



THE STRATEGIES USED BY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS IN GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research aims to find out the strategies used by students in giving and receiving compliments. The research participants were graduate students of English language education at Syiah Kuala University. In collecting the data, the researcher used the Discourse Completion Task (Henceforth called DCT) framework of Xiang (2013). The researcher carried out an interview adapted from Fattah (2020) to elicit participants' understanding in conveying their compliments based on the topic complimented. The findings of DCT revealed that there were three of four types of compliment topics identified: topic appearance, topic ability/performance, and topic possession. The interview result showed that they knew how to utter compliments to each case. The responses strategies tend to use appreciation tokens consisting of 65 answers. The return consists of 11 responses, the question consists of 10 responses, the scale down consists of 8 responses, and comment history consists of 3 responses. While, praise upgrade, request, and qualification consist of 1 response, respectively. The questionnaire and DCT results were equal, which means the participants favored using appreciation tokens in giving and receiving compliments. It occurred due to their habit of daily conversation.

Keywords: *compliment, compliment topic, compliment response.*

INTRODUCTION

Linguists used the term “Speech Act” to describe an intrinsic and essential sub-discipline of pragmatics concerned with the action of

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interpreting phrases. Austin was the first to develop the concept of a speaking act. An act performed while uttering a command and promising something is known as a speech act (Austin, 1962).

In pragmatics research, the production and comprehension of speech acts have been an important topic. According to Wu (2019), giving and getting praises is one of the speech acts that has received much attention during the last three decades. Compliments are a societal linguistic phenomenon. In ordinary human culture, compliments are used to greet, encourage, thank, and congratulate someone. Meyerhoff and Holmes (2003) stated that a compliment is a speech act that expressly and implicitly assigns credit to someone other than the speaker. Usually, the person is addressed for some 'goods' (possession, competence, traits, etc.) that the speaker and hearer positively appreciate.

People use compliments to develop, maintain, and promote interpersonal relationships (Searle, 1976). People frequently compliment other people's beauty, accomplishments, personalities, and skills in various ways. According to Berowa (2020), giving and receiving compliments is a significant speech act that can strengthen or weaken an interpersonal relationship. Compliments can maintain a relationship because those who receive them may feel better about themselves. Following that, Zhu (2019) explains that compliments regard as a positive politeness strategy for improving a good relationship during the communication process. Cheng (2011) divided compliment responses into three categories: acceptance, evasion, and a mix of the two. Depending on their needs and preferences, speakers may use various compliment strategies.

Many studies have investigated compliment responses, such as compliment responses across gender among British and Spanish exchange students (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001), compliment responses across gender in Persian (Yousefvand, 2010), Arabic and English compliment responses (Nelson, Al-Batal, & Echols, 1996), compliment responses in naturally occurring Turkish exchanges (Ruhi, 2006), and compliment responses in naturally occurring conversation in English (Farenkia, 2011).

The researcher looked at how they used compliments to determine what strategies native speakers and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners used. As a result, the findings of previous studies diverged. Diverse cultures resulted in various interactional styles, which led to different speech act preferences. For example, Berowa (2020) investigated the ability of 46 Maranao ESL learners to give and receive

praises using the Discourse Completion Task. The study results reveal that the participants' methods alter depending on the context of the compliments.

In the last few years, few studies on compliments and compliment response acts can be found in Indonesia, particularly Aceh. English is their second language for Acehese students, and the research on this subject is still sparse. The researchers aim to discover how the students used giving and receiving compliments strategies among English Department students at Syiah Kuala University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics is, in many senses, understood as the study of the relationship between language and context, which is the foundation of language comprehension (Nadar, 2009). Furthermore, according to Levinson (1983), pragmatics is the study of language and its context and language grammar usage, implying that pragmatics is a discipline that analyzes the relationship between language and settings connected to writing language structures. Furthermore, pragmatics is the study of the context of the speaker or writer as perceived by the audience. As a result, the speaker's analysis both in discourse and words or sentences in their speech can be signified by themselves (Yule, 1996). In other words, pragmatics is the study of language users' ability to connect and align phrases with contexts.

