

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS IN GIVING COMPLIMENT BY EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Compliment is one kind of speech acts where the speaker expresses his/her feeling toward the hearer. The present study investigates compliment strategies employed by speakers, both male and female to male and female addressees. It also attempts to see the common strategies and the syntactic patterns used by male and female EFL students in delivering a compliment. Three males and three females are chosen as the participants based on their speaking scores since the data are gathered by means of an oral discourse completion test which includes 12 items. The findings reveal that in term of compliment strategies, males employ explicit, implicit, and zero- realization strategies, while females only offer direct and zero-realization strategy. In expressing the explicit one, both males and females use the first pattern “NP looks/is (really) ADJ” more often than other patterns. Overall, the present study points out that female student are the most frequent in uttering the compliments rather than males, but there is only a slight difference amongthem.

***Key words:** gender, speech act, compliment, compliment strategy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As a human being, people need to socialize with other people. People talk to and do things with others; from asking a glass of water to our sister to asking grocery from a shopkeeper people need to communicate. According to Musa & Domatob (2011), “Communication can be defined as a process by which people assign and convey meanings in the attempt to create shared understanding”. In communicating, people express and exchange the information, ideas, feelings, and thoughts to the hearer. It means that common rules and strategies should be used by a speaker and hearer in order to make a good communication.

Regardless of how people communicate with others, there are always speech acts which occur in a conversation such as asking, complimenting, apologizing, requesting and so forth. Speech act itself means as the actions performed by saying something (Austin, 1962). For instance, when people meet someone they know, they will give a greeting like “Hi! Pleased to meet you, how are you?”, or when people want to have a party, they will invite them by saying “We would love it if you could come this night”. Another example of speech act which is often

used is a common commanding like; “Keep silent please!”. It infers that realizing or not, people; both male and female use various speech acts in their daily life.

However, male and female often misunderstand in their communication because many studies proved that they have some differences in using the language. The common case is when male and female express a compliment speech act. As people know, most females really like to get a compliment from the people around them; both from the same gender as her and also from a male when they have something new to wear, get an achievement, and etc. Unfortunately, several studies show that male tends to avoid giving a compliment (Holmes, 1988; Riesberg, 2000; Jianxiang, 2013). It occurs because male mostly talks to exchange the information, they do not express "feelings and passing thoughts" because this is not seen as important for them (Tannen, 1990). It will make female be disappointed or may get angry if they do not know this fact since female loves a compliment.

Compliment itself is used by people in order to establish, consolidate and promote interpersonal relationships (Searle, 1976). People often give the compliment to comment on other people's appearance, achievement, personality and skills in a various way. For EFL students especially in our country Indonesia which often hear that the general way to give a compliment is 'S (to be) Adj' like “You are pretty!”, they may assume it is the only appropriate way to give compliments because English is a foreign language for them, thus they only tend to follow the common English patterns.

Speech act of compliment has been conducted by many researchers around the world, such as Riesberg (2000) and Jianxiang (2013). Riesberg (2000) who examines several patterns in compliments within a hypothetical university classroom in the Midwest, particularly the effects of status and gender shows the results that regardless of status, females give and receive more compliments than males in a significant frequency. Moreover, Jianxiang (2013) in his research finds that females utilize more direct compliments than males, while males prefer to give non-compliment and no response strategy. It suggests this study is really needed to conduct because if people do not know gender differences in giving a compliment, people would think that male is impolite or even arrogant. Then the researcher thinks it will be useful to decrease the amount of misunderstanding between both genders.

This research aims are to investigate the compliment strategies uttered by two genders when they give a compliment to the same and the opposite gender; and also to find out the common compliment strategies and syntactic patterns employed by two genders.

