve the performance.”

There is a participant who pinpointed some specific words that influenced his/her decision-making. He/she stated:

“The statement is well phrased, and it strongly affects guest’s feeling. The use of word ‘*allow*’ signifies that the guest has power and superiority over the hotel. The word ‘*redeem*’ suggests that the hotel has already realized the mistake and is willing to improve. However, the most influential aspect of the *Response B* lies in the way which the responder provides his/her direct contact and promise to personally take care of the guest. The guest would feel special because of the attempt to solve the issue.”

According to the statement, some specific words can also be viewed as influential elements in achieving service recovery. The words *allow* and *redeem* mentioned in the statement were used to show respect and enthusiasm to take action. The direct contact information provided is confirmed to be a decision trigger as it implies compensation.

Compared with its counterparts, M2Sc, M4Sc received much more attention from participants. In addition to expressing feelings, admitting the mistake and making a genuine apology (*I apologise that your complaint was not graciously handled.*) could increase the chance of achieving service recovery. One participant states:

“It is very traditional to say something like ‘sorry to hear that’ or ‘disappointed to hear that’. Customers are looking for real apologies, not sympathy.”

As reported earlier, expressing feelings may not be able to deliver the sense of admitting faults. Since it has been conventionalized in RTCs, to guests, expressing feelings may no longer sound sincere. It is suggested that making a genuine apology is more effective as it is expected by the public and guests.

According to previous studies on an apology in response to customers’ complaints. Ekiz and Arasli (2007) note that an apology can be perceived as an exchange or compensation for the incident. The relationship between an apology and the chance of service recovery has been extensively studied. Boshoff and Leong (1998) discovered that an apology has a very powerful effect on complainants’ satisfaction, and they note that an apology should be considered as a very first step in attempts to recover services. John and Fern (1999) confirm that an apology plays a key role in achieving service recovery. Although making an apology is an intangible process, it serves as a compensation.

The responses from participants indicate that for the top UK hotels’ RTCs are more effective in achieving service recovery. *Apologizing for error* (M4Sc) and *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd), the steps that are significantly more preferred among top UK hotels, strongly influence customers’ decisions. The findings presented here concur with Cengiz et al. (2007) theory stating that effective responses to service errors contain both psychological and concrete efforts. In this sense, M4Sc and M5Sd will be considered as psychological and concrete efforts respectively. M4Sc psychologically influences customers to forgive; M5Sd is a tangible process as it solicits direct contact which can lead to compensation.

4.5.2.2 Perceptions towards an Effective RTC

The last question in the questionnaire asks participants to express their expectations of the RTC. The expectations are not limited to the language elements, so participants were encouraged to identify what they really expect the hotel management to do for them. In this section, the participants were divided into two groups – Thai and non-Thai – based on the information they filled out in the first section. The responses to the question of how they want hotels to respond to their complaints were analyzed and grouped into different themes. The responses indicate five aspects of an RTC – *promptness*, *compensation*, *attentiveness*, *explanation*, and *sincere apologies*. The following table illustrates the five aspects and the number of participants mentioning each aspect.

Table 4.29

Desirable aspects of an RTC

Aspects	Thai (N)	Non-Thai (N)
Promptness	0	9
Compensation	9	6
Attentiveness	5	0
Explanation	3	5
Sincere apology	3	0

Comparing the responses from Thai and non-Thai participants shows some striking differences. The term *promptness* refers to the speed with which the hotel management responds to the complaints. It was found that nine of the non-Thai participants expected hotel management to respond quickly. The words that lead to the identification of this aspect include *quick*, *prompt*, and *immediately*. The participants used these words to express that they really want hotels to immediately take action. The findings concur with previous research revealing that the amount of time taken to handle customers' complaints affects the chance of service recovery (Kincade, Redwine & Hancock, 1992). Davidow (2000) confirmed that there is a

positive correlation between promptness and customer satisfaction. However, none of the Thai participants mentioned such aspect.

Compensation was very much expected by both groups. Hotel managements were expected to offer compensation. It is obvious that compensation plays a vital role in recovering services as it provides tangible evidence that the service provider is fair (Wamuyu et al.,2015). Offering compensation is widely acknowledged to be one of the most important strategies to overcome service failure. A response that implies compensation is as follows:

“I want hotel to respond to my complaints by providing and how they are going to compensate or redeem for their mistake.”

Hotels may assign concrete resources to correct their failure by, for example, replacing the service or offering discounts for a future visit. Although it seems to be the most effective way to bring back customers, hotels can still decide not to offer compensation, especially for those reporting inaccurate information or in the situation where hotels are not at fault.

Some Thai participants suggested hotels show their empathy and desire to recover services. *Attentiveness* refers to hotels’ understanding, care, and willingness to solve the problems customers experienced. Some responses are as follows:

“Hotels should respond with understanding, empathy and sincerely.”

“The hotel should show that they really care.”

“I want them to make it personal and say that they are willing to help.”

As can be seen in the responses, the participants expected hotels to show that they understand how customers feel about the incident and to express their intention to solve the problems. Although this aspect is only an intangible process, it does affect customer satisfaction. Elements revolving around this topic

include willingness to understand (Whitely, 1994) and empathy for the inconvenience (Zemke, 1994). While some Thai participants consider these elements influential, none of the non-Thai participants mentioned any of them.

Explanation here refers to the explanation regarding what hotels did or will do to resolve service failures and/or to prevent them from reoccurring. This aspect was highlighted by both Thai and non-Thai participants. They expected hotels to elaborate what they have done or how they are going to # resolve the issue. Some responses are as follows:

“I want hotels to explain what will they do to correct the mistake.”

“Hotels should provide solution to the problem.”

“Ensure that the mistake will not happen again.”

