

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In this chapter, there are two sections. At first, the writer will give the review of some related theories which show more explanations concerning about theories of compliments and compliments giving and also the level of sociolinguistic competence that follow. Moreover, the theories of compliments giving based on gender differences also displayed in this chapter. In supporting to those theories, the writer will show the review of related studies from the previous students which give contribution to develop the writer's understanding of the theory.

### **2.1. Review of Related Theories**

In conducting this research, there were some related theories from some researchers that the writer used which were separated into the main theories and supporting theories.

#### **2.1.1. Main Theories**

In this section, the writer showed the theories of compliments and sociolinguistic competence as the main theories as the consideration that these terms are influential to give the major explanations in conducting this research.

##### **2.1.1.1. Theories of Compliments**

Holmes (1986b, p. 485) as cited in Zhan Rong's study, defines compliments as "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". She emphasized by stating compliments are positive expression or evaluation, which are directed either explicitly or implicitly to someone for something valued positively by the speaker and the hearer, and even the whole speech community. The expressions like "*you're looking good*" and "*Is that a new suit*" can be included as the examples of

compliments. In general, the major function of compliments is to establish and maintain social “rapport” and smoothness between participants (Manes and Wolfson, 1981). However, in some other contexts, compliments may function as praise and encouragement (Holmes, 1995) if it deals with the social status. Besides, sometimes it can serve as an admiration rather than offers of solidarity (Herbert, 1990).

In other cultures such as Indonesia, Wolfson also emphasized that though a term for complimenting exists in Indonesian, native speakers feel that they occur relatively rarely and usually only among the educated that have been exposed to Western customs. Hence, for the students of the upper batches who have been taught in English department, they are expected to have almost the same competent with the native speakers of English both in the side of language factors and social factors

Besides, according to Herbert (1990) as cited in Coates (1993), compliments can be analyzed in terms of types of personal focus. There are three types of compliments in terms of personal focus:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> person focus  
example: *“I like your hair that way”*
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> person focus  
example: *“your hair looks good short”*
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> person focus (impersonal)  
example: *“nice haircut!”*

Based on the theory, the explanation of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person focus are the types of compliments which are more personal, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> person focus is more impersonal. The difference of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person focus is on the subject who gives compliments and object complimented. The 1<sup>st</sup> person focus is emphasized on the person who is pleased with the object complimented, for example in the statement *“I like your hair that way!”* Whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> person focus is more emphasized on the object complimented itself, for example *“Your hair looks good short!”* The example for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person focus is on the statement *“Nice haircut!”* which is indirectly given to the object complimented.

Furthermore, Holmes (1995) had tried to summarize and classify the topics of compliments, that which deals with an ability or accomplishment and that which has to do with appearance and/or possessions. Wolfson (1981) stated that ability is quality of something produced through the addressee's skill or effort, a skillfully played game, or a good meal. The example for the compliments on ability is "*Wow! You played well today Davy*". In addition, possession is the act of having or possessing of being possessed, especially new ones, Wolfson added. The example is "*Your new car is great*". Lastly, based on Holmes (1994), appearance is an outward or visible aspect of a person or thing, something that appears and could be seen such as clothes and hair. The example is "*I like your outfit Beth. I think I could wear that*".

Specifically, compliments seem to function as positive politeness strategies in some situations, that is, they attend to the positive face needs of the addressee. Nevertheless, in other situations, compliments can be face-threatening, because they ignore the negative face-needs of the addressee, Coates (1993) emphasized. Kuntjara (2003) also added by stating that the act of giving compliments do not always seem convey good effects to the addressee if it is given in an inappropriate situation. In a particular society, the compliments can be interpreted as a face threatening acts for the interlocutor. She gave an example if there is a person who says, "*Your cookie is so delicious!*" the one who is complimented can interpret that compliments as the desire of the speaker to have the cookie more. Thus, the addressee feels obliged to offer it because he/she probably misinterpret the real intention of the compliments itself.

Moreover, the compliments based on gender differences can also be considered an allusion or even an insult. Kuntjara gave another example such as if a man gives compliments to the woman's body when the woman passed in front of him, the woman probably feels angry and consider that man only wants to tease her. In conclusion, if the compliments are given inappropriately, it may cause to the misunderstanding for they do not know the appropriate way of giving compliments especially in some different social contexts.

