MAKING COMPLAINTS IN GHANAIAN ENGLISH: AN ANALYSIS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract:
Complaints are bound to occur in our daily interactions while seeking a remedy to that which has directly or indirectly affected someone unfavourably, thus, threatening the face of the addressee and may eventually engender social relationship breakdown if not done appropriately. This study examined complaints by speakers of Ghanaian English in three public second cycle schools in Ghana to ascertain the politeness strategies invested in expressing their dissatisfaction with an unacceptable act in Ghanaian English. The Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory served as the theoretical framework for the study. A case study design was adopted with data elicited from ninety-four (94) participants role-playing four complaint-provoking situations and analysed thematically. The findings revealed that eleven strategies are used in producing different complaints in Ghanaian English. The findings further indicated that Ghanaians are indirect and tend to have a high inclination toward positive politeness strategies as they try to reduce the effect of the face-threatening act of complaining on the addressee's positive face. It was also found that this complaint behaviour is influenced by the cultural norms of politeness in Ghanaian languages.

Keywords: complaints; Ghanaian English; politeness; pragmatic transfer

1. Introduction

Language is considered the most essential tool of communication used in conveying not only our thoughts but also, influencing or manipulating peoples' attitudes, challenging and even controlling people's values and ideas (Yule, 1996). When people communicate with language, they perform several functions that go beyond just the production of a set of grammatically correct sentence structures. Thus, these utterances have embedded in them, meanings that are not always superficially expressed, yet aimed at provoking certain reactions in the hearer (Milleret, 2007). The concept of communicative competence dictates that unique rules and social

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conventions must be followed in interaction (Saville-Troike, 2003; Spencer-Oatey, 2004). Therefore, the appropriateness of an utterance and its interpretation requires knowledge of the linguistic, as well as the socio-cultural background of the language used. Failure to do so may lead to pragmatic failure which could result in a breakdown of communication.

One area of our daily communication which requires strict adherence to social rules of interaction is the expression of speech acts such as complaints. In a complaint, the complainant does not only voice out their displeasure but also expects the hearer to correct the harm done since they hold the hearer partly responsible for the offensive act perpetrated. A complaint is therefore considered a *face-threatening act* (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Laforest, 2002) which may cause embarrassment to the hearer if not properly made. This may lead to anger and a refusal to make any form of reparation for the damage done and eventually lead to a breakdown in communication or even sever the relationship that exists between the interlocutors. This study examines how educated Ghanaians use English language in making complaints to unveil not only the linguistic forms but also, the different pragmatic strategies employed in making complaints. This is because the effectiveness of a complaint depends not only on the way it is expressed but also on the social context within which it is performed.

1.1 Complaint as a speech act

A complaint is an expressive speech act that expresses a psychological state of dissatisfaction, annoyance or disapproval of something or an action that has unfavourably affected the speaker (Tanck, 2002). Trosborg (1995) views a complaint as an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainant) expresses his/her disapproval or other negative feelings towards the state of affairs described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he/she holds the hearer (the complainee) responsible, either directly or indirectly. (pp. 311-312)

Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) outline some preconditions required for a complaint to take place from the complainant's point of view:

- The hearer (H) performs a socially unacceptable act (SUA) that is contrary to a social code of behavioral norms shared by the speaker (S) and H.
- S perceives the SUA as having unfavorable consequences for herself, and/or for the general public.
- The verbal expression of S relates post facto directly or indirectly to the SUA, thus having the illocutionary force of censure.
   S perceives the SUA as:
a) freeing S (at least partially) from the implicit understanding of a social cooperative relationship with H; S therefore chooses to express her frustration or annoyance.
b) Giving S the legitimate right to ask for repair in order to undo the SUA, either for her benefit or for the public benefit. The main goal of such instrumental complaints is to ensure that H performs some action of repair as a result of the complaint (p. 108).

Olshtain and Weinbach, just like Trosborg (1995), perceive a complaint as a communicative act in which speakers express their annoyance or pass a moral judgement on a past or ongoing unacceptable action that is affecting them or the public unfavourably.

According to Holmes (1995), such actions that could be considered as socially unacceptable by an individual include the following:

- Space offences: e.g. bumping into someone, queue jumping,
- Talk offences: e.g. interrupting, talking too much,
- Time offences: e.g. keeping people waiting, taking too long,
- Possession offences: e.g. damaging or losing someone's property,
- Social gaffes: e.g. burping, coughing, laughing inappropriately,
- Inconvenience offences/inadequate service e.g. giving someone the wrong item (p. 167)

Thus, whenever any of these infractions occur, there is a tendency for a complaint being made. As a result, complaints are usually directed at the hearer who is either totally or partially held responsible for that unpleasant act with the main aim of provoking them into correcting that act and this could threaten the desired face wants of the addressee, especially if not done appropriately.

1.2 Categories of complaints

The speaker, in expressing his dissatisfaction with an offensive act perpetrated, can either do so directly or indirectly. According to Boxer (1993) and D'Amico-Reisner (1985), complaints can be characterized as direct and indirect, depending on the speaker's intentions.

1.2.1 Direct complaints

Direct complaints are those that are expressed when the speaker directly communicates their displeasure about a previous or an ongoing act that has caused them some discomfort to the hearer to fix it (Monzoni, 2008; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993). A direct complaint thus involves an explicit or implicit accusation and at least one explicit or implicit directive act (Ghaznavi, 2017). This makes a direct complaint face threatening since the hearer is expected to undertake some actions to change the undesirable state of affairs. This way, the speaker impinges on the hearer's negative face want, and, his complaint may not be positively perceived by the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

According to Shaeffer (2018, p. 9), these complaints may take the form of *explicit complaint* (e.g., "You're so mean to me!"), *accusation and warning* (e.g., "If you do that again, I will lower your course grade"), or *immediate threat* (e.g., "Don't touch my food or you'll be sorry"). Direct complaints therefore usually produce a feeling of embarrassment, humiliation, chagrin, or defensiveness in the hearer who ironically, is also expected to repair the harm done to the speaker. This conflictive nature of complaints may rather negatively impact the social goal of maintaining comity between interactants (Leech, 1983). This is succinctly captured in Place (1981) that "*the act of moral censure or blame is an act of social rejection; an act whereby the accuser breaks ties of affection, mutual support and co-operation*" (p. 28).

1.2.2 Indirect complaints

An indirect complaint is also known as 'gripping' (Allami, 2006) or 'trouble-telling' (Jefferson, 1988). It refers to the expression of discontentment with oneself or someone/something that is not present (Gass & Neu, 1995; Sauer, 2000). Boxer (1993) explains that an indirect complaint is commonly related to self, situation, and others. In a self-complaint, speakers express dissatisfaction with themselves, their ability, actions, or physical appearance. In a situation-induced complaint, speakers register their displeasure about general problems such as time,

food, weather, and crime. And, in other-complaint, which is commonly referred to as third-party complaint, speakers express their discontent about another person(s) who is/are not present (Traverso, 2008). Consider the utterance in (1):

Example (1):
"I am tired of mum's nagging."

Here, we observe that even though the speaker expresses her negative feeling (*I am tired*) on a "complainable matter" (mum's nagging), the addressee in this case is neither adjudged responsible nor capable of remedying the perceived offence. Therefore, in contrast to direct complaints, indirect complaints are not deemed as prototypical face threatening acts (FTA). Rather, they provide an avenue for expressing negative feelings, while establishing rapport and solidarity with the addressee, without provoking actions to redress any form of grievances (Drew, 1998; Traverso, 2008) as illustrated in (2).

Example (2):
Complaint by two students about the quantity of food served at the dining hall
A: "I hardly get satisfied with the food served at the dining hall!"
B: "Oh, yesterday was the worst!"

Indirect complaints create the opportunity for further interaction between the interactants who, based on their shared beliefs, freely engage in a number of considerate responses by way of building rapport and strengthening relationships (Tatsuki, 2000). Trosborg (1995), for instance, observed that NSs of English preferred indirect complaints as a positive strategy for establishing points of commonality and solidarity with their interlocutors while Ukrainians preferred explicit strategies of making complaints (Prykarpatska, 2008). Also, Olshtain and Weibach (1993) in their study of complaints produced by Russian and Moroccan immigrants who had been in Israel for at least two years, revealed that Russians tended to be more direct in their production of complaints than the Moroccans. In the academic setting, students are likely to express their displeasure or annoyance directly so as to seek from their interlocutors, an immediate redress of the perceived wrongful or unfavourable act. This study therefore focuses on investigating direct complaints as produced by learners at the secondary level of education.

