

# Exploring Online Arabic Complaints in Hotel Reviews on TripAdvisor: A Discourse-Pragmatic Study

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## Abstract

Although much work has explored Arabic complaints in face-to-face (FTF) communication, the subject has received less scholarly attention in computer mediated communication (CMC). In response to the lack of studies on online Arabic complaints, the present study aimed to identify the types of speech acts employed in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor, the specific topics evaluated in negative reviews, and the adjectives used to convey the reviewers' evaluations. The study was conducted on hotels in Saudi Arabia, with a sample comprising 246 reviews of 35 hotels in Riyadh, Al-Khobar, and Jeddah. Only 5-star hotels were included. The data were collected manually and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using Microsoft Excel. The results showed that when writing negative reviews on TripAdvisor, Arabs used various speech acts to express their complaints; the most frequently used were retrospective speech acts that included mostly negative evaluations with some positive evaluations. Additionally, the topics most frequently evaluated negatively were services, interpersonal relations, and accommodation; such negative evaluations featured various adjectives with some adverbs to intensify the negative review. Regarding positive evaluations, location was the most frequent positively evaluated aspect, followed by services and accommodation. The results also demonstrated that Arabs rarely used opening and closing speech acts in their negative reviews on TripAdvisor. Finally, the study's limitations and suggestions are discussed in this paper for the benefit of further research.

**Keywords:** negative reviews, online complaints, evaluative discourse, Arabic, TripAdvisor, speech act

## 1. Introduction

Travelers tend to use various websites before embarking on their journey, such as TripAdvisor, which is the world's most popular website for travel arrangements and accommodations. TripAdvisor allows users to peruse the best and worst hotels, airlines, restaurants, places, and so forth through positive and negative reviews other travelers wrote and posted on the website. Complaints constitute one of the most significant features of TripAdvisor reviews. According to Searle (1976), a complaint expresses the complainant's approval or disapproval of a behavior the complainees has done or failed to do. According to Trosborg (1995), a complaint is an illocutionary act in which the complainant expresses disapproval of the state of affairs described in the proposition and for which they hold the complainees responsible, either directly or indirectly. Complaints about hotels can be about services, payment policy, receptionists' attitude, prices, location, food, and so forth. The fact that people are free to write a negative review without any restrictions makes readers more convinced about the veracity of review content. Reviews are usually written after someone has an experience in order to highlight the best and worst features of any given hotel.

However, very few studies have examined Arabic complaints in CMC. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the types of speech acts used in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor as well as the topics evaluated and the adjectives used in negative reviews. Given the Arab region's large geographic size, it is expected that complaints may vary according to complainers' geographical location. This study focused on complaints about 5-star hotels in Saudi Arabia in the form of negative reviews on TripAdvisor. This narrowed focus provides better insight to understand the construction of online Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor in the form of negative reviews. Furthermore, investigating Arabic complaints will illustrate the way in which Arabs express their negative thoughts and feelings via CMC on a website such as TripAdvisor. The current study aimed to answer the following questions to understand how Arabic complainers construct their negative reviews on TripAdvisor:

1. What types of speech acts do Arabs employ in their complaints on TripAdvisor?
2. Which topics do complainers evaluate on TripAdvisor?
3. Which adjectives do complainers use in their complaints on TripAdvisor?

### 1.1 Theoretical Background

Utterances are made through the act of using words and are thus called a "speech act" (Austin, 1962). Speech act theory began with

Austin (1962); it is concerned with how words can be used not only to present information but also to perform an action. Searle (1969) proposed two types of speech acts: direct and indirect. A speaker might want to deliver the literal meaning that the words express; this is called a direct speech act. On the other hand, when the speaker wants to deliver a meaning that differs from the literal meaning of the words, it is called an indirect speech act (Searle, 1969). Further, Searle (1969) classified illocutionary force into macro-classes: declarations, representatives, commissives, directives, and expressives. According to Austin (1962), an illocutionary act is the issuing of an utterance with conventional communicative force achieved “in saying.” Expressing a complaint is the act of expressing the state of being unsatisfied about something through propositional content. Searle (1976) categorized complaints as a part of expressive speech acts that express the complainant’s disapproval of the complainees’ behavior. Trosborg (1995) has claimed that the speech act of complaint involves expressive and directive functions; that is, when the speaker complains, they tend to express their dissatisfaction alongside a request that the complainees perform a remedial act to compensate for the speaker’s loss.

According to Boxer (1989), complaints can be direct or indirect. Direct complaints are when complainers express their annoyance or unhappiness immediately in a case where the complainees is held responsible for the perceived offence. A direct complaint involves an explicit or implicit accusation and at least one explicit or implicit directive (Clyne, 1994, p. 54). Unlike direct complaints, an indirect complaint neither holds someone responsible nor is it capable of remedying the perceived offense.

## 1.2 Literature Review

### 1.2.1 Complaints in Arabic FTF Communication

Many studies have been conducted to investigate Arabic complaints in FTF communication. El-Dakhs, Al-Haqbani, Althaqafi, and Al-Fouzan (2019) argued that age, social dominance, and distance strongly influence Saudis’ complaints. It was found that older Najdis (people from the middle of Saudi Arabia) are more in command of complaint strategies than their younger counterparts. Najdis place more emphasis on harmony with complainees. It was also observed that Najdis use different complaint strategies, with the most common being non-confrontational repair requests, anonymous expressions, and blame. They also use a high number of modifiers and initiators. Furthermore, Alfadda (2019) proposed that complaint calls to a Saudi furniture trading company’s (FTC) complaint unit featured threats, blame, direct accusations and requests, and shows of solidarity. Additionally, it was revealed that Saudi Arabic complaints have a specific structure with different features than those of regular telephone conversations. These findings can contribute to sociolinguistics, pedagogy, and business. The pluricentric nature of Arabic, meaning that the language is spoken in different countries, has been ignored due to the emphasis on regional variation within individual countries (El-Dakhs & Ahmed, 2021). To address this gap, El-Dakhs and Ahmed (2021) explored complaints in two Arabic dialects: Alexandrian Arabic and Najdi Arabic. The data were collected through roleplay and coded using an adapted version of Trosborg’s (1995) coding scheme. The study found that both groups tended to use directive acts with blame and disapproval to express their complaints. Furthermore, they both cared about the complainees’ negative face. However, Alexandrians tended to use direct complaint strategies where the influence of the social variables of gender, social distance, and social dominance was minor compared to Najdis. Additionally, Abdo (2021) agreed that Egyptian Arabic speakers employ different strategies when complaining and that their choice of strategies varies depending on the social power and distance of the given context. In this pragmatic study, a sample of 50 Egyptian speakers were given a discourse completion test (DCT), and the data were analyzed using Trosborg’s taxonomy of complaint strategies (1995).

Al-Shorman (2016) and Rashidi (2017) covered direct complaints in the Saudi context. Al-Shorman (2016) claimed that Saudis use a variety of strategies to express complaints. It was noted that calmness and rationality were the most used strategies among Saudi and Jordanian students, followed by offensive, opting-out, and direct complaint strategies. Rashidi (2017) explored the strategies used among monolingual Saudi Arabian adults, Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) adult learners, and native English speakers in the speech act of direct complaint. The main finding was that requests, hints, and annoyance were the most frequently used strategies among all the different types of participants. In the previous study, the data were collected using a DCT.

Hakim (1986) indicated that speech act theories have great importance in language instruction. Hakim conducted a study involving Palestinian, Saudi, Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese dialects to identify the importance of Arabic negation in communication. Twenty-two students were asked to respond to two different stimuli (aural and visual) through roleplaying. It was found that complaints were the most frequent type of negation used among the participants. Moreover, *ma(a)* “not” was the most commonly used negative lexical item in both aural and visual situations, followed by *mish*, *mush* and *la(a)*. The researcher argued that refraining from saying “no” when socializing is part of being polite in Arab culture. Additionally, Arabs usually repeat the negative lexical item *la(a)* to add emphasis. Mayouf (2013) investigated Iraqi Arabic complaints using two data collection tools: roleplay and a DCT. The data were then analyzed according to response length and semantic components. Both methods showed similar results; the respondents realized the speech act of complaint while in DCT and used criticism in their complaints. The findings proved that the data collection method plays an important role in the way Iraqi speakers realize speech acts. These studies have contributed to understanding everyday situations, although they only used DCT and roleplay, which do not generate naturalistic data. In other words, such tools reflect what people may say but not the precise content of their utterances in the given situations.