Speech Acts

Pragmatics covers the study of speech acts. It focuses on how to say utterances to accomplish something. It signifies that the speaker uses language to persuade the listener to do something, and the listener has to grasp their communication aim. For more than 30 years, many scholars have investigated the speech act (Al-Ghamdi & Alrefaee, 2020). Even though it does not include the proportion of communication language, the speech act is intimately tied to communication. One can be fluent in the language of communication by mastering the use of a language, which is different from mastering speech acts.

Speech acts are ubiquitous; they differ between cultures since each language has its own set of speech acts (Vaezi, 2011). Different cultures influence the development of acts in different ways (Al-Kahtani, as cited in Sattar, Lah, & Suleiman, 2012). Speakers can achieve their

communicative aims using a range of speech acts (Tanck, 2002). Meanwhile, speech actions are acquired by accumulating encounters with a community's culture. In the study of speech act, Al-Ghamdi and Alrefae (2020) try to establish the differences and similarities in people's interactions from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. According to Vaezi (2011), a region's culture influences the language spoken by its inhabitants, giving the language a shape. As a result, people's cultural backgrounds influence how they conduct various acts, such as Americans, Arabs, and Japanese groups performing different compliment strategies in English (Al-Kahtani, 2005).

Situation Aspects of Speech

The speech situation has five components (Leech, 1983), and these five aspects describe in the following description:

1. Address and addressee

The speaker and the recipient of the speech can be distinguished into two. The first one is the speaker who becomes the person who will receive the message from the speaker's speech. The second one is the recipient of the speech who becomes the person who will receive the message from the speaker's speech, such as a passer-by who hears the speaker's speech while the conversation is in progress.

2. Context of an utterance

The physical aspect or social background is significant to the discourse covered by the context in a speech. Context is general information held and advised by the speaker that affects the understanding of the speaker's advice.

3. The goal of an utterance

The speaker's speech has a specific goal and aim in mind. When communicating the same intent, different kinds of speech can be utilized. On the contrary, a comparable speech conveys a wide range of objectives.

4. Utterance as a form of act or activity: a speech act

When language structure treats language elements as abstract entities, such as sentences in syntax and propositions in semantics, pragmatics deals with verbal acts specific to a circumstance. Pragmatics deals with language at a higher level than language structure in this situation.

5. Utterance as a product of a verbal act

Speech is the outcome of a specific activity. Human activities can be divided into two categories: verbal and nonverbal. Acts of expressing anything with words or language are known as verbal acts. Because it is made up of linguistic acts, speech is regarded as a product of verbal acts.

Type of Speech Acts

Austin and other philosophers and specialists have classed the speech act hypothesis based on their findings. As a result, various debates emerged about defining and categorizing the speech act hypothesis. As a result, it is necessary to include some related theories while presenting the sort of speech act in this study.

Locutionary

The locutionary act, according to Alston and Alston (2000), is the act of saying something. It is the act of saying something in a regular and conscious manner by the speaker (Pandey, 2008). As a result, locutionary acts are statements made solely to provide information. It is commonly referred to as the act of speaking. This type of speech act intends to inform the hearer what is happening; it does not need any actions.

Illocutionary

An illocutionary act is an utterance made by someone to demand, request, or command something based on the situational context. According to Searle (1980; as cited in Yule, 2010), an illocutionary performs some activities while stating something. According to Alston and Alston (2000), an illocutionary occurs while we are speaking. What people say about what they do is illocutionary conduct (Pandey, 2008). This category is commonly referred to as "doing something."

Perlocutionary

In contrast to illocution, illocution creates a general agreement that the community has converted. The effect or consequence in perlocution is not a convention; it has been established from the beginning so that the listener can be substantially influenced by what the speaker is saying, either actively or passively (Austin, 1975). The speaker has taken some time to consider how he will direct the content of his speech to the audience.

