

**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### I. Introduction

This section chiefly comprises background of the study, statement of the problem, research objective, the importance of the study, definition of key terms, scope and limitation of the study.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Complimenting is a tool for establishing friendship that creates ties of solidarity. It also is an important social strategy that functions as an opener for a conversation and allows meaningful social interaction to follow. As Holmes points out (1988), compliments should function as positively affective speech acts and can be considered as phatic communion, a type of speech, which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words, termed by Malinowski (Malinowski, 1935, 2000). In our daily lives, we generally exchange compliments as an effort to keep relationships solid. Many linguists have investigated the compliments and turned to the point that compliments are socially correlated to the relationship of the interlocutors, with data collected from such dyads as employers and employees, landlords and tenants, teachers and students, classmates, friends, co-workers, and family members. In other words, compliments are supposed to be for rapport instead of report and for cooperation instead of competition in Tannen's terms (e.g., 1986, 1993, 1996). Neglecting to give compliments, moreover, may even be understood as a sign of disapproval, and the inappropriate

use of compliments may cause embarrassment and even offense. The speech act set of compliments has highly structured formulas with rather simple linguistic structures. According to Manes and Wolfson (1981), 85 percent of American compliments contained one of three simple sentential patterns. The great majority of compliments included the most common five adjectives (*nice, good, beautiful, pretty, and great*) and two verbs (*like and love*) (pp.117-120).

Compliments are also implied in the social status. According to Sims (1989), the compliment sequence is influenced by the status and sex of participants, for instance the person in the higher position, especially in a continuing relationship, who regularly uses compliments as positive reinforcement (Wolfson 1989: 114). People of lower status are complimented more often by people of higher status, for instance a manager to his or her subordinate and a teacher to the students. By giving compliments to the people of lower status, they might feel more motivated, more self-esteem and so forth. Therefore, with relation to age differences, we speculate that adults will probably give more compliments than youths. When we consider the implications of complimenting another on ability, it is not difficult to see why this should be the case. An ability/performance compliments is a serious judgment, and the person who makes it must be seen as a competent judge. In situations of unequal status, especially those, which are work-related, the competence to judge goes hand in hand with superior skill or knowledge, therefore a person who has high social status generally give compliments to the lower status such as teachers and the students.

Studies of the speech act of complimenting in different languages reveal that most of compliments fall into only a few general topics (Ye, 1995:212). These topics are appearance / possessions and performance / ability / skills, accomplishments and so forth. Wolfson (1983:90) points out that in American English, there are generally two topics, "those having to do with appearance and those which comment on ability". Generally, Manes' (1983) findings replicate Wolfson's study. He also indicates that Americans are more likely to comment on personal appearance as a result of "deliberate efforts" (p. 99), such as new "clothes and hair-dos" (p.98). She further defines Wolfson's "ability" as "the quality of something produced through the addressee's skill or effort, a well-done job, a skillfully-played game, a good meal" (p.101). Holmes (1986) and Holmes and Brown (1987) New Zealand data show that the general topics in New Zealand English are similar to those in American English. Nelson, et al. (1996:415) find that Egyptians also compliment the attributes of physical appearance, personality traits, and skills / work. Although different researchers may prefer to use different terms such as appearance, possessions, performance, skill, ability, work, personality and friendship, whatever, basically all these aspects can be roughly grouped into two broad categories: appearance and performance. Despite the fact that there are some general topics people from different cultures compliment or comment upon, some studies also find that, different cultures may have different preferential topics for compliments. In American English, appearance and performance are the two most frequently complimented topics, as shown by Wolfson (1983) and Manes (1983). According to Holmes and Brown (1987), New Zealanders comment far more frequently on appearance (45.0%) than on ability / performance (27.5%). They also comment on possessions (10.5%) and personality traits / friendship

(13.5%). Herbert (1989) data also indicate the cultural variation in Polish compliments. He finds that in Poland, people pay about 50% of compliments on others possessions. He contributes this phenomenon, from a sociological point of view, to the fact that there was insufficient goods supply available at the time of study. In Ye (1995) Chinese data, 80.9% of the respondents paid compliments, either explicitly or implicitly on performance while only 44% on appearance. This, Ye (1995:233-4) concludes, suggests that a change in appearance may not be deemed as worthy of complimenting as an achievement in performance and reveals a preference of topic for complimenting in Chinese. All this indicates that more detailed study and analysis of complimenting in different cultures are needed as to which aspects of appearance and which particular possessions are appropriate for comment. Acceptable topics of compliments certainly vary cross-culturally (Holmes 1986:497)