### 1.2.2 Complaints on TripAdvisor

Several studies have examined complaints in FTF communication, while few have investigated complaints in CMC. Among the latter, Vázquez (2011) examined the characteristics of 100 English-language CMC complaints in the form of negative reviews on TripAdvisor.

TripAdvisor was selected because it is the largest and most popular website for travel services and accommodation reviews. The study found that over one-third of complaints tended to include some type of positive evaluation and the same proportion involved the reviewer's expectations. The study also revealed that complaints often occur as a larger speech act set, frequently co-occurring with advice and recommendations.

Cenni and Goethals (2017) argued that English, Dutch, and Italian TripAdvisor users share the same norms and discourse habits. Negative reviews in those three languages represented the main speech acts with other speech acts, such as positive evaluation. Furthermore, the reviewers discussed similar topics in their reviews, such as services. The study was a cross-linguistic analysis of 100 reviews in each language; the data were coded manually using NVivo. Cenni and Goethals (2020) conducted another study on negative hotel reviews from a cross-linguistic perspective. Around 300 responses written in English, Dutch, and Italian were analyzed to examine the texts' discourse characteristics. It was found that while English and Dutch responses shared relatively similar communicative strategies, Italian responses differed. Kılıç Gönen (2019) is another study that pragmatically examined CMC complaints. That research investigated 100 online Turkish complaints on TripAdvisor to ascertain whether the complaints were direct or indirect. The study aimed to analyze the complaints according to some descriptive words' frequency of use. Complaints about 5-star hotels in Antalya were selected, as these were the most popular hotel complainees in 2018. It was found that 91 of the complaints were indirect in the form of explicit advice, one was direct, and eight included both. From another perspective, Decock and Depraetere (2018) argued that it is essential to consider the distinction between linguistic (in)directness and perceived face-threat in order to reach a better understanding. They have claimed that their approach is based on the current methodological advances in pragmatics. They focused on linguistic (in)directness and distinguished six complaint strategies. However, Puksi (2016) argued that threat strategy is considered an alternative to the speech act of complaining in online hotel reviews, though complaint strategy is the most frequently used. It was also observed that there is no apology strategy for the speech act of complaint in online hotel reviews. In this study, content analysis was used to identify speech acts in Indonesian and English hotel reviews.

In addition to examining CMC complaints, hotels' responses to customer complaints need to be analyzed. Zhang and Vásquez (2014) investigated 80 hotel responses to online customer complaints posted on TripAdvisor. They used Biber, Connor, and Upton (2007) as a model. It was revealed that most hotel responses are formulaic and feature gratitude and apologies. Despite the study's limitations, it contributed to understanding how businesses manage customer dissatisfaction. To address the problem from another perspective, Ekiz, Khoo-Lattimore, and Memarzadeh (2012) indicated that the most frequent complaint themes in luxury hotels' reviews are that the rooms are too small or that they lack technology, rude staff, and failure to respond to customers' complaints. The main criterion used to identify hotels in this study was their rating, which led to an investigation of 32 luxury hotels in Kuala Lumpur. Furthermore, Fernandes and Fernandes (2017) argued that the most common complaint category in online hotel reviews is "rooms," with 39.3% references. Additionally, customer demographics and hotel class affect customers' expectations; therefore, these factors affect the number of complaints. Ho (2018) investigated strategy use to identify review response genres. The study explored the effectiveness of the genre from customers' perspective since most previous studies investigated the effectiveness of the genre from analysts' perspective. Responses posted on TripAdvisor and reviewers' opinions were collected. It was revealed that effective and ineffective responses differed in terms of move structure and metadiscourse. This study contributed to the methodology by investigating the problem from customers' perspective; therefore, it added a new approach to research on hotel management's responses.

TripAdvisor and other online public platforms can greatly impact hotel review content, as evidenced in Ruytenbeek, Verschraegen, and Decock (2021), who examined the impact of TripAdvisor's and Booking.com's affordances on the expression of negativity in hotel reviews. A corpus of negative reviews written in French was built and then coded using Depraetere, Decock, and Ruytenbeek's (2021) guidelines for complaints. The finding was that Booking.com reviews tended to be shorter than TripAdvisor reviews, which were found to be more explicitly negative than Booking.com's. Tuominen (2011) argued that online consumer-generated reviews impact hotel profitability. Indeed, correlations were found between hotel performance and the number of reviews as well as hotel ratings. As the number of reviews and customer recommendation percentage increase, hotels' daily rate and revenue per room also increase. Additionally, Hassan, Tik, Yoke, and Nor (2021) found that online negative reviews negatively impact tourism service providers. Those scholars collected 270 online reviews written by tourists and examined tourism service providers' interpersonal communication skills. Tourists' complaints about their negative experiences with tourism service providers were embedded in other speech acts such as advice, due to the presence of verbal and non-verbal communication factors. Furthermore, Hong (2020) explored tourists' negative reviews about Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul, Korea, using qualitative analysis to investigate users' negative reviews on TripAdvisor. The data were inputted into an Excel spreadsheet, and QSR NVivo was used for analysis. It was revealed that the reasons underlying visitors' negative reviews were as follows: Gyeongbokgung Palace does not evoke real Korean history, and the place is not impressive and convenient for tourists and is not worth visiting.

Tian (2013) compared American and Chinese travelers' engagement patterns in online hotel reviews. Using chi-square testing, Tian (2013) aimed to explore whether the two groups of travelers from the two different cultures displayed engagement homogeneity in writing hotel reviews. Overall homogeneous engagement patterns in hotel review writing were revealed among American and Chinese travelers. Travelers expressed their feelings about their experiences at hotels. Thus, travelers' writing is introspective. On the other hand, Fiorentino and Compagnone (2019) shed light on French and English reviews of some Italian hotels. They compared reviews of the same hotel to observe potential intercultural aspects of citizen tourism. They adopted a mixture of qualitative investigation and quantitative data. The

main finding was that English reviewers were more focused on evaluation while French reviewers were more detailed and favored a neutral, objective tone.

Some studies used narrative analysis to investigate communication technologies. For example, Vázquez (2012) collected 100 negative hotel reviews on TripAdvisor to examine their narrative features. Despite this study's limitation given its exclusive focus on negative reviews, it is clear that TripAdvisor reviews can be considered "small stories." Vázquez argued that using narrative features in online reviews attracts audience attention to the review content. However, De Fina (2016) claimed that people's comments on social media tend to be more storytelling than a tale. In social media, the big story can be manipulated in a way that is impossible in a face-to-face environment (De Fina, 2016).

Migdadi, Badarneh, and Khwaylih (2021) investigated Jordanian graduate students' complaints on Facebook using Brown and Levinson's politeness model. The sample comprised 60 complaint posts about institutions. The researchers analyzed the complaints according to their semantic formulas, correlation with the complainant's gender, and politeness functions. It was revealed that complainants tended to show solidarity with student representatives as a way to encourage them to transfer the problems to university officials. In another study, Hassouneh and Zibin (2021) examined Facebook users' complaint strategies regarding Zain Jordan according to their frequency and type and the linguistic features of the language. Data were collected randomly and analyzed using pragmatic annotation. The study found that most complaint strategies utilized on Facebook are direct.

Studies on Arabic in CMC are rare, especially on TripAdvisor, which plays a tremendous role in the tourism industry and countries' economies. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore types of speech acts, the topics that are evaluated, and the adjectives employed in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor to understand the construction of Arabic online negative reviews containing complaints about hotels.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Data

Complaints can be found in negative reviews published on TripAdvisor, which is the world's most famous travel website, where users can find information about, including reviews on, hotels and restaurants in different countries, as well as airplane tickets. The content is mainly generated by travelers who share their experiences and comments with the public through reviews that can be accessed by anyone searching the website. TripAdvisor (2022) provides over 1 billion reviews and opinions related to nearly 8 million businesses. Since TripAdvisor offers plenty of services for both travelers and businesses, the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system classifies TripAdvisor as a part of the "data processing and preparation" industry, while the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) places the company into the "travel agencies" industry. According to Yoo, Sigala, and Gretzel (2016), at the core of TripAdvisor's business model and strategy are the development, continuous enhancement, and maintenance of the platform and its content through features that further facilitate and encourage value creation for travelers and firms (p. 245).