Explaining and/or presenting a future plan to prevent the issue from reoccurring implies that hotels have already acknowledged and admitted the service failure. In this sense, again, customers want to witness hotels' admission of guilt. This recovery strategy is well-known for its effectiveness in establishing positive image and improving customer satisfaction. Acknowledging the mistake and providing an elaboration can increase complainers' level of satisfaction (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). Boshoff and Leong (1998) found that the most crucial step to handle customers' complaints is to take the blame instead of blaming a third party.

A genuine apology is still expected. Three of the Thai participants expect hotels to make a sincere apology. *Sincere apology*, as its name suggest, refers to an apology indicating that hotels acknowledge the mistake and admit guilt. Although it is only a psychological compensation, it is still demanded by some participants.

Some interesting points emerge in the comparison between the responses of Thai and non-Thai participants. Non-Thai participants lean towards tangible efforts as they expected a prompt response and compensation. These two

aspects require concrete actions, not just words. It implies that non-Thai participants seem to care about outcome, rather than process. On the other hand, in addition to the most powerful recovery strategy, compensation, intangible efforts were expected among Thai participants, Thai participants also expected understanding, willingness, explanation, and a sincere apology.

4.5.3 Summary of Questionnaire Results

The last fold of this research was devoted to the investigation of customer perceptions towards local Thai hotels' and top UK hotels' RTCs and an effective RTC. The fourth set of questions was proposed to address such dimension of this genre. In this set, there are one umbrella and two sub-questions, and addressing the two sub-questions will lead to the answer to the umbrella question. The questionnaire was employed as a tool for data collection. The first sub-question, *Whose RTC is more effective, local Thai hotels' or top UK hotels'?*, addressed the comparison of the representative RTCs. Most of the participants revealed that the top UK hotels' RTCs are more satisfying. They tend to have positive attitude towards the top UK hotels' RTCs. The findings also indicate that expressions that are more significantly preferred among top UK hotels are more effective for recovering services. A spotlight was put on *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd) as it was found to be very influential to customer satisfaction. Thus, top UK hotels' RTCs are more effective as they contain expressions that positively affect customer satisfaction.

In the last question of the questionnaire, participants were asked to express their expectations of an RTC. Concerning a cross-cultural dimension of the responses to this question, participants were divided into two groups, Thai and non-Thai. This question was used to address the second sub-question of this research, *Is there any difference between the expectations of Thai and non-Thai guests of an RTC?* The responses were grouped into five different categories representing the participants' expectations. It was discovered that a cross-cultural variation of the customer expectations towards an effective RTC does exist. That is, there are differences between the expectations of Thai and non-Thai guests. Non-Thai participants lean towards tangible efforts. For example, most of non-Thai participants consider a timely response from hotels important, while this aspect is not mentioned at all in Thai participants' responses. Intangible efforts are still expected among Thai participants. Compensation

is very much desired by both groups, and it is considered the most effective recovery strategy in the service industry.

The five aspects discovered in the participants' responses to the last question lead to the identification of characteristics of an effective RTC. The fourth question of this research is, *From customers' perspectives, what are the characteristics of an effective RTC?*, The characteristics identified here include *promptness, compensation, attentiveness, explanation, and sincere apologies*. Identified by the participants, these characteristics are well-known for their effectiveness, confirmed by previous studies on responses to customers' complaints. To achieve service recovery and increase customer satisfaction, hotel managements should consider these characteristics.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the findings of each component to address the research questions proposed in Chapter 1. The purpose of this chapter is fourfold. First, it compares authors' responses to the interview questions, indicating some differences between the responses from the two groups of authors and various characteristics of the genre. Second, it identifies and describes each communicative unit based on the functions it performs in the genre and its boundary and compares the move structures of the two groups based on the frequency of each move and step. Third, it presents and compares wordlists and recurrent word combination between the corpora. The findings lead to the development of useful expressions, which can be used as guidelines for constructing a RTC. Four, it reveals the questionnaire findings leading to desirable and influential characteristics of the genre.

All the findings in this chapters were discussed to address all the research questions. The results provide a richer description of the genre and will significantly contribute to English education and business communication. The next chapter is the concluding remarks for this dissertation.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the main findings, practical applications, and limitations of this study. The dissertation is closed with recommendations for future research.

5.2 Conclusion

This study responds to the emergence of computer-mediated interaction between hotels and customers in social media platforms and the rapidly expanding interest in responses to customers' complaints (RTCs) as a genre. Since the cross-divisional and cross-cultural study into the genre were beyond the scope of the previous studies, the present study explores the differences between two groups of hotels representing two classes of services and countries whose cultures may have affected the way hotel managements respond to customers' complaints. Moving far beyond the scope of traditional genre analysis, which generally concerns only the construction of the genre, this study takes RTC writers' and readers' perception into account as it adds insight into the rationale behind the construction of the genre.

This dissertation began with an attempt to compare RTCs of local Thai hotels with those of top UK hotels based mainly on genre theory in the scope of English for Specific Purposes in order to (1) characterize the genre for English language learners, potential authors, and professionals and (2) investigate sub-variations of the genre. This study employed various instruments – interviews, move analysis, corpus analysis, and a questionnaire – to capture the all-around aspects of the genre, which was explored through the lens of practitioners, genre analysts and readers. This study touches on four different layers of the genre – characteristics, move structure, linguistic features, and customer perceptions. Such process started from the macro level in which distinct characteristics of RTCs were identified. The genre was then analyzed for a

variety of communicative functions that altogether established the genre to be the way it is. The linguistic features were also examined as they confirmed the identity of each move and step, characterized the genre, and reflected the actual language used by professionals. Lastly, the investigation went on to explore customer perceptions on local Thai hotels' RTCs and top UK hotels' RTCs and their expectation of an RTC. The following sections discuss major contributions and pedagogical implications of this study.