### **2.1.1.2. Theories of Sociolinguistic Competence**

According to Canale and Swain's (1980), they explained that a given learner or a group of learners needs to know and emphasizes the way in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express language functions appropriately. The most important linguistic ability is that of being able to produce or understand utterances which are not so much grammatical but, more important, appropriate to the context in which they are made, Campbell and Wales (1970) added. Hymes (1972) also came to the same conclusion by stating that there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use. In other words, communicative competence refers to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence (knowledge of the rules of grammar) and sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of the rules of language use).

In general, Holmes (1992) defined sociolinguistic competence as the knowledge which underlies people's ability to use language appropriately. Using language appropriately involves knowing the sociolinguistic rules for speaking in community. It conveys a meaning in which understanding the influence of social factors on speech behavior. Besides, Wolfson (1989) also added that language acquisition involves not linguistic competence alone but also communicative competence. Researchers convinced that successful language acquisition involves learning what to say to whom and in which circumstances, as well as the ability to follow the rules of grammar and pronunciation. The aim of second language instruction should be to facilitate learners' acquisition of communicative competence, the ability to speak both accurately and appropriately.

In supporting those theories, there were three studies of Savignon (1972), Tucker (1974) and Palmer (1974) in the book of Canale and Swain (1980) that came to the same summary that focus on grammatical competence in the classroom is not a sufficient condition for the development of communicative competence. Communicative competence is indeed one of the goals of language teaching. Furthermore, for L2 learners, knowledge of what a native speaker is likely to say in a

given context is a crucial component to understand L2 communication and to express them in a native-like way, they added.

### **2.1.2. Supporting Theory**

In this section, the writer talked further about another theory that supported the previous main theories. It consisted of the theory of compliments behavior based on gender differences.

#### **2.1.2.1. Theories of Compliments Behavior based on Gender Differences**

The way people give compliments is also influenced by the different gender of the speaker. According to Holmes (1995), women give and receive more compliments than men do. It is because women's compliments are positively affective speech acts, serving to increase or consolidate the solidarity between speaker and addressee. For men, compliments can be regarded as a face threatening act and task oriented, as cited in Kuntjara's dissertation (2001). Besides, Holmes added that women more often focus on the social or affective function of talk, while men tend to orientate to its referential function. Thus, women's speech is more focused on the feeling, while men's speech is more focused on the information itself. Furthermore, in terms of types of personal focus, Coates also emphasized that "women preferred more personalized forms, while men preferred impersonal forms" (p. 99). It is probably because of women's characteristics which are stated in Herbert study (1990, p. 205) as "social, affiliative, other-oriented, socioemotional, supportive, and so forth" Thus, it is expected that compliments from females are longer than males'

Concerning the topic of compliments based on gender differences, Holmes (1995) stated that women give compliments on appearance more than men do. This finding is reliable to the theory which says that an appearance compliment is clearly an expression of solidarity, a positively affective speech act. Thus, the characteristics of women which are more concern to the feeling of the interlocutor lead to the highest occurrence of compliments on appearance. Men, by contrast, appear to prefer

to compliment other men, but not women, on possessions, since compliments on possession are much vulnerable to be interpreted as face-threatening acts because the complimenter will be heard as expressing desire for or envy of the object referred to. Even, the compliments giving can also be misinterpreted as the obligation of the addressee to offer the object to the complimenter.

## **2.2. Review of Related Studies**

This section revealed the review of related studies conducted by some researchers which were important to be the writer's reference and it also showed some review of the studies from previous students in Petra Christian University.

### *2.2.1. Compliments in cross-cultural perspective* by Manes and Wolfson (1981) as cited in Wolfson (1981)

This research attempted to reveal the compliments behavior among native speakers of English, especially Americans. They analyzed 686 compliments which were collected in a natural occurring speech. Then, it was found that compliments occurred in a very wide variety of situations between people of American English. The compliments were quite frequent and they served to produce to reinforce a feeling of solidarity between speakers. From the study, it was revealed that there were 85% of the respondents gave compliments. The rest preferred not to give compliments. Specifically, there were 16,1% of American English preferred to use the first person focus, for instance "*I like your shirt*" Then, 53,6% and 14,9% of the data respectively for the second and third person focus. The example for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person focus is "*You look good*" and for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person focus is "*That's a good system*". Hence, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person compliment occurred in a highest frequency among all types. This research only focused on the compliments giving of the Americans. They then were not trying to compare the findings with people from other country. Nevertheless, the writer also tried to reveal the differences and/or similarities of types of personal focus in the act of giving compliments between the students of the upper and lower batches.