The data for the present study were 246 negative hotel reviews posted on TripAdvisor.com. The collected reviews pertain to different cities: Riyadh, Al-Khobar, and Jeddah. This includes 15 hotels in Riyadh, nine hotels in Al-Khobar, and 11 hotels in Jeddah. These cities were chosen because they are the most visited in Saudi Arabia. All the reviews were written in Arabic; no translations were included. Hotels were chosen depending on their class, and only 5-star hotels were selected. After hotel selection, the filter was adjusted to limit the results to "poor" and "terrible" reviews written in Arabic. Even with these parameters, there were a few purely positive reviews among the results. Those were excluded, except the ones deemed to be generally negative despite the inclusion of some positive comments. The reviews were then copied from the website and inputted to an Excel sheet. Color-coding was applied to identify city and hotel names for each review. City names were highlighted in yellow, and hotel names were highlighted in blue. This technique facilitated the process of analyzing the reviews. The names of hotels and of the people who left a negative review were omitted and will not appear in the results reported in this paper for privacy purposes. The IRB approved this study's data collection procedures.

### 2.2 Procedure

The data were coded according to the description of negative reviews speech acts Vázquez (2011) proposed, which Cenni and Goethals (2017) modified, to help with exhaustive corpus codification. It guided us to identify and quantify the frequency of the occurrence of different speech acts and evaluation topics in Arabic negative reviews. However, it was slightly adjusted to suit the different speech acts found in Arabic complaints. As can be seen in Table 1 below, additional codes were added to Cenni and Goethals' (2017) taxonomy, namely "opening," "closing," and "others."

Table 1. Segmentation of the reviews' text

The types of speech acts and evaluated topics			
Opening		Greeting Services Interpersonal	
Retrospective speech acts	Negative evaluation	Accommodation General Price Location Location Services	
		Positive Evaluation	Accommodation General Interpersonal Price
			Descriptions
	Future - oriented speech acts		
		Metapragmatic speech acts	
	Others		Previous Experience Request Thanking Wishing
Closing			Farewell Greeting
			Insult

Retrospective speech acts comprised negative and positive evaluations. The evaluative statements were subdivided by evaluation topic, which yielded six categories: accommodation, services, location, price, interpersonal relations, and general evaluation. "Accommodation" refers to the hotel's appearance, that is, the rooms and furnishings such as sofas, shower, and beds. "Services" include check in and out, food, cleanliness, safety, and availability of transportation. "Location" refers to the distance from the hotel to downtown and to the airport. "Price" is the price of the hotel including the cost of its services. "Interpersonal relations" are relations with hotel staff, such as reception desk staff, cleaning staff, and restaurant staff. The last category, "general," reflects a general evaluation of the whole stay experience. Retrospective speech acts also include travelers' demands for remedial action for their inconvenience or dissatisfaction regarding anything related to the hotel being reviewed. Other descriptions were categorized as "extra information," which includes all irrelevant information (i.e., unrelated to the hotel being reviewed) mentioned by the traveler.

The second category is "future-oriented speech acts." These acts do not include travelers' past experiences but rather their future intentions, recommendations, and advice. The researchers subdivided the categories according to the intended addressee: intentions (self-oriented), recommendations directed at peer travelers, and advice for hotel owners and others.

The third category is "metapragmatic speech acts." This includes all metapragmatic comments, such as "I don't have enough bad words to describe this hotel" or "Normally we wouldn't complain, but . . ."

Three more categories were added to Cenni and Goethals' (2017) taxonomy, namely "opening," "closing," and "others." "Opening" refers to greetings. "Closing" involves thanking, wishing, farewell, greeting, and insult. The category "others" encompasses expectations, previous experiences, and requests.

During the analysis, the researchers found that some complaints include more than one comment belonging to the same category or code, such as advising the hotel owner to engage in building maintenance and hire professional staff. The researchers considered such comments as belonging to each applicable category; for instance, in the case of the above example, the numeral 1 was added in the category "advice for hotel owner" instead of 2, referring to frequency.

The researchers achieved reliability. The first author analyzed the first 50 reviews independently; the second researcher then revised them. This was done to create an agreed upon set of criteria for identifying Arabic speech acts of complaint. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. The same procedure was applied to the rest of reviews, as well as to categorizing the adjectives used in the complaints based on their semantic similarity.

### 3. Results

In this section, complaint construction will be detailed in terms of the different types of speech acts, the evaluation topics, the adjectives used in negative reviews, and overall frequency, with examples drawn from Arabic complaints posted on TripAdvisor.

Table 2. The types of speech acts and evaluated topics

The frequency of types of speech acts and evaluated topics		Freq	%	
Opening	Greeting	2	0.2%	
	Services	158	15.4%	
	Negative evaluation	Interpersonal	136	13.3%
		Accommodation	135	13.2%
		General	70	6.8%
		Price	54	5.3%
		Location	23	2.2%
Retrospective speech acts	Location	32	3.1%	
	Services	27	2.6%	
	Positive Evaluation	Accommodation	26	2.5%
		General	21	2.1%
		Interpersonal	19	1.9%
	Descriptions	Price	3	0.3%
		Extra information	101	9.9%
		Remedial action	29	2.8%
		Advice for hotel owner	50	4.9%
		Recommendations for travelers	44	4.3%
Future - oriented speech acts	Intentions	36	3.5%	
	Advice for other	0	0.0%	
Metapragmatic speech acts	Metapragmatic speech acts	1	0.1%	
	Expectation	21	2.1%	
Others	Previous Experience	21	2.1%	
	Request	4	0.4%	
	Thanking	5	0.5%	
	Wishing	3	0.3%	
Closing	Farewell	1	0.1%	
	Greeting	1	0.1%	
	Insult	1	0.1%	
Total		1024	100%	

As shown in Table 2, six types of speech acts were identified: opening, retrospective, future-oriented, metapragmatic, closing, and other speech acts. Their frequency order, sequenced from the most frequently occurring speech act to the least used, is as follows: negative evaluations > positive evaluations > future-oriented > extra information > others > remedial action > closing > opening > metapragmatic. Evidently, retrospective speech acts were the most frequently occurring type of speech act found in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor. The results presented in Table 2 show that the Arabic complaints rarely included opening speech acts such as “greeting,” which only accounted for two occurrences out of 1,024, as shown in Example 1 (see Appendix A for the transliteration symbols for Arabic).

**Example 1:** السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، انا نزيل لديكم من يوم الاثنين الى هذا اليوم، انا واجهت عدة مشاكل تهدد سمعة (اسم الفندق) . . .

Transliteration: assala:mu ʿalaykum wa rah̄matu allah wa barakatuh. ʔana nazi:l min yawm al-ʔithnayn eila hadha al-yawm. ʔana wa:jaht ʿiddat masha:kil tuhaddid sumʿat (eism al-funduq) . . .

Translation: Peace be upon you and Allah’s mercy and blessings. I have been a guest in your hotel since Monday until today. I have faced many problems that threaten the reputation of [hotel name]... .

Complainants used the greeting “peace be upon you and Allah’s mercy and blessings” to initiate their complaints but did not frequently use greetings within their actual complaints. The negative reviews began with a direct complaint. The most common topic in the Arabic complaints was “services,” with an overall frequency of 158 occurrences (see Example 2).

**Example 2:** الخدمة كانت سيئة جدا

Transliteration: al-khidmah ka:nat syyiʔah jiddan

Translation: The service was very bad.

Complainants used the adjective “bad” to complain about different services including cleanliness, food, and so forth. This suggests that, compared to other adjectives’ usage frequency, most complainants used the same negative adjective to express their complaints, as will be shown in Tables 3–8. Moreover, the evaluation topics “interpersonal relations” and “accommodation” showed approximately the same frequency, that is, around 135 occurrences (see Examples 3 and 4, respectively).

