



Assessing The Effectiveness Of Chatgpt-3.5 In Generating Complaints: A Case Study Based On The Indian Workplace

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Abstract

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT) in generating workplace-related complaints. Moreover, it focuses on evaluating the efficacy of ChatGPT in developing communicative competence, as an integral part of the teaching-learning process in the ESL classroom. Utilising a qualitative approach, the research purpose was achieved through an in-depth analysis of the ChatGPT-generated (ChatGPT-3.5) complaint using a case study design. These complaint tokens were produced using a hypothetical problematic situation based on a formal domain, that is, the Indian workplace; it was analysed using Anna Trosborg's model of Complaint (1994) to study the complaint strategies, perspectives, and internal and external modifiers utilised by ChatGPT for the production of complaints. While testing the appropriateness of complaints generated by ChatGPT-3.5, this research examined whether the inclusion of ChatGPT in Indian classrooms would benefit the second language learners of English to acquire the language and simultaneously develop their communicative competence for effective and appropriate communication in the target language. Using this as a learning platform, language teachers would be able to achieve higher quality in their teaching activities, thereby improving learners' experience and overall quality of learning.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), chat generative pre-trained transformer (ChatGPT), communicative competence, English as a second language (ESL), speech act of complaints.

1. Introduction

Becoming an effective communicator in a language requires more than just linguistic competence (Hymes, 1966, pp. 114-158). According to Hymes, language users must employ language in ways that are both grammatically correct and socially appropriate to effectively achieve their communicative goals (Devec, 2003, p. 2). Since all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts, that is, "speech acts" (Searle, 1969, p.16), the grammatically accurate and socially appropriate performance of these acts results in effective communication. However, speech acts such as complaints are challenging for non-native speakers, as they are also difficult for native speakers due to their "complexity" (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993, p. 34) and "face-threatening" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 65-66) nature. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), complaints have the potential to challenge the hearer's "positive and negative face" by expressing disapproval, dissatisfaction

Therefore, developing "sociolinguistic competence" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p.5), "discourse competence" (p.8), and "strategic competence" is an integral part of the teaching-learning process in the ESL classroom as "speech acts are conditioned with a host of social, cultural, situational, and personal factors" (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993, p.34).

Traditional language learning methods often overlook the nuanced needs of second/foreign language learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This gap underscores the need for a system that not only teaches language but also bridges cultural divides, fostering greater mutual understanding among global citizens (Yina, Shin, & Shin, 2024).

The emergence of AI has revolutionized the communication sector across the globe by imitating human intelligence and the decision-making process. Gradually, Generative AI and LLMs have become a significant producer of conversational language or human interaction. ChatGPT 3.5, an artificial intelligence (AI) language model developed by OpenAI, is designed to understand and generate human-like conversational text based on user input. However, producing face-threatening acts like complaints, which is also an emotive act, requires linguistic competency, sociocultural appropriateness in a particular context, cooperation between the interlocutors, and the maintenance of social harmony among the participants. Compared with other speech acts, performing face-threatening acts, such as complaints, is more challenging for both native and non-native speakers. Therefore, developing communicative competence is an integral part of the teaching-learning process in the ESL classroom.

The present study focuses on conducting a paralinguistic study of AI-generated complaints in the workplace to assess the effectiveness of AI in producing socioculturally appropriate and meaningful conversations.

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Research Methodology

The present study examines the pragmatic structuring of complaints generated by ChatGPT-3.5 in a socially asymmetrical interaction, elicited through two hypothetical situations. The analysis focuses on three interrelated dimensions of complaint construction: (i) complaint strategies, (ii) complaint perspective, and (iii) internal and external modification. The major focus is on the linguistic choices made by the interlocutors (complainer and the complaine), the interlocutors' relative power, face management, and the gender of the complainer. The analysis treats the generated dialogues as pragmatic performances rather than as isolated linguistic forms, since the effectiveness of a complaint depends on how the complaint is calibrated to the social relationship between the participants.

The two hypothetical situations used for eliciting complaints from ChatGPT 3.5 are as follows:

- **Situation A:** Professor Bakshi has promised Rahul, a B.Tech. final-year student, a letter of reference for a job interview. When Rahul comes to pick up the promised reference a day before the interview, no reference has been written. Moreover, Professor Bakshi shows his inability to write it in a day. Compose a dialogue between Rahul and Professor Bakshi that serves as a complaint.
- **Situation B:** Professor Bakshi has promised Smitha, a B.Tech. final-year student, a letter of reference for a job interview. When Smitha comes to pick up the promised reference a day before the interview, no reference has been written. Moreover, Professor Bakshi shows his inability to write it in a day. Compose a dialogue between Smitha and Professor Bakshi that serves as a complaint.