Perlocution is used in a specific situation to persuade the listener to the perlocution's effect in thinking and doing something, such as

propagandizing, inviting, stimulating, surprising, exhilarating, arousing, confusing, relieving embarrassing, attracting, and expressing (Austin, 1962). For example, when someone promises to do something and promptly fails to do so. "I swear, I'm terribly disappointed with you," remarked the person whose pledge had been canceled. When he said the word, he made the listener feel bad for what he had done. The listener's feelings, thoughts, or actions are all influenced somehow.

Assertive

The assertive act is a speech act that encourages the speaker to believe the proportion shown is accurate, resulting in a truth value. This style of speech act offers the speaker self-assurance. Meanwhile, when delivering this type of speech act, the speaker portrays the world he believes in as it is, ensuring that the words he speaks correspond to the world he believes in (Searle, 1969). The assertive has to do with the act of stating, claiming, reporting, announcing, and so on (Searle, 1979). For example, "She will come in a few minutes".

The preceding sentence is a speech intended to inform the listener that the person in question will return shortly.

Directive

A directive is a speech act in which the speaker commands the communication partner to do something in response to what the speaker has stated. According to Arani (2012, p. 163), directives are words directed to the interlocutor to get them to perform something. This speech act expresses the speaker's wish for the communication partner to do something. The speaker wants to use it to achieve numerous future action objectives, such as making the world fit his words through his speaking partners. Ordering, requesting, demanding, and begging are examples of instructions (Searle, 1979). For example, "Come here, please". The speaker is attempting to instruct his companion to approach him.

Commissive

It is a type of speech act that urges the speaker to do some action in the future. The speaker's purpose to do something is shown through this speech act. Promising, offering and swearing become the compassionate concern in this speech act. (Searle, 1979). For example: "If you keep working like this, I will fire you". In this speech, the speaker

tries to persuade his listener that he will be fired if his partner continues to work without following him.

Expressive

This is a type of speech act in which a speaker displays delight, likes or dislikes, or melancholy in the form of a psychological action or phrase. There is no connection between the words said and the reality around the speaker in this form of speech performance. Thanking, apologizing, and congratulating are examples of expressive acts (Searle, 1979). For example, "Congratulations on your graduation". The speaker congratulated the interlocutor on his graduation.

Declaration

This type of speech act can influence and change the conditions of certain occurrences that occur. A specific party, such as representing an institution, frequently expresses this speech act. As a result, this type of speech act might be classified as a formalized performative speech act. When these speech acts are performed, the speakers themselves change the world. The declaration is used when naming a quitting ship, being sentenced, being dismissed, and being excommunicated (Searle, 1979). For example, "For the mistakes you have made, I suspend you for three days". The utterance is designed to punish the speakers' hearers for the errors made by their speaking partners.

Finally, it may infer that a speech act occurs when we say something, and the output is the production of the utterance to make things happen. People make meaningless remarks that are influenced by the context of the moment and take actions resulting from it. Speech acts define the context in which various variables influence the speaker's utterance.

Compliment

A compliment is a speech act that conveys admiration to another, either directly or indirectly. It is usually directed toward some positive elements of the hearer, such as abilities, qualities, and assets, among other things. It's frequently given to items that speakers and listeners think are great (Holmes, 1988). Brown and Levinson (1987) also stated that it is concerned with the politeness method, which alleviates the listener's lack of cheerful face. A compliment is a positive expression made by the listener about a person's appearance, activity, or possession (Al-Hilu, 2017).

Compliments are positive expressions or evaluations that directly or implicitly credit someone for something that the speaker, the listener, and the speech community respect highly (Holmes, 1986; Kasper, 1995). Wierzbicka (as reported in Kodama, 1996) stated that compliments are a complex blend of positive evaluations that reflect good feelings and implicit friendliness. Compliments appear to be possible to treat as interpersonal and interactive speech acts based on these interpretations. According to Holmes (1988), compliments should serve as positively affective speech acts and can be called phatic communion, a sort of communication that creates links of unity through a simple exchange of words.