Research suggests that there is a universal pragmatic knowledge base made available to both L2 learners and native speakers (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). The appropriateness of an utterance and its interpretation requires the use of this knowledge base. A complaint is complex and can easily engender communication breakdown if not expressed appropriately. Its complex nature has made it more difficult for non-native speakers to learn and successfully use it in English the setting and participants impact one's choice of expression. In relation to this, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006) observe that "*the choice of how to say something may depend on who is talking to whom and under what social circumstances*" (p. 93). Unfortunately, learners are unable to effectively draw from this knowledge base, resulting in a deviation from native-like competence (Blum-Kulka, 1991; Tanck, 2002). This is attributed to factors such as (1) their

restricted L2 linguistic knowledge, (2) their lack of L2 pragmalinguistic knowledge, together with the negative transfer of socio-pragmatic norms from L1, (3) and their unwavering loyalty to L1 cultural patterns (Kasper, 1992). These can make it difficult for even learners with high L2 proficiency to fully draw from, or utilise, the available pragmatic knowledge base in complaining appropriately.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that in Ghanaian English, this difficulty in mastering the speech act of complaint is further heightened by the way learners are taught. For instance, most, if not all teachers of English at the senior high school, focus on ensuring that students acquire the right grammatical competence to the detriment of the other components of communicative competence, especially sociolinguistic competence (Borti, 2015). Since teachers do not give any instruction in pragmatics, students are unable to develop an appreciable level of pragmatic competence to appropriately express their grievances in English when the need arises. As such, they are likely to employ less variation in complaining to their peers while they rarely openly express their displeasure towards the elderly for an unacceptable act.

In addition, their Ghanaian languages are likely to influence their complaint realization patterns due to their close interaction with English, both in school and at home, where there may be a transfer of some complaining strategies into English. With this, the complaints that are produced may have some characteristic features that can be described as Ghanaian (Anderson, 2009) which can be understood by only speakers of English in Ghana. For example, in many Ghanaian languages, one way of expressing one's displeasure with someone who keeps borrowing could be by saying, *you are not the only one with the poverty pot sitting in your house* or *won't you let me land*. An addressee who is not a speaker of Ghanaian English may find it very difficult to interpret this as a complaint. Unfortunately, very little is known about this pragmatic act in Ghanaian English. It is against this backdrop that this study explores the production of complaints in English by Ghanaian students at three public SHSs in Ghana. The main aim is to reveal some specific linguistic features of the complaints as well as the level of influence of the Ghanaian culture on the realization of the complaint speech act within varied contexts. To achieve this, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

a) What are the strategies employed by students in the act of making complaints in Ghanaian English?
b) What pragmatic features from Ghanaian languages do students transfer in their production of complaints in English?

The next section discusses the theoretical framework adopted for the study, followed by a discussion of the methodological procedure. The fourth section presents the results of the study, while the fifth section concludes the paper.

2 Theoretical framework: Politeness theory

The concept of politeness has gained a lot of attention in the literature and has led to the formulation of a number of theories aimed at explaining it and how it operates. One of such approaches was proposed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in 1978 and 1987 and forms the theoretical underpinning of this study. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), each person is endowed with 'rationality and face' which work simultaneously to achieve the

communicative goals in any speech event. Rationality is considered as a clearly defined mode of reasoning which guarantees inferences from ends or goals to means that will achieve those ends. The notion of 'face', which is at the heart of this politeness theory, is based on the ideas of face as posited by Goffman, who defines it as "*the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume s/he has taken during a particular contact*" (Goffman, 1967, p. 5).

Brown and Levinson (1987), in relating face to politeness, describe face as the public self-image that all rational adult members have when engaged in spoken interaction. They further explain that in any given communicative event, everyone has two specific faces that must be constantly adhered to; positive face and negative face. Positive face is "*the want of every member that, his /her wants be desirable to at least some others*" (p. 62). Negative face, on the other hand, is "*the want of every competent adult member that his /her actions be unimpeded by others' constitutes a person's negative face*" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 62). In essence, one's positive face is largely based on the desire to have one's values and wants acknowledged and approved to enable them to stay connected to others, while the negative face is simply, the desire of every partaker of any social interaction to be allowed to act freely without imposition from their interlocutors. Brown and Levinson built their theory of politeness on the assumption that face, though an emotionally invested thing, can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and so ought to be constantly attended to, in any social interaction. Consequently, most often than not, during social interactions, interlocutors endeavour to redress or minimise any form of offence that may affect a person's face wants by considering the three social variables: the perceived social distance between the hearer and the speaker (D), the perceived power difference between them (P), and the cultural ranking of the speech act (R).

Relative power (P) refers to the authority of the speaker in relation to that of the hearer (equal status, subordinate to superior, or superior to subordinate), which reflects the degree to which the speaker can impose his/her will on the hearer. Therefore, the level of face threat will increase if the addressee wields more power than the speaker and consequently, more reparation will be needed to balance the threat in such a situation.

Agyekum (2004) observes that speakers of a higher status or power speak freely without necessarily paying attention to the face wants of their addressees but speak with utmost caution when the opposite occurs. Social Distance (D) is the degree of familiarity and solidarity that exist between the interactants. A speaker is more likely to choose polite expressions when engaging in an interaction with the hearer when the social distance between them is wide. For instance, Yule (1996) notes that speakers of lower status in English-speaking contexts tend to mark social distance between themselves and higher status addressees by using address forms that include a title and a last name (e.g. Mr. Adams) but not the first name so as not to be deemed impolite by the hearer. Absolute ranking (R) of imposition shows the right of the speaker that allows him to perform the speech act in one's culture and the degree to which the hearer welcomes the imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 74). Therefore, the higher the risk of imposition, the higher the degree of politeness necessary for communicating.

2.1 Complaint as a face threatening act

There are times when the face that a person earnestly seeks to uphold is challenged, or undermined. This is due to the fact that many speech acts are intrinsically face threatening and

as such may not support the face wants of either the speaker or the addressee. Watts (2003) regards a face-threatening act as any act that undermines the desirable view of a person by others. So, if a speaker in the cause of an interaction says something that represents a threat to the addressee's public self-image, it is described as a face threatening act (FTA) (Yule, 1996).

In Trosborg's (1995) view, complaints are inherently non-polite, hence considered as threatening the face of the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Complaints threaten the addressee's positive face and want of being respected and appreciated when the speaker holds the hearer responsible for an unsatisfactory act. Besides, by implicitly requesting a redress of the addressee's unacceptable behaviour, the addressee's negative face wants to act freely without any form of imposition from others is also threatened. Consider the utterance in (3).

> **Example (3):**
> A student openly complains to his teacher in class:
> Student: "Sir, your method of teaching always makes it impossible for me to understand anything you teach in class."

The student, per his utterance in (3), is not only expressing his displeasure, but also requesting the teacher to change his method of teaching which seems to be the reason for his non-comprehension of the lesson. In this case, the teacher's positive face (the need for recognition and appreciation of the self-image) and negative face (the need for freedom of action and freedom from imposition) are threatened. As a result, the student is obviously considered very rude in this case since he did not take the teacher's face into consideration while making his complaint.

2.2 Complaint face saving strategies

Interlocutors demand utmost respect or tolerance from each other as they interact and so even if one feels offended at a point, they are expected to express their displeasure politely as much as possible in order to reduce, if not completely, avoid embarrassing the hearer. Unfortunately, a face threatening act like a complaint inherently damages the face of the addressee who acts in opposition to the wants and desires of the other. It is imperative then, that, the speaker presents his grievance in the most appropriate manner, so as to mitigate the severity of the complaint as a way of saving the face of the offender. As Brown and Levinson cleverly state, normally everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others' faces, it is in general, in every participant's best interest to maintain each other's face. (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61)

Guided by this assertion, Brown and Levinson outline some polite strategies (opt out, bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness) considered by interactants in performing such face threatening acts as complaints.

2.2.1 Opting out strategy

A speaker may *opt out* by completely refraining from expressing the FTA as a way of avoiding the consequent effect of potentially damaging the face of the hearer. According to Olshtain and

Weibach (1993), in a 'complainable' situation, the speaker usually opts for this strategy in situations where voicing out one's frustration could induce a confrontation between the interactants instead of ensuring a redress of the grievous act, thereby severing the social relationship between them. On the other hand, when the speaker decides to perform an FTA, he can do so either by going off-record or on-record.

2.2.2 Off-record strategy

The speaker, in choosing an off-record strategy, uses linguistic realizations such as irony, rhetorical questions, and all sorts of hints to express what he wants to communicate. A speaker who chooses this strategy expresses his dissatisfaction without directly mentioning either the unacceptable act or the offender (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993). The hearer in this case is expected to infer the true meaning of what is said based on the situational context. Consider, for instance, the situation where a family decides to while away time by driving through town and their driver decides to speed up unnecessarily on the road, the speaker might say something like, 'we're not in a hurry to get back home'. No real face damage is committed in this case since there was no direct mention of the offender or the offence, yet the offender will, most probably, reduce the speed at which he is driving and thus resolve the concerns of the speaker. In using the off-record strategy, therefore, more is communicated than said as a way of saving the face of the hearer.