5.2.1 Main Findings

This study draws on author perceptions to capture characteristics of RTCs. Local Thai hotels tend to be concerned about their online reputations, whereas top UK hotels focus on achieving service recovery, which is commonly perceived to be the ultimate goal of the service industry when responding to customers' complaints. Local Thai hotels explicitly expressed concern over the damage the online platform can cause to their hotels, and thus they prioritize the image their prospective customers perceive, rather than service recovery of their existing customers. On the other hand, top UK hotels insisted that service recovery is their top priority. They want to do their best to make sure that the complainants come back to their hotels, so they can recover the service failures. Thus, it can be concluded from this point that each class of hotels strives to fulfill different purposes when it comes to public responses to customers' complaints. Although different communicative purposes were found here, service recovery is still more widely recognized and accepted in any service industry. Thus, achieving service recovery is what this study commits to promote.

These early findings made way for the following investigations as they point out some differences which might affect the way authors construct the texts. However, there are common attitudes they share towards the genre. Both groups of authors found customers' complaints very helpful as they provide constructive information which lead to improvements of services.

To confirm the identity of this genre, the interviews addressed authors experience of public and private responses to customers' complaints. It was discovered that hotel managements employ different strategies to handle complaints in public and private zones, due to the fact that responses in public spaces (e.g., TripAdvisor) can be

seen by potential customers. The interview data has confirmed the detached identity of the responses to customers' complaints on public online platforms, leading to the conclusion that the RTC is a genre in its own right.

When dealing with customers' complaints publicly posted online, there are two strategies employed to protect hotels' reputations. Some hotels may keep their responses short, because providing too much information about a particular service failure may result in damaging their hotel's reputation. This is the reason why many times detailed information regarding the incident was not mentioned in the response. However, when hotels are dealing with a customer who reports false information that can potentially cause damage to the hotels, they communicate with their potential customers through the responses, providing detailed explanations to make sure that they will not be misjudged. The first component of this study provides an understanding of the macro level of the genre.

Employing a top-down approach, this study moves from macro to micro level. After the interviews, two comparable corpora of RTCs were compiled for move analysis and linguistic feature analyses. The present study used Panseeta and Todd's (2014) move structure of RTCs as a starting point. As the data were being coded and recoded, some new communicative units emerged. The final move structure of RTCs proposed by this study includes six moves, each of which performs a distinctive function in the genre (see Table 4.4). Sub communicative functions, steps, were identified in each move. These represent the strategies authors employed to fulfill the communicative purpose. The two corpora were then analyzed for frequency of each move and step.

The frequency of each move was used to identify the typicality of each move, which is one of the focused areas. Moves were categorized into three different types – *obligatory*, *conventional*, and *optional* – based on the frequency of occurrence. The cut-off points between categories were exclusively designed for this study (see Table 4.10). In term of typicality of moves, THHC and UKHC is the same except for *Opening* (M1), which typically occurs in traditional business correspondence (see Table 4.11). This move is labeled *conventional* in THHC but *optional* in UKHC. It does not serve any significant function in achieving service recovery or image protection, but rather it is only there for the formality of the response. This implies that

local Thai hotels tend to keep their messages formal as it conforms with traditional business correspondence. Top UK hotels seem to be more relaxed about such formality, and focus on other moves that serve powerful functions to fulfill the communicative purpose.

The comparison between step frequency of THHC and UKHC shows a statistically significant difference in term of the overall step application, leading to the conclusion that the two groups of hotels employ different strategies to achieve their communicative purposes. The present study also compares the frequency of each individual step between the corpora (see Figure 4.17). Some significant differences are identified. Greeting (M1Sb) and Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sa) are used significantly more frequently by local Thai hotels, whereas Stating hotel's commitment (M3Sa), Apologizing for the error (M4Sc), and Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd) are significantly more preferred by top UK hotels (see Table 4.14). Such differences concur with the aforementioned point. The degree of each step in fulfilling the communicative purpose varies. As far as achieving service recovery is concerned, top UK hotels are superior, since the moves that aim to fulfill the communicative purpose are employed significantly more frequently. The lack of such steps in many local Thai hotels' RTCs indicates that service recovery is not their ultimate concern. These findings align with the interview data in that the frequency of steps employed can reflect the true intention of the authors.

As for the linguistic features of the genre, the application of first-person subject pronouns (*we* and *I*) and recurrent word combinations are selected as the focused areas. In spite of the fact that *we* is widely used in business correspondence as it promotes sense of organizational unity, *I* was used frequently among top UK hotels, especially when it involves expressing feelings and making an apology (see Table 4.18 and 4.23). In UKHC, *I* constitutes more than half of the total occurrences of first-person subject pronouns. It is evident that top UK hotels do not strictly conform with the style of traditional business correspondence. The use of *I* makes the message sound personal and in the case of expressing feelings and making an apology, it provides a real sense of sincerity. On the contrary, THHC is prevailed by the use of *we*, as it occurs much more frequently than *I*. Such findings prove that local Thai hotels strictly follow the

traditional style in the construction of RTCs, even though some of the features are not effective in the context.

To verify the identity of each step and develop guidelines for RTC construction, frequently used words and recurrent word combinations were examined. Sub-corpora representing each step were examined individually to explore their linguistic properties. The findings indicate that there is a clear cut between steps, since the wordlists and recurrent word combinations generated by the corpus tool are different from one sub-corpus to another (see Table 4.17, 4.24, and 4.25). The distinctive wordlist of each step reflects the function serving to fulfill the communicative purpose. For example, the terms such as *contact*, *directly*, and *email* could only be found in *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd). However, steps that serve similar functions could share some frequently used words. Performing similar functions, *Expressing regret/concern/apology* (M2Sc), *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc), and *Expressing regret/concern/apology (2)* (M5Sb) share some words to fulfill their purposes. Each step also presents its own set of recurrent word combinations.