In giving a compliment, one must choose a topic relevant to the praise. Holmes (1988), Herbert (1990), and Wolfson and Judd (1983) in their articles they divided the compliment topics into four types;

1. appearance (e.g., *I like your hair all curly; wow, I really like your hair*),
2. ability or performance (e.g., *you were skiing well today*),
3. possession (e.g., *what a lovely garden*), and
4. personality or friendship (e.g., *you're such a gentle person or you are a good friend*) (Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1986).

Compliment Response

The importance of compliment responses can't be overstated when it comes to compliments. Even though the realization of compliment answers differs from others', the replies are theoretically bound by two general conditions: agree with the speaker and prevent self-praise (Pomerantz, 1978).

Herbert (1986, 1989) identified twelve different types of complement response methods. The twelve varieties are narrowed down to three groups of compliment responses (Herbert, 1990):

Table 1. Compliment response types

<i>Main Compliment Responses</i>	<i>Compliment Responses</i>
Agreement	1. Acceptance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Appreciation token b) Comment acceptance c) Praise upgrade
	2. Comment history
	3. Transfer <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) reassignment b) return
Non-agreement	1. Scale down

	2. Question
	3. Non-acceptance
	a) disagreement
	b) qualification
	4. No acknowledgment
Other interpretation	1. Request

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design that involved a questionnaire sheet and interview guide. Thus, this research used two instruments to collect the data; Discourse Completion Task (DCT) Questionnaire Sheet and Interview Guide. The questionnaire sheet was adapted from Xiang (2013). Meanwhile, the interview guide was adapted from Fattah (2020). The research participants were the 20 graduate English language teaching students at Syiah Kuala University from 2016 to 2017 batch. The researchers sent the DCT questionnaires consisting of six questions to 20 participants through WhatsApp. Further, the researchers did an interview session with 5 of 20 participants through Mobile Phone. The data were analyzed based on the framework of Herbert (1986, 1990) by using the method proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), namely, condensation data, display data, and drawing and verifying conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The information was gathered by using DCT questionnaires and interviews. The DCT was given to 20 graduate English language teaching students at Syiah Kuala University, ten from the 2016 batch, and ten from the 2017 batch. The interview was given to five of the 20 participants.

The researchers discovered three areas of compliment expressed by graduate students of English language instruction at Syiah Kuala University after evaluating the data from the DCT questionnaire. They are the appearance, ability/performance, and possession of the topic. The researcher also discovered that the 20 respondents employed eight compliment responses: appreciation token, praise upgrade, remark history, return, scale down, query, request, and qualifier.

Table 2. Compliment response strategies of graduate students of English language education at Universitas Syiah Kuala

<i>Compliment Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Acceptance	
d) Appreciation token	65
e) Comment acceptance	-
f) Praise upgrade	1
Comment history	3
Transfer	
c) reassignment	-
d) return	11
Scale down	8
Question	10
Non-acceptance	
c) disagreement	-
d) qualification	1
No acknowledgment	-
Request	1

Based on the interview, the researcher found that participants considered a compliment as utterances to praise someone's style, kindness, accomplishments, or intelligence. The interviewee's response demonstrates that the praise provided is intimately tied to the praised object. As a result, the praise must be suitable.

Researcher:

Apa sajakah pujian berikut yang kemungkinan besar akan Anda gunakan dan bagaimana Anda akan memberikan setiap pujian? Jadi yang pertama compliment of appearance.

(What are some of the following compliments you would most likely use, and how would you give each compliment? So, the first is a compliment of appearance).

Informant:

Ehmmm, kalau pujian terhadap appearance biasanya sih, hmmm saya mengucapkan "you look good!".

(Um, if compliments on appearance are usually, hmmm I say "you look good!").