2.2.3 On-record strategy

In contrast to the off-record strategy, the speaker may directly and unambiguously express his intentions by going on-record. The speaker, in performing an on-record FTA, chooses from any of these three sub-strategies: i) *bald-on record (non-redress)*, ii) *positive politeness (redressive action)*, and iii) *negative politeness (redressive action)* depending on what he seeks to achieve. Bald-on-record, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), is chosen whenever the speaker wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy the hearer's face. This strategy is therefore considered the least polite of the FTA strategies. For instance, a speaker who feels offended may choose to express his frustration as much as possible in the most direct, explicit form, without any mitigation. S/he could even go to the extent of using insults and threats to achieve their aim of expressing their displeasure about an unacceptable act (Olshtain & Weibach, 1993). However, Brown and Levinson claim that an FTA is usually done this way only if the speaker does not fear retribution from the hearer or the speaker is superior in power to his addressee and thus, can verbally control the addressee's behaviour. For example, in an office situation where the boss tells his subordinate at a meeting, *You always drag our meetings with your unnecessary interruptions*. The boss in this case, without mincing words, directly expresses his displeasure towards his subordinate without any attempt to save the face wants of that worker. This strategy is also used in urgent or desperate situations where explicit or unambiguous instructions must be given, such as "hold still!" when efficiency is necessary, as in, "pay attention"; and in task-oriented situations, such as, "hand over the key".

2.2.4 Positive politeness

The positive politeness strategy is more oriented towards saving the positive face want of the hearer by treating him as one whose wants and personality traits are known and accepted. In performing the speech act of complaint at this level, the speaker still explicitly airs their displeasure but with some expression of mutual concern and understanding so as to maintain the face of their addressee. This strategy, unlike the bald-on record, will not necessarily lead to real conflict and the face damage will be relatively minimized since the complainant appeals to a common goal, and even friendship, via the use of expressions of solidarity, informality, and familiarity. For instance, if a father tells his son, *You parked the car by the roadside again*, and there is an understanding between them that *he should park the car at the garage*, such a complaint will not greatly damage the relationship between the two.

2.2.5 Negative politeness

Negative politeness, on the other hand, is used by the speaker to reduce the threat to the hearer's desire to maintain freedom of action and personal space. As such, a complaint in this regard might take the form of mitigation through the use of a conventional request for repair, where applicable, or a less direct statement relating to the socially unacceptable act or other softening mechanisms that give the addressee a face-saving line of escape, permitting them to feel that their response is not coerced (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thus, in the example of the overspeeding driver, the speaker might say *Excuse me, sir. Could you slow down a bit* or in the case of the boss and his subordinate at the meeting, the boss could say *I was really hoping to end our meeting early today*. By negative politeness, therefore, the speaker tries to keep the hearer's negative face by valuing their personal territory through the use of expressions of formality, distancing, and restraint. Brown and Levinson assert that these politeness strategies provide an effective approach to communicating one's intentions without causing a break in communication which could eventually sever the relationship between the interlocutors. Thus, politeness according to them, is a redressive action for amending the effect of FTAs in all cultures and languages.

2.3 The directive acts of complaint

Whenever complaints are produced, three directive acts: request for repair, threats and request for forbearance may be implied (Trosborg, 1995, pp. 320-322). These are discussed as follows:

2.3.1 Request for repair

At the core of every complaint is the request for repair. A complainant complains with the obvious intentions of not only calling an end to a morally unacceptable act, but even more importantly, anticipates some form of compensation to remedy the harm that has been done by the hearer. Consider an example given by Trosborg (1995) of a passenger to a fellow passenger smoking in a non-smoking compartment in a train: '*This is a non-smoker*'. The speaker in this case is not only voicing out his displeasure but also implying that the passenger ought to stop smoking.

2.3.2 Threat

In this act, the complainant, by seeking a redress of the unsatisfactory act, may threaten the hearer. The speaker in this case usually uses swear words to provoke a form of remedy from the hearer. Consider (4), a situation in which a cassette was stolen from a shop:

> **Example (4):**
> Speaker: *"Now, give me back what you have stolen, or I shall have to call the police."* (Trosborg, 1994, p. 321)

The speaker here resorts to the threat '*I shall have to call the police'* to cause the hearer who is being held responsible for the offence of stealing to return the missing item.

2.3.3 Request for forbearance

In performing this directive act, the complainant asks the hearer to take the required steps to prevent or reduce the risk of repeating the offensive act in future such as in Example (5):

> **Example (5):**
> *"Well, I'd like to find out about this because I'm hoping it won't happen again."*

Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) recommend that in such instances where the damage done could be repaired by the hearer, the speaker needs to consider the most effective approach for such a remedy to occur since a straightforward reproach may not always ensure the repair process. There is therefore the need for an individual to take sociocultural variables like social distance, gender, and social power into consideration in order to employ appropriate and effective strategies for complaining. This is because the influence of these variables may differ from one culture to another, and are relevant factors for a person's intercultural communication competence (Garcia, 1996).

3. Methodology

This section presents the methodology employed in data collection and analysis. This includes a description of the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, and the instrument of data collection. The chapter further discusses the data collection procedure and data analysis.

3.1 Research approach and design

This study employed the qualitative research approach. A qualitative research is an exploration of the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a social or human phenomenon, opinion, and experience (Creswell, 2009). The current study employed a qualitative approach since it seeks to investigate complaints, a delicate linguistic human behaviour whose successful realization and interpretation is largely based on shared social norms and belief systems and thus difficult to obtain through quantitative methods of data collection. The study utilized a case study design.

According to Creswell (2009, p. 13), a case study is "*a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals*". This is to understand complex issues in their real-life settings. The case study design allows for unravelling a deeper understanding of "how" and "why" students complain in Ghanaian English after being taught in British English at least from Primary 4 to the Secondary level.

3.2 Population and sampling

The population of this study consists of male and female final year students of three senior high schools in the Ashanti Region. These schools were chosen because they admit students from every part of the country and thus give a fair representation of the different ethnic groups and first languages from across the country. A purposive sampling technique, which allows the researcher the luxury of selecting participants who possess the ability to provide the requisite data, was used in choosing final year students as the participants for this study. The sample size for this study comprised 32 (16 females and 16 males) final year students from each of the three schools who have English language as their second language (L2) and 4 teachers who only served as interlocutors to the student participants. The final year students were chosen because they have acquired an appreciable level of mastery over the use of the language having studied and used English as a second language learners (L2) for not less than 14 years.

3.3 Instruments

Considering the objectives of this study, an open role play was utilized to collect data for analysis. Role play as an instrument is used to afford more tightly pre-structured interaction among participants was the role play (Demeter, 2007; Kasper, 2008). Kasper describes role-plays as "*simulations of social interactions*" (Kasper, 2008, p. 288) in which participants enact described roles within stipulated situations. Role plays can be *spontaneous, mimetic-replicating* or *mimetic-pretending* (Kasper, 2008). They can either be open or closed depending on the extent of interaction (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). In open role plays, the interlocutors take multiple turns and discourse sequences as needed in order to maintain and complete an interactional task. This enables researchers to examine the sequential structure of utterances in a full discourse context to reveal particular speech behaviour. Open role plays are effective for examining how context factors influence the selection and realization of communicative acts and how the values of these factors may be changed through conversational negotiation in simulated real-life situations. As Tompkins (1998) notes, open role plays allow researchers to observe generic resources and structures of conversation that are fairly independent of particular contexts and goals, and unlike authentic discourse and elicited conversation, they also permit researchers to design contexts and roles that are likely to elicit specific speech events and communicative acts.

3.4 Data collection

The role play scenarios were based on four complaint-induced situations which were carefully designed not only to be as realistic as possible but even more importantly, to reflect everyday occurrences that are familiar to the participants. This helped to reduce unnecessary anxiety that the participants might feel as a result of an unfamiliar situation which could lead to a

misrepresentation of their true behaviour. Table 3.4 summarizes the four situations used in eliciting data on complaints.

After the character specification was explained to students and their teachers, the participants were grouped in pairs for distinct elicitation sessions. They were then encouraged to negotiate the role (i.e. speaker or addressee) they wanted to act out. Since the participants were asked to complain to a teacher and house master/mistress in scenarios 1 and 4 respectively, six teachers (2 females and 4 males) acted as addressees to the student participants to address the authenticity concerns in those scenarios.