Both frequently used words and recurrent word combinations made great contributions to the development of guidelines for RTC construction. The guidelines were developed based solely on the empirical evidence of frequently used words and recurrent word combinations (see Table 4.26). The guidelines developed here can assist potential novice practitioners to naturally respond to customers' complaints in terms of organization and word choices.

In spite of the fact that the guidelines were developed from the empirical data, they only provide typical structures and word choices. Still, to effectively respond to customers' complaints, practitioners need to take in to account other factors such as institutional policies (if any), personal goals, and situations, because they may affect the response. The guidelines were only designed to connect the conventional form of the genre with different situations practitioners deal with.

The present study moves beyond the scope of traditional genre analysis, investigating not only writers' but also readers' perception of the genre. A group of experienced hotel guests was asked to express their attitudes towards (1) local Thai hotels' and top UK hotels' RTCs and (2) an effective RTC. As for the side-by-side comparison, the representative RTC from the top UK hotels is superior, as it

contains influential communicative units aiming explicitly for service recovery. *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc), *Asking for a return visit* (M5Sc), and *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd) were found to play vital roles in satisfying customers, especially when they co-occur in the same message. While M4Sc offer a genuine apology indicating admission of guilt, the combination of M5Sc and M5Sd implies satisfaction in the future visit. M4Sc and M5Sc were underused by local Thai hotels, and thus, the hotel managements should be encouraged to consider these steps as strategies to restore customer satisfaction. It has been confirmed that top UK hotels' RTCs can be used as a model as they strive for service recovery.

To identify the characteristics of an effective RTC, participants were also asked to reveal their expectations of an RTC. This section takes into account cultural differences between Thai and non-Thai customers. Based on the participants' responses, aspects that the authors have to consider include *promptness*, *compensation*, *attentiveness*, *solution*, and *sincere apology*. The effectiveness of these aspects has been confirmed by previous studies on responses to customers' complaints. The comparison between the responses of Thai and non-Thai participants leads to the conclusion that non-Thai customers focus on tangible efforts (e.g., prompt responses, compensation), while intangible efforts (e.g., understanding, willingness to solve the problem, a sincere apology) were still very much a concern among Thai customers. Both groups, however, mutually agree that compensation should be considered.

5.2.2 Methodological Contribution

This section presents the contribution of the present study in terms of methodology. Using specialist informants to gain insight into a genre is not something new in genre research. Yang's (2015) study into call for paper, for example, involves semi-structured interviews. Six academics who have experience as academic conference organizers were recruited to play the informant role. Since they were what Swales (1990) calls 'expert members', they were able to recognize the purpose of the genre (p.58). Normally, in written genre, specialist informants are writers and/or readers of a particular genre.

In this study, authors of RTCs and experienced customers served as specialist informants. Instead of using normal readers as specialist informants, this study uses experienced customers, who are able determine the success of an RTC.

Different from other text types, RTCs are in a success-or-fail situation. They can strongly affect customer satisfaction, revisiting intention, and hotel reputations. The experienced customers are immediate external stakeholders that a hotel must take into serious consideration.

Customer questionnaire data suggest five aspects of an effective RTC. The findings make significant contributions to practitioners in a wide-range of service industries. Additionally, the comments from experienced customers were drawn on as a means to confirm the effectiveness of top UK hotels' RTCs and what local Thai hotels' RTCs lack to achieve service recovery.

5.3 Implications

Although this study has made several significant contributions, researchers, instructors, English language learners, and practitioners have to face the challenges of putting the findings into practice. This section discusses practical implications of the findings.

5.3.1 Pedagogical Implications

The present study was initiated with the desire to gain insight into this genre as it plays vital roles in the hospitality industry and is one of the tasks EFL students are expected to fulfill in business-related ESP courses. Due to the rapid growth of business interactions on online public platforms, business-related ESP courses should prepare the students to communicate effectively via the platforms.

Instructors of business-related ESP courses are encouraged to put the findings of this study into practice. ESP students should understand the expected communicative purpose, service recovery. Analyzing moves shows several distinctive communicative functions, which learners need to understand in order to achieve the communicative purpose. It is also beneficial for learners to be aware of the typicality of each move in that *obligatory* and *conventional* moves should be prioritized as they are used frequently by professionals. Learners can also benefit from the findings of the linguistic feature analyses as they reflect the authentic language used by professionals.

Since a practical teaching implication is very much of concern in this study, guidelines for RTC construction were developed to support not only English language learners, but also practitioners (see Table 4.26). The guidelines can be used as they are or further developed for specific classroom instructions or professional trainings. However, the guidelines only provide learners with commonly used expressions. That is, relying solely on the guidelines is not the intention of the developer. They are still required to consider other factors such as situations they have to deal with and institutional policies. Even with the guidelines, learners need to be exposed to a variety of situations.

5.3.2 Professional Implications

Apart from pedagogical implications, this study also has professional implications, especially for practitioners at local Thai hotels. The questionnaire data have confirmed the superiority of top UK hotels' RTCs in term of achieving service recovery. Service recovery should be prioritized over image protection, as it is widely accepted and beneficial to both hotels and customers. This study has highlighted significant differences that make top UK hotels' RTCs more effective. *Apologizing for the error* (M4Sc) and *Soliciting direct contact* (M5Sd) should be considered by practitioners at local Thai hotels and probably the wider hotel industry to increase the possibility of service recovery.

