

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Sociolinguistic, Speech Act, and Compliment

It is well-known that sociolinguistic is a study about the relationship between language and society (Hudson; 1996). How people do conversation and communicate to each other is a social activity and it means that speech is also social. Speech is shorter or longer string of linguistic items expressed specific occasions for specific purpose (Hudson; 1996:106). Compliment is also a speech act. As defined by Holmes (1986b; 485), compliment is "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some good (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer". In another word, compliment helps us express admirations, praises on someone's personality, ability or some other good things in him/her. Due to the specific purposes, compliment can be considered as a speech act or more specifically positive politeness. In terms of politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1978), compliment is expressed to fulfill the idea of positive face-the need to be liked and admired. In another word, the speaker gives a compliment to make the addressees to feel good.

In addition, numerous researchers about speech act of compliment such as Brown & Levinson 1987; Holmes 1995 and Hobbs 2003 claimed that speech act of compliment is overpoweringly observed as one of the most obvious positive politeness strategies. Wolfson (1983) claimed that compliments can be described

as ‘social lubricants’, which enable us to ‘create or maintain rapport’, that means beside it can be a polite way to express admiration, it can build the solidarity.

B. Topics of Compliment

Among several topics of compliments, there are some common topics usually used in many studies about compliment. The first is *appearance*. It is “outward or visible aspect of a person or thing, something that appears and could be seen such as clothes and hair” (Holmes 1995). The second one is *possession*, and the third one is *performance/ability/skill* that is a “quality of something produced through the addressee’s skill or effort, a skillfully played game, a good meal” (Manes; 1983). Also, Manes and Wolfson (1981) categorized 3 general topics in compliment they are; appearance/possession, performance/skill/ability, and personal trait.

Furthermore, Herbert (1998) classifies topics of compliment into four categories. First is *appearance* that means to compliment someone’s external packing, the make-up, and the clothes and so on. Second one is *possession* means to compliment something of someone’s. Third is *performance/ skill/ ability* that means to compliment someone’s job or competences, and the fourth one is *personality* that means to compliment someone’s internal traits or people friendship or other emotions.

C. Responses of Compliment

One more about compliment that researchers interest to explore is compliment responses. When we discuss about compliment responses study, we will find the name like Pomerantz, Holmes, Herbert, etc. Their theories of

compliment response categorize are frequently used by other researchers. The form of compliment responses are formed as macro level and each macro has divided into sub-category, which is then become micro level. To begin with Pomerantz(1978) pointed out that addresses of American English use two conditions in responding the compliments: when they agree with the speaker and avoid self-praise. But then, she was not satisfied with her study because in fact the limitation of her compliment response was not enough, so she came up with three categories on compliment response; (1) Acceptance (appreciation token, agreement), (2) Rejection (disagreement) and (3) Self-praise Avoidance mechanisms that divide into praise downgrades and referent shifts. Pomerantz divides self-praise avoidance mechanisms into agreement and disagreement, then referent shifts into reassignment and return. Furthermore, Holmes (1986, 1988) in her study in New Zealand conclude that there are three main categories of compliment responses; Accept, Reject, Deflect or Evade.

Additionally, Herbert's (1998) compliment responses categories seem to be more complete and as looked that many of compliment responses studies used hers. Herbert divides the macro compliment responses into agreement, non-agreement and other interpretation and divides them into twelve micro compliment responses. The explanation of Herbert's compliment responses will follow next (Adapted from Furkó&Dudás; 2012). First is *agreement* that divides into appreciation token, comment acceptance, praise upgrade, comment history, and reassignment, an return. *Appreciation token* that means the addressees accept the compliment by verbal or nonverbal "Thank you!; (nod)". *Comment*

acceptance means the addressees accept the compliment and give a related comment on the appreciated topic “Yeah, this is my favorite, too!”. *Praise upgrade* is addressees accept the compliment and pay to the force of the compliment “Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn’t it?”. *Comment history* is addressees give a comment or usually give information on the object of the compliment about how they have acquired it “I bought it for the trip to Arizona”. *Reassignment* means the addressees agree with the compliment, but the complimentary force is moved to third person “My mother gave it to me”. And *return* that means the compliment is shifted or returned to the addresser “So is yours”.

The second one is *non agreement* that divides into scale down, question, disagreement, qualification, and no acknowledgement. *Scale down* means the addressee does not agree with the compliment, she/he directing to some weakness in the object or claiming that the compliment is exaggerated “It is really quite old”. Next one is *question* that means the addressees ask questions about sincerity or the appropriateness of the compliment “Do you really think so?” Also *disagreement* that means the addressees affirm that the object of the compliment is not praiseworthy “I hate it”. Then, *qualification* is the addressees simply qualifies the original affirmation usually with though, but, well etc. “Well, it is all right but Kim’s is nicer”. And *no acknowledgement* is addressee gives no clue of having heard the compliment. Usually she/he responds for the compliment by chooses to shift the topic or gives no response.

Third one is *Other Interpretation/ Request Interpretation* that means the addressees interprets the utterance as a request rather than a simple compliment “You wanna borrow it?”

D. Compliment and Compliment Response Related to Gender

Plentiful researchers explained that women’s speech is different from men’s (Baron, 1986; Arliss, 1991). Then many researchers studied the distribution of compliments and compliment response between women and men. Holmes (1995) claimed in her study that women use compliment as expressing the rapport and solidarity, though men use compliment as face threatening or controlling device. Also, Herbert (1990) in his American study identify that women accepted more compliments from men than from women. Wolfson (1983) claimed that the differences in complimenting behavior between men and women reflect social power, where women in society’s position are usually saw as subordinate. In addition, Holmes (1995) stated ‘praise is often directed downwards from superordinate to subordinate’

Furthermore, from the plentiful studies about compliment across gender, there are some similarities in their finding, such as women give compliments to each other more often than men give to each other. Another similarity is that women more likely receive compliment more than men (Cai; 2012). Then the topic that women use in compliment mostly is about appearance, while men compliment is about possession. Furthermore, the function of compliment they used is different, women use compliment to build and keep the relationship while men use

compliment for encouragement or evaluation feedback (Wolfson, 1983; Manes, 1983; Holmes, 1988; Holmes, 1996).