Table 3.4: Situations used in eliciting data on complaints

Situation	Description
1	You have just received your test script but you are surprised how low your grade is. After careful review of your work, you come to the realization that you should have had a better grade than what you have been given. Since this grade would adversely affect your final grade if not rectified, you decide to talk to your teacher about it.
2	You are sharing a room with your friend who never sees the need to take part in cleaning the room, yet is fond of messing up the place. You have tried your best to put up with his/her behaviour for a while but today, after seeing the kind of mess made in the room, you feel you have had enough and need to speak to him/her about it. How would you complain to your friend?
3	You asked your junior to sweep your class after school but you realized the next day that he/she didn't do it. Complain to that junior.
4 Student to teacher (indirect)	You are at the boarding house and noise is strictly prohibited after night prayers. However, your colleagues in your dormitory have blatantly ignored this all-important rule. As a result, you hardly get enough sleep and this is gradually taking a toll on your academics. How would you present your complaint to your housemaster/ housemistress?

With their permission, the role-plays were recorded using a digital video recorder. In order to minimize the effect of the observer's paradox, each participant performed more than once, with the first performance serving as an icebreaker before the main recording. An average of 40 minutes was spent on each complaint situation.

3.5 Data analysis

The data recorded from the role-play were played back for an orthographic transcription of the relevant aspects (i.e. speakers' complaint production utterances). The transcripts were then coded, grouped into themes and interpreted in accordance with the research questions. All strategies were identified and classified and segmented into their semantic components based on the framework developed by Trenchs Parera (1994). Since not all semantic components occurring in the data fit into this framework, slight modifications were made to suit the complaint culture of the Ghanaian. Thus, strategies such as interrogation, opening statement and remedy were incorporated into that of Trenchs Parera's categories of semantic formulae. Each semantic component was then counted based on the number of occurrences and distribution across the four situations. Any semantic component produced more than once in the same complaint sequence was counted only once.

4. Results and discussion

The analysis revealed that a variety of pragmatic strategies were used by the participants in expressing their displeasure towards an unacceptable behaviour. These strategies are the opener, opening statement, justification, act statement, and remedy. The rest are interrogation, valuation, preaching, insults, formulaic adjunct, and closing. In addition, the analysis showed that the use of openers, the use of politeness markers, and the expression of gratitude were the pragmatic features transferred from the Ghanaian culture into the production of complaints. The results are discussed as follows:

4.1 Strategies used in the production of complaints
In all, 384 complaints were produced in the four compliant-provoking situations. Out of these, 256 representing 66.67% of complaint utterances were produced by females while 128 representing 33.33% were uttered by male complainants. It is important to note that not all complaint sequences had all these semantic formulae. However, a participant could use more than one strategy in a particular situation. In general, male and female students showed very similar tendencies in the use of semantic formulae across the four situations.

Table 4.1 presents these formulae:

Table 4.1: Occurrence of the semantic components across the 4 complaint situations

Semantic formulae	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Opener	365	18.22
Remedy	342	17.07
Act statement	318	15.87
Justification	221	11.03
Formulaic Adjunct	201	10.03
Interrogation	162	8.08
Opening statement	160	7.98
Valuation	84	4.19
Preaching	72	3.59
Closing	66	3.29
Insulting	13	0.65
Total	**2004**	**100**

Table 4.1 shows that there were more openers used compared to the other formulae. These are followed by act statements and remedies. The least produced formulae were preachers, closers, and insults. In the literature on complaints (e.g. Trosborg, 1995), the act statement and remedy constitute the main components of a complaint. The act statement thus expresses the speaker's displeasure, or annoyance while through remedy utterances, the speaker draws the addressee's attention to their responsibility to amend the offensive act. Moreover, considering how complaints can threaten both the positive and negative face of the addressee, De Leon and Parina (2016) claim that openers are used by complainants to soften or make their complaints more polite. Hence, the reason for the three components: opener, act statement and remedy recorded the highest frequencies in the data. These strategies are discussed in this section:

4.1.1 Opener

The opener was used by virtually all the complainants to get the attention of their addressees and also as a way of opening the conversation rather than immediately mentioning the offence. It constituted the strategy with the highest frequency. In all, only 6 females and 13 males did not use an opener in their complaints. The types of openers identified from the data are the name of the addressee, attention-getter, addressing, greeting, or a combination of any two or more of the openers. Example (6) represents the use of names of addresses in complaints:

Example (6):
a. *"Adriana*, you've been messing up the room all the time and I haven't been complaining."
b. *"Kombat*, who do you think you are?"
c. *"Linda*, I have a conversation with you."
d. *"Esther*, see, the way you live with me, I don't like."
e. *"Mike*, you always provoke me to talk but I have been quiet every day."

In (6), we observe that the complainants are so frustrated by the addressees' behaviour that they do not mince words. They begin by explicitly mentioning their names to let them know that there is no desire to protect their face. The speakers' complaints sound accusing and threatening and hence, the positive face of the addressee in this case is not adhered to. This is in sharp contrast to Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim that the use of names as openers in FTAs is one of the positive politeness strategies aimed at establishing a common ground of solidarity as the complaint becomes more direct and bolder, increasing the severity of its effect and damaging the positive face of the addressee.

We observe from the analysis that almost all the participants used the combination of different openers as the first component of some of their complaint sequences. The combination of openers was usually expressed with the structure:
a) formulaic adjunct + addressing + greeting,
b) attention-getter + name of the addressee,
c) addressing + formulaic adjunct + greeting, or
d) formulaic adjunct + addressing.
This is illustrated in Example (7):

Example (7):
a. *"Sir, please good morning*. I am here because I got an unfair grade in the essay test you marked."
b. *"Hey Nancy*, where do you think you are going?"
c. "Madam please good afternoon, there is something going on at the dormitory which I'm not really happy about it."
d. "Please madam, there is a complaint I want to draw your attention to, it has been happening at the dormitory."
e. "Hey you Prince, I've been watching you for a while now."

When complaints are produced by especially someone of a lower status, a lot of care is taken in order not to further heighten the situation. In (7a), for instance, the student complaints to his teacher about how he has been unfairly graded in class work. Even though the teacher is at fault, the student is careful not to compromise the face want of the teacher. He therefore chooses an opener *Sir, please good morning* to set the right tone of upholding the positive face of the addressee in gaining the attention of the teacher who, as a result, may out of empathy, be willing to make reparation for the damage done. This strategy is an indication of politeness or respect in Ghanaian English (Anderson, 2009) as the first step in his complaint production. The speaker in (5b) uses the attention-getter *hey* and follows it with the addressee's first name *Nancy* to gain her attention. This combination used shows the level of familiarity or friendship that exists between the interlocutors. The use of *hey* in addressing someone is considered derogatory in Ghanaian culture. Therefore, the combination shows even more importantly, the level of anger of the speaker who shows no recognition of the roommate's personality and thus is not afraid to address her directly concerning her despicable behaviour in the room. This shows disregard of the positive face wants of the addressee.

The use of openers in a conversation is an important discourse feature in Ghanaian English. This is because, in the Ghanaian culture, openers are used in recognition of the addressee's status, age and power. Hence, a speaker who uses an opener as a pre-sequence in any social interaction is considered communicatively competent and aware of the social contract view of politeness. It is therefore not surprising that even in expressing one's displeasure of a socially unacceptable act, speakers preceded their complaints with an opener which presents them as well-cultured.

4.1.2 Act statement

Act statement was another component that was frequently used in complaint sequences. These were utterances used by the complainant in explicitly stating their grievances toward an unacceptable behaviour.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), explicit complaints constitute bald-on record politeness. The complainant usually uses this strategy when they want to express their displeasure with maximum efficiency, without bothering to take care of addressees' face wants. The highest frequency of use of this strategy was recorded in the two situations of *unfair grade* and the *noisy housemate* while the lowest frequency of use was produced in the situation of a *disobedient junior*. The following examples are examples of act statements used:

> **Example (8):**
> a. "Please, the exercise you marked for me yesterday, you didn't give the correct score."
> b. "Sir, *there are some people at the dormitory that always make noise to disturb those of us who want to take our rest during lights out.*"
> c. "I told you to sweep and you have the guts not to do it."
> d. "You keep embarrassing me in this room before my friends with your dirtiness."
> e. "As your senior, I asked you to pick the rubbish and you didn't do it."

All the examples in (8) point to the fact that the complainants had no problem in explicitly stating what they perceived to be wrong irrespective of who their interlocutors were. However, the complaints were either hedged or expressed baldly depending on the intentions of the complainant. For instance, in (8a), the complainant complained to the teacher about an error in the grade given to him. Even though the complainant used the bald-on record strategy by directly and explicitly stating the problem, he clearly had no intentions of being rude or ignoring the face of the teacher. On the contrary, as a way of acknowledging the positive face of the hearer, the complainant preceded the complaint with the politeness marker 'please' so as to minimize the level of imposition, being mindful of the power and status of the teacher. This was stated directly because he knew that he needed to clearly identify the problem to elicit the right response or action from the teacher - to give him the desired marks, and thus, applied the direct form of strategy to avoid any ambiguity.