These dialogues therefore permit a controlled qualitative comparison of how ChatGPT constructs complaints when the gender of the complainer is altered.

Each ChatGPT-generated complaint utterance is coded at two levels: First, the primary pragmatic function of the utterance is identified. Second, any mitigating or intensifying device accompanying the complaint strategy is coded separately. This avoids treating a single utterance as belonging exclusively to one category when it performs multiple pragmatic functions.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Using Anna Trosborg's taxonomy of Complaint Strategies, the ChatGPT-generated complaint interactions were coded for Complaint strategies, along with complaint perspective, internal modification, and external modification.

Complaint strategies were accessed based on the degree of directness and the directive acts. In addition, complaint perspective was examined in terms of focalising and defocalising reference to the complainer and complaine, while internal modification was analysed through the use of downgraders and upgraders. External modification was studied through supportive moves such as preparators, disarmers, evidence, substantiation and appeals to the complaine's moral consciousness. These dimensions are particularly relevant because, in Situations A & B, the professor (complaine) occupies a higher institutional position than the student (both male and female), making the management of directness and face central to the interaction.

2.2.1. Coding Scheme based on Anna Trosborg's Taxonomy of Complaint (1994):

Analytical Dimension	Category	Definition	Example
Complaint Strategy	Cat.1: No explicit Reproach Str.1: Hint	*Indirect and non-confrontational strategy.	Str.1.: "I came to pick up the reference letter ... but I don't see it prepared."

		*Avoid direct mention of the complaine and the complainable to mitigate conflict. (Str.1: Weak, but prepares for a more forceful strategy.)	
	Cat.2: Expression of Disapproval Str.2: Annoyance; Str.3: Ill Consequence	*Explicit condemnation of the deplorable act of affairs, without mentioning the complaine. (Str.2: Expression of annoyance, disapproval, concerning a deplorable state of affairs. Str.3: Expression of worst consequences of affair that the complainer considers to be bad.)	Str.2: "... you promised me that you would write this letter. I've been counting on it ..." Str.3: "... this has put me at a significant disadvantage."
	Cat.3: Accusation Str.4: Indirect Accusation; Str.5: Direct Accusation	*Establish the complainer/agent of the complainable. (Str.4: Indirectly positioning the hearer as a potential agent of the complainable. Str.5: Directly accusing the complaine of having committed the offence.)	Str.4: "I came to collect the reference letter you promised me ... but I don't see it prepared." Str.5: "You promised me that you would write this letter ... you have put me in a difficult situation."
	Cat.4: Blaming Str.6: Modified Blame Str.7: Explicit condemnation of the accused's action Str.8: Explicit condemnation of the accused as a person	*Presupposing the accused as guilty of the offence. (Str.6: Modified disapproval of an action attributed to the accused. Str. 7: Explicit condemnation of an action for which the accused is held responsible. Str.8: Explicit characterization of the accused as an irresponsible or socially unacceptable member.)	Str.6: "I understand. I'll have to make do with what I have." Str.7: "However, delay in writing a reference letter has put me at a significant disadvantage." Str.8: "However, you have put me at a significant disadvantage."
Directive Acts	Request for Repair	*Demand for immediate discontinuation of the deplorable act and remedial action from the complaine.	"... this has put me at a significant disadvantage. Is there anything you can do at this point?"
	Threat	*Issuance of an ultimatum with immediate consequences to the complaine.	"If this doesn't get completed by tomorrow, I'll lodge a complaint against you."
	Request for Forbearance	*Expectation of non-occurrence of the deplorable act and improved behaviour in the future from the complaine. It may also include a threat.	"But in the future, I hope we can avoid such situations. A promise like this is crucial for a student's career prospects."
Complaint Perspective	Focalized reference to the complainer (I, My, Me, mine)	*Explicit reference to the complainer's interest or grievance.	"... this letter of reference is crucial for my interview tomorrow. I was relying on your support for this opportunity."
	Defocalized reference to the complainer (We, us)	*Minimization of the complainer's presence through impersonal reference to the complaint.	"Is there any alternative solution we can explore?"