**Example 3:** موظفة الاستقبال سيئة جدا  
 Transliteration: muwaTHTHafat al-istiqlbal sayyi?ah jiddan  
 Translation: The receptionist is very bad.

**Example 4:** الأثاث قديم جدا  
 Transliteration: al-atha:th qadi:m jiddan  
 Translation: The furniture is very old.

The complainants in the examples used the same adverb, “very,” to indicate the intensity of their complaints, whether they were complaining about the hotels’ accommodation or the staff. Next, general evaluations were identified 70 times (see Example 5).

**Example 5:** كانت تجربة سيئة  
 Transliteration: ka:nat tajrubah sayyi?ah  
 Translation: It was a bad experience.

Sentences such as this were common; complainants referred to their visit using the word “experience” and used various negative adjectives to describe it, such as “bad” and “bitter.” The evaluation topics “price” and “location” were the least discussed in the Arabic complaints, with the former occurring 54 times, and the latter being mentioned 23 times (see Examples 6 and 7, respectively).

**Example 6:** السعر مبالغ فيه  
 Transliteration: assi°r muba:lagh fi:h  
 Translation: The price is exaggerated.

When complaining about the price, the complainants repeatedly used the phrase “the price” to refer to the cost of the hotel and that of any of its services. Regarding how people complained about hotels’ location, see Example 7.

**Example 7:** الموقع سيء جدا  
 Transliteration: al-mawqi° sayyi? Jiddan  
 Translation: The location is very bad.

Two adjectives were frequently used to complain about hotels’ location: “bad” and “far away.” In contrast, the most common topic in positive evaluations was “location,” with an overall frequency of 32 occurrences. It was observed that complainants sometimes added some positive evaluations to their complaint (see Example 8).

**Example 8:** الفندق موقعه ممتاز ولكن...  
 Transliteration: al-funduq mawqi°uh mummtaz wa la:kin . . .  
 Translation: The location of the hotel is excellent, but . . .

Given the aforementioned tendency, complainants tended to express their opinions and share their experience reasonably, that is, without neglecting hotels’ favorable aspects. Next, the evaluation topics “services” and “accommodation” had approximately the same frequency at around 26 occurrences each (see Examples 9 and 10, respectively).

**Example 9:** الفطور رائع  
 Transliteration: al-fu°u:r ra?i°  
 Translation: The breakfast is wonderful.

**Example 10:** الغرفة جميلة  
 Transliteration: al-ghurfah jami:lah  
 Translation: The room is beautiful.

“General” and “interpersonal relations” also had approximately the same frequency at 20 occurrences each (see Examples 11 and 12, respectively).

**Example 11:** الفندق ممتاز  
 Transliteration: al-fundūq mummtaz  
 Translation: The hotel is excellent.

**Example 12:** العاملین بالفندق متعاونين جدا  
 Transliteration: al-ʿamili:n bi al-fundūq mutaʿa:wini:n jidan  
 Translation: The hotel staff are very cooperative.

In Example 11, the complainant refers to their overall experience and describes it using a positive adjective, “excellent.” Moreover, it was observed that reviewers sometimes referred to the people working at hotels in general as “staff,” as in Example 12, or they may refer to specific workers by their job title or role, such as “receptionist,” “chief,” or “housekeeping,” as shown previously in Example 3. Finally, the least common evaluation topic was “price,” which only had three occurrences in the positive evaluations. The second component of the retrospective speech act is “description.” This category includes “extra information,” which occurred 101 times (see Example 13).

**Example 13:** وصلت تاريخ ١٧ ابريل الساعة ١٢ ونص صباحا  
 Transliteration: waṣalt tari:kh 17 ʔibri:l assa:ʿah 12 wa nuṣ ṣaba:ḥan  
 Translation: I arrived on April 17 at 12:30 a.m.

Example 13 is considered to be extraneous information since it does not give readers any information about the hotel being reviewed. Other reviewers in the research sample shared personal information, and some even mentioned information totally unrelated to the hotel such as the weather in the city at the time or information about airlines. The second type was “remedial action,” which was only mentioned 29 times (see Example 14).

**Example 14:** ...وطالبتهم بصلحون المكيف وكل ما طلبت منهم صيانه بكون يغيرون فلتر  
 Transliteration: ... wa ṭalibhum yṣalluḥu:n al-mukayyif wa kul ma ṭalbtuhum ṣiya:nah yiju:n yighayyiru:n filtar  
 Translation: Every time I ask[ed] them to fix the air conditioner, they just change[d] the filter.

This example involves remedial action regarding a problem the guest was facing. Complainants who mentioned remedial action tended to describe the entire problematic situation they faced and mention exactly what they asked for and what they received in terms of a solution. Additionally, future-oriented speech acts were analyzed. The most common types were “advice for hotel owner” and “recommendations for travelers,” at frequencies of 50 and 44, respectively. These were followed by “intentions” in third place, with 36 occurrences. There were no instances of “advice for others.” Example 15 is a recommendation for travelers, and Example 16 is a reviewer’s expression of their own intentions.

**Example 15:** لا انصح  
 Transliteration: la ʔanṣaḥ  
 Translation: I do not recommend.

**Example 16:** لن اكرر الزيارة  
 Transliteration: lan ʔukarrir azziya:rah  
 Translation: I will not come again.

In Example 15, the complainant uses the verb “recommend” with the negation “no” to make a recommendation to other travelers. In Example 16, the reviewer expresses their intention to refrain from revisiting the hotel using “will,” which refers to the future, coupled with the negation “not.” Table 2 clearly shows that the Arabic complaints rarely included metapragmatic speech acts; there was only one example among all the collected reviews.

**Example 17:** لم يتم هذا التقييم لغرض معين ولكن...  
 Transliteration: lam yatim hadha attaqyiyi:m ligharad mu<sup>o</sup>ayyan wa lakin ...  
 Translation: I am not rating this hotel for a specific purpose, but ... .

In Example 17, the complainant begins the review by explaining their motive for writing the review, a tendency that was found to be uncommon among online Arabic complaints.

Additionally, in the category “others” that includes expectations, previous experiences, and requests, expectations and requests showed the same frequency at 21 occurrences each (see Examples 18 and 19, respectively).

**Example 18:** توقعت افضل من ما وجدت  
 Transliteration: tawaqqa<sup>t</sup> ʔfdal min ma wajdt  
 Translation: I expected better than this.

**Example 19:** جربت فنادق اسماءها اقل من (اسم الفندق) لكن اكلهم افضل  
 Transliteration: jarrabt fanadiq ʔsmaʔaha ʔaqal min (ʔism alfunduq) lakin ʔakluhum ʔafdal  
 Translation: I have tried hotels with lower ratings than [hotel name], and their food was better.

Example 18 expresses a reviewer’s disappointed expectation about the overall stay experience using the verb “expect.” In Example 19, the complainant uses the comparative adjective “better.” As previously mentioned, the hotel name has been omitted for privacy purposes. Regarding requests, there were only four occurrences (see Example 20).

**Example 20:** ارجو حل هذا الموضوع بشكل سريع  
 Transliteration: ʔarju: hal hadha ʔalmawdu:<sup>o</sup> bishakil sari:<sup>o</sup>  
 Translation: I hope this issue is resolved quickly.

This example communicates a request in a form of a wish beginning with the verb “hope,” which is a common way of expressing requests in online Arabic complaints. In contrast, the speech acts of “thanking” and “wishing” occurred only five and three times, respectively, whereas “farewell,” “greeting,” and “insult” occurred only once each. Therefore, it can be concluded that Arabs rarely used “closing” when complaining. Examples of closing are تحياتي *tahiyati* “my greetings” and شكرا *shukran* “thank you,” indicating that Arabs tend to use short, simple phrases to end their complaints/reviews.

In their negative evaluations, complainants employed various adjectives and synonyms to describe their complaints about services, interpersonal relations, accommodations, and so forth. Closely examining these adjectives can shed light on their different meanings in the context of a negative evaluation presented as a complaint.