The questionnaire data also address customer expectations of an RTC. The five desirable aspects should be taken into consideration. While tangible efforts are strongly desired in an RTC, intangible efforts (e.g., *attentiveness*, *sincere apology*) are still expected by some customers. The combination of the five aspects will boost customer satisfaction and chances of service recovery. Apart from the questionnaire data, the effectiveness of the five aspects was also confirmed by previous studies. In addition, the differences between Thai and non-Thai expectations imply that hotels should be aware of the cultural diversity of the customers, which may affect their expectations.

5.4 Limitations

Limitations of the present study are discussed with regard to size of corpora, the number of specialist informants, and the identities of the authors.

5.4.1 Size of Corpora

As reported in Chapter 3, to make the two corpora comparable, the numbers of RTCs in both corpora have to be reduced to meet the criteria. The number of texts considerably decreased from 117 to 72 in THHC and from 103 to 72 in UKHC. Although the corpora sizes seem to be sufficient as they can represent the structure and linguistic features of the genre, bigger corpora would provide more generalizability of each corpus. Before the reduction, the total of 117 texts and 103 texts were identified to represent local Thai hotels' and top UK hotels' RTCs respectively. Analyzing all the available texts would provide a deeper description of RTCs of a certain group of hotels. To gain insight into local Thai hotels' RTCs without concerning any comparative aspect, the 117 texts from 117 different local Thai hotels responding to customers' complaints on TripAdvisor would offer more conclusive results.

5.4.2 Specialist Informants

The present study employed specialist informants to explore different aspects of the genre. There are two groups of specialist informants; authors and customers. While the authors provided useful information regarding characteristics of the genre, customer perceptions shed some light on local Thai hotels' and top UK hotels' RTCs and characteristics of an effective RTC. However, the number of participants in this study seems to be limited in that only four hotel representatives were interviewed and 30 customers participated. With more authors participating, other interesting characteristics might emerge. Also, a larger number of customers participating might provide other aspects of an effective RTC. Thus, adding more participants to this study would yield conclusive results. In addition, due to the geographical distance, participants from top UK hotels were asked to fill in their answers in the online form. That is, the questions are limited to only those presented in the questionnaire. Face-to-face interviews can provide much more information as the

researchers can use follow-up questions to better understand the participants' responses.

5.4.3 Identity of RTC Authors

The nationality and L1 of the authors of the RTCs collected for this study were not identified. The sign off alone does not provide background information about the authors. The RTCs did not represent the products of Thai and British authors, but rather it represents two different classes of hotels located in two different countries. Being able to identify the nationality and L1 of the authors would add another dimension to the cross-cultural study of this genre.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the limited scope of this study, like any research, this study makes room for further investigations of RTCs. The scope of this study is limited to the comparison of local Thai hotels' and top UK hotels' RTCs. The findings indicate that there are differences between the two groups of hotels in terms of communicative purposes and strategies employed in RTC constructions. Such differences may be the result of the difference between 3- and 5-star hotels' cultures, not Thai and UK cultures. Since the identities of the authors were not investigated, the RTCs collected for this study did not represent Thai and British authors' productions. Therefore, future research can compare the RTCs written by Thai and British authors. Apart from Thai hotels' and UK hotels' RTCs, RTCs produced by hotels from other regions should also be investigated. The findings of this study suggest that the variations of this genre do exist, and thus, future research is encouraged to investigate other cross-regional variations of the genre.

The present study did not take into account the role of negative reviews that hotels responded to. The importance of the role of negative reviews was raised in the interviews with the authors. The participants mutually agreed that their biggest challenge in responding to negative reviews is to deal with misinformation, which damages hotels' reputations. Their responses imply that the way they respond to misleading reviews must be different. That is, misleading reviews can affect the way hotel managements respond. Dealing with misinformation is just one example of the

reviews that can affect RTC constructions. Thus, future research can draw on the reviews that hotels respond to, looking into the information presented by reviewers and see whether it affects hotels' responses. These data would lead to a better understanding of responses to customers' complaints in different contexts.

As far as pedagogy is concerned, this study has some practical implications for language classrooms. Although genre analysis research has been widely recognized for its practical applications in language teaching, further investigation on such applications is still insufficiently carried out. Future research should include, but not be limited to, the effects of the materials developed from the findings of this study on writing performance, for instance, and learners' and instructors' attitudes towards the materials.

The genre will undergo changes over time, and thus, this study must be considered only a snapshot. This study synchronically focuses responses to negative reviews posted on TripAdvisor. Only the most recent responses were collected from each of the hotels' homepages. The last but not the least recommendation is to investigate how the genre may have changed, and what factors led to the change.

5.6 Final Words

The components of my dissertation have been efforts to explore the characterization of public responses to customers' complaints on a travel website with a cross-cultural focus. My study has proved that realizing the communicative purpose of a genre leads to better understanding of the rationales behind the application of each communicative function. Move analysis can provide insight into each communicative function employed by practitioners to fulfill their communicative purpose. Linguistic feature analyses provides useful information in confirming the identity of each communicative function, understanding how a particular feature occurs, and developing teaching and learning materials. In the case of the customer-related genre, investigating customer perceptions shed some light on what professionals should do to satisfy customers.

Driven by the will to contribute to language education and the hospitality industry, I hope that the findings of my study will support the teaching and learning of

responses to customers' complaints and other related genres and benefit English language instructors, learners, material developers, and professional practitioners in the hospitality industry and other service industries.



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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

INFORMATION SHEET AND LETTER OF CONSENT (AUTHOR)



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (THAI HOTELS)

Introduction

This project is a PhD research exploring responses to complaints as a genre. It is conducted under the auspices of Thammasat University which requires that all participants are provided with the information of the project before proceeding.