1.1 Language and Gender

Many articles offer plausible explanations on how genders affect the use of language such as Tannen (1990) who conduct gender research in order to see the comparison between male and female language. Tannen (1990) concludes that both genders have different speech styles, and she describes it as "rapport-talk" and "report-talk," respectively. In a conversation, women's language principally is a language of rapport-talk. The aim is to establish and negotiate a relationship. That is why she relates female linguistic behavior to the view of rapport-building since female in conversations presently uses language for intimacy purposes. Whereas male,

the conversation they do is for gaining information, thus it is called as "report-talk." They try to keep the independence and maintain status in the hierarchical social order; as males are taught in their activity to develop their intelligence and ability through a verbal performance like storytelling, joking, and giving information. It makes male's language tend to be simpler, not comprehensive and not reveal much emotion than female. It is different with female's talk where they tend to be more affiliative and facilitative toward both sexes. Women tend to work harder at keeping conversations going (Tannen, 1993)

In relation to gender and compliment speech act like the present study focused on, several studies have been investigated, such as Holmes (1986) and Riesberg (2000). Their findings show a very significant difference between male and female where females give more compliments with a higher frequency than males. In compliment strategy, Holmes (1995) explains that people express more explicit compliments to women rather than men in that they ken women will value them more. It is quite different from men where they do not really take a compliment as the way to achieve a specific goal such as to create a close relationship with the interlocutor. Another researcher comes from the same country as this study, Indonesia; Indah (2017) also conducts the research which focused on compliment across gender and power relation among Indonesia EFL students. In the context of an Islamic institution, the finding reveals that female students use more compliment strategies compared to males and results in specific expression related to powerdisplay.

However, Wu (2008) who conducts the research in order to find how men and women use compliments in English conversations in TV-series demonstrates that the female's compliment frequency is only a bit higher than males. The reason might deal with nowadays' perspective where males and females have an equal status in society. Hence, it encourages the males to produce more compliments as well as females. The compliments also occur more oftentimes between the same genders, particularly in women conversation (Ye, 1995 and Wu, 2008). This is because it is easy to be regarded as a gay if males often pay the compliments to other males specifically in term of the appearance.

1.2 Compliment Strategies

Various strategies can be uttered when someone want to give a compliment to other people. Ye (1995, as cited in Jianxang, 2013) divides compliment strategies into four categories: 1) Explicit Compliment, 2) Implicit Compliment 3) No Responses 4) Non-Compliment.

Taxonomy of Compliment

Type of Compliment	Strategy	Example
Explicit	Verb	<i>I like your boots.</i>
	Noun	<i>You are a real professional.</i>
	Adverb	<i>You've done it well.</i>

	Adjective	It is <i>nice</i> !
Implicit	Request Form	Could you tell me where you bought that bag?
	Question Form	When did you learn it?
	Hints	I hope I could cook like you.
No-response zero-strategy or realization	Being Silent	
Non-compliment	Starting a New Topic	

Manes and Wolfson (1981) gather an American English compliment-giving by investigating people's daily conversations. They find nine syntactic patterns of an explicit compliment-giving strategies. Those are used for classifying data in the current study.

Compliment strategies by Manes and Wolfson (1981)

(1) NP looks/is (really) ADJ	E.g. Your headband looks really beautiful.
(2) I (really) love/like NP.	E.g. I really like your watch.
(3) PRO is (really) a ADJ (NP).	E.g. It's a great boots.
(4) You V a (really) ADJ NP.	E.g. You wrote a really good thesis.
(5) You V NP (really) ADV.	E.g. You did this work wonderfully.
(6) You have a ADJ NP.	E.g. You have a good shawl.
(7) What a ADJ NP!	E.g. What a pretty necklace!
(8) ADJ NP!	E.g. Cool watch!
(9) Isn't NP ADJ.	E.g. Isn't your nail art lovely?