Researchers have analyzed the most and least frequently used adjectives in both negative and positive evaluations of hotels on TripAdvisor. However, since the focus of this study was investigating Arabic complaints, only negative adjectives will be discussed (see Appendix B for positive adjectives). Negative adjectives were mostly used in sentences with the structure “X is ADJ,” and few occurred in sentences with the structure “ADJ X.” These adjectives were used to express negative evaluations in complaints.

Table 3. Adjectives used in evaluating the services in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor

Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1 سيء/مبتذل/معدومة/تعبانة/فاشل/ خايس/ارديء	<i>sayyi?/mubtadhal/ma<sup>c</sup>du:mah/ta<sup>c</sup>ba:nah</i>	Bad/tacky/non-existent/weak/unsucc	76	40%
2 وسخ/غير نظيف/قذر/كريبه	<i>waskh/ghayr naTHi:f/qadhir/kari:hah</i>	Dirty/not clean/nasty/unpleasant	43	23%
3 لا يليق/اقل من عادي/لا بمستوى المأمول/لا يلقى/ليس بمستوى/ادنى من المستوى المقبول/متدنية/متدني/ليست بالشكل المطلوب/غير مرضي/غير مقبول/ابدا/متدني جدا/ليست مقبولة ايدا/اقل من المتوقع	<i>laysa bilmustawa alm?mu:l/la: yali:q/aqal min <sup>c</sup>a:di/la: yartaqi</i>	Not as expected/not appropriate/less than normal/not up to the level/below the acceptable level/low/low/not as it should be/unsatisfying/not acceptable at all/very low/not acceptable at all/less than expected	12	6%
4 بطيء	<i>Ba<sup>t</sup>i:?</i>	Slow	9	5%
5 قليل/محدود/ناقص/غير كافي	<i>qali:l/ma<sup>h</sup>du:d/naqi:s/ghayr ka:fi</i>	Few/limited/incomplete/not enough	9	5%
6 عادي/متوسطة/ضعيف/متواضع	<i><sup>c</sup>a:di/mutawassitah/da<sup>c</sup>i:f/mutawadi<sup>c</sup></i>	Normal/average/weak/modest	7	4%
7 غير جيد	<i>ghayr jayyid</i>	Not good	5	3%
8 قديمة/مهترئة/تالفة	<i>qadi:mah/muhtari?ah/ta:lifah</i>	Old/rundown/damaged	4	2%
9 بلا جودة/جودة اقل/قليل جودة	<i>bila jawdah/jawdah aqal/gali:l jawdah</i>	no quality/low quality/low quality	3	2%
10 عدم احترافية	<i><sup>c</sup>adam ihtirafiyah</i>	Not professional	3	2%
11 معدومة	<i>ma<sup>c</sup>du:mah</i>	Non-existent	3	2%
12 غير لذيذ	<i>ghayr ladhi:dh</i>	Not delicious	3	2%
13 بارد	<i>ba:rid</i>	Cold	2	1%
14 معقد/صعبة	<i>mu<sup>c</sup>aqqaq/da<sup>c</sup>bah</i>	Complicated/hard	2	1%
15 مزعجة	<i>mu<sup>c</sup>izjah</i>	Annoying	2	1%
16 بعيد	<i>ba<sup>c</sup>i:d</i>	Far	1	1%
17 سطحي	<i>sathi</i>	Superficial	1	1%
18 مهمل	<i>muhmal</i>	Neglected	1	1%
19 مستفز	<i>mustafiz</i>	Provocative	1	1%
20 مظلم	<i>muTHlim</i>	Dark	1	1%
Total			188	100%

According to Table 3, the complainants used 20 adjectives that were categorized based on semantic similarity in the context of hotel service evaluation. These adjectives occurred 188 times in total, among which the most commonly used adjective was *sayyi?* “bad,” with 76 occurrences (40%). It is worth mentioning that complainants used a variety of synonyms of “bad,” such as *mubtadhal*, *ta<sup>c</sup>ba:nah*, *kha:yyis*, *fa:shil*, and so forth. The second most commonly used adjective was *waskh* “dirty,” which occurred 43 times. Three synonyms of “dirty” were found in the Arabic complaints: *qadhir*, *kari:hah*, and *ghayr na<sup>t</sup>hi:f*. Other adjectives were also used but at lower frequencies. Among the least used adjectives were *ba<sup>c</sup>i:d* “far away,” *muTHlim* “dark,” and *muhmal* “neglected.” Moreover, some adjectives were preceded by negations such as *ghayr naTHi:f* “not clean,” *laysa bilmustawa alm?mu:l* “not as expected,” and *la: yali:q* “not appropriate.” A variety of Arabic negation words were evidently employed to convey the adjectives’ negative connotations. Additionally, adverbs such as *ghayr maqqbu:l ?abadan* “not acceptable at all” and *mutadanni jidan* “very low” were used to intensify negative evaluations.

Table 4. Adjectives used in evaluating the accommodation in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor

Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1 قديم/غير مجدد/متهاك/مستهلك	<i>qadi:m/ghayr mujaddad/mutaha:lik/mustahlak</i>	Old/ outdated /rundown/worn out	44	27%
2 سيء/ارديء	<i>sayyi?/radi:?</i>	Bad/bad	27	17%
3 ضيق/صغير	<i>da<sup>y</sup>yiq/saghi:r</i>	Tight/small	26	16%
4 غير مريح	<i>ghayr muri:h</i>	Not comfortable	10	6%
5 مزعجة	<i>mu<sup>c</sup>izjah</i>	Annoying	8	5%
6 قذر/معفن/مقزز	<i>qadhir/m<sup>c</sup>affin/mugazziz</i>	Nasty/rotten/disgusting	8	5%
7 عادي	<i><sup>c</sup>a:di</i>	Normal	5	3%
8 خرابان/عطلان/غير صالح للاستخدام	<i>kharba:n/<sup>c</sup>atla:n/ghayr sa:lih lilitikhdam</i>	Down/down/not appropriate for use	4	2%
9 كئيب/ظلام	<i>ka?i:b/THala:m</i>	Gloomy/darkness	4	2%
10 مجهز/غير مهين/غير مكتملة	<i>ghayr mujahhaz/ghayr muhayya?/ghayr muktamilah</i>	Not equipped/unprepared/ incomplete	4	2%
11 معقدة/غير عملية/غير مناسبة	<i>mu<sup>c</sup>aqqaqah/ghayr munasibah</i>	Complicated/impractical/not appropriate	3	2%
12 قليلة/محدود	<i>qali:l/ma<sup>h</sup>du:d</i>	Few/limited	3	2%
13 ضعيف	<i>da<sup>c</sup>i:f</i>	Weak	2	1%

14	غير فخم/متواضع	ghayr fakham/mutawa:di <sup>f</sup>	Not luxury/modest	2	1%
15	غير مطلة	ghayr muṭillah	No view	2	1%
16	باردة	ba:ridah	Cold	1	1%
17	صعب	ṣa <sup>c</sup> b	Hard	1	1%
18	غريب جدا	ghari:b jiddan	Very weird	1	1%
19	غير مرضي	ghayr murdi	Unsatisfying	1	1%
20	لا يليق	la: yali:q	Not appropriate	1	1%
21	مكتظ	muktaTH	Overcrowded	1	1%
22	مضحكة	madhakah	Ridiculous	1	1%
23	مستحيل	mustahi:l	Impossible	1	1%
24	غير جيد	ghayr jayyid	Not good	1	1%
25	مبكي	mubki	Pathetic	1	1%
26	الهوء متوسط	?lhudu: ? mutawassit	Calmness is average	1	1%
Total				163	100%

As shown in Table 4, to evaluate accommodation, the complainants employed 26 adjectives that were categorized based on semantic similarity and which occurred 163 times in total. The most common adjective for evaluating accommodation was *qadi:m* “old,” with 44 occurrences (27%). Complainants also tended to use various synonyms of the adjective “old,” such as *ghayr mujaddad* “outdated” *mutaha:lik* “rundown,” and *mustahlak* “worn out.” The adjectives *sayyi?* “bad” and *dayyiq* “tight” were used 27 (17%) and 26 times (16%), respectively, showing no significant difference in frequency. Synonyms of “bad” and “tight” were also used, namely *radi:?* and *ḡaghi:r*, respectively. Other adjectives were used less frequently, with the least common being *ba:ridah* “cold,” *sa<sup>c</sup>b* “hard,” and *ghari:b* “very weird.”