Researcher:

Selanjutnya compliment of skills
(Next, compliment of skills)

Informant:

Banyak sih yang bisa diucapkan, cuma, yang sering spontan terucap adalah seperti kata "awesome!" Kemudian.... Ability, itu biasanya seperti mmmmmm, "you did that?! I am so proud of you!" Apa lagi?

(There are many things that can be said, yet, what is often spontaneously spoken is like the word "awesome!" Then.... Ability, it's usually like mmmmmm, "you did that?! I am so proud of you!" What else?).

Researcher

*Possession dan personality or friendship
(Possession and personality or friendship).*

Informant

Iya, mmmmm, kalau possession hmmmmm, seperti "I never knew you had that. What a good investment!" sedangkan untuk personality or friendship bisa diucapkan "what both of you have is incredible!" hmmmm. Sudah habis ya?

(Yes, mmmmm, if the possession hmmmmm, like "I never knew you had that. What a good investment! "While for personality or friendship you can say "what both of you have is incredible!" Hmmmm. Is it finished?).

Researcher

*Sudah, terima kasih banyak atas bantuannya.
(That is all, thanks for the help).*

Informant

*Sama-sama, kak.
You are welcome, sister*

Informant

*Biasanya sering sekali mmmm memuji seseorang itu mengenai pakaiannya iya kan? Biasanya kami mengucapkan "you look so gorgeous with that red dress".
(Usually, mmmmm often praises someone about their clothes, right? Usually, we say "you look so gorgeous with that red dress").*

Researcher

Kalau compliment of skills apa saja?
(What about the compliment of skills?).

Informant

Saya sering pakai ucapan "your painting is so amazing" kemudian apa lagi tadi kak?
(I often use the words "your painting is so amazing" then what else was that, sis?).

Researcher

Compliment of ability, possession *dan* personality, or friendship.
(Compliment of ability, possession, and personality or friendship).

Informant

Kalau pujian terhadap ability ya kan bisa berupa "I am so proud of you to be able to be a winner in the math competition" terus kalau possession seperti "your house is so big" dan personality or friendship "congratulation on your wedding day, so happy for you"
(For the praise of the ability, it can be in the form of "I am so proud of you to be able to be a winner in the math competition" and if possession such as "your house is so big" and personality or friendship "congratulation on your wedding day, so happy for you").

The interviewee can place praises based on the relevant topic, as evidenced by the above outcome. As a result, the interview and DCT results are highly correlated. As a result, the research informants have delivered the predicted responses.

Discussions

The strategies used by graduate students in giving the compliment

Based on the findings of this study, the compliment topic or approach utilized by graduate students of English language education at Syiah Kuala University was identified. The informants praised three topics based on the DCT results: topic appearance, subject skill or

performance, and topic possession. The researcher discovered that the informants could change the compliment expressed with the themes based on the interview results.

The informants utilized the topic appearance to express their admiration for the addressee's look. The compliment is directed to the addressee's clothing, hair, and overall appearance. Katsuta (2012) confined the topic of appearance to complimenting the addressee's face. It's no surprise, then, that beauty is praised (Doohan & Manusov, 2004) because it's been proved that every culture evaluates a person's physical and aesthetic features, particularly women (Buss, 1989). Face, hair, smile, voice, and other aspects of the body are among the more significant categories of appearance subject complement classified by Gao et al. (2017). The researchers discovered that the topic appearance compliment was the most frequently utilized by the informants as a consequence of this study. According to Katsuta (2012)'s findings, Japanese participants were less likely to employ this topic praise. In contrast to Mandalasari and Hamzah (2018)'s findings, they discovered that most of their Indonesian participants complimented someone's attractiveness. Yuan (2002) found that Kunming Chinese speakers prefer to approach new haircuts by complimenting their looks. Furthermore, according to Coates (2015), women are more concerned about admiring their beauty. As a result, the speaker's and interlocutor's background cultures and gender influence the topic of appearance compliment utterances in this scenario.