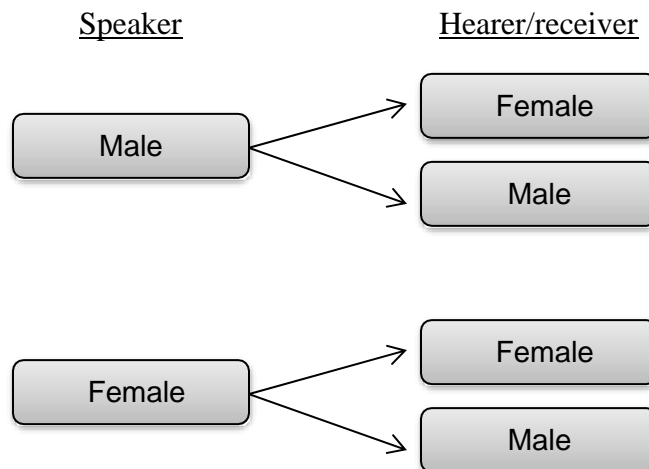
2. METHOD

2.1 Subject

There are six students as the subjects of this research which consists of three males and three females in the fifth-semester of English Department in Jambi University. The researcher selects each of them based on the highest speaking III score since this study uses an oral DCT to collect the data.

2.2 Data Collection Technique

The instrument to collect the data in this research is ODCT (Oral Discourse Completion Test). As Adrefiza (2011, p.8) says, “The use of ODCTs is considered most relevant as it still represents speech data and the control over research variables and time is still manageable.” There are 12 situations of compliment-giving with the possession/appearance as the topic for all situations. Six situations which they need to give the compliments to a female, and the rest six situations have the same settings as the six situations in the beginning, but only differs in the sex, means they need to give the compliment to a male and vice versa for a female. It can be summarized below:



3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Male Compliment Strategies Expressed to Female

When male participants face the female addressee in expressing the compliment, the most used strategy in rank is; the explicit strategy with the adjective form, zero-realization, and the implicit strategy in a question form. For the explicit compliment patterns, the first syntactic pattern “NP looks/is (really) ADJ” is the most preferred pattern that they use 5 times, while they only use the second pattern “I (really) love/like” 1 time, and the third pattern “PRO is an ADJ (NP)” 4 times. These three syntactic patterns come under the highly popular pattern from Manes and Wolfson (1981).

Example:

M2 : Mother, whose watch is that?↑ that's an (.) expensive watch

M3 : that's nice to you↑ and you look so (.) pretty (.) cool

3.2 Male Compliment Strategies Expressed to Male

Males tend to express the compliments when they meet a male which is close to them; while they choose to utter no compliment when they meet a male which has a distant intercourse with them. Males also prefer to employ more implicit strategies rather than when they face the female compliment receiver.

Example:

M2 :Hey boy↑ where you get (.) that shoes? I think that is (.) that an unlimited shoes, i want to buy ittoo

M3: I will (.) choose to: keep silent(.)

3.3 Female Compliment Strategies Expressed to Female

The most used strategy by female participants to the female hearer is the explicit strategy. They employ this strategy 26 times. This strategy occurs in all situations. Another strategy is zero-realization which is only used for 2 times, while they do not use any implicit and non-compliment strategy.

Example:

F2 : i really like it↑ ... i think (.) it's very amazing (.) for you

F3 :Waw: mom:: your watch looks so amazing!

3.4 Female Compliment Strategies Expressed to Male

Unlike the previous section when females face a female addressee, they only utter a few compliments in these situations since the addressee is a male. They tend to keep their distance with those males and they solely give a short compliment in some situations.

Example:

F1 : hi Dad↑ it's good↑

F3 : I think (.) i dont care about that

3.5 The Common Strategies and Syntactic Patterns

The Distribution of Compliment Strategies by Gender

Compliment Strategy	Male		Female	
	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage
Explicit Compliment	16	34%	41	78,8%
Implicit Compliment	18	38,3%	-	-
Zero-realization	13	27,7%	11	21,2%
Non-Compliment	-	-	-	-
Total	47	100%	52	100%

The table above shows that males and females produce a different number of compliment strategies. The total of compliment strategies used by males is 47 with the implicit as the most

preferred strategy for males which reaches 18 times (38,3%); the next are the explicit strategy which occurs 16 times (34%) and zero realization which occurs 13 times (27,7%). In contrast, females use more explicit strategies which reach 41 times (78,8%); and then zero-realization which accounts for 11 times (21,2%).