	Focalized reference to the complaine (You, your, yours)	*Direct address to the complaine by explicit attribution of responsibility for the deplorable state of affairs.	"Is there anything you can do at this point?"
	Defocalized reference to the complaine (Is/this/that)	*Indirect reference to the complaine by avoidance of direct attribution of blame.	"A promise like this is crucial for a student's career prospects."
Internal Modification	Downgraders	*To moderate the complaint	"I hope we can avoid such situations. A promise like this is crucial for a student's career prospects."
	Upgraders	*To exacerbate the complaint	"... but I'm disappointed and worried about the impact this might have on my interview prospects."
External modification	Supportive Moves	*To successfully pin the blame on the complaine	"... this letter of reference is crucial for my interview tomorrow. I was relying on your support for this opportunity."

3. Analysis of ChatGPT-Generated Complaints on "Promised Reference" (Complaint Directed towards a Person of Superior Status)

The analysis aims to investigate the effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated complaints directed to a superior, who is held responsible for the disapproved action, in resolving the problematic situation without disrupting the social harmony between the complainer and the complaine. Furthermore, the analysis focuses on examining the influence of the gender of the complainer (Situation A: Male student; Situation B: Female student) on the formulation of complaints generated by ChatGPT-3.5 in the given scenario.

3.1. Use of Complaint Strategies and Directive Acts

3.1.1. Male as complainer (Situation A)

Rahul, an engineering final-year student, who has been short-listed for a job interview scheduled for the next day, initiates the conversation with Professor Bakshi, a university professor, by greeting him and stating the purpose of his visit.

In response to Rahul's statement, Professor Bakshi greets him and discloses the problem: he has not yet written the reference and cannot provide it by the next day. The professor apologises for this oversight, acknowledging his role in the situation and making it clear that Rahul's job opportunity is at risk due to the delay on his part (see L2, Appendix 1).

Recognising the professor as the source of the problem, Rahul reminds the professor of the commitment made to him and begins to voice his "disapproval" (Trosborg, 1995, p. 317), starting with an expression of "annoyance" (p. 317). Following this, Rahul "explicitly condemns of the accused's (professor's) action" (p.318) by explaining that he had been relying on the professor for the reference. Since the professor has now expressed his inability to provide the reference on time, Rahul finds himself in a difficult position. He intensifies his complaint by pointing out the professor's negligence, thereby closing his statement by confirming the position of Professor Bakshi as the complaine/accused in the given problematic scenario (see L3, Appendix 1).

To de-escalate the situation, Professor Bakshi expresses empathy and explains that, despite his strong commitment and intention to write the reference, unavoidable circumstances prevented them from fulfilling the promise (see L4, Appendix 1).

Acknowledging the professor's superior status, Rahul attempts to mitigate the complaint's impact by showing appreciation for the professor's willingness to fulfil his promise, "I appreciate that, Professor ...". This approach softens his stance, paving the way for a more impactful strategy. Rahul then "explicitly condemns of the accused's (professor's) action" (Trosborg, 1995, p. 318) for failing to provide the reference on time. Rahul concludes with a "directive act" (p.320), that is, a "request for repair" (p.320), seeking a remedy from the professor to resolve the ongoing issue (see L5, Appendix 1).

Despite feeling annoyed by the professor's delay, Rahul seeks a remedy in the form of an indirect request (framed as a yes-no question), keeping in mind the superior status of the professor. Thereby, mitigating the impact of the "directive act" (Trosborg, 1995, p.320) and maintaining the solidarity of the interpersonal relationship.

In response to Rahul's request for a remedy, Professor Bakshi expresses a willingness to address the situation but mentions that, due to time constraints, he cannot guarantee a quality reference (see L6, Appendix 1).

Rahul acknowledges the professor's limitations and accepts that he must proceed with the reference currently available. Rahul's "expression of annoyance or disapproval" (Trosborg, 1995, p.316) highlights the "ill consequence" (p.317) caused by the professor's delay in providing the reference. Considering the professor's authority, Rahul implicitly performs the directive act, a "request for forbearance" (p.322), framed as a wish to prevent similar issues in the future, thus softening the impact of the complaint. Moreover, Rahul states that such a commitment or assurance is essential for a student's success. With a cautious and forward-looking tone, he aims to prevent similar problems and seeks a more favourable outcome. This response represents an indirect "modified blame" (p.318) directed at the professor (see L7, Appendix 1).

Professor Bakshi concludes the conversation by affirming Rahul's statement and committing to ensuring that his behaviour will not negatively impact students' career prospects in the future. Moreover, the professor apologises for the inconvenience caused by the delay in preparing the reference, which has risked his job opportunity. Professor Bakshi acknowledges the importance of his responsibilities and expresses the intention to manage their obligations, committing to managing his obligations with greater care and accountability. This helps the Professor to save their face in front of the student (see L8, Appendix 1).