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in this research. Before making your decision, it is important that you understand the purposes of this research and what it will involve. Please read the following information thoroughly. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact the researcher.

Purposes

This research aims at investigating how local Thai hotels and top hotels in UK respond to customers' complaints with the focus on similarity and differences between the two groups of hotels. The objectives of this research are to prepare English language learners for real-world tasks and help professionals, especially hotels' staff, improve their practices.

Procedure

Once you have decided to participate, you will be interviewed in semi-structure manner about your experience with responses to customers' complaints on TripAdvisor. you will be interviewed at place and time convenient to you. The conversation between you and the interviewer will be recorded with a voice recorder. The interview will last approximately 20-30 minutes.

Confidentiality

All the information about your identity will be kept securely. You and your institution will not be identified in any reports or publications.

Contact Information

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (UK HOTELS)

Introduction

This project is a PhD research exploring responses to complaints as a genre. It is conducted under the auspices of Thammasat University which requires that all participants are provided with the information of the project before proceeding.

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in this research. Before making your decision, it is important that you understand the purposes of this research and what it will involve. Please read the following information thoroughly. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact the researcher.

Purposes

This research aims at investigating how local Thai hotels and top hotels in UK respond to customers' complaints with the focus on similarity and differences between the two groups of hotels. The objectives of this research are to prepare English language learners for real-world tasks and help professionals, especially hotels' staff, improve their practices.

Procedure

To participate in this research, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about your experience with responses to customers' complaints. You can complete the questionnaire at time and place of your convenience.

Confidentiality

All the information about your identity will be kept securely. You and your institution will not be identified in any reports or publications.

Contact Information

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LETTER OF CONSENT (THAI HOTELS)

Name: _____

I was informed and understand the purposes and procedure of this research as provided in the INFORMATION SHEET. I understand that my personal and institutional identities will be kept strictly confidential. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I agree to participate in this research

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (AUTHORS)

Section 1

Background Information

1. How old are you?
2. How would you describe your ethnicity?
3. What is your first language?
4. How long have you been working in hospitality industry?
5. What is your highest level of education?
6. How often do you write a response to customer's complaint?

Section 2

Perception and Experience

1. How do you learn how to respond to customers' complaints?
2. Is there any difference between responding to customers' complaints publicly and privately?
3. How do you feel about customers' complaints on TripAdvisor?
4. What is the most challenging thing of responding to customers' complaints on TripAdvisor?
5. What do you try to achieve by replying customers' complaints on TripAdvisor?
6. Is there any institutional rule or regulation you have to follow when you respond to customers' complaints on TripAdvisor?

APPENDIX C

CODING RUBRIC

Move	Step	Description	Example
Opening (M1)	Salutation (M1Sa)	The author begins the messages by addressing the reviewer. Salutations may appear either physically separated from the main text or at the beginning of the main text.	<p><i>“Dear (review’s name)”</i></p> <p><i>“(reviewer’s name)”</i></p>
	Greeting (M1Sb)	The author begins the message by greeting the reviewer.	<p><i>“Greeting from”</i></p> <p><i>“Sawadee & Greetings”</i></p>
Acknowledging feedback (M2)	Expressing gratitude (M2Sa)	The author acknowledges customers’ feedback by showing gratitude.	<i>“Thank you for your review”</i>
	Valuing feedback (M2Sb)	The author reassures the reviewer that the feedback is important and ensures that the feedback will be taken seriously.	<p><i>“We value your feedback”</i></p> <p><i>“We have indeed taken on board your comments”</i></p>
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (M2Sc)	The author uses expressions of regret, concern, or apology to assure the reviewer that he/she really cares about the feedback. When markers of apology such as <i>sorry</i> and <i>apologize</i> are used	<i>“We are sorry that it hasn’t been very convenient for you”</i>

Move	Step	Description	Example
		without mentioning any unpleasant experience, they are considered <i>Expressing regret/concern/apology</i> .	<p><i>“I apologize for any disappointment or inconvenience you might have experienced.”</i></p> <p><i>“I regret that our team did not meet your expectations on this occasion.”</i></p>
Positioning hotel brands (M3)	Stating hotel’s commitment (M3Sa)	The author states the hotel’s goal or commitment to create a positive image about the hotel.	<i>“At the Chester Residence we strive for 5 star service in every facet of the business.”</i>
	Confirming hotel’s standard (M3Sb)	The author confirms the hotel’s standard by mentioning that the incident doesn’t reflect the actual performance of the hotel.	<i>“I can assure you it is not the norm & runs contrary to the usual high standards we hope & expect to deliver.”</i>
Dealing with complaints (M4)	Explaining cause of the incident (M4Sa)	The author explains the cause of the incident and/or how it happened; this includes the scenarios when the author informs the customer of the policies, orders, rules, regulations, regular practices, and related information (e.g., reception opening hours, wireless internet services, charging policies, location).	<i>“Sadly the size of our bar was dictated by the existing layout & limited footprint of our grade 2 listed property.”</i>

Move	Step	Description	Example
			<p><i>“Hotel provides a designed smoking area at outdoor restaurant on the ground floor and open 24-hour.”</i></p> <p><i>“As we tried to explain on the phone, we made a genuine mistake in offering you such a high level of discount during our peak month of trade.”</i></p>
	Reporting action taken/investigation result (M4Sb)	The author informs the reviewer that he/she is doing something about the problem or would like to report the result of the investigation.	<p><i>“Having investigated this, it appears that the receptionist had to step away from the desk in order to assist another guest.”</i></p> <p><i>“The points you have raised in regards to the air conditioning, hot water, smell from cigarette and Shuttle service has surely raised concerns in which your comments have been shared with my team.”.</i></p>