Table 5. Adjectives used in evaluating the hotels’ staffs in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor

Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%	
1 سيء/مقزز/غير جيد/بشع/متهالكة/فاسدة	sayyi?/mugazziz/ghayr jayyid/bashi <sup>c</sup> /mutahalikah/ fasidah	Bad/nasty/not good/ugly/rundown/rogue	46	38%	
2 عديمي خبرة	‘adimi khibrah	unprofessional	16	13%	
3 مكترئين/غير مباليين/تجاهل/غير	istihitar/ghayr muktarithi:n/ghayr mubali:n/tajahul/ghayr				
نفس/عدم	mutajawibi:n/bidu:n nafs <sup>f</sup> /adam	Disrespect/careless/incurious/ignoring/not	13	11%	
المبالاه/مشغولين/عدم	almubalah/mashghuli:n <sup>f</sup> /adam	responsive/not interested/careless/busy/no			
تجاوب/لا يهتم/عدم الاهتمام	tajawub/la yahtam <sup>f</sup> /adam alihtimam	response/do not care/carelessness			
4 غير متعاونين	ghair muta <sup>c</sup> awini:n	Uncooperative	7	6%	
5 بطيئين	batii?:n	Slow	6	5%	
6 لطيف/غير راقئ/مزعج/يناfox	ghayr lati:f/ghayr raqi/muz <sup>c</sup> ij/ynafikh	Not kind/not elegant/annoying/yelling	5	4%	
7 غير لائق	ghayr la?iq	Not appropriate	5	4%	
8 عدم الاحترام/غير مهذبين	‘adam alihtiram/ghayr muhaththabi:n	No respect/impolite	3	2%	
9 قليل/غير كافي	gali:l/ghayr kafi	Few/not enough	3	2%	
10 غير منضبطة/غير منظم	ghayr munTHabitah/ghayr munaTHTHam	Undisciplined/unorganized	2	2%	
11 غير صادق/مراوغين	ghayr ṣadiq/murawighi:n	Not honest/elusive	2	2%	
12 بخيلة جدا	bakhi:lah jiddan	Very stingy	1	1%	
13 متعاليين	muta <sup>c</sup> ali:n	Bumptious	1	1%	
14 متدني	mutadanni	Low	1	1%	
15 لا يرتقي بمستوى	la yartaqi bimustawa	Not up to the level	1	1%	
16 غير مرضي	ghayr murdi	Unsatisfying	1	1%	
17 متوسط	mutawaṣṣit	Average	1	1%	
18 نفسيات	nafsiyyat	temperamental	1	1%	
19 متطفلين	mutataffili:n	Meddlesome	1	1%	
20 غير متحضر	ghayr mutahaddir	uncivilized	1	1%	
21 متناقضة	mutanaqidah	Contradictory	1	1%	
22 ضعيف	ḡa <sup>c</sup> i:f	Weak	1	1%	
23 غير مسؤول	ghayr mas’u:l	Irresponsible	1	1%	
24 لا مصداقية	la miṣdaqiiyyah	No credibility	1	1%	
25 عنصرية	‘unsuriyyah	Racism	1	1%	
Total				122	100%

When evaluating hotel staff, the complainants used 25 adjectives with different meanings that were categorized based on semantic similarity. These adjectives occurred a total of 122 times. As shown in Table 5, the most common adjective for evaluating hotel staff was “bad” (*sai?*), with 46 occurrences (38%). Notably, “bad” was the most commonly used word in the Arabic complains in general.

Synonyms used included *mugazziz*, *ghayr jayyid*, *bashi<sup>c</sup>*, and *fa:sidah*. The adjective *‘adimi khibrah* “unprofessional occurred a total of 16 times (13%). This adjective was frequently used to describe hotel staff’s incompetence and was applied to a range of positions, including reception desk staff and housekeepers; the role of such descriptions in complainants’ reviews was to explain the reason for their dissatisfaction as a customer at the hotel being rated. The adjective *la mubali* “careless” was used 13 times (11%), alongside synonyms that refer to “carelessness.” Less frequently used adjectives included *bakhi:l* “stingy,” *muta<sup>c</sup>:li* “bumptious,” and *nafsiyyat* “temperamental”

Table 6. Adjectives used in evaluating the hotels in general in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor

Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1	سيئة	<i>sayyi?ah</i>	Bad	51 66%
2	قديم/متهالك/متدنني	<i>qadi:m/mutaha:lik/mutadanni</i>	Old/rundown/low	7 9%
3	اقل من عادية/متواضع/ضعيف	<i>?aqal min ‘adiyyah/mutawa:ḍi<sup>c</sup>/ḍa<sup>c</sup>i:f</i>	Less than normal/modest/weak	4 5%
4	غير مرضية	<i>ghayr murḍiyah</i>	unsatisfying	2 3%
5	مزعج	<i>muẓ‘ij</i>	Annoying	2 3%
6	اهمال	<i>ihma:l</i>	Carelessness	1 1%
7	غير نظيف	<i>ghayr naTHi:f</i>	Not clean	1 1%
8	بخلاء	<i>Bukhala:?</i>	Stingy	1 1%
9	غير جيدة	<i>ghayr jayyidah</i>	Not good	1 1%
10	مخيب للامال	<i>mukhayyib lil?ama:l</i>	Disappointing	1 1%
11	عنصرية	<i>‘unṣuriyyah</i>	Racism	1 1%
12	بانس	<i>ba:ʔis</i>	Miserable	1 1%
13	ممل	<i>mumil</i>	Boring	1 1%
14	يفتقر للمهنية	<i>yaftaqir lilmihaniyyah</i>	Lack of professionalism	1 1%
15	يحتاج تجديد	<i>yahtaj tajdi:d</i>	Needs for renewal	1 1%
16	مريرة	<i>mari:rah</i>	Bitter	1 1%
Total			77	100%

Complainants also used a variety of adjectives to describe the hotel in general or their overall experience, as shown in Table 6. Specifically, complainants employed 16 adjectives that occurred a total of 77 times. The adjective *sayyi?ah* “bad” was often used to evaluate customers’ overall stay experience, with a usage frequency of 51 times (66%). Therefore, it is considered the most popular adjective across the complaints. Other common but less frequently used adjectives were *qadi:m/mutaha:lik/mutadanni* “old/rundown/low” and *?aqal min ‘adiyyah/mutawa:ḍi<sup>c</sup>/ḍa<sup>c</sup>i:f* “less than normal/modest/weak,” which appeared seven (9%) and four (5%) times, respectively. The least used adjectives were *ihma:l* “carelessness,” *ghayr naTHi:f* “not clean,” and *bukhala:?* “stingy.”

Table 7. Adjectives used in evaluating the price in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor

Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1	مبالغ فيه	<i>muba:lagh fi:h</i>	Overrated	21 43%
2	غالي	<i>gha:li</i>	Expensive	12 24%
3	مرتفع	<i>murtafi<sup>c</sup></i>	High	10 20%
4	لا يستحق	<i>la: yastahiq</i>	Not worth	2 4%
5	سيئة	<i>sayyi?ah</i>	Bad	1 2%
6	غير منطقية	<i>ghayr mantiqiyyah</i>	Illogical	1 2%
7	غير مرضية	<i>ghayr murḍiyah</i>	Not satisfying	1 2%
8	خيالي	<i>khaya:li</i>	Imaginary	1 2%
Total			49	100%

According to Table 7, complainants used eight adjectives to evaluate hotel pricing, and these adjectives occurred 49 times in total. Compared to the other adjectives’ usage frequency, the complainants tended to use the adjective *muba:lagh fi:h* “overrated” to express their complaints about hotels’ prices the most often, with 21 occurrences (43%). The adjectives that followed in the usage frequency order showed no considerable differences in terms of magnitude. For instance, the adjective *murtafi<sup>c</sup>* “high” was used ten times (20%) and *gha:li* “expensive” was used 12 times (24%). This suggests that customers were generally dissatisfied with hotel pricing as well as the cost of hotel restaurant dining and other services. This may be due to the hotels’ poor aesthetic appearance or low-quality services. Other adjectives such as *sayyi?* “bad,” *ghayr mantiqi* “illogical,” and *ghayr murḍi* “not satisfying” were used infrequently.