3.1.2. Female as complainer (Situation B)

Smitha, a B. Tech. final-year student, initiates the conversation with Professor Bakshi by greeting the professor and stating the purpose of her visit. Since there is "no explicit reproach" (Trosborg, 1994, p.316), the opening of the conversation is observed as a hint, "a weak complaint strategy" (p.316), that is used to initiate a more impactful complaint strategy, that is, "indirect accusation" (p.317). Smitha continues the conversation by implicitly accusing the professor, making him realise that he has not fulfilled his promise (see L9, Appendix 1).

Professor Bakshi responds to Smitha's indirect accusation by apologising for not writing the reference and justifies the delay, thus acknowledging his role as complaine/accused (see L10, Appendix 1).

Professor Bakshi's response confirms Smitha's accusation and establishes him as the cause of the problem. Recognising this, Smitha begins to voice her complaints, starting with an expression of "annoyance" (Trosborg, 1994, p.316). Unlike Rahul, Smitha explains the importance of the reference for her job interview, thereby "explicitly condemning the accused's (professor's) behaviour" (p.318) for not extending his support on time (see L11, Appendix 1).

Professor Bakshi acknowledges Smitha's explicit condemnation of his actions and expresses his apology for not fulfilling his promise. To save face and de-escalate the issue, Professor Bakshi seeks a remedy from Smitha to make amends (see L12, Appendix 1).

Smitha expresses her "annoyance" (Trosborg, 1994, p.316) and mentions that she does not know how to resolve the issue. To strengthen her argument, she repeatedly "hints" (p.316) to the professor that she's running out of time and emphasises the importance of having the reference in advance. Moreover, Smitha "explicitly condemns the accused's (professor's) behaviour" (p.318), explaining that she was relying on the reference to strengthen her application (see L13, Appendix 1).

In response to Smitha's annoyance and condemnation, Professor Bakshi apologises once again for being the cause of the problematic situation. He suggests a remedy by expressing his willingness to expedite the process of writing the reference, but mentions that due to time constraints, he cannot provide it on time (see L14, Appendix 1).

Smitha appreciates the professor's willingness to resolve the issue but expresses her "annoyance and disapproval" (Trosborg, 1994, p.316) regarding the "ill consequences" (p.317) this delay might have on her job opportunity. Smitha intensifies the complaint by "explicit condemnation of the accused's (professor's) action" (p.318) for not providing the reference on time. However, considering the professor's superior status, Smitha performs the "directive act" (p.320) in the form of a "request for repair" (p.320) to the professor, thereby softening the complaint while implicitly asserting the importance of resolving the issue (see L15, Appendix 1).

In response to Smitha's request for repair, Professor Bakshi suggests that until he can provide a formal reference, he will write a provisional reference letter as a temporary solution (see L16, Appendix 1). This could be observed as a face-saving strategy.

Given the urgent need for a reference letter, Smitha expresses her gratitude to Professor Bakshi for providing a temporary reference on such short notice. Acknowledging his superior status, Smitha thanks the professor for his consideration and appreciates his willingness to help despite time constraints. Smitha empathises with the Professor ("I understand that circumstances can be unpredictable ...") to mitigate the effect of the complaint to the superior (see L17 & L19, Appendix 1).

Professor Bakshi responds by acknowledging her thanks and apologising once again for the inconvenience caused, thus saving his face or maintaining his dignity. Smitha closes the conversation by expressing her thanks once more and promising to keep him updated about the interview results (see L18, Appendix 1).

3.2. Complaint Perspective and Agency Management

In the given situations A and B, the hierarchical relationship between the interlocutors, where the accused/complainee (Professor Bakshi) holds a superior position to the complainer (Rahul and Smitha as students), increases the difficulty of performing a complaint without disrupting social harmony. The analysis examines the ChatGPT-generated complaint dialogue within this challenging context and documents the following observations regarding the use of supporting strategies and complaint perspectives employed to reduce the severity while maintaining the effectiveness of the complaint.

Depending on the severity of the problematic situation and the power-relationship status of the interlocutors, the complainer might either try to avoid taking personal responsibility for the criticism by presenting it as a general blame, or explicitly blame the complainees for their action. The concept of complaint perspective involves a distinction between focalizing and defocalizing reference to the speaker and hearer (Haverkate, 1984).

