

**EXPRESSING COMPLIMENTS IN ENGLISH AND INDONESIAN
LANGUAGE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**
*(Pernyataan Pujian dalam Bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Indonesia:
Suatu Studi Komparasi)*

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji pernyataan pujian yang dilakukan oleh penutur Bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Indonesia baik yang diungkapkan oleh pria maupun wanita. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kesamaan dan perbedaan dalam mengungkapkan pujian dalam kedua bahasa tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif yang bersifat kuantitatif. Data diperoleh melalui teknik lapangan dengan teknik kuesioner dan juga kepustakaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penutur bahasa Inggris dalam mengungkapkan pujian cenderung lebih langsung. Akan tetapi penutur bahasa Indonesia cenderung bersifat tidak langsung karena perbedaan budaya.

Kata kunci: pernyataan pujian, bahasa Inggris, bahasa Indonesia, studi komparasi

Abstract

This study discusses the expressing of compliments uttered by both English and Indonesian native speakers either male or female. This study of compliment has objectives to describe the similarities and the differences in expressing compliments in the both languages. Data is obtained through field research by using questionnaire and library research. The result shows that English and Indonesia native speakers tend to express compliments directly. In the other hand, Indonesian people express it indirectly since cultural diversity.

Keywords: expressing compliment, English, bahasa Indonesian, comparative study

INTRODUCTION

When two or more people communicate to each other in speech, they are actually employing a code as an inseparable part of the system of communication. Communication is defined as "the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols, oral, and written form" (Richards, Jack C, Richard W. Schmidt, 1987).

Regardless of the natural system of communication as mentioned above, Canale and Swain (1980) have postulated that communication requires some important aspects that includes

socio-cultural rules of use and rules of discourse". This is popularly known as sociolinguistic competence that is concerned with the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts which also depends on the contextual factors such as status of participants and purposes of interaction.

It is known that speech changes according to the degree of formality and Japanese is well known for its differences in styles. Speech is defined by many factors; among them are alike, speakers, status, and roles. Most languages in

the world possess a number of mechanisms to show politeness or solidarity (Brown & Levinson, 1987) which range from an elaborate honorific system). The importance of appropriateness of using language in social interaction had long been emphasized by some linguists and hence, the idea of systematic study of speech acts as a social phenomenon is not new. Therefore, when two people from similar and different culture interact, they often state compliments in order to please each other.

In our daily lives, we generally exchange compliments as an effort to keep solid relationships. In other words, compliments are supposed to be for rapport instead of report and for cooperation instead of complimenting in Tannen's terms (1996). There are many ways that people use to express compliments, therefore the ways to respond are also various. Different person may have different ways in giving responses of the responded givers, depending on the situation, and the ways the recipients of the compliments assume the compliments given and also who the one do the compliments.

A compliment is a speech act with or implicitly attributes credit to someone or other than the speaker, usually the person addresses, for some "good" (possession, characteristics, skills, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer. (Holmes, J, 1988).

It is generally stereotyped that English native speakers are more direct than Indonesian when both express speech acts in this case compliments. Usually Indonesians go around for a while talking about related things before finally say that they agree or disagree. Even sometimes they do not use any expressions which really mean disagree. They may just ask questions or say something different from that mention by their interlocutors, or even, when their interlocutors are higher in status than they are, they just keep silent.

Furthermore, in expressing compliments, Indonesian people usually say indirectly to their interlocutors without thinking about misinterpretation, although it pleases the interlocutors.

In Indonesian culture for example, stating compliments are relatively rare because stating too many complements the recipients are often misunderstood among people. Therefore this statement is usually used only among members only of the educated class who have been exposed to western customs.

There are many ways that people use to state compliments, therefore the ways to respond compliments are also various. Different person may have different ways in giving responses of the responded givers, depending on the situation, and the ways the recipients of the compliments assumes the compliments given and also who does the compliments.

In order to provide insightful understanding about the objectives and detailed analyses regarding the subject of the research, the writer outlines the problem statements which are formulated in the following research questions.

1. What is the characteristic of compliments between sexes in the two languages?
2. How are the similarities and differences between the two cultural groups revealed?
3. Why do people disclose compliments?

After revealing research question of this study, the writer would like to present its objectives as follows.

1. To describe the characteristics of compliments between sexes in the two languages.
2. To explain the similarities and differences between sexes in the two languages.
3. To discuss the reasons for people to do compliments.

FRAMEWORK THEORY

According to Brown and Levinson (1978: 52), "a compliment is a positive strategy to address the hearers' positive face". The positive face is the person a person's desire to be approved by others and to have one's goal thought of as a desirable by others who share similar interests. For example, a compliment such as "your personal opinions are

very valuable and interesting," conveys approval and a sense that speaker and hearer share similar views. It works as a kind of social accelerator.