Move	Step	Description	Example
			<i>“I have personally investigated your recent stay with us and have contacted you via”</i>
	Apologizing for the error (M4Sc)	The author makes an apology for the incident. This step is slightly different from <i>Expressing regret or concern</i> (M2Sc). Similar markers (e.g., <i>apologize, sorry</i>) are used, but M4Sc highlights a particular area or incident that the author apologizes for.	<i>“First of all I would like to apologize regarding the scooter, my staff made a mistake with the price, my apologize.”</i>
Concluding remarks (M5)	Expressing gratitude (2) (M5Sa)	The author repeats M2Sa and M2Sc. That is, he/she expresses gratitude, regret, concern, and/or apologizes for the second time.	<i>“Again thank you for your feedback”</i> <i>“Once again we apologise for your inconvenience!”</i>
	Expressing regret/concern/apology (2) (M5Sb)		
	Asking for a return visit (M5Sc)	The author asks the reviewer to give his/her hotel another chance. The author directly asks the reviewer to revisit.	<i>“I hope we will have the opportunity to serve you again.”</i> <i>“I truly hope we can restore your faith in us in the near future and invite you back to stay with us again.”</i>

Move	Step	Description	Example
	Soliciting direct contact (M5Sd)	<i>Soliciting direct contact</i> is used when the author asks the reviewer to contact him/her directly. Contact information such as email address and/or telephone number is provided.	<p>“Please feel free to email me, at (author’s direct contact information)”</p> <p>“If we can be of assistance in the future, please don’t hesitate to contact us on (author’s direct contact information)....”</p>
	Promising to improve service (M5Se)	The author makes a promise to improve the area of service that the customer complains about. The author reassures that the unpleasant experience will not occur again.	<p>“Please feel free to email me, at (author’s direct contact information)”</p> <p>“If we can be of assistance in the future, please don’t hesitate to contact us on (author’s direct contact information)....”</p>
Closing (M6)	Sign off (M6Sa)	The author includes <i>sign-off</i> (M6Sa), <i>signature</i> (M6Sb), <i>job title</i> (M6Sc), <i>contact information</i> (M6Sd) (e.g., email, telephone number, hotel’s name), <i>affiliation</i> (M6Se).	<p>“Kind Regards</p> <p>(author’s name)</p> <p>Guest Services Manager</p>
	Signature (M6Sb)		
	Job title (M6Sc)		
	Contact information (M6Sd)		

Move	Step	Description	Example
	Affiliation (M6Se)		<i>(author's direct contact information)</i> <i>(author's affiliation)"</i>



APPENDIX D
LISTS OF 100 MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS

Rank	THHC	UKHC
	Word	Word
1	the	to
2	to	the
3	you	you
4	we	your
5	your	and
6	and	I
7	for	we
8	our	that
9	that	of
10	in	our
11	with	for
12	of	with
13	I	in
14	a	a
15	have	have
16	is	this
17	on	us
18	not	not
19	are	on
20	us	are
21	this	is
22	stay	thank
23	thank	as
24	it	would
25	hotel	sorry

Rank	THHC	UKHC
	Word	Word
26	as	at
27	at	experience
28	again	am
29	will	regards
30	can	very
31	would	feedback
32	from	time
33	regards	stay
34	do	be
35	time	was
36	resort	will
37	all	it
38	be	do
39	feedback	hotel
40	please	dear
41	guests	manager
42	like	hope
43	very	guests
44	experience	review
45	manager	so
46	was	can
47	service	team
48	future	all
49	so	taking
50	hope	back
51	room	contact
52	sorry	please
53	my	were

Rank	THHC	UKHC
	Word	Word
54	any	did
55	best	from
56	were	general
57	apologize	again
58	during	comments
59	sincerely	had
60	staff	me
61	but	kind
62	comment	opportunity
63	guest	recent
64	taking	been
65	dear	future
66	team	guest
67	back	much
68	did	service
69	review	welcome
70	there	visit
71	about	disappoint
72	an	my
73	has	discuss
74	improve	during
75	inconvenience	read
76	recent	ensure
77	if	if
78	been	apologise
79	opportunity	by
80	regarding	like
81	rooms	but

Rank	THHC	UKHC
	Word	Word
82	check	London
83	me	more
84	much	apologies
85	next	directly
86	am	expectations
87	by	about
88	once	an
89	provide	any
90	welcome	com
91	or	when
92	some	which
93	which	able
94	accept	best
95	apologies	rooms
96	appreciate	share
97	com	should
98	had	accept
99	issue	assure
100	kind	further

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE (CUSTOMERS)

Customer Perception towards Responses to Customer Complaints

I would like to seek your cooperation for my research. The fundamental aim of this questionnaire is to address characteristics of an effective response to customer's complaints. Your participation will help me understand the topics in detail and provide true results for the study.

Section 1

Identify your nationality.

Thai

Non-Thai

How often you stay at a hotel?

Less than once a year

1-3 times a year

4-6 times a year

More than 6 times a year

Section 2

Read the responses below

Response A

Dear XXXX (customer's name)

Greeting from XXXX (hotel's name)

Thank you for choosing our hotel for your recent stay.

I am very concerned to learn that you were disappointed with our hotel housekeeping service. As per standards, rooms are cleaned daily including of course the provision of new linen and toilet paper. Our front office team is also available 24/7 in case you require any other additional service.

Again, we would like to apologize for your inconvenience. Anyway, we always welcome feedback as it helps us to maintain our standards and improve our guests experience so we look forward to welcoming you back in the near future with better services.

Best Regards,

Response B

XXXX (customer's name),

I am extremely sorry that we let you down during your recent stay with us and I apologise that your complaint was not graciously handled. We aim to provide guests with the most comfortable and relaxing experiences so please accept our deepest apologies for letting you down.