3.2.1. Focalizing reference to the complainer (speaker-perspective – I):

In the given situation, both the B.Tech. final-year students, Rahul (Situation A) and Smitha (Situation B), whose job interview is at risk due to Professor Bakshi's delay in providing the reference, use the "focalizing reference to the complainer" (Trosborg, 1994, p.323) technique throughout the interaction and explicitly establish themselves as the complainer.

By the use of "I", both Rahul (see L3 & L7, Appendix 1) and Smitha (see L9, L11, L13 & L15, Appendix 1) take personal responsibility to explicitly condemn the professor's action, as their career is at stake due to his negligence.

Rahul (see L5 & L7, Appendix 1) and Smitha (see L11, L15 & L17, Appendix 1) use a "focalized reference" to personally appreciate the professor's willingness to resolve the issue, and to empathise with the professor for his limitations and constraints. This can be understood as a face-saving act while articulation a complaint to a person of superior status.

3.2.2. De-focalizing reference to the complainer (speaker-perspective – We):

In the ChatGPT-generated complaint, both Rahul and Smitha have used the "all-inclusive reference "we"" (Trosborg, 1994, p.324) to mitigate the effect of the complaint. By doing so, complainers have issued directives – "request for forbearance" (p.322) by Rahul in L7, Appendix 1; "request for repair" (p.320) by Smitha in L15, Appendix 1 – to the complainees of superior status, without threatening his face. Thereby saving their face and maintaining the social harmony.

3.2.3. Focalizing reference to the complainees (hearer-perspective – You):

In the complaint generated by ChatGPT, Rahul (see L1, L3 & L5, Appendix 1) and Smitha (see L9, L11, L13, L17 & L19, Appendix 1) use a "focalizing reference to the complainees (you)" (Trosborg, 1994, p.325) to establish Professor Bakshi as the accused in the situation. They employ pronouns such as 'you', 'you're' and 'your' to emphasise the professor's actions – promise, support and efforts – whose non-fulfilment led to the problematic situation. Additionally, the complaint highlights specific expectations, such as a letter and an email from the professor, to rectify the situation.

3.2.4. De-focalizing reference to the complainees (hearer-perspective – It):

In the ChatGPT-generated complaint, the complainers, Rahul and Smitha, have used "de-focalizing reference to the complainees (It, This, That)" (Trosborg, 1994, p.325), to implicitly refer to the agent's action/agent of the complaint. In two instances, criticism is presented in the form of generalisation and moral truism. Since the complainees are persons of superior status, to mitigate the complaint and to avoid confrontation, both Rahul (see L3, L5 & L7, Appendix 1) and Smitha (see L13, L15 & L17, Appendix 1) have utilised this technique.

3.3. Internal Modification: Mitigation and Intensification of Complaints

As Trosborg (1994, p. 327) suggests, the severity of a complaint can be moderated by the use of a "downgrader" and exacerbated by the use of an "upgrader", depending on the situation, power dynamics, and relationship between the interlocutors.

3.3.1. Downgraders:

In an effort to persuade Professor Bakshi to repair the damage, Rahul issues a request for repair. However, given his relationship with Professor Bakshi, Rahul frames his request as an "appealer" (Trosborg, 1994,

p.328) to soften the impact of the directive act (see L5, Appendix 1). This approach appeals to the understanding of the complaine/accused regarding the problematic situation. Similarly, Smitha appeals for a remedy (see L11, L15 & L17, Appendix 1).

In another instance, Rahul issues a directive in the form of a “request for forbearance”. He uses a “subjectivizer” (Trosborg, 1994, p.328) to present the warning as a personal opinion (see L7, Appendix 1). This approach ensures that rather than making the professor feel like his subordinate is dictating his moral behaviour, it comes across as a mere opinion.

Similarly, Rahul (L5, Appendix 1) and Smitha (L11, L15 & L17, Appendix 1) make use of “cajolers” (Trosborg, 1994, p.328) to maintain harmony with the professor while explicitly accusing his action of not supporting them on time.

3.3.2. Upgraders:

To increase the impact of the allegation on the complaine, Rahul uses a “lexical intensifier” (Trosborg, 1994, p.329) that amplifies the severity of the direct accusation (see L3, Appendix 1) and modified blame (see L7, Appendix 1). Similarly, Smitha uses an intensifier to explicitly condemn the professor’s (accused’s) action (see L15, Appendix 1).