In general, females employ more explicit compliments than males. Female participants in this research tend to use a compliment in order to make solidarity and positive evaluation between them and the hearer (Wolfson, 1983; Holmes, 1986). Particularly when females face a female addressee, they utter those compliments even with someone who has more power and do not familiar to them. It infers that females also consider giving compliments to others as a kind of positive social speech acts. They prefer to show politeness and positive side of themselves by complimenting others in a direct way. To be specific, females are more likely to use the explicit and positive speech act in order to maintain and strengthen the relationship with the interlocutor. This is to achieve the harmonious development of interpersonal relationships in their life. From a social point of view, this behavior of female participants will not only meet the definition of women in society but also meet the social expectations of female speech acts (Jianxiang,2013).

On the contrary, male subjects utter the implicit compliments more often than the explicit one, while all females do not use any implicit strategy. In this case, males definitely feel something positive about the appearance or possession of the interlocutor since the compliment situations are given by the researcher, but males may still refrain from complimenting the person, so they prefer to express it in an implicit way.

Example:

M2 : Mother, whose watch is that?↑ That's an (.) expensive watch

M2 : Hey↑ where you get that jacket? I know (.) I want the new one (.)

The utterances "*who's watch is that? that's an expensive watch*" may imply that he is amazed and cannot believe that his mother uses the great watch. Then, in situation 4 and 6, they ask "*where you bought it?*"; this question is a kind of an indirect compliment as explained in chapter 2 that the compliment giver likes the hearer's stuff so they ask '*where you get that jacket*' since people only get or buy things that they think are nice and suit to, and '*I want the new one*' is the addition which can be categorized as a 'hint'; if they want to have it, it means they really love the jacket.

Males also use more zero-realization than females, although the frequency is not much different.

Example:

M2 :I just keep silent, because (.) I dont know I dont know (.)she's reallyreally (.) close

F2 :Umm maybe when i meet uhh () acquaintance, uhh the: male, i just (.) silent maybe, because im(.) uhh not really umm ya(.) know about him: and uhhy:: i justsilent

This may occur because the participants do not feel comfortable complimenting people face-to-

face. Two genders consider the social power of the hearer and their familiarity with the hearer.

Both males and females do not use non-compliment strategies. It might happen since the participants get the situations from the researcher, so that they only give the strategy that they think appropriate to the situations because as the researcher explains in chapter II; non-compliment is a kind of strategy where the subject utters a verbal answer to the given situation which does not carry any positive meaning and it simply functioned to change the topic of a conversation (Yuan, 2002).

Next, for the distribution of syntactic patterns in direct compliment strategy (Manes and Wolfson, 1981) employed by each gender can be seen in Table 11.

No.	Structure	Male		Female	
		Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage
1.	(1) NP looks/is (really) ADJ.	9	56,25%	18	44%
2.	(2) I (really) love/like NP.	1	6,25%	4	9,76%
3.	(3) PRO is (really) a ADJ (NP).	6	37,50%	13	31,70%
4.	(4) You V a (really) ADJ NP.	-	-	-	-
5.	(5) You V NP (really) ADV.	-	-	-	-
6.	(6) You have a ADJ NP.	-	-	-	-
7.	(7) What a ADJ NP!	-	-	-	-
8.	(8) ADJ NP!	-	-	1	2,44%
9.	(9) Isn't NP ADJ.	-	-	-	-
10.	Other Patterns	-	-	5	12,10%
Total		16	100%	41	100%

(Note: NP = Noun Phrase; Adj. = Adjective; Pro. = Pronoun; Adv. = Adverb; Freq. = Frequency)

Both males and females prefer to use the first pattern “NP looks/is (really) ADJ”. Females use it 18 times, while males 9 times.