I really do hope that you allow us the opportunity to redeem ourselves by returning to XXXX (hotel's name) in the future and ask that you contact me directly on XXXX@gmail.com (responder's email address) so that I can personally oversee your next stay with us and ensure that you are in a bedroom that you will both love.

Warm wishes,

XXXX (responder's name)

How would you describe the responses in a few words?

E.g., *Response X is okay, Response Y is helpful, Response Z is disappointing*

Response A

.....
.....

Response B

.....
.....

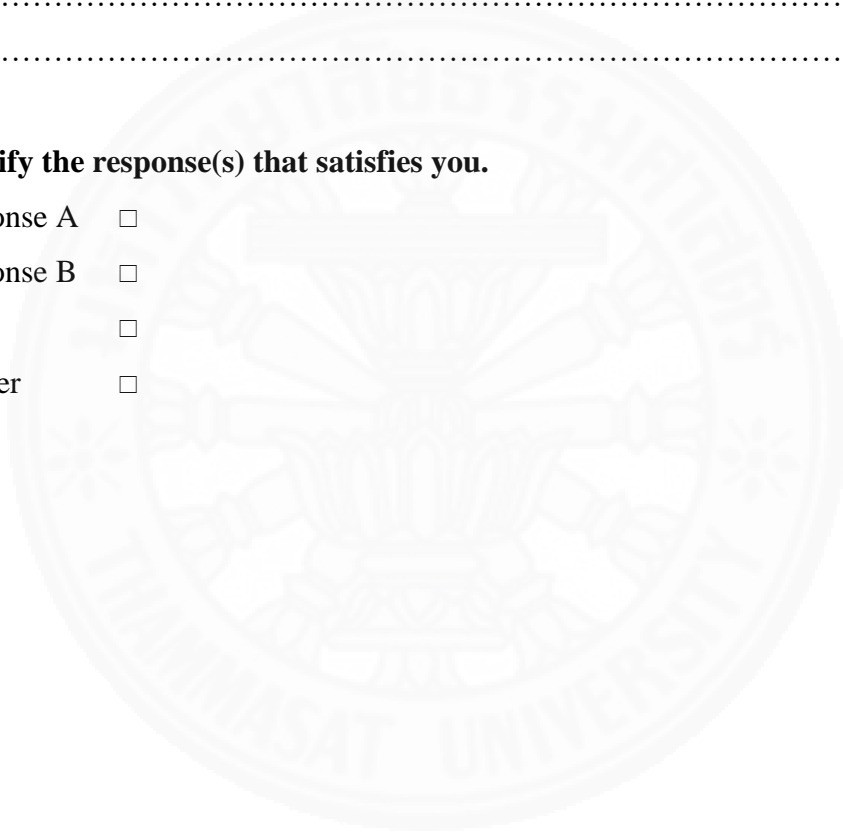
Identify the response(s) that satisfies you.

Response A

Response B

Both

Neither



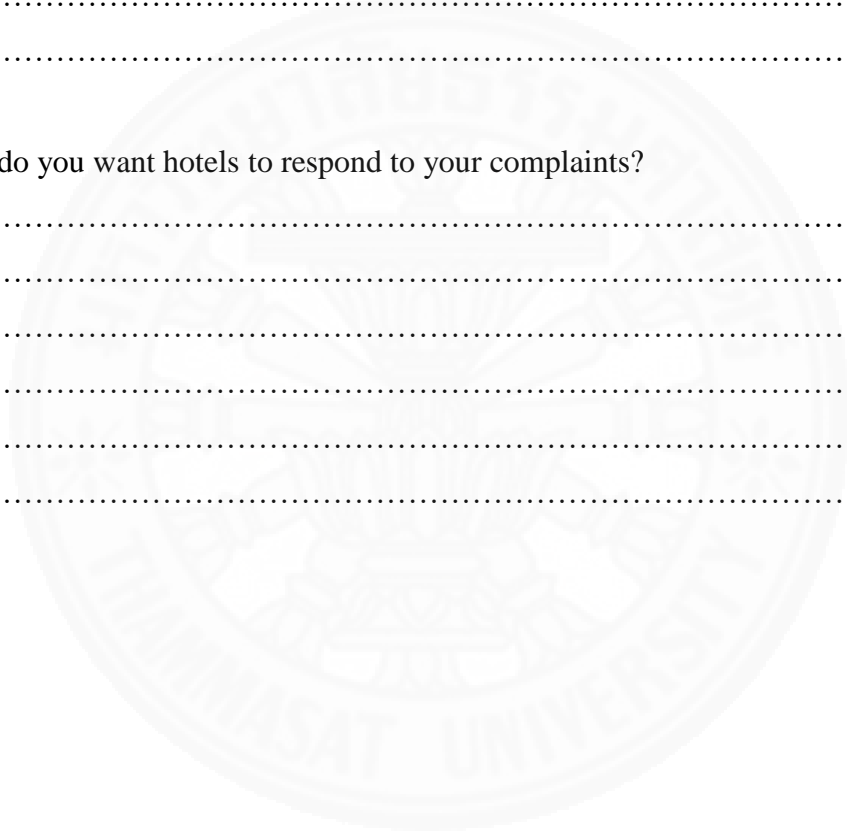
Section 3

In the responses, identify the expression(s) (sentence, phrase, and/or word) that satisfies you (if any), and briefly explain why it is satisfying.

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How do you want hotels to respond to your complaints?

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BIOGRAPHY

Name	Mr. Athip Thumvichit
Date of Birth	June 25, 1987
Educational Attainment	2011: Bachelor of Arts in English 2013: Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction
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