3.4. External Modification and Supportive Moves

To maintain social harmony and to avoid conflict when expressing moral censure, the complainer must either maintain a low level of directness or should be able to “justify his/her accusation or reprimand so that it appears convincing” (cf. Place 1986). In situation A, Rahul, as the complainer, employs “supportive moves” (Trosborg, 1994, p.329) to successfully pin the blame on the complaine, that is, Professor Bakshi. By using a “preparatory” (Trosborg, 1994, p.330) at the beginning of the conversation, Rahul sets the stage for a more serious act of complaint. By greeting Professor Bakshi and stating his purpose of visit, Rahul paves the path for more forceful strategies further (see L1, Appendix 1). Similarly, Smitha uses a “preparatory” as a supportive move at the beginning of the conversation to introduce the disapproved action of not preparing the reference on time (see L9, Appendix 1).

Rahul (L5 & L7, Appendix 1) and Smitha (L11 & L15, Appendix 1) employed “disarmers” (Trosborg, 1994, p.330) with severe complaint strategies to reduce the intensity of their complaints while preserving the impact.

Rahul “provides evidence” (Trosborg, 1994, p.330) to demonstrate that Professor Bakshi has performed the reprehensible action that has jeopardised Rahul’s job opportunity. He reminds the professor about “the breach of promise” (p.332), highlighting the “lack of consideration” (p.331). Moreover, Rahul “substantiates” (p.331) his argument by “aggravating the offence” (p.331) by clearly stating that the act of not providing the reference has put Rahul in a difficult position (see L3, Appendix 1).

Likewise, Smitha “substantiates” (p.331) the complaint by stating the importance of a letter of reference for an interview. She reminds the professor about the “lack of consideration” (p.331) by not extending the support on time (see L11, Appendix 1). Rahul “appeals to the complaine’s (professor’s) moral consciousness” (p.332) by requesting the professor not to repeat this.

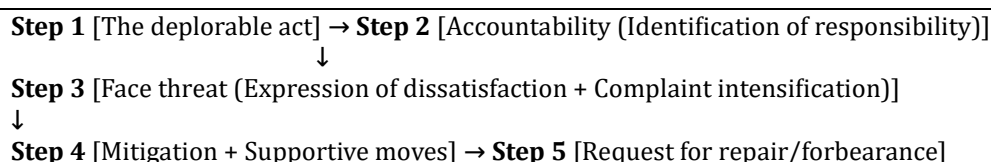
4. Power, Face Management and Relational Negotiation

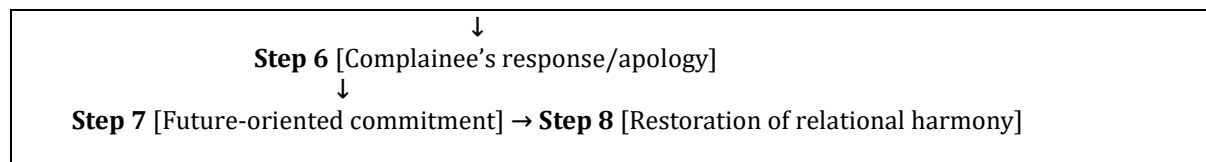
The hierarchical relationship between the student, as subordinate, and the professor, as senior/institutional authority, plays a vital role in interpreting the ChatGPT-generated complaint tokens. This power asymmetry becomes the major factor in increasing the difficulty of complaint performance, as the complainable must accomplish two potentially conflicting goals: (i) to hold the professor accountable for the deplorable act while avoiding excessive damage to the professor’s face; (ii) to maintain harmony in the student–professor relationship.

The generated interactions resolve this tension through a recurring pattern of accusation followed by mitigation. Strong complaint strategies are accompanied by appreciation, empathy, appeals, apologies, and requests rather than imperatives. For instance, in Rahul’s interaction, appreciation of the professor’s willingness to help precedes a stronger complaint and repair request.

Similarly, Smitha combines dissatisfaction with acknowledgement of the professor’s constraints. Her later response explicitly expresses understanding of unpredictable circumstances while simultaneously maintaining the importance of the reference.

The interaction can therefore be conceptualised as a face-management cycle:





5. Gender-based Comparison of ChatGPT-generated Complaints

In both situations, the ChatGPT-generated complaint tokens for both the complainers reveal major convergence and limited divergence, exhibiting a similar pragmatic structure of complaint interactions. Both complainers establish the problem, express dissatisfaction, assign responsibility, provide justification, request repair/forbearance, and conclude through face-saving strategies. This structural similarity suggests that the power relationship between student and professor may be a stronger organising variable than gender in this particular scenario.