In the study of compliments, there are several researchers or linguists attempting to analyze and observe the study of compliments in relation to other linguistics branches such as the study conducted by Manes and Wolfson (1981), even though, they do not focus their investigation merely on syntactic structure, they also analyze the process of syntactic structure on their research entitled *The function of Compliments in the speech of middle-class native speakers of American English*. Their findings show that well over 50 percent of all the compliments in the corpus make use of a single syntactic pattern as followed:

1. NP is/ looks (really) ADJ (e.g., “Your blouse is beautiful”)

Two other syntactic patterns,

2. I (really) like/love NP (e.g., “ I like your car “)

3. PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP (e.g., “That’s a nice wall hanging”)

In the same study, moreover, the researcher finds another analysis of compliment related to the analysis of the semantic composition of compliments done by Manes and Wolfson. The findings show that there are two major categories that deal with semantics namely, the adjectival and the verbal. The great majority of adjectival compliments make use of only five different adjectives for instance *nice*, *good*, *beautiful*, *pretty* and *great* (e.g., “That’s a good haircut”). Semantically, if we refer to the topic of compliments, we also find the correlation with the adjectival such as topic of clothing (“That sweater looks good on you”), ability (“He’s a good actor”), and accomplishments of all sorts (e.g., “Nice shot!” or “Your lecture was good”).

Inspired by the study conducted by Manes and Wolfson (1981) about compliments perceived in several linguistics branches as the aforementioned explanation, the researcher attempts to conduct an investigation on compliments related to education especially in the field of teaching. The effective teacher must be ever mindful of the simple fact that students go to school for a living. School is their job, their livelihood, and their identity. Therefore, the critical role that school and the teacher play in the student's social development and self-concept must be recognized. Even if a student is enjoying academic success in the classroom, his or her attitude about school will be determined by the degree of social success that he/she experiences, again the students will be more encouraged and more self-confident. This is the task of the teacher as a manager in the classroom to support the students to believe in their own ability to complete a task. Without self-confidence, they are unlikely to take risks, and risk-taking is necessary in

language learning. The students need to feel that it is safe to make mistakes. By trying out new or less familiar language, they may find that they are indeed capable of more communication than they thought. The teachers, moreover, should try to reduce feelings of embarrassment when the students make mistakes, and give far more compliments than criticisms. As a part of compliments, providing praise and rewards is a pervasive strategy for encouraging effort and attention. Effective teachers provide informative compliments that make learners feel a sense of accomplishment and pride in their work. Wlodkowski (1985) on his study suggests that praise should be “3S-3P”: praise that is sincere, specific, sufficient, and properly given for praiseworthy success in the manner preferred by the learner. Note that teachers’ attempts at effective praise are not always successful. If students interpret praise as manipulative, their motivation may decline because they feel they are being treated as objects (Flint, Boggiano, Main, Barrett, & Katz, 1992). “However, when praise is sincerely given and interpreted as recognition of achievement, it can increase students’ self-perceived competence and motivation” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000,p. 414).

Thus, in this study, the researcher wants to find out and focus her investigation on teachers’ compliments to the students while both the teachers and the students are in the classroom, the frequency of giving compliments, the topic of the compliments and the purposes of giving compliments to the students.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In line with the background of the study, the researcher wants to investigate the teachers’ compliments to the students’, the frequency of giving compliments, the topics

of the compliments: and the purposes of giving compliments to the students. Hence, to cope with this problem accurately, the researcher formulates the questions as follows:

1. How frequent do the teachers compliment their students?
2. What topics of compliments do the teachers deal with?
3. What are the purposes of giving compliments to the students?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

Based on the statement of the problems, this research is specifically intended to:

1. Observe the teachers' compliments to the students derived from the interaction between the teachers and the students while they are in the classroom, take notes to describe the teachers' compliments to the students. the data through interviewing the teachers based on the questions list that are related to the topic of the researcher's study as well as record the interaction between the teachers and the students in the classroom to find out the teachers' compliment to the students.
2. Find out how often the teachers compliment their students
3. Observe the topics of compliments that the teachers deal with and find out whether the teachers compliments their students based on which topics.
4. Know the purposes of giving compliments to the students

### **1.4 Importance of the Study**

Looking at the research objectives, the results of this study later are expected to:

1. Teachers

Enrich the teachers' knowledge about giving compliments to the students while they are in the classroom.



## 2. Students

Inspire the students to perform their task competently after being complimented by the teachers.

### 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

**Compliments:** a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually that person addressed, for some good (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and hearer (Holmes, 1988).

### 1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research is sociolinguistics implemented to the educational purpose. In this study, the researcher restricts her observation to the compliments given by the lecturers of International Business Management Department, Petra Christian University Surabaya.