**Preference for noticings and beforehand apologies to withhold the complainable**

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In terms of politeness research, complaints are characterized as ‘face threatening acts’ (i.e. Brown & Levinson, 1987, Kraft & Geluykens, 2002) and the main focus of analysis contains mitigation strategies for the teller of the complaint or description of the ways a recipient of a complaint acts. Furthermore, the fact that complaints are contextually-sensitive and contextually-embedded (Edwards, 2005), indicates that the interpretation and recognition of a complaint is very much contingent on its discourse context. This tricky nature of the complaint sequences has led to different categorization, one of which is the distinction between direct and indirect complaints. Direct complaints, concern cases where the recipient is one of the participants of the on-going conversation (cf. Dersley & Wootton 2000) and indirect complaints, refer to cases where non-participants or facts that are not relevant with conversation are addressed (cf. Drew 1998). The core difference between them is, as Curl et al. (2002) underline, the level of their performed affiliate nature and since there might be a clue of accusation a complaint the level that complaints hold the recipient accountable (Sacks 1995: 90-91).

The present paper by adopting a conversation analytic perspective aims at studying direct complaints in ordinary conversation, in order to describe the turn-by-turn construction and management of a complaint sequence. More specifically, the data of the study consist of 20 audio-recorded conversations between friends and relatives and the main focus of the paper is on instances where the participants themselves reveal their understanding not only in the structural features of a complaint sequence but also of the social function of the ongoing act. Moreover, the study addresses the focus on mitigation and accounting practices of a complainee/complainer respectively, by paying particular attention on noticings and beforehand apologies used from the participants to withhold the appearance of disaffiliative complaint for the co-participants. With this practice, the candidate recipient of the complaint and not the assumed complainer mitigates the impact of accountability by overriding the appearance of a complaint.

Keywords: complaints, preference, (im)politeness, accountability

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