Table 8. Adjectives used in evaluating the location in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor

Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1	بعيد/منعزل	<i>ba<sup>c</sup>i:d/mun<sup>c</sup>azil</i>	Far away/isolated	8 42%
2	سيء/غير جيد	<i>sayyi?/ghayr jayyid</i>	Bad/not good	7 37%
3	صعب الوصول	<i>ga<sup>b</sup> alwusu:l</i>	Difficult to reach	1 5%
4	كئيب	<i>kaʔi:b</i>	Gloomy	1 5%
5	عادي	<i>‘adi</i>	normal	1 5%
6	غير معروف	<i>ghayr ma<sup>c</sup>ru:f</i>	Unknown	1 5%
Total			19	100%

As shown in Table 8, the complainants used six adjectives a total of 19 times to evaluate location. The two most frequently used adjectives to express complainants' dissatisfaction with hotels' location were *ba'i:d/mun'azil* "far away/isolated" and *sayyi?/ghayr jayyid* "bad/not good," which occurred eight (42%) and seven times (37%), respectively. A hotel's location plays a tremendous role in its ratings. The most common location-related complaint was that the hotel is far away from downtown, the airport, or other services. Complainants used other adjectives such as *ʔa'ab alwusu:l* "difficult to reach," *ka?i:b* "gloomy," and *ghayr ma'ru:f* "unknown" relatively infrequently.

#### 4. Discussion

It is important to reiterate that this study investigated the types of speech acts observable in Arabic complaints, as well as the evaluation topics and the adjectives employed to describe aspects of complaint in order to understand the construction of negative reviews on TripAdvisor. Concerning the first question about speech act segmentation in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor, the results showed that Arabic complaints involve different speech acts, including opening, retrospective, future-oriented, metapragmatic, closing, and other speech acts. These results align with other studies that found that complainants employ different speech acts when complaining (Abdo, 2021; Al-Shorman, 2016). This means that complainants complain in different ways: One individual may begin their complaint with a greeting and end it with a farewell, while another may state their complaint directly. Moreover, some individuals include advice and recommendations in their complaint, while others do not.

Regarding the frequency of the occurrence of different speech acts in Arabic complaints, the results showed that retrospective speech acts are the most common type of speech act in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor. This finding suggests that Arabs often express their complaints in the form of a negative evaluation that sometimes includes some positive evaluation. This result differs from that of Vasquez (2011) who found that in English, complaints tend to include advice and recommendations. However, there were similarities regarding the frequency of speech acts between the present study and that of Cenni and Goethals (2017) who stated that negative evaluations are the most popular category in English, Italian, and Dutch complaints on TripAdvisor. Those scholars' frequency order of speech acts in complaints is similar to that which the current study proposes: negative evaluations > positive evaluations > future-oriented > extra information > remedial action > metapragmatic.

On the other hand, complainants rarely used "opening" and "closing" speech acts. Thus, the majority Arabs are largely direct when complaining, preferring to straightforwardly express their complaints without any openings or closings. This finding again differs from that of Vázquez (2011) who found that indirect complaints outnumbered direct complaints in English on TripAdvisor. The abovementioned finding is also inconsistent with Migdadi et al. (2021) who found frequent use of an "appreciative closing" semantic formula in Jordanian graduate students' complaints in Facebook posts. Appreciative closings accounted for 64% of the posts, which also featured various modes of opening such as names, formulaic adjunct, salutation, addressing expressions, and combinations of two or more openers. This difference may be a result of complainants' varied goals regarding the act of complaining, such as to encourage representatives to transfer the problem to university officials in the case of the Jordanian students. Additionally, the present study found that Arabs rarely use "request" and "metapragmatic" speech acts in complaints. This finding disagrees with Rashidi (2017) who named requests among the most common strategies used in English complaints among monolingual Saudi Arabian adults, Saudi EFL adult learners, and native English speakers.

Regarding the second question concerning evaluation topics, the most popular topics in Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor have been noted to be services, interpersonal relations, and accommodation, while location and price were the least popular. These findings suggest that complainants are mostly concerned with hotel services, staff, and accommodation. These results align with those of Cenni and Goethals (2017) who also found that accommodation and services were the most common topics in negative comments written in English, Italian, and Dutch. Therefore, Arabic, English, Italian, and Dutch speakers share the same popular topics in complaints on TripAdvisor.

Regarding the third question concerning the adjectives used in evaluations, the complainants employed at least one adjective as well as synonyms in their negative evaluations in most of the reviews. The findings of this study regarding popular use of negative adjectives mirror those for complaints in English as a lingua franca (Demir, 2021) and Turkish (Kılıç Gönen, 2019). Specifically, the most common adjectives for complaining about popular evaluation topics were *sayyi?* "bad" for complaining about hotels' services and staff, *qadi:mah* "old" for complaining about accommodation, *muba:lagh fi:h* "overrated" for complaining about price, and *ba'i:d/mun'azil* "far/isolated" for complaining about location. Although the complainants tended to use different adjectives for different topics, they used synonyms of the same adjective to evaluate the same aspects of their experience. To illustrate, people may complain about a hotel's rooms by saying *al-ghurfah ʔaghi:rah wa ʔayyiqah jiddan* "The room is very small and tight," where both adjectives convey the same message: that the room size is insufficient. This phenomenon can be explained as a way for complainants to emphasize the aspect about which they are complaining as an alternative to using an adverb such as "very." This practice can have the effect of drawing hotel managers' attention to the complaint.

Several complaints included some positive comments on different aspects of the hotels such as location, services, accommodation, and so forth, for example, *muwaTHTHaf al-istiqba:l ghayr muhadhdhab wa lakin al-ʔamila:t ra:ʔi:n* "The receptionist is not polite, but the housekeepers are wonderful." In addition to using negative adjectives, the complainants tended to use nouns such as "lack of professionalism" to describe their opinions and feelings. This demonstrates the flexibility and richness of Arabic, although most evaluations utilized adjectives, not nouns.

It was also noted that when people gave advice, they either did so directly, using a phrase such as *ʔansah* . . . "I advise . . ." or *ʔawaji:k* . . .

“I recommend. . .” or they offered their suggestions implicitly using *ʔatmanna* “wish” or the verb *yatamanna* “wish” to directly convey a wish, albeit with the function of indirectly advising either travelers or hotel owners. People who choose to give indirect advice assume that doing so is more polite and acceptable than the direct route. Based on the results, it can be said that the complainants described their experiences through comparison with a past experience at the same hotel, such as *kan afdal bi kthi:r lamma zrtuh ʔalmarrah al-ʔu:la* “It was much better when I visited it for the first time,” or through comparison with another hotel, such as *al-khadama:t ka:nat rafi:ʕ ah lmma kunt fi (ism al-funduq)* “When I was at (hotel name), the services were really great.”

It should be mentioned that most of the reviews included extraneous information. Therefore, the researchers concluded that Arab complainants tend to share personal details and other information about their experience that are unrelated to rating the given hotel. For example, some reviewers mentioned their membership status as well as the size of their family. Additionally, some reviews included extraneous information in the form of a narrative; that is, some complainants wrote their review as if they were telling a story and included profuse details and situations that arose during the visit.

Moreover, guests who sought remedial action were often dissatisfied with the help or solution offered to them. For instance, a guest who asked to be moved to a different hotel room because the originally assigned room was dirty reported that the manager simply gave him another filthy room. In such a case, while it is true that the hotel manager provided remedial action, the problem was not solved.