On the other hand, in (8c), the complainant registered his displeasure to a junior who had disobeyed him. The complainant saw the addressee's refusal to comply with his directives as an open defiance of his authority and that provoked him to perform the complaint efficiently and directly rather than minimizing the threat to the addressee's face. The complainant forcefully registered his displeasure by using words like *guts* to show how disgusting the addressee's behaviour was to him. It also showed his unpreparedness to tolerate any such act in future, but to demand full compliance of what was expected of the addressee.

4.1.3 Justification

Another strategy used by speakers was justification and this functioned as supportive moves of the central act of complaint. These utterances were used by speakers to either substantiate their complaints or give a reason for the addressee having committed that complainable. Two types of justification were found: justification of the speaker and justification of the addressee, are consistent with the categories in Trench-Parera's study. Of these types, 216 utterances representing 97.74% were identified as justification of the speaker while 5 utterances representing 5.21% were identified as justification of the addressee, found in the unfair grade complaint. According to Brown and Levinson, justifications constitute positive politeness. Some utterances representing justification are seen in (9):

Example (9):
a. "Maybe you were tired when marking mine or you weren't able to read the work because of my handwriting."
b. "Sir, I don't know if you gave the script to someone to mark because I know you won't do that."
c. "I was expecting more than this because *I answered it using the method you gave us and the answer was the same to that of the brilliant students in class.*"
d. "Since you came into this room, I've been the one doing everything, sweeping and scrubbing for the past three years."
e. "The question 3 was marked wrong but *I just referred to the notes you gave us, that was exactly what I wrote but I'm marked down.*"

Example (9a) was produced by a female complainant in the situation of an unfair grade. Here, the complainant tries to give reasons why the teacher gave her that unacceptable grade as a way of mitigating the severity of the complaint on the addressee's face. She did not want to portray the teacher as incompetent because of the error found in her grade, resulting in a disregard for his positive face. Consequently, she consciously shifted the blame to the overexertion of the teacher in his marking which resulted in his tiredness and the illegibility of her handwriting. The use of justification in this sense is thus a positive strategy in acknowledging the positive face of the addressee.

It is however observed that speakers mostly used justification to aggravate the complaints made, as can be seen in example (9d). Here, the complainant, in her quest to give reasons why her complaint was valid, used an utterance that in the end portrayed the addressee as being lazy and inconsiderate. The complainant claimed that even though for the past three years she has not been happy, she has been tolerant in order to maintain the cordial relationship that exists between them while hoping that, the addressee would change her attitude. However, since the complainant was not seeing any transformation in the addressee's behaviour, she felt compelled to point out her mistakes without being mindful of how her addressee would feel, thereby intensifying the severity of the effect of the complaint on the addressee's negative face.

4.1.4 Remedy

A total of 342 remedy utterances representing 17.07% were produced by all participants across the four situations. This placed remedy as the second most frequently used strategy. The participants' high frequency of the use of remedy is consistent with claims that complaints are inherently face threatening because they seek a redress of the offensive act committed (e.g. Trosborg, 1995). They are made not only to express one's emotional stance on a socially unacceptable act but even more importantly, require of the addressee, a change in behaviour to correct the wrong done. The forms of remedy used are request, threat, warning, command, and suggestion.

The request is a subtle way of making a demand without offending the sensibility of the addressee, hence considered as a negative politeness strategy. The negative politeness strategy allows the speaker to maintain the addressee's negative face by acknowledging the addressee's face want and yet imposing on the person (Totimeh & Bosiwah, 2015). The analysis revealed that requests were the most frequently used form of remedy in the situation of unfair grades and noisy housemates. Example (10) illustrates how requests were made by the complainants:

Example (10):
a. "So please sir, *I want you to go and punish him or talk to him for me and make him stop the noise making.*"
b. "So please, *re-mark my assignment for me*."
c. "Please remark my work."
d. "Please madam, *I will like you to talk to her on my behalf for her to stop disturbing us*."
e. "Sir, please, *change them from our room*."

Examples (10a & b) express some requests made by two complainants in the situations of noisy housemates and unfair grades respectively. The complainants followed their complaints with a request for remedy from their addressees. The use of 'want' in (10a) and the imperative statement in (10b) make their requests rather direct and face threatening. As a result, the requests can be described as a tacit way of giving commands to the addressees to have the problem solved in the complainants' own way. In an attempt to mitigate the level of imposition of the request to addressee's negative face therefore, the complainants used the politeness marker prior to requesting a repair. Other uses of request in the complaints were a call on addressees to change their behaviour, put an end to that offence or avoid a repetition of the offence and implore addressees to intervene in the situation.

Threats were utterances that communicated an action the speaker might take, as a result of the addressee's negative reaction to their request for remedy. They constituted the second most frequently used form of remedy by the complainants and were used only in situations of the dirty roommate and the disobedient junior. However, their frequency of use in these two situations was different; males used more threats in both situations than females. Example (11) constitutes a list of utterances that show how complainants threatened their addressees:

Example (11):
a. "Take it from me today, next time you repeat, *you will see the animal side of me*."
b. "Better go and do it now *or I will go and report you to the senior house mistress*."
c. "Please you must stop this thing *or else you going to see the bad side of me.*"
d. "Hurry up and go and do the work, *otherwise, I'll go and report you to the house master.*"
e. "Next time try it again and you will see who is who."

Example (11d) is a threat issued out to a disobedient junior. The threat was a warning to the addressee that the complainant was capable of going to every extent, including involving people of higher authority like the *house master* to ensure that his instructions were carried out to the latter. Hence, the complainant used the bald-on record strategy in expressing his unpreparedness to leave any stone unturned to see to it that his desires are met and so the addressee should not take him for granted. Some threats were also used to to physically harm the addressee as in Example (12):

Example (12):
a. "Today, *I will punish you mercilessly*."
b. "If you joke, *I'll beat you and send you to the senior house master*."
c. "Herr! You are doomed, if you don't erh, the way *I will beat you mercilessly.*"

Punishments are supposed to be corrective and not necessarily cause damage or harm but in some cases, the extent of provocation could cause the person meting out the punishment to go overboard if the warnings are not heeded, as illustrated in (12a). Such utterances show extreme provocation. Verbal threats as seen in the examples violate the addressee's negative face want and thus constitute negative impoliteness, as they force the addressee to act contrary to their will.

Warning was also used by some of the speakers in cautioning addressees against repeating the offence in future. These utterances were used only in situations of the dirty roommate and the disobedient junior. Example (13) illustrates this:

Example (13):
a. "This should be your first and last!"
b. "Don't repeat what you have done again!"
c. "Let this be the last time you will ever refuse to do my punishment!"
d. "If you know you can't sweep this room after the mess up then it's better for you to leave."
e. "Chelsea, be very careful!"

Example (13a) is a complaint addressed to a disobedient junior by a male complainant. The complainant is annoyed that the addressee refused to do his assigned work without any tangible reason. The complainant therefore vehemently registers his disapproval of the addressee's behaviour with an admonishing that a repeat of that unruly behaviour would have dire consequences. Just like in (13a), the complainant in (13d) is not prepared to accept the roommate who seems to be fond of messing up the place all the time yet shuns cleaning the room. These utterances show that the complainant does not care about the face wants of the addressee and thus uses the bald-on record politeness strategy as an indication that he has run out of patience and so sends a strong word of caution to let her roommate know the intended outcome of such behaviour.

4.1.5 Formulaic adjunct

According to Trench (1994), a formulaic adjunct is used as an indication of politeness. Participants used a lot of formulaic adjuncts in their quest to appear courteous and tone down the aggressiveness of their complaints. As a result, this marker usually preceded an address term, act statement or request as a way of marking politeness. A total of 201 utterances representing 10.03% of the complaint utterances produced are found in this category. The highest frequency of its use was recorded in the situation of the noisy roommate. This use might be because the addressee (teacher) in this situation could not be held directly responsible for the offensive act, and so the complainants used of a lot of this politeness marker to mitigate the severity of the intended speech. It was also observed that the females used more of this courtesy marker throughout the four situations than the males who did not even bother using this strategy at all. The politeness marker *please* creates a more congenial environment for a person to be heard so once the person begins with that, the addressee becomes more receptive. Being mindful of this, the complainants used this courtesy marker to make the addressee prepared to hear what he or she had to say. Example (14) illustrates this:

Example (14):
a. "Sir, *please* the assignment you gave us, none of mine was wrong but you just wrong me."
b. "*Please* stop this behaviour of yours."
c. "*Please* next time I see it again, I will park your things out of this room."
d. "*Please* sir, per the marks that I got I think I deserve more marks than what you have given me."
e. "*Please* check if there is a mistake."