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Brown and Levinson (1987) also claimed that speech acts of complementing are a largely positive and politeness strategy, since it lets the addressee know that he or she is liked. As the positively affective speech acts, the most obvious function of compliments is to polish the social relationship, pay attention to positive face wants and thus increase or integrate solidarity between people. Holmes (1992) in her work complementing in speech has provided the definition of compliments as a speech act, which explicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speakers, usually the person addresses, for some good that is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer. In short, the act of compliment can also serve other functions such as greeting, thanking, and apologizing or even as substitute for them. Yet, to express so many compliments, people can often be really annoyed and strange. In another word, a person does not feel convertible.

Cultural differences also account for differences in making sense of the so called politeness. Brown and Levinson (1978) cited in Richards (1984) suggest that in order to enter into social relationships with each other, one must acknowledge the face of other people. This is to assume that both sides avoid intruding upon each others territory such as physical territory, a partial field of knowledge and try to seek to enlarge the territory of others. Lakoff (1993) provides term as to make other people to feel good on the assumption that the same will be done to them which is believed to be different from society to society.

They further state that the precise ways of indicating respect for face may be specific culture and not subject to direct translation. For example, in some cultures, initial refusal of an offer may be

merely polite, and invite repetition in others, the opposite may be true.

The Function of Compliments

The study has shown that complimenting involves a variety of linguistics functions. It is argued that the main function of compliment is to establish solidarity between speakers and addressee (Holmes 1992). Manes (1983), maintains that praise in American English functions to both establish and reinforce solidarity between speaker and listener and that solidarity between interlocutors thus emerges or establishes.

Another possible function of compliments may serve to strengthen or replace other speech acts like apologizing, greeting, reprimanding or thanking or to soften acts such as criticism (Wolfson, 1983).

Tips for Compliments

It is suggested by Wolfson (1983) that there are several tips for giving powerful compliment as follows.

1. Be specific. Don't vague when you give compliment. Say something truly.
2. Acknowledge their character when complementing an accomplishmen. Do not just acknowledge what the person did. Point to a person's character traits such as persperance, kindness, and thoughtfulness.
3. Be authentic. If you do not really mean the compliment, do not give it. Every one has some characters strength or gift worthy of acknowledgement.
4. Express your appresiation when complimenting someone about something they did not benefit you. Be direct in your praise.

Syntactic Pattern of Compliment

Manes and Wolfson (1981) have suggested the structural pattern of compliment, compliments are remarkably formulaic speech acts in that a very small number of lexical ideas and syntactic patterns account for the great majority 175 compliments. The syntactic pattern can be seen as follows.

1. NP BE (INT) Adj. In a sentence, Your hair is really great.
2. I (INT) like NP such as I simply love the skirt.
3. (a) PRO BE a (INT), for example that's a very nice coat
4. (INT) Adj. (NP), the sentence says really cool, ear-rings
5. NP looks/is really Adj. Such as Your watch is really nice
6. Pron is (really) (a) Adj. NP such as He is real a good teacher

METHODS

In collecting the data, this study designed a questionnaire, then she met the respondents: 15 men and 15 women. She asked them to read each situation and respond to the questionnaires by writing it in what she /he would say in each situation given. In addition to the use of questionnaire as the technique of collecting data, the writer also used library research.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected by using an open ended questionnaires which consist of two versions, the first version was delivered to native speakers of English. And the second one is Indonesian students who speak bahasa Indonesia.

Subjects of Research

The subjects of this study were divided into two groups of English and Indonesian, the Indonesian males and females of native speakers of English as well as Indonesian people. Native speakers meant are defined as those who speak the language as their first or second language. The total of respondents between the two language users are twenty, ten Indonesian respondents and also ten English respondents. The Indonesian respondents mostly consist of the researchers' colleagues while the English respondents are mostly visitors (native speakers of English, such as Australian, Americans etc.) who visit Macassar and other tourists destinations in South-Sulawesi, for example Bira beach, Benteng Rotterdam and

many others who stay in hotels. The population of this study is Indonesian males and females as well as English and males and females. Samples were taken on the basis of a random sampling.

Data Analyses Technique

Data obtained through questionnaires were grouped according to the speakers' sexes, and the status of the audience is higher, same or lower. Data were then presented in the form of syntactic pattern used by the respondents to express their compliments. Next, the findings of each data were discussed on the basis of gender.

Discussions

The Characteristics of Compliment in the two Languages

Data obtained through interview are the natures of compliment between the two sexes in the two languages. The following explanation shows the nature and characteristics of compliments in the two languages, English and Indonesian. After presenting the nature of compliments, data were presented through oral data.