## 5. Conclusion

This study investigated the types of speech acts in Arabic complaints and the adjectives used to evaluate specific popular topics in negative hotel reviews on TripAdvisor. The researchers adapted Cenni and Goethals’ (2017) taxonomy of speech acts to cover most of the speech acts observable in Arabic complaints. The results showed that complainants used a variety of speech acts when complaining on TripAdvisor. The most popular type was the retrospective speech act, which complainants used especially frequently when evaluating services, interpersonal relations, and accommodation. However, reviewers rarely used opening and closing speech acts and tended to state their complaints directly. It was also noted that reviewers used more than one adjective to convey their complaints about hotel staff, services, accommodation, and so forth. These adjectives were sometimes used in combination with adverbs to semantically intensify negative evaluations. Moreover, when giving advice, complainants offered their suggestions either directly or indirectly in the form of a wish. It was also observed that complainants tended to compare their most recent hotel experience with their previous experiences at the same hotel or at another hotel. Furthermore, reviewers were typically dissatisfied with hotel management’s remedial actions on the grounds that the initial problem was not actually resolved. Moreover, most reviews contained extraneous information, with some reviewers even favoring the narrative form. Finally, some negative reviews included positive evaluations, suggesting that guests tended to give overall reasonable evaluations.

Regarding the implications of this study, the most important contribution is to the field of discourse analysis given that there are only a few studies examining Arabic complaints on CMC in general and TripAdvisor in particular toward understanding online use of the Arabic language. Additionally, this study provides the tourism sector and businesses with necessary knowledge to improve their services in order to meet customers’ needs, which can translate into economic growth in the tourism and hospitality sector. Specifically, this research can be referenced to help hospitality workers understand Arab guests’ needs through the content of their complaints as well as how to deal with them, which will result in a higher degree of professionalism in hospitality based on a clearer grasp of popular aspects of hotel stay evaluation and the adjectives guests tend to use in their negative evaluations.

Given the finding that complaints on TripAdvisor involve narrative discourse, narrative analysis of Arabic complaints on TripAdvisor is recommended. Scholarly investigation of Arabic businesses’ responses to customers’ complaints on TripAdvisor is also highly recommended. Finally, regarding the present study’s limitations, the number of reviews used in the analysis constrains generalization of the results to Arabic complaints on CMC in general because only one website was used in this study. Future studies covering more data from more than one website will be illuminating. Although the present study collected data from Arabic hotel reviews posted on TripAdvisor in Saudi Arabia, it cannot be definitively said that all the guests were Saudis because personal information such as nationality was not available. For this reason, the researchers used the word “Arabs” instead of “Saudis” to cover other Arabic nationalities.

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**Appendix A**

**Transliteration symbols for Arabic vowels and consonants**

Arabic Letter	English Symbol	Arabic Example	English Equivalent
ء	ʔ	ʔamal	hope
ب	b	ba:b	door
ت	t	tibn	chaff
ث	th	thaʕlab	fox
ج	j	jamal	camel
ح	h	hub	love
خ	kh	khubz	bread
د	d	dub	bear
ذ	dh	dhahab	gold
ر	r	rab	Lord
ز	z	zayt	oil
س	s	sabt	Saturday
ش	sh	shams	sun
ص	s	sayf	summer
ط	d	dayf	guest
ظ	t	ti:n	mud
ع	TH	THuhr	noon
غ	ʕ	ʕabd	slave
ف	gh	gharb	west
ق	f	fam	mouth
ك	q	qalam	pencil
ل	k	kita:b	book
م	l	layl	night
ن	m	makr	guile
هـ	n	nawm	sleep
و	h	hudhud	hoopoe
ي	w	ward	rose
ي (فتحة)	y	yawm	day
و (ضممة)	a	kataba	he wrote
و (كسرة)	u	kutub	books
مد طويل /ي	i	sin	tooth
ضممة طويلة و	a:	ka:tib	writer
كسرة طويلة ي	u:	fu:l	beans
Diphthongs	i:	fi:l	elephant
(أصوات علة مركبة)	aw	mawt	death
	ay	bayt	House

Source: Retrieved and adapted from <http://www.ijaes.net/Author/Help>.

Appendix B

The positive adjectives employed in the negative reviews in Arabic complaints

Adjectives for evaluating accommodation					
	Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1	جميل	jami:l	Beautiful	5	15%
2	جيدة	jayyidah	Good	5	15%
3	واسعة	wasi'ah	Wide	3	9%
4	مريح	muri:h	Comfortable	3	9%
5	كبيرة	kabi:rah	Big	2	6%
6	ممتازة	mumtazah	Excellent	2	6%
7	فاخر + فخم	fakhir + fakhm	Deluxe / Luxury	2	6%
8	هادئ	hadi?	Quiet	2	6%
9	مرتبة	murattabah	Organized	2	6%
10	جديد	jadi:d	New	1	3%
11	مناسبة	munasibah	Suitable	1	3%
12	مميز	mumayyaz	Special	1	3%
13	متنوع	mutanawwi <sup>c</sup>	Various	1	3%
14	عصري	<sup>c</sup> asri	Modern	1	3%
15	معقول	ma <sup>c</sup> qu:l	Reasonable	1	3%
16	رائع	ra?i <sup>c</sup>	Wonderful	1	3%
17	ذكية	dhakyyah	Smart	1	3%
Total				34	100%
Adjectives for evaluating services					
	Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1	ممتاز	mumtaz	Excellent	10	30%
2	جيدة	jayyidah	Good	7	21%
3	رائع/راقي/طيبة/ حلو/رفيع	ra?i <sup>c</sup> /ra:qi/tayyibah/hulu/rafi: <sup>c</sup>	Wonderful/elegant/good/ beautiful/ wonderful	5	15%
4	نظيفة	naTHi:fah	Clean	4	12%
5	مميزة	mumayyazah	Distinctive	2	6%
6	احترافية	?ihtirafiyah	Professionalism	1	3%
7	متنوع	mutanawwi <sup>c</sup>	Various	1	3%
8	سريعة	sari: <sup>c</sup> ah	Quick	1	3%
9	منعشة	mun <sup>c</sup> ishah	Fresh	1	3%
10	كبيرة	kabi:rah	Big	1	3%
Total				33	100%
Adjectives for evaluating hotels' staffs					
	Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1	ممتاز	mumta:z	Excellent	7	23%
2	محترمين	muhtarami:n	Respectful	5	17%
3	متعاونين	muta <sup>c</sup> a:wini:n	Cooperative	5	17%
4	بشاشة/قمة في الاخلاق/متفهم/ اخلاق عالية	bashashah/qimmah fi: al?akhla:q/mutafahhim/ ?akhlaq <sup>c</sup> a:liah	Cheerfulness/well-mannered/con siderate/ well-mannered	4	13%
5	راقي/رائع	raqi/ ra?i <sup>c</sup>	Elegant/wonderful	3	10%
6	سريعين	sari: <sup>c</sup> i:n	Quick	2	7%
7	جميل	jami:l	Beautiful	2	7%
8	الأفضل	Al-?afdāl	The best	1	3%
9	جيد	jayyid	Good	1	3%
Total				30	100%
Adjectives for evaluating price					
	Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1	مغري	mughri	Attractive	2	67%
2	مناسبة	muna:sibah	Suitable	1	33%
Total				3	100%
Adjectives for evaluating location					
	Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%
1	جميل/ممتاز/ مميز/رائع	jami:l/mummtaz/ mumayyaz/ ra?i <sup>c</sup>	Beautiful/excellent/distinctive/ wonderful	20	74%
2	جيد	jayyid	Good	3	11%
3	قريب	qari:b	Close	3	11%
4	استراتيجي	?istra:ti:ji	Strategic	1	4%
Total				27	100%
Adjectives for evaluating hotels in general					
	Adjectives	Transliteration	Translation	Freq	%

1	ممتاز/مميز رائع/جميل/حلو	mummtaz/mumayyaz/ raʔi <sup>c</sup> /jami:l/hulu	Excellent/distinctive/wonderful/ beautiful/beautiful	16	62%
2	جيد	jayyid	Good	5	19%
3	فاخر/فخم	fakhir/fakhm	Deluxe/luxury	2	8%
4	جديد	jadi:d	New	1	4%
5	كبير	kabi:r	Big	1	4%
6	هادي	hadi?	Quiet	1	4%
Total				26	100%

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