In (14a), the student, though eager to unambiguously state his complaint to the teacher, cautiously chooses his words to ensure that he does not infringe on the addressee's positive face wants. He therefore precedes the act statement with the polite marker *please* to mitigate the effect of the complaints on the addressee's face even though the teacher is in the wrong. Also, to maintain the close relationship between the speaker and her roommate, the complainant uses the formulaic adjunct as a politeness marker to reduce the negative effect of her request as in (14b). The use of *please* is an indication that the complainant paid attention to the positive face want of the addressee.

4.1.6 Opening statement
An opener was usually followed by an opening statement in some of the complaints produced by the students. This strategy was, however, not found in Trench's categories of semantic formulae. Opening statements are utterances used by the participants solely to prepare the minds of their addressees before stating their displeasure. In all, there were 160 utterances representing 7.98% of all complaint utterances produced identified as opening statements. Out of this, females produced 44.92% while males 35.17%. The participants used opening statements to perform three main functions:

- to introduce themselves to their addressees by giving their names and/or some information about themselves such as in Example (15).

Example (15):
a. "*My name is Frank and I am a member of Assenso house* and I'm here to lodge a complaint."
b. "Please sir good morning. *Please I'm Alex.*"
c. "Please sir, good evening. *It's me Bismarck.*"
d. "Sir, *I'm Emma.*"
e. "Good afternoon, madam. Please *I am in Savino Room 3 and I sleep on the down bed.*"

Example (15a) is an example of a complaint made to a housemaster about a noisy roommate. The speaker, in realizing the number of students in the school, saw the need to introduce himself by mentioning his name and house of residence for identification purposes before even stating his complaint. Also, the mention of the name of the house of residence *Asenso* suggests that the teacher must be well aware of the notoriety of noise making associated with that particular house and would therefore not downplay his complaint. In (15e), the complainant goes a step further to indicate his sleeping place in the hall *the down bed* which makes him more

susceptible and exposed to all the vices associated with the noise making. The complainants in both instances used the opening statement to prepare the teacher's mind to be receptive to their complaints which articulate the severity of the offence.

- to precede complaints to show apology as shown in (16).

Example (16):
a. "Sir please good afternoon. Sir, *I'm very sorry to disturb you*."
b. "Please madam, *sorry to disturb you this time of the day*."

The apology in (16) was an acknowledgement of the fact that they were invading the privacy of the addressees (teachers), who at the time had the right to either grant them a hearing or ignore them. That statement was thus made not only to get the attention of the teacher but also as a request for the teacher to grant the speaker an audience. Therefore, by apologising before stating his complaint, the complainant showed his reluctance to impinge on the addressee's negative face. According to Murphy and Neu (1996), this form of an opening statement is considered a politeness marker as it minimizes the negative effect of the speaker's imposition on the addressee's negative face.

- to reveal the speaker's intention of initiating a complaint on an issue that bothered him/her without necessarily stating the problem.

Most of the opening statements found in the data functioned in this regard. The examples in (17) are evidence of such:

Example (17):
a. "Please madam good afternoon. *Please, I want to complain about the work you gave us the last time*."
b. "Hey Jacob, *I have to tell you something*."
c. "Please *I want to have a word with you if you don't mind.*"
d. "Madam please *I have something to tell you.*"
e. "erm please *I have a problem with the results of the test.*"

Example (17a) is a complaint produced by a female student regarding an unfair grade. Here, the student only gave a hint to the teacher that she was about to pass a negative comment on an issue known to both of them without disclosing the true problem. The speaker uses the off-record politeness strategy at this point by giving a hint. The complainant avoided stating immediately his complaint because, he acknowledged the fact that, the teacher had the power to award or deny him of the needed mark. With this in mind, he needed to be very polite and tactful in his complaint to gain the attention and sympathy of the teacher which could not have been achieved by just being confrontational.

Example (17b) presents a different scenario: here, we observe that even though the complainant used an opening statement in complaining to his dirty and lazy roommate, the aim for doing so was quite different. The complainant preceded his utterance with an opening statement as a way of engaging the attention of his colleague for him to listen to what he had to say since he could have easily ignored him or brushed him aside. Therefore, by saying '*I have*

something to discuss with you' the complainant kept the addressee in suspense and made him curious to know what was next. The complainant at this point went off-record by being intentionally vague to gain the attention of the addressee. Generally, females used significantly, more opening statements than males. It was frequently used by both genders in situations in which the complainant was of a higher status than the addressee.

4.1.7 Valuation

Some valuation utterances were also produced by the complainants. These are utterances that expressed the complainant's emotional state concerning either the addressee or the problem. Thus, the complainant, by using this strategy, poured out their grievances to show their disapproval of the unacceptable act, in a way which would appeal to the emotions of the addressee. It does not elicit a response; rather, the complainant expects the addressee to amend his or her behaviour with those kinds of admonishing or promptings. A total of 84 utterances representing 4.19% were produced as valuation in the data. The highest frequency of valuation was recorded by 30 females, representing 46.88% in the situation of the dirty roommate, while the least was recorded by a single male in the situation of an unfair grade. Both genders did not use a lot of valuations in their complaints in the situation of a disobedient junior. Examples of such utterances include those in (18).

> **Example (18):**
> a. *"I have had enough of this; I can't tolerate this anymore!"*
> b. *"Sir, it's not fair oo!"*
> c. *"I am tired of doing all the house chores alone!"*
> d. *"What I want to say is that, I dislike your behaviour!"*
> e. *"Madam, I really know is good to pray and sing but what my colleagues are doing is unbearable!"*

In (18b), the speaker does not only voice out his complaint about an unfair grade but also expresses his total disappointment at the teacher's unpardonable behaviour because he is convinced that, the teacher is entirely to blame for the kind of marks recorded. The speaker at this stage uses the bald-on record strategy to achieve the desired effect of appealing to the conscience of the teacher. Similarly, in (18d), the complainant strongly registers her frustrations and unwillingness to keep a blind eye on her roommate's irresponsible behaviour. Her utterance clearly indicates that she is fed up with the roommate's attitude of not helping with the cleaning of the room. It is obvious that this speaker is annoyed by the addressee's behaviour to the extent that he has no regard for the addressee's face wants at that time.

4.1.8 Preaching

Another formula of the complaint sequence found in the data was preaching. A total of 18.75% of the utterances fell under this category. Preaching was used by the females in all the complaint situations with the exception of the situation of an unfair grade. The males on the other hand used this strategy in only the situations of a dirty roommate and a noisy housemate.

Consequently, females produced 23.05% of the total utterances that were used as preaching. The examples in (19) are evidence of preaching from the data.

Example (19):
a. *"It is said in our holy book that cleanliness is next to godliness,* so change!"
b. "Don't repeat it because *it is a bad manner*."
c. "A word to the wise is enough."
d. "You are a lady and so you can't be lazy to the extent that you can't sweep your own room."
e. "And our elders have been saying that a word to the wise is enough so advice yourself okay."

Example (19a) is a complaint made to the speaker's roommate in the situation of a dirty roommate. The complainant in this case used the Holy Book as a source of reference. This suggests that the complainant and the addressee are ardent believers who share a common faith and belief that the Holy book could be used to teach, correct and admonish and ultimately help to transform an individual. The complainant therefore referred to that book to enable the addressee to reflect on that message and take the necessary remedial measures. In the same vein, the utterance in (19c) is a proverbial saying which means that a reasonable being does not need much prompting to be made aware that they are on the wrong path and need to change their attitude or behaviour. The complainant therefore did not need to speak at length for the addressee to know what was expected of him. The complainant's choice of preaching did not seek to make the addressee guilty, but to transform them. Thus, the speaker, though may be provoked or hurt, still tends to empathize with the person who has committed the offence, and therefore tends to address the person in a way that will cause them to reflect on their actions or inactions and change their behaviour. The speaker uses the off-record politeness strategy at this point by invoking implicature through the use of proverbs to save the face of the addressee.

