

proceedings of

Paper presented at Languages for Specific Purposes and Professional Communication International Conference, "Collaboration and Engagement", 15-17 July 2010, Petaling Jaya Hilton Hotel, Selangor.

Language choice in enquiries about accommodation in hotel telephone service encounters

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Abstract

Service encounters are complementary in that one interactant demands and another gives, resulting in much shorter but more formal conversations than everyday talk. In multilingual settings, the interest is not only in the staging of the service encounter but also the language choices used to fulfil various functions in the transaction. The study examined language choice in enquiries about accommodation in hotel telephone service encounters. The specific aspects studied were the staging of the telephone enquiries about hotel accommodation and the points of departure from the initial language used for the telephone enquiry by the client and the hotel receptionist. The case study involved a trained hotel receptionist working in a three-star hotel. Her interactions with the clients were audio-taped with the permission of the hotel management. Analysis of the staging of the hotel accommodation enquiry was carried out using Halliday and Hassan's (1985) framework of the structure of service encounters. The analysis of 21 accommodation enquiries showed conformity to the Greeting ^ Service Initiation ^ Service Request ^ Service Compliance ^ Service Closure. The recursive elements were the stages of Service