Nevertheless, differences can be observed in the interactional realisation of the complaint. The complaint articulated by Rahul is characterised by relatively early explicit condemnation and a later request for forbearance. Whereas the complaint token produced by Smitha initially adopts a more indirect route, beginning with a hint before moving towards explicit dissatisfaction and condemnation.

Smitha's interaction also contains a sequence of appreciation, empathy, and gratitude surrounding the repair negotiation. She acknowledges the professor's willingness to assist, expresses understanding of his constraints, and closes the interaction with appreciation.

However, these differences should be interpreted cautiously. Because the present dataset consists of only one generated dialogue for each gender, the observed differences cannot establish a general gender effect.

6. Result and Discussion

The analysis of situations A and B represents a gradual progression of complaint strategies from low-intensity/indirect complaint strategies to direct complaint strategies, accompanied by remedy-oriented directive acts. This progression of strategies implies that ChatGPT-generated complaints are not a single confrontational act but an interaction following a pragmatic trajectory:

Step 1 (Opening/Preparator) → **Step 2** (Identification of Problem) → **Step 3** (Expression of Dissatisfaction/Disapproval/Ill Consequences) → **Step 5** (Accusation/Condemnation) → **Step 6** (Mitigation) → **Step 7** (Request for Repair/Forbearance) → **Step 8** (Relational Closure).

The complaint perspective exhibited in situations A and B provides an effective mechanism to assess how ChatGPT manages agency. Both Rahul and Smitha utilize the pronoun "I" to establish themselves as the complainer or consequence bearer of the deplorable act, thereby presenting the complaint as personal rather than simply expressing opinion about the complainee's behaviour as unacceptable. Simultaneously, Rahul and Smitha use the pronoun "YOU" to hold Prof. Bakshi responsible for the deplorable state of affairs, thus establishing him as a complainee.

However, keeping in view the superior institutional status of the Professor, excessive use of direct accusation/blame may threaten the social relationship. Therefore, by utilizing "WE" and impersonal pronouns "IT," "THIS," "THAT," Rahul and Smitha implement a mechanism that reduces interpersonal confrontation. This strategy enables the complainers to mitigate directives and avoid confrontation with the superior.

ChatGPT-generated complaint sequences not only explicitly establish accountability, but also employ significant mitigation strategies to ensure that the complaints remain socially acceptable.

The ChatGPT-generated complaints in situations A and B clearly indicate systematic and strategic use of downgraders and upgraders. Both interactions make maximum use of downgraders. Rahul's request for repair is framed as an appeal rather than as a direct command, while his request concerning future behaviour is presented as a subjectivised statement. Similarly, Smitha uses appeals and cajolers when requesting corrective action.

Simultaneously, both complaint tokens contain lexical intensification. Rahul uses an intensifier when presenting the consequences of the professor's action, whereas Smitha intensifies her explicit condemnation.

The ChatGPT-generated complaints are efficiently calibrated rather than simply increased or decreased.

The use of supportive moves in the ChatGPT-generated complaint tokens establishes a strong argumentative function. In both situations A and B, a simple expression of dissatisfaction/disapproval is transformed into a justified accusation with the help of supportive moves. Apart from stating the inappropriate behaviour of the professor, the complainer provides contextual evidence demonstrating why the action has serious consequences.

The ChatGPT-generated complaint interaction displays a layered structure:

Step 1 (Complaint) → **Step 2** (Complainer's Justification) → **Step 3** (Mitigation) → **Step 4** (Request for Repair/Forbearance).

The findings demonstrate that complaint construction in the two ChatGPT-generated dialogues is best understood as the interaction of complaint force, mitigation, power, and relational management rather than as the isolated deployment of individual complaint strategies.

Power appears to regulate directness. Although both students explicitly establish the professor's responsibility, they avoid sustained unmitigated confrontation. The hierarchical relationship encourages the use of appeals, cajolers, subjectivisers, appreciation, and indirect requests.

Complaint effectiveness is constructed through evidential support. The generated complaints repeatedly explain how the delayed reference threatens the student's employment opportunity. Consequently, the complaint is framed as a legitimate response to a consequential breach rather than as an emotional reaction. Face management is integrated into the complaint sequence itself. Apologies, appreciation, empathy and future commitments occur before the interaction reaches closure. The professor is given opportunities to restore his face, while the students are provided with mechanisms for maintaining respect despite expressing dissatisfaction.