4.1.9 Insulting
In general, 13 utterances of insults representing 3.34% of the complaint utterances were recorded in the data. Utterances of insults were made by the speaker with the intention of disrespecting or humiliating the addressee, thereby disregarding their positive face wants. This category was the least of all the strategies as used by the complainants. Insults occurred only in situations of the dirty roommate and disobedient junior. Consider the following examples in (20) of how insults were used by the speakers in the data:

Example (20):
a. "So, *your common sense can't tell you to keep the room clean*."
b. "if you refused to obey my words again you will see who came to this school first, *nonsense*!"
c. "Leave my sight, *you wretched girl from the forest*!"
d. "Am I your houseboy? *Stupid boy*!"
e. "My friend, go look for a broom and start sweeping. *Rubbish!*"

It was observed from the analysis that utterances of insults as illustrated in (20), mainly pointed out a defective performance, ability, or traits in the addressee. For instance, the utterances in (20a) and (20d) show the extent of desperation or frustration on the part of the complainant to see the addressee change his behaviour in the situation of a dirty roommate. It suggests that the complainant must have made some effort earlier to correct the addressee which yielded no effect. The addressee is therefore seen by the complainant as a deviant or a nonconformist who could only be corrected with the use of such harsh words. In most cases, insults are used as a last resort to get a person to transform into a required behaviour. The complainant therefore resorted to insult hoping that it would compel the addressee to change his behaviour or attitude. The complainant intentionally used insults, a bald-on strategy to affect the ego of the addressee and cause him to get the necessary change or reaction.

4.1.10 Interrogation
Another formula for the complaints produced by the participants is Interrogation. The interrogatory strategy constituted 8.08% of the total utterances found in the data. Both genders recorded the same percentage of use in all four situations. This strategy was used when the complainant presupposed that the addressee was not just responsible but also well aware of the offence committed and thus called for an explanation of the addressee's behaviour. None of the respondents used the interrogation strategy while addressing a teacher in registering their complaints in either the situation of a noisy housemate or an unfair grade. However, the highest number of interrogations was recorded by both genders in the situation concerning the disobedient junior. This pattern in the usage of the interrogatory strategy corroborates the Ghanaian assertion that the younger one should not question the behaviour of the adult because it is perceived to be either a sign of disrespect or an act of insubordination.

The interrogatory utterances were usually expressed by means of 'Wh-' questions and 'yes-no' questions as shown in example (21).

Example (21):
a. "What stopped you from doing your morning duties?"
b. "Why would you trash the room on purpose?"
c. "Why do you always want me to do the work?"
d. "Hey! Form 1 boy come here. *What happened to the work I asked you to do*?"
e. "Hey! Come! *What did I ask you to do before I went to the prep room?*"

Example (21a) is an utterance made by a female complainant to a junior who refused to do her assigned morning duty. The complainant by this utterance did not necessarily seek any answers or explanation from her addressee. Rather, it was an indication that the junior had no reason whatsoever not to have done the duties assigned her, and so the speaker was not prepared to accept any excuses from the addressee. In that sense, the complainant felt no reason could absolve the junior whose inability to do the work was only an open defiance of the complainant's authority. In spite of this, the complainant's use of questioning however is a negative politeness strategy which reduced the level of confrontation between the interlocutors.

In the same vein, in (21c), the complainant seemed very annoyed because he expected that as roommates, the tidying up of the room should be a shared responsibility since they shared the room. The complainant therefore expected that the addressee ought to have known better, and so posed a question as a way of calling him to order rather than asking for an explanation. In both (21a & c), although the complainants appeared rather irritated by the addressees' behaviour and thus categorically mentioned the offensive act, they still tried to save the face of the addressee by using interrogation as a negative politeness strategy. Moreover, in some cases, the questions asked were rhetorical in nature. Such rhetorical questions basically attacked the addressee rather than asked them for an explanation or information, such as utterances in (22).

> **Example (22):**
> a. "What sort of laziness is that?"
> b. "Do you think I am a fool?"
> c. "What sort of uncleanliness is that?"
> d. "Why do you always push me to the wall?"
> e. "Who do you think you are?"

In (22b), the complainant expressed his anger at the behaviour of the addressee who presumably has been taking him for granted for far too long. The expression showed that the complainant has been very accommodative over the period but the addressee seemed to have taken his silence or acquiescence as a weakness. This provoked the complainant to the extent that this time, there was an outburst of his anger. This utterance threatens the addressee's positive face as it is an insult and a mockery of the pride of the addressee who thinks the complainant is not wise enough to have noticed all that she had done over the months. The speaker however goes off-record in his complaint through the use of the rhetorical question and irony.

4.1.11 Closing

An expression of gratitude was employed by some of the participants as a closure to their complaints, thereby minimizing the face threat to the addressee. A total of 3.29% of utterances of gratitude were produced by both genders in all situations, except in the situation of the disobedient junior where neither the male nor female participants used this strategy. The complainants were rather more appreciative of their addressees in the situation of a noisy housemate than that of an unfair grade. Thus, only 3 males and 10 females expressed gratitude to their addressees at the end of the conversation in the case of an unfair grade. Conversely, in the situation of the noisy housemate, the number of closing shot up to 70.31% females and 15.63% males. It is interesting how the frequencies are consistently higher in the fourth situation than the first even though both involve a student complaining to a teacher. This could probably be because, in the situation of the noisy housemate, the teacher was not responsible for the offensive act committed. Examples of utterances that expressed appreciation as a form of closing include those in (23):

Example (23):
a. "*Thank you* for wasting some of your time to listen to some of our problems."
b. "Ok madam, *I'm grateful to you.*"
c. "Ok, *thank* you for accepting to help me to clean up this place every day."
d. "I want you to remark it for me for I don't deserve to have that mark. *Thank you."*
e. "Can you please add the marks for me. *Thank you very much sir."*

A form of appreciation used in the data served two main functions: to express their gratitude to the addressee for making time to listen to their grievances and for the addressee's acceptance of the possible remedy action proposed by the complainant. For example, in (23a), the complainant showed gratitude to the teacher by saying 'thank you' for having had the patience to even give him a listening ear. The complainant is well aware of the level of imposition on the addressee's negative face as a result of his complaint and thus uses an appreciation which is a negative politeness strategy as a redress to the addressee's face. By thanking the addressee, the complainant also expressed his confidence in the addressee that his grievance would surely be attended to for him to have his peace of mind. Similarly, in (23c), the complainant said 'thank you' to her roommate for accepting to change her unsatisfactory attitude of not helping the complainant clean the room. A word of appreciation at this point allowed the addressee to take the complaint in good faith without any malice and be prepared to give the needed response or reaction. In the end, a word of gratitude engenders harmony between the complainant and the addressee. Moreover, showing appreciation even in a complaint situation is considered an act of politeness that will make the addressee more receptive to any suggestions or complaints in future.

We observe from the analysis that complainants have no difficulty expressing their dissatisfaction with unacceptable behaviour using different semantic formulae such as the opener, act statement, remedy, justification, and formulaic adjunct among others. With the use of act statement and remedy, the complaints produced were identified as direct. However, Ghanaians, just like the Chinese (De Zang, 2001), tend to use external linguistic build-ups to achieve indirectness so as to cushion the face threatening acts and to preserve the harmony between the speaker and his addressee. Consequently, the complainants used formulaic adjunct and justification in their complaint sequences while syntactic downgraders were sparingly used. As Trosborg (1995, p. 312) points out, "*causing offence is part of the conflictive functions, and complaints are by definition non-polite*". These external linguistic build-ups were thus used as positive politeness strategies in adjusting the social distance between them and their addressees to ensure a harmonious result at the end of their complaints. With the use of act statements, male complainants tended to be more direct and aggressive than females. This is because the females produced a lot of justification, formulaic adjunct, and other supporting moves that hedge their complaints. This is consistent with the findings in the literature that claim that females tend to be politer than males (e.g. De Leon & Parina, 2016; Mills, 2003).

4.2 Influence of the Ghanaian culture on complaint production
The second research sought to examine the influence of Ghanaian culture on the complaints produced by the participants in this study. Every speech community has clearly defined norms

and conventions that regulate the actions or reactions of people in a given context (Eelen, 2001). Consequently, a person is deemed polite when his actions are in congruence with these predefined social norms. Ghanaian society also has its norms and conventions regarding utterances that are deemed fit and appropriate or otherwise, in any given social interaction. Thus, one has to be extremely cautious when interacting with people, especially regarding their social status and age (Thompson, 2019). From the analysis, it was evident that learners had woven some Ghanaian cultural politeness principles into the complaints they produced in English even after studying English for so long. Considering that a complaint is a face-threatening act whose successful production is to a large extent influenced by one's culture, such transfers were rather expected. Anderson (2009) notes that the interplay of the Ghanaian and English communicative norms and conventions gives the English spoken in Ghana its distinctive colourization and pragmatic features. The pragmatic transfer found in the analysis comprised the use of openers, the use of the politeness marker, and the expression of appreciation. These are discussed as follows:

4.2.1 Use of openers

The types of openers identified in the data and their usage are consistent with the Ghanaian culture. In Ghana, a person who wishes to engage in a conversation with someone must endeavour to use an opener of a kind, irrespective of one's age or status. Failure to do so sends a negative signal to your interlocutor that you are either not in a cordial relationship with them or you are just not communicatively competent. Therefore, whether in pleasant or unpleasant situations, one would usually not directly start speaking without first using an opener. This is because the appropriate use of an opener helps to eliminate perceived obstacles that may impede the free flow of the interaction. This accounted for the high frequency of the use of an opener, even in a situation where one feels offended by his addressee's action. The use of openers is seen in Examples (6) and (7) respectively as (24) and (25):

Example (24):
a. "*Adriana*, you've been messing up the room all the time and I haven't been complaining."
b. "*Kombat*, who do you think you are?"
c. "*Linda*, I have a conversation with you."
d. "*Esther*, see, the way you live with me, I don't like."
e. "*Mike*, you always provoke me to talk but I have been quiet every day."

