

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In business, effective communication either through verbal or nonverbal communication is a key to success; furthermore, as a businessperson, we have to write professionally to state our messages clearly and convey our sincerity to evoke the response that we want from the readers. Imprecise language and unstructured or drawn-out sentences, whether spoken or written, will leave a negative impression; at worst, there might be miscommunication, which can cause certain problems in the future.

Hart (2000) stated effective writing means applying the simplest constructions and styles to convey basic facts as the sole intention of it is to share information that aims to persuade others to your way of thinking. Bennie (2009) stated that communication styles vary by context. An accurate, brief, and clear writing style is usually used in writing letters, reports, advertisements, et cetera. Taylor (2017) explained that in written communication, readers evaluate or criticize the person who is ‘speaking’ through the writer’s style such as the structure or form, creativity, and visual appeal since they lack nonverbal cues. Taylor (2017) constructed four-point plan, namely introduction (writer’s background or purpose), details (information, instructions, or requests), response or action (reader's or writer's next steps, with deadlines if needed), and close (a simple one-line closing sentence). In line with it, Al-Maskari (2013) emphasized the need to keep the purpose, readers, and content in mind.

There are several studies that have explored the structure of business writing, which showed two different results. Rachmania and Mirahayuni (2009) found that business letters often omit elements like copy notation, interest, salutation, complimentary close, or signature, but always include letterhead, date, inside address, subject, and body. In contrast, Sudomo (2013), Sanchez (2015), Yosepha (2015), Assanova and Kurmanova (2017), Sundari (2018), Sverdlova et al. (2020), Iliescu (2024) insisted that all elements are essential for formality and

professionalism. Tam et al. (2022) concluded that responding to positive reviews typically include elements like greetings, expressing feelings, thanking reviewers, and acknowledging the reviewer's value, while responses to customer complaints vary more such as personalized responses are crucial for rebuilding trust, as they demonstrate the hotel's concern for customer opinions and highlight their engagement. Taw et al. (2022) showed that there are six main moves in responses to negative reviews, namely opening, acknowledging feedback, dealing with complaints, positioning hotel brand, concluding and closing.

Numerous studies have explored the communication style (language use) in business writing to respond to the customers complaints. Dewitt and Martin (2009) emphasized that a credible initial response to complaints should summarize the customer's issue, outline resolutions, and provide an expected resolution timeline. Yu and Fu (2014) identified that tactful language, interrogatives, and passive voice for politeness are essential to write an effective business correspondence. Zhang and Vasquez (2014) highlighted the importance of expressing gratitude and apologies in hotel responses to online complaints, noting that vague replies can diminish perceived sincerity. Li and Wei (2015) found that business emails should clear and use simple language, standardized formatting, and multimedia. Yaghubyan (2024) highlighted the importance of concise language, simple structure, and unitary contents to establish successful business communication. Overall, effective business writing should prioritize clarity, empathy, and appropriate tone to foster positive relationships with customers.

In contrast to the previous researchers which mostly focus on the e-mail-based data, the writer is going to focus on the correspondence that happens in a hotel online platform of Tripadvisor, an internationally popular travel website that has over a billion reviews and contribution for hotels, especially in complaint replies. The writer is going to focus on Shirley Taylor's strategy called four-point plan which rarely done. The target hotels are Harris Kuta Tuban Hotel and Melia Bali Hotel. It is interesting to observe how the management team of this hotel corresponds with their guests on an online platform (tripadvisor) as they actively respond to the customers' reviews.

1.2 Problem Identification

Effective business writing by hotel administrators in responding to guest complaint reviews on TripAdvisor is crucial for maintaining an appropriate tone that fosters positive feedback as a single mishandled TripAdvisor complaint can rapidly decrease the prospective guests' trust. This research reveals pressing gaps in current practices. In contrast to prior studies that focusing on private email-based correspondence, this research targets public replies on TripAdvisor. Existing analyses overlook structured frameworks like Shirley Taylor's four-point plan strategy, which no prior study has applied to online review responses. This study examines replies from Harris Kuta Tuban Hotel and Melia Bali Hotel as both hotels actively engaging with the guests on TripAdvisor. Identifying alignment of online review responses with Shirley Taylor's strategy provides actionable guidelines, simplifying complaint replies, and enhancing professionalism.