English

1. In general, the structure of compliments either made by males or females tend to account for pre-act which is characterized by the presence of attention getter, head-act which is the compliments, and post-act which is the expression following compliments.
2. In English, attention getter is varied according to sex differences and certain getters are only used by males.
3. Most expressions of compliments do the function as pleasure or making the hearers happy.
4. English speakers express compliments more often than Indonesian
5. Most of head-acts (a statement of compliments) do a variety of speech acts such as expressive of praising, congratulating, and thanking.

Indonesian

1. The structure of compliments also emerges in Indonesian data but in some cases, the frequency of occurrence between males and females differ from English.
2. Attention getters do not vary as the English do, but Indonesian makes it different according to the the speakers ethnic group
3. Indonesian compliments expression has the same function as English

Most head-acts (a statement of acts does a variety of function such as praising, congratulating, and thanking.

English Data

Data above show that females of native speakers of English employ a wide range of attention getter in their spoken compliments. Such as *wow, nice, great ,hi, excellent, and gorgeous.*

From having illustrated these attention getters, it may be inferred that these tokens perform certain acts which can be mostly positive based on the context in which they are used. For example, "great" almost implies positive meaning since it is used when addressing something as the emergency satisfactory situation.

Table 1: Attention getter of Female English Complimenter.

Types of Attention Getter	Frequency of Occurrence	Examples of Compliment	Total%
'Wow'	2	wow, new hair cut , you look more handsome	0,90%
'nice'	1	nice,car you are driving , isn't it	0,45%
'great'	3	Great,You have lost a lot of weight, what have you been doing?	1,36%
'Hi'	2	hi, how are you,you are looking just terrific	0,90%
'Hem'	1	Hem, that's a nice hat	0,45%
'Great'	1	I knew there was something different but I couldn't quite work out what/. It looks great	0,45%
'Excellent'	2	Your idea so excellent	0,90%
'Beautiful'	1	Your shoes so beautiful	0.45%
'Gorgeous'	2	the birds are very Gorgeous	0,90%
Total	15		6,76%

Table 2: Example of Female Complimenter where Attention Getter Occur

Utterances	Compliment about
'wow'	Hair
'nice'	Car
'great'	weight loss
'hi'	News
'hem'	Hat
'great'	different thing
'excellent'	ideas
'beautiful'	shoes
'gorgeous'	birds

Data listed above show that females of the native speakers of English employ a wide range of attention getter in their spoken compliments. The most frequent attention getter used is "great" which account for 3 times that is 1,36 %. This may lead us to infer that great has positive meaning

which is popular used by females.

The next important usage of attention getter is "wow" that accounts for twice (0, 90 %). The attention getter of making compliment emerges in the data about people are amazed of others' performance.

Another important attention getter is "hi" which also accounts for twice (0, 90 %). This attention getter occurs in the data expressing compliment about someone who greets another for asking news.

With regard to attention getter of "hem" this token is almost the same as "wow" but, hem is less strong than "wow".

The last important attention getter emerging in the data is in reference to "nice". This getter is also almost similar with great but nice is less strong than great which express the sign of surprise.

Table 3: Attention Getter of Male English Compliment

Attention Getter	Frequency of Occurrence	Example in the Data	%
'Love'	1	I love the tachoos .I'll be back tomorrow for some more	0.45%
'Fine'	2	You are looking very smart today	0.90%
'Really'	1	It's really time . I finished it though - ok, I just really realized you have had your hair cut	0.45%
'Great'	2	I knew there was something different but, I couldn't quite work out what.It looks great.	0.90%
'Polite'	1	"What a polite child"	0.45%
'Good'	1	You make that sweater look good	0.45%
'Gorgeous'	2	"your photo looks gorgeous"	0,90%
'Excellent'	2	'your ideas excellent'	0,90%
'Handsome'	2	'he is a handsome man'	0,90%
'Hello'	1	'hello mate your argument is very good'	0.45
Total	15		6,75%

The following data show the examples of male compliment which employ a wide variety of attention in expressing compliments to their recipients. Some of the attention getter used by males happen to be used by females complimenters.

Each attention getter is expressed once and twice which account for 0, 45% and 0,90% for all getters. As far as the writer is concerned, this attention getter is always used as an address to females from males.

Table 4: Example of Male Complimenter where Attention Getter Occur

Utterance	Compliment about
'Love'	Meals
'Fine'	Encouragement
'Really'	Awareness
'Great'	Extraordinary
'Polite'	Politeness
'Good'	Matching
'Excellent'	Ideas
'Handsome'	Man (person)
'Hello mate'	Argument

Males appear to use only once for each attention getters above. The reasons for only expressing once is because males are very rare to compliment to others.