Thus, the generated dialogues reveal a pragmatic balancing mechanism:

Accountability + Complaint Force + Mitigation + Repair = Relationally Sustainable Complaint

Conclusion

Overall, the findings demonstrate that ChatGPT-3.5 constructs complaints through a combination of explicit accountability and interpersonal mitigation. Both Rahul and Smitha employ complaint strategies that establish the professor's responsibility while simultaneously using downgraders, supportive moves, indirectness, appreciation, and repair-oriented directives to manage the face-threatening potential of the complaint.

The most significant finding is therefore not a simple difference between male and female complainers but the systematic calibration of complaint force to institutional power. ChatGPT-generated complaints in the present dataset are characterised by a recurring movement from dissatisfaction to justification, mitigation and repair. This suggests that pragmatic appropriateness in AI-generated discourse is realised through the simultaneous management of propositional content, interpersonal face and relational hierarchy.

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APPENDIX 1

Complaints to a person of superior status**Situation: Promised reference**

Situation A. Professor Bakshi has promised Rahul, a B.Tech. final-year student, a letter of reference for a job interview. When Rahul comes to pick up the promised reference a day before the interview, no reference has been written. Moreover, Professor Bakshi shows his inability to write it in a day. Compose a dialogue between Rahul and Professor Bakshi that serves as a complaint.

- L1 Rahul: Good morning, Professor Bakshi. I came to pick up the reference letter you promised for my job interview tomorrow.
- L2 Professor Bakshi: Good morning, Rahul. I'm sorry, but I haven't been able to write it yet. I'm afraid I won't be able to have it ready by tomorrow.
- L3 Rahul: Professor Bakshi, you promised me that you would write this letter. I've been counting on it for my interview, which is now less than a day away. This puts me in a difficult position.
- L4 Professor Bakshi: I understand your frustration, Rahul. I truly intended to write it, but unforeseen circumstances arose, and I couldn't manage to complete it in time.
- L5 Rahul: I appreciate that, Professor. However, this has put me at a significant disadvantage. Is there anything you can do at this point?
- L6 Professor Bakshi: I can try to expedite the process and have it ready by tomorrow afternoon, but I cannot guarantee its quality given the time constraints.
- L7 Rahul: I understand. I'll have to make do with what I have. But in the future, I hope we can avoid such situations. A promise like this is crucial for a student's career prospects.
- L8 Professor Bakshi: You're absolutely right, Rahul. I apologize once again for the inconvenience caused. I'll make sure to handle such commitments more responsibly in the future.

Situation B. Professor Bakshi has promised Smitha, a B.Tech. final-year student, a letter of reference for a job interview. When Smitha comes to pick up the promised reference a day before the interview, no reference has been written. Moreover, Professor Bakshi shows his inability to write it in a day. Compose a dialogue between Smitha and Professor Bakshi that serves as a complaint.

- L9 Smitha: Professor Bakshi, I came to collect the reference letter you promised me for the job interview tomorrow, but I don't see it prepared.
- L10 Professor Bakshi: Oh, Smitha, I'm sorry, but I couldn't get to it. I've been tied up with urgent tasks and didn't realize how quickly time flew by.
- L11 Smitha: Professor, I understand that you're busy, but this letter of reference is crucial for my interview tomorrow. I was relying on your support for this opportunity.
- L12 Professor Bakshi: I completely understand, Smitha, and I sincerely apologize for not being able to fulfil my promise. Is there any way I can assist you now?
- L13 Smitha: I'm not sure, Professor. The interview is tomorrow, and most employers require references in advance. I was counting on your letter to strengthen my application.
- L14 Professor Bakshi: I regret that this situation has arisen. I can try to expedite the process and have the letter ready as soon as possible, but it might not be in time for your interview.
- L15 Smitha: I appreciate your willingness to help, Professor Bakshi, but I'm disappointed and worried about the impact this might have on my interview prospects. Is there any alternative solution we can explore?
- L16 Professor Bakshi: Let me see if I can provide you with a provisional reference letter, stating my intent to vouch for your skills and character. It won't be as detailed as a fully prepared letter, but it might serve as a temporary measure until I can provide a more formal one.
- L17 Smitha: That would be helpful, Professor. Thank you for considering this option. I understand that circumstances can be unpredictable, and I appreciate your efforts to assist me despite the time constraints.
- L18 Professor Bakshi: You're welcome, Smitha. I'll work on the provisional letter right away and email it to you as soon as it's ready. Again, I apologize for any inconvenience caused by this delay.
- L19 Smitha: Thank you, Professor Bakshi. I'll be on the lookout for your email and will keep you updated about the interview outcome.