Example:

M3 : you look so (.) pretty(.)

F2 :you look so beautifultoday

Male only use the second pattern "I (really) love/like NP" once (6,25%), while females use it 4 times (9,76%).

Example:

M3 : i love it↑

F2 : i really like it↑

Then, for the third pattern "PRO is (really) a ADJ (NP)" males only use it 6 times (37,50%), while females apply it 13 times (31,70%).

Example:

M2 : That's a good bag!

F1 : It's a good (.) jacket↑ (.)

Males only use those 3 syntactic patterns in expressing the compliment, while females use "ADJ NP!" one time (2,44%) and other patterns 5 times (12,10%).

Example:

F2 :ciecie::: the pretty bag↑

F1 : how beautiful it is!

The present study points out that in general, females are more inclined to use a various pattern in giving the compliment, they also often pay more than one compliment in one situation, like in the fifth situation when they express the compliment to theirjunior:

Example:

F2:I look (.) your hair umm very fresh: (.) and (.) you cutting: you hair umm very good (.) and (.) i like it↑

Whilst males prefer to use the simple one;

M3: Hey↑ you look so beautiful with that hair

It might occur since a language is closely related to social attitudes (Trudgill, 2000). Male and female are socially different in which society lays down different social roles and expects different behavior patterns from both of them. For example, in our country Indonesia, a female attitude in the society might be seen to be more supportive, long-winded and really careful to avoid offense when they speak to other people. It can be the reason why females give a compliment more frequently with a various pattern than males.

However, some differences have also emerged across different cultures. The specific syntactic patterns used in each culture may vary. For instance, in English participants, the most famed patterns are pattern number 1 "NP looks/is (really) ADJ", 2 "I (really) love/like NP", and 3 "PRO

is (really) a ADJ (NP)" (Manes and Wolfson, 1981; Holmes, 1986), but in Chinese (Yuan, 2002) and the present study, pattern number 2 is very rare appeared. In other words, it can infer that the compliments are rarely paid from the first person perspective in Asia. This is because the compliment such as 'Your watch is very amazing' sounds more objective than 'I like the watch', while this pattern (I (really) love/like NP) may also sound 'too brave' for the participants in expressing their feeling as they need to face a different person that has a distinct stage of power and distance in the situation given.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

Some conclusions can be drawn as regards to the compliment employed by two genders. Firstly, this study discovers that males use explicit, implicit, and zero-realization strategies in expressing the compliments. In male to female part; males prefer to use an explicit strategy. While in the same gender (male to male); an indirect strategy occurs more often than other strategies. Secondly, for females, they only use direct strategy and zero-realization. Females employ all the compliments in an explicit way.

Thirdly, in overall, female participants offer more compliments than males but it is only a slight difference among them. This might occur because nowadays the equality between males and females has been advocated and it influences people's opinions toward gender and the behaviors in terms of the methods of speech acts. Besides, two genders tend to offer a compliment to a female rather than the male addressee. Then, as regards to the compliment strategy, female participants in this study prefer to use an explicit strategy when they face both female and male, while males frequently express the compliment explicitly to female and implicitly to male.

The last conclusion is that both genders only employ several patterns in expressing the direct compliments. Females use five patterns; "NP looks/is (really) ADJ", "I (really) love/like NP", "PRO is (really) an ADJ (NP)", "ADJ NP!", and other patterns as well, while males only apply three patterns; "NP looks/is (really) ADJ", "I (really) love/like NP", and "PRO is (really) an ADJ (NP)". Both males and females use the first pattern "NP looks/is (really) ADJ" more frequent than other patterns. In contrast to most previous research, the present study finds that pattern number 2 is very rare appeared, thus it implies that the compliments by EFL students are rarely expressed from the first person perspective.