1.3 Problem Statements

Based on the background of the study mentioned above, the writer states 3 problems of this study, namely:

1. What structure is used in business writing by the hotel administrators for replying to complaint reviews on TripAdvisor?
2. What language expressions are used in business writing by the hotel administrators for replying to complaint reviews on TripAdvisor?
3. To what extent do hotel administrators' business writing responses to guest complaint reviews on TripAdvisor align with Shirley Taylor's four-point plan strategy?

1.4 Purposes of the Study

Based on the problem statements of the study mentioned above, the writer has 3 purposes of this study, namely:

1. To investigate and identify the structure in business writing used by the hotel administrators for replying to complaint reviews on TripAdvisor.
2. To investigate and identify the language expressions used in business writing by the hotel administrators for replying to complaint reviews on TripAdvisor.

3. To investigate and identify the alignment between Shirley Taylor's four-point plan strategy and the hotel administrators' business writing for replying to complaint reviews on TripAdvisor.

1.5 Scope of the study

This study was limited to structure, language expressions, and the extent of hotel administrators' business writing English responses to guest complaint reviews on TripAdvisor align with Shirley Taylor's four-point plan strategy at Melia Bali Hotel and Harris Kuta Tuban from 2019 to 2026. These limitations ensure that the study's results are not overly broad, allowing precise application of Shirley Taylor's strategy while enabling future researchers to build on it by examining additional aspects not covered in this study. The findings cannot be generalized to other hotels, as this study is limited to Melia Bali Hotel (a 5-star hotel) and Harris Kuta Tuban (a 4-star hotel), both known for their consistent and active responsiveness to guest complaints on TripAdvisor. This study investigates only those hotels' TripAdvisor complaint replies, with data obtained through systematic visual documentation; it does not extend to other platforms (e.g., Google Reviews) or direct interviews. No primary data collection beyond public reviews was conducted, limiting insights into internal response processes.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is expected to be useful contributions in theoretical and empirical areas as follows:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This study offers to contribute to the theoretical framework of business writing by focusing on the correspondence, especially replying to complaint reviews, that happens in a hotel online platform of Tripadvisor which is going to advance the existing knowledge that mostly focusing on the e-mail-based data. The study applies Shirley Taylor's underexplored four-point plan strategy, which no prior research has examined in this context and it extends discourse analysis about that theory to hospitality industry. It delivers practical outputs for hotel administrators replying to complaints, such as a guideline template for effective

responses aligned with Shirley Taylor's four-point plan strategy and a professional-use checklist for tone and flow to maintain response quality and timeliness.

1.6.2 Empirical Significance

The findings of this study can be an empirical review or consideration to other researchers that are going to write about business writing as it discusses the structure of business writing focusing on the correspondence that happens in an online platform which follows the trends now with a new strategy.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The definition of key terms is expected to help the reader with the technical language use in this study as follows:

1. Structure

In this study, structure is an arrangement or framework to write replies to the guests' complaint reviews at two hotels namely Harris Kuta Tuban and Melia Bali Hotel uploaded by the hotel administrators on TripAdvisor Website.

2. Language expression

In this study, language expressions are the various kind of English expressions used by the hotel administrators in Harris Kuta Tuban and Melia Bali Hotel to write replies to the guests' complaint reviews on TripAdvisor Website.

3. Business writing

In this study, business writing is communication through writing in professional setting, which is the hotel administrator of Harris Kuta Tuban and Melia Bali Hotel written reply to the guest' complaint reviews on TripAdvisor Website.

4. Correspondence

In this study, correspondence is exchanged written communication between hotel administrators and guests. Specifically, the Harris Kuta Tuban and Melia Bali Hotel's administrators written reply to the guest reviews, especially complaint reviews, on an online platform called Tripadvisor.

5. Tripadvisor

In this study, TripAdvisor is an online platform that operates as a travel agency and comparison-shopping websites with user generated content which is used by Harris Kuta Tuban and Melia Bali Hotel's administrators to write replies to the guest complaint reviews.

6. Hotel Administrator

In this study, the hotel administrator is a worker in Harris Kuta Tuban and Melia Bali Hotel that is responsible for replying to the guests' reviews, especially complaint reviews on TripAdvisor website.

7. Complaint Reviews

In this study, complaint reviews are written comments uploaded by the guests in the Harris Kuta Tuban and Melia Bali Hotel's review section on TripAdvisor website that are unsatisfied with the service, facilities, et cetera.

8. Complaint Replies

In this study, complaint replies are written messages uploaded by the hotel administrator as the representative of Harris Kuta Tuban and Melia Bali Hotel to respond to the guests' complaint reviews in the review section of the hotel on TripAdvisor website.