Example (25):
a. "*Sir, please good morning*. I am here because I got an unfair grade in the essay test you marked."
b. "*Hey Nancy*, where do you think you are going?"
c. "Madam please good afternoon, there is something going on at the dormitory which I'm not really happy about it."
d. "Please madam, there is a complaint I want to draw your attention to, it has been happening at the dormitory."

e. "Hey you Prince, I've been watching you for a while now."

The type of opener used, however, is what depicts the level of respect and the relationship that the person has with his interlocutor. For instance, in the Ghanaian culture, addressing an elderly as 'Sir, or Madam' is a mark of utmost respect and recognition of the person's status and power. As a result, the participants used these address forms rather too frequently than one would expect. Thus, such address terms were used not only as openers but even preceded their complaints, justification and requests as a sign of respect and a way of minimizing the level of imposition on the addressee's face wants.

They also transferred the use of kinship terms as openers into their complaints. In the Ghanaian culture, unlike the English, kinship terms like (*my*) *brother and* (*my*) *sister* are extended to address a non-acquaintance or anybody of the same age as the speaker, as a way of showing solidarity as well as bridging the social distance between them. This is seen in Example (26):

Example (26):
a. *"My brother*, I've realised that you've been messing this place for some time now. This is not good at all."
b. *"Sister*, why do you always like to leave the light on? Know that we need to put them off when it's lights-out."

Another type of opener transferred into the English spoken by the participants of this study is greeting. Greeting in Ghana does not only pave the way for one to initiate or contribute to a conversation, it is also a mark of communicative competence. This is because one greets in recognition of the addressee's status, age or power (Anderson, 2009). Consequently, the younger person is expected to initiate a form of greeting depending on the time of the day when speaking with an adult, as a mark of politeness and respect. The use of greeting is illustrated in Example (27):

Example (27):
a. *"Good afternoon*. Madam, please I want to complain about something which is going on in the dormitory."
b. *"Good afternoon*. Please Sir, something baffles my mind and I want to tell you."
c. *"Good afternoon*, sir please I'm here because I had a question right and you marked me down."
d. *"Good morning*, sir please I want to discuss an issue with you."

Speakers who used this form virtually transferred such syntactic structures from their L1 as these are polite ways of greeting. Even though such structures may seem odd to the natives, these are important discourse features of the English spoken in Ghana.

4.2.2 The use of the politeness marker
It was observed that the participants used the politeness marker *please* excessively in their quest to make their complaints more polite while talking to a person of a higher status. With this, they

ended up producing structures which may sound awkward to a native speaker, yet consistent with the English spoken in Ghana. Consider Example (28):

Example (28):
"Please Sir good morning. Please, Sir, I have an issue to discuss with you. Sir please there is one guy in my room who always disturbs when it's lights out. Sir, the reason why I want to report this issue to you is that the noise that the guy makes disturbs me a lot. Sir when I'm sleeping and there is noise in the room, I can't sleep so it's affecting me in my health and academics. So, Sir please I want you to tell him to stop or change him from that way to another way."

This excessive use of the politeness marker *Please* could only have been transferred from the speaker's first language as this is consistent with politeness expressed in many Ghanaian languages. It is considered rude for a child or a person of lower status to speak to an adult or someone of a higher status without the use of this marker in Ghana. This feature is extensively used among the Akuapem for instance who precede even an insult with 'please' such as 'me pa *kyɛw se wo yɛ aboa' which means* 'please you are a fool'. In the Ghanaian community, it is uncommon for a child to openly express their anger when they are offended by an adult. Therefore, when it becomes necessary for such a child to do so, s/he must do so with utmost politeness using *please* as often as possible to reduce the level of imposition. This is premised on the fact that in Ghana, as far as our traditions are concerned, there is an axiom that the adult is precluded from feeling guilty in the presence of the child even if the child is right or not guilty during arbitration; lest the child might subsequently disrespect the adult for winning the case, and culminate in insubordination.

4.2.3 Expression of appreciation
In a complaint where tensions are high as a result of one's expectations not being met, one would hardly expect that the complainants would express gratitude at the end of their conversation. However, complainants in this study did not fail to appreciate their addressees at the end of their interaction, especially with a person of a higher status. In Ghana, it is considered unworthy to spend one's resources or even time on an ungrateful person. Such people are often referred to as "*bonyi ayɛ*" in Akan which means *an ingrate*, and they are always shunned by people for not being appreciative. As a cultural practice, children are taught to be appreciative by saying *thank you* for any kindness or favour shown to them. An instance of showing appreciation is seen in Example (29):

Example (29):
a. "*Thank you* for wasting some of your time to listen to some of our problems."
b. "Ok madam, *I'm grateful to you*."
c. "Ok, *thank* you for accepting to help me to clean up this place every day."
d. "I want you to remark it for me for I don't deserve to have that mark. *Thank you.*"
e. "Can you please add the marks for me. *Thank you very much sir.*"

As such, in the study, in a situation where the addressees were not the offenders but were used as third parties to get the required remedy, they had to be appreciated. Hence, the expression of appreciation is a mark of politeness.

Considering the fact that language and culture are intertwined, we observe that the Ghanaian culture influenced the performance of the complaint speech act, irrespective of complainants' background. The occurrences of pragmatic transfer were reflected in the frequency of some of the semantic formulas used. Thus, the participants' choice of openers, politeness marker, and appreciation could be traced to their Ghanaian languages and cultural backgrounds. This is consistent with existing literature, indicating that non-native speakers often transfer some aspects of their sociocultural values in their speech acts (Al-Rashid, 2017; Franch, 1998; Prachanant, 2006).

According to Prachanant (2006), such transfers are usually a result of the learner's L2 proficiency level and his L1 cultural background. The results also corroborate findings that the Ghanaian equates these to competence in communication (Agyekum, 2003; Thompson & Anderson, 2018). For example, the predominant use of the openers in addressing someone of higher status was in recognition of the power hierarchy that exists in Ghana. And, this must not be disregarded if one wants to be deemed communicatively competent in any speech event in Ghana. These transfers are thus a deliberate attempt to indigenize the English language, showing its innovative and stylistic use to convey their distinct cultural concepts and meanings as well as establish their identity.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the present study have shown that there are several strategies used in complaining, with the most frequently used being opener, act statement, and remedy. Due to the face-threatening nature of complaints, complainants did not randomly choose just any kind of strategy in complaining, but consciously selected the most appropriate ones based on the relationship between them and their addressees. This was done to reduce the degree of face threat while seeking a repair of an offensive act. The findings of this study are consistent with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory which indicates that if the level of imposition or face threat goes higher, the interlocutors tend to be more courteous. Again, it was established that complainants transferred some politeness strategies such as the use of openers, the use of the marker *please*, and a show of appreciation. These are considered very characteristic of the Ghanaian culture and although such transfers may render the complaints awkward or impolite to the native speaker of English, it is argued that these are what give the English spoken in Ghana its distinctive pragmatic features (Anderson, 2009).

The present study focused on the nature of complaints produced by Ghanaian English as a second language learners. It would be a fruitful step for interlanguage pragmatics researchers to compare the complaint realization strategies in Ghanaian English with those of native English to ascertain the differences and similarities between the two. Also, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the participants in the present study do not, by any means, represent all Ghanaian speakers as they were limited to those in their final year in the senior high schools. Future research might thus replicate all aspects of the social variables: social distance and status

with a great variety of participants in varied complaint situations beyond the school setting to add to our understanding of second language pragmatics. Additionally, to enhance our understanding of the influence of gender, an in-depth analysis of the complaint behaviour of females and males could be considered in future studies to examine its influence on speakers' choice of politeness strategies in making a complaint. Finally, a complaint enjoins the hearer to do something to compensate for the loss of the speaker. Therefore, an examination of the kind of responses given to complaints would be worth future research to ascertain the pragmatic competence of learners in handling the complaints produced.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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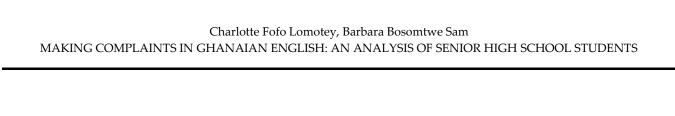
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