### 2.2.2. *Sex-based differences in compliment behavior* by Robert K. Herbert (1990)

This research was trying to reveal the compliments behavior between male and female speakers. In this study, he collected the data ethnographically from the students at the State University of New York at Binghamton. The situation given was within the student community, such as dining halls, classroom, student union, and so on. Then, he found 1062 compliments which were represented the data from the male and female students of American. He revealed that there were 228 compliments occurred in the interaction from male-male, 258 compliments occurred in the interaction from male-female, 330 compliments occurred in the interaction from female-female, and 246 compliments occurred in the interaction from female-male. It was obvious that compliments among men were the least occurred, but it had the highest occurrence in the compliments among women. He then found out that females of American preferred to give the *1<sup>st</sup> person compliment*, 152 compliments from female-female and 111 from female-male. On the contrary to that finding, the interaction from male-male only occurred in 35 compliments and male-female only occurred in 51 compliments using the *1<sup>st</sup> person compliment*. The *3<sup>rd</sup> person compliment*, which is more impersonalized, really occurred in the highest frequency among men. There were 156 compliments from male-male, 134 compliments from male-female, 58 compliments from female-female, and 56 compliments from female-male. While this research tried to go deeper to reveal the compliments giving and responses behavior based on gender differences, the writer intended to reveal the compliments behavior from the male and female students of the upper and lower batches.

### 2.2.3. *A Study of Compliments-giving as seen on "Ceriwis". A talk show program on Trans TV* by Risma Natalia Marpaung (11401125)

This research was focused on the compliments-giving as seen in Indonesian talk show, called *Ceriwis*. The purpose of this research was to investigate the similarities and differences between the female and male presenters in giving compliments to their female and male guests. In collecting the data, this writer used

tape recorder to record the utterances. She focused only on 5 episodes of the show which were broadcasted on March 4<sup>th</sup> – March 8<sup>th</sup> 2005 at 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM. The instrument of this research was the writer herself. She recorded 5 episodes of “*Ceriwis*” talk show program. The findings of this research were the female presenters gave 4 topics of compliments to her guests. While men presenters complimented only on 2 topics of compliments. In the side of female presenters, the mostly used topic of compliments-giving given to female guests was on appearance, and to male guests was on ability. Whereas, the mostly used topic of compliments-giving given by male presenters to both female and male guests was on specific act, which has a kind of spontaneous utterances that were uttered after something that has been done, for example “*Nice game*”, “*You’re a smart boy*” and many more.

The similarities between this research and the writer’s are on the same topic, in which both of us only focused on compliments-giving, not to compliments responses. Besides, we also conducted the study using gender differences as the variable. However, we had differences in choosing the object and the theory. The object of this research was based on the utterances of the presenters from the talk show, whereas the writer used English department students as her respondents. The theory of this research was on the topic of compliments by Holmes (1995). The writer then conducted the research using the theory of types of personal focus by Herbert (1990) as cited in Coates (1993).

For the writer, this study gave further information about the theory of the three topics of compliments giving, ability, possession and appearance. In more detail, the writer could understand more on what topic usually the compliments given based on gender differences.

#### 2.2.4. *A Sociolinguistic Study on Giving Compliments among Americans and Indonesians based on Status and Gender Differences* by Vony Yoewono (11493018)

This research was focused on the differences and similarities of compliments given by the Americans and Indonesians (Javanese and Chinese Indonesians). This research also tried to find out whether status and sex would be an important factor in

the compliments-giving. The methodology that was used was an elicitation technique – the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) which was originally developed by Blum-Kulka in 1982 (Wolfson, 1989), which was written role-play questionnaires. The subjects were divided into two sets of respondents. All of them were working people who worked at Westin and Shangri-La Hotels. From this research, the writer found that different cultural backgrounds of Americans and Indonesians sometimes influenced their ways in giving compliments. Although both nationalities had similarity in using the *2<sup>nd</sup> person compliments*, but the number of occurrence differed greatly. Besides, status and gender also influenced them in giving different kinds of compliments.

The similarity between this research and the writer's research was both the writers used the theory of personal focus and only focused on compliments-giving. However, the difference was on the object. This research used native speakers of English and native speakers of Indonesian as her respondents, so she talked about the different cultures background. On the contrary, all of the writer's respondents were the native speakers of Indonesian who differed in their level of sociolinguistic competence.

This study is beneficial for the writer since it also revealed the compliments behavior of native speakers of Americans. Thus, the writer could use the findings of this study as another reference besides the study conducted by some researchers from other countries.