4.2 SUGGESTIONS

The results of the study bring some suggestions for students and teachers of English, and future researchers. Since the researcher finds out that the participants make several grammar mistakes and they use a limited vocabulary in expressing the compliments, this result would be useful for English teachers so they need to enhance the students more about grammatical competence and also develop their vocabulary in an interesting way.

The compliments strategies and pattern in this study can provide a view of compliment behavior based on gender differences. Besides, the teacher will be able to broaden their students' minds as regards to speech act across gender. The students will know and understand the differences between men and women language in using the compliment speech act. Hence, EFL students are expected to learn how to make an appropriate compliment, as it is an easy way to create friendship, maintain the relationship, or even to reach a business goal in their future career.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTIONS SHEETS

The following are descriptions of Jeffersonian Transcription Notation used in this research:

Symbol	Name	Use
[text]	Brackets	Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech.
=	Equal Sign	Indicates the break and subsequent continuation of a single interrupted utterance.
(# of seconds)	Timed Pause	A number in parentheses indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause in speech.
(.)	Micropause	A brief pause, usually less than 0.2 seconds.
. or ↓	Period or Down Arrow	Indicates falling pitch.
? or ↑	Question Mark or Up Arrow	Indicates rising pitch.
,	Comma	Indicates a temporary rise or fall in intonation.
-	Hyphen	Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance.
>text<	Greater than / Less than symbols	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more rapidly than usual for the speaker.
<text>	Less than / Greater than symbols	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual for the speaker.
°	Degree symbol	Indicates whisper or reduced volume speech.

ALL CAPS	Capitalized text	Indicates shouted or increased volume speech.
underline	Underlined text	Indicates the speaker is emphasizing or stressing the speech.
:::	Colon(s)	Indicates prolongation of an utterance.
(hhh)		Audible exhalation
? or (.hhh)	High Dot	Audible inhalation
(text)	Parentheses	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript.
((italic text))	Double Parentheses	Annotation of non-verbal activity.

APPENDIX B

Discourse Completion Test

Instruction: Please imagine you are in these situations and then answer each question orally.

1-6 = The Speaker Gives a Compliment to a Female			
No.	Situations	Social Power	Social Distance
1.	The first day of college after the semester holiday, you notice your lecturer is wearing a beautiful new shirt. What will you say to her?	S < H	+SD
2.	Today, you see your mother has a new watch and it is sparkling amazingly. What will you say to her?	S < H	-SD
3.	You are going to meet your new acquaintance. You've never met her before. When you see her, you find she is in the same age as you and she is wearing nice shoes. What will you say to her?	S = H	+SD

4.	Your classmate is using a pretty bag from Hong Kong today. You see it and what will you say to her?	S = H	-SD
5.	When you meet your junior in the canteen, she looks so fresh with her new hair-cut. What will you say to her?	S > H	+SD
6.	You see your little sister wearing a new jacket today. She looks really good. What will you say to her?	S > H	-SD
7-12 = The Speaker Gives a Compliment to a Male			
1.	The first day of college after the semester holiday, you notice your lecturer is wearing a cool new shirt. What will you say to him?	S < H	+SD
2.	Today, you see your father has a new watch and it is sparkling amazingly. What will you say to him?	S < H	-SD
3.	You are going to meet your new acquaintance. You've never met him before. When you see him, you find he is in the same age as you and he is wearing nice shoes. What will you say to him?	S = H	+SD
4.	Your classmate is using a cool bag from Hong Kong today. You see it and what will you say to him?	S = H	-SD
5.	When you meet your junior in the canteen, he looks so fresh with his new hair-cut. What will you say to him?	S > H	+SD
6.	You see your little brother wearing a new jacket today. He looks really good. What will you say to him?	S > H	-SD