According to the findings, participants also used the topic skill or performance compliment to express their admiration for the addressee's study endeavor achievement, singing ability, and football performance. In another study, Mostafa (2019) and Yuan (2002) discovered that participants utilized topic compliments of expertise to commend others' computer skills. Mainland Chinese students used the term skill or performance compliment to express their enthusiasm for addressing achievement (Lin, Woodfield, & Ren, 2012). Turkish native speakers, on the other hand, were uninterested in complimenting the addressee's skill/performance, whereas native English speakers are delighted to praise the hearer's skill/performance (Şakırgil & Çubukçu, 2013).

The participants also used the issue of possession to express their gratitude for something that belonged to the addressee. Clothes, voice, hair, and skill are among the attributes praised in the addressee's possession. In his investigation, Yuan (2002) discovered that Kunming Chinese speakers tend to express their possession subject compliment on

the addressee's new things. Furthermore, Turkish theme compliments were sent to the addressee, including surnames, clothing, accessories, and the recipient's home. In contrast, the theme of possession in English compliments was also targeted to the addressee's hair and physical attributes (Şakırgil & Çubukçu, 2013).

The strategies used by graduate students in receiving compliments

As previously stated, graduate students of English language education at Syiah Kuala University have eight response strategies for receiving praises. There are 65 responses for the appreciation token strategy, 1 response for the praise upgrade method, 3 responses for the comment history, 11 responses for the return, 8 responses for the scale down, 10 responses for the inquiry, 1 response for the request, and 1 response for the qualification.

The participants favored the acceptance technique in responding to compliments through gratitude tokens. Transfer via the return, inquiry, scale down, and comment history followed this procedure. Acceptance through praising upgrading, non-acceptance through disagreement, and request, on the other hand, were less commonly utilized. In the meantime, the other four tactics were not used: comment acceptance, reassignment, disagreement, and no acknowledgment. Participants' individual reactions to the addressee/interlocutors alone develop their relationship's closeness. Culture has a huge impact on ordinary communication in this area. According to the findings of this study, participants are accustomed to interacting politely, and it is not uncommon for them to reciprocate every compliment with another compliment. Not only that, but when they were applauded for chiming in on various remarks, they often did it with humility to avoid appearing arrogant. Thus, they seemed to distinguish where, when, and from whom they obtained anything.

Maranao students also used an appreciation token as an acceptable response to their classmates (Berowa, 2020). Torres et al. (2020) showed that Ilocano and Tagalog students prefer to use gratitude tokens above other engagement tactics in their research with students. However, Yuan (2002) reported that Kunming Chinese people did not respond to compliments with appreciation tokens or "thank you" in his study of Kunming Chinese people. They claimed that it was still not widely used in Kunming Chinese, so people chose to react to compliments with a smile. Return, scale down and question were the other beneficial techniques adopted. Torres et al. (2020) recently discovered that Ilocano

and Tagalog pupils use return and scale down compliment responses, but not question responses.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The approach of giving and receiving compliments utilized by graduate English language education students at Syiah Kuala University was explored using DCT in this study. The participants' tactics for providing compliments were gathered via DCT and confirmed through an interview. The information gathered was entered into Herbert's (1990) framework. After evaluating the DCT data, the researchers concluded that participants prefer complimenting the addressees' topic appearance, subject ability/performance, and topic possession. The interview results also revealed how to use compliments for each subject.

In conveying their compliment responses, the participants tend to use specific strategies of Herbert (1990). The data showed that they mostly tend to use an appreciation token to convey their compliment responses which were uttered 65 times. Further, praise upgrade strategy consists of 1 response, comment history consists of 3 responses, return consists of 11 responses, scale down consists of 8 responses, question consists of 10 responses, request consists of 1 response, and qualification consists of 1 response.

Suggestion

There is a scope of the current study that is expected to be filled by future researcher-related studies. The purpose of this study only focuses on several students; therefore, future relevant studies should focus on more than one class (cross-sectional). Besides, the deeper analysis on the usage of speech act in using the compliment strategies will present variation data from different types and the level status of students and diverse gender.

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