Among 175 compliments obtained in Indonesian data, it appears that both sexes do use attention getter preceding their compliments. Females account for 15 times (4,5) from their 137 compliments and males account for 15 times (3,6%) from their total 125 compliments.

Indonesian Data

Data above show that male in Indonesian language using compliments generally use attention getter preceding their compliments. The most frequent attention getter used is "*cantik*" and "*bagus*", *licin*, *enak*, *manis*, *danlezat* especially in male-females interaction which account for two times. It should be noted that the emerge of certain data or attention getters repeatedly because the ethnic group of respondents.

In contrast, the uses of attention getters of *enak*, *pintar* and *indah* are only used once. The writer does not understand why the respondents use only once for those kinds of attention getters.

Table 5: Attention getter of Female Indonesian Complimenter.

Types oe Attention Getter	Frequency of Occurrence	Cxamples of Compliment	Total %
'Cantik'	r	Cagtik sekali tasnya ml) a	0,90
'Bagus'	r	Bagus sekali sepatumu, mahal pasti.	0,90
'licin"	r	Licinnya muka mu pakai bedak apa?	0,90
'Bagus'	i	Bagus sekali suaramu	0,95
'Enak'	r	mnaknya kuemu, bisa minta resepnyn?	0,90
'Pintar'	i	Pintar sekali anak ibu, nilainya tinggi semua.	0,45
'Manis'	r	Manis sekali cewek yang lewatdepanrumah mu tadi	0,90
'Lezat'	r	Lezatsekalmakannyabu!	0,90
'Indah'	i	Indah sekali pemandanganya di Malinmini	0,45
Total	15		6,75

Table 6: Example of Female Complimenter where Attention Getter Occur

Utterances	Compliment about
'Cantik'	belonging (possession)
'Bagus'	ways
'cantik'	Beauty
'merdu'	Quality
'Enak'	cookies
'Pintar'	Ability
'Manis'	girls
'Lezat'	Food
'Indah'	views

The data tabulated above describe that attention getters in Indonesian are very seldom expressed. As can be seen in the data above that there are only three adjectives used in addressing compliments such as *cantik* and *bagus*, *manis*, and *lezat* used twice for different expressions. Mean while, the words *enak* and *pintar*, and *indah* only expressed once. This thing signed by Indonesian people are reluctant to say compliment most times.

Data show that males use attention getters in their compliments but, certain attention getter addressed twice such as "hebat", because this getter is more preferable by males in Indonesian complimenter.

Table 8: Example of Male Complimenter where Attention Getter Occur

Utterance	Compliment about
'Gagah'	to admire
'Hebat'	Play
'Hebat'	Phenomenal
'Rajin'	hard work
'Kuat'	Energetic
'Indah'	Ways of working
'Mewah'	House's interior
'Luarbiasa'	Boxing
'Mantap'	Motor cycles

Based upon the data mention above, it seems that males in addressing compliments tend to be more interested in saying words implied ability.

Table 7: Attention Getter of man in Indonesian language Complimenter

Attention Getter	Frequency of Occurrence	Example in the Data	%
'Gagah'	2	Gagah sekali pasukan <u>paskibraka itu</u>	0.90%
'Hebat'	1	Hebat sekali <u>tendangannya</u>	0.45%
'Hebat'	1	Hebat sekali pemilihan gubernur <u>DKI Jakarta</u>	0.45%
'Rajin'	1	Rajin betul anak itu <u>belajar</u>	0.45%
'Kuat'	2	Kuat benar pekerja <u>bangunan itu</u>	0.45%
'Indah'	1	Indah sekali <u>lukisanmu dek</u>	0.45%
'Wah'	2	Wahbenar-benar <u>Hebatkamu</u>	0,45%
Mewah	2	Mewahsekali interior <u>rumah mu</u>	0.90%
Luarbiasa	2	Luarbiasapukulan mu	0,90%
Mantap	1	Mantapbetul motor <u>ninja mu</u>	0,45
Total	15		<u>5,40%</u>

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing all data written in the table, it is found that there is significant similarities and differences between Indonesian and English people in stating compliments. Both Indonesian and English people state compliment when they see something beautiful or interesting. However, Indonesian people are rarely used compliment rather than English. In other word, Indonesian people are commonly reluctant to be complimented directly. Only among members of the educated class who have been exposed to western customs. Although English people are more directly in stating compliments they do not intend to giggle the people who are complimented. They tend to show their friendly manner. The getters stated by English people in the table above seem more complimented, such as, great, you lost a lot of weight, what have you been doing? hi, how you are, you are looking just terrific. Failure of communication in the process of interaction might be caused by differences in cultures, values systems, and norms that the interlocutor harbor. This study forms a small contribution to the growing body of research on language and sexes. It also does a variety of acts such as expressive of praising, congratulating, and thanking.

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