

The Analysis of Compliment Strategies in a Movie Entitled *The Spectacular Now*

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the kinds of compliment and compliment responses in a movie entitled *The Spectacular Now*. This paper tries to find out the types of compliment's topics, to reveal the functions of each type of compliment's topics and to figure out the types of compliment responses employed by the characters in the movie entitled *The Spectacular Now*. This research is descriptive qualitative research. This research uses a pragmatic approach. The technique used is purposive sampling, meaning that the researcher took all of dialogues containing giving and responding compliments as data. The results show that first the most common topic of compliment used by the characters is the ability topic. Revealed based on Wolfson's theory, there are five functions found in the movie. They are to express admiration or approval, to maintain rapport, to modify sarcasm, to encourage, and to give positive evaluation for someone. Furthermore, there are eight compliment responses found in the movie based on Herbert's classification. They are appreciation token, no-acknowledgement, comment acceptance, question, scale down, disagreement, request, and return. Based on the analysis, the most widely used is appreciation token with verbal acceptance.

1. INTRODUCTION

When someone speaks a language, the focus is not only on what he or she is uttering, but also on what the speaker intends to convey (Yule, 1996:127). The language is the key to communication. The goal of communication is when the listener understands what the speaker is saying. There are many ways to achieve the communication goal. In daily conversation, we often hear people using speech act either directly or indirectly to convey their intentions.

One of the acts is complimenting. We usually use the expression of compliment with various reasons like to express admiration, or respect for the work or activities that have been done by others (Manes, 1983; Herbert, 1990), to maintain solidarity (Manes & Wolfson, 1981), to use it as a replacement change from greeting / honor, apology, and speech congratulations (Wolfson, 1983).

Compliment is defined by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003: 145) as a positive appreciation for others conveyed for a thing or action, both explicitly and implicitly. According to Herbert (1990: 202), compliment contains statements that tend to be taken care of, for example, personal appearance (especially clothing and hair), goods (new), and the results of skills or effort. Holmes (1986: 496) categorizes the types of compliments into four topics namely, the topic of personality, skill or ability, appearance and possession.

Compliment makes the listener feel good and limits the possibility that the hearer will misinterpret the speaker's intention to offer solidarity and good intentions. According to Wolfson (1983) compliments have many different functions depending on the context of situation in an interaction. These functions are to affirm solidarity, to create or manage the rapport, to modify criticism, to encourage people, to express the admiration of people, to express positive evaluation, and to strengthen other speech formulas.

Those functions of the compliment can show the true intention from the speaker. Basically, when the speaker gives compliment to the addressee, usually the response that arises will have two different conditions. First, the addressee responds to the compliment positively, usually appearing with approval or returning compliment to the

speaker. Second, the addressee responds to the speaker with negative intention. In this case, the response given by the addressee is satire and ridicule.

2. METHOD

The research is considered as descriptive qualitative research because in this study, the researcher describes the types of compliment, functions of compliment and types of response used by the characters in the *The Spectacular Now* movie. *The Spectacular Now* is selected as the object of study. The data of study will be taken from dialogues which contain types of and responses to compliments. The main data studied in this research take forms of parts of the script of *The Spectacular Now* movie, which are purposively selected. The data collection was done by documenting all dialogues that contain types of and responses to compliments. The procedures of collecting the data are: downloading the movie, watching the movie three times, looking for the subtitles of the movie and making the transcript of all the dialogues, writing and finding all of the dialogues that contain giving and responding to compliment, classifying all of data into three categories which were giving compliments, responding to compliments, and the function of compliment, analyzing the classified data with pragmatic approach and trying to solve the problem statements, and drawing conclusions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

5.1.1. The topics of Compliments

The findings are presented in the following phases: description of the context, analysis of the compliments, analysis of the function each of compliments and analysis of the compliment responses. The first phase is analysis of compliment strategies using Holmes' (1986) theory, revealing the three topics used by the characters, namely the topics of appearance, skill or ability, and personality.

The topic of appearance is used for praising the appearance of someone. Topic of ability is delivered to someone who has worked hard to achieve something. This compliment is also related to taste, personal qualities and talent. Meanwhile, the topic of personality deals with non- physical appearance. This type of compliment is articulated when a person has good character, personality and behavior, making others impressed with the traits within him or her. The detailed findings can be seen below:

Table 1. Topics of Compliments

No.	Topics	Data Number	Percentage
1.	Appearance	1, 18, 23, 28 and 29.	12%
2.	Personality	14, 22, 30, 31, 33, 34, and 35	20%
3.	Ability	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26,27, and 32	68%

Table 1 reveals that topics of appearance appears the least (12%), followed by topics of personality (20%) and topics of ability (68%).

The example of dialogues that shows the topic of appearance:

Data 01/Ap/Fri

Sutter: "That dress- Wow. Beautiful" Cassidy: "Thank you."

The example of utterance containing the topic of ability. Data 06/Ab/Fri

Aimee: "That's amazing. That's awesome." Sutter: "Look at you, you're such a great listener."

The example of dialogue incorporating the topic of personality. Data 35/Per/Fam

Sutter's mother: "You have the biggest heart of anyone I know." Sutter: "Nobody loves me."

5.1.2 The Functions of Compliments

All topics of compliments have different functions. In this research, Wolfson’s classification of the function of compliment is employed as the framework of analysis. These functions are to affirm solidarity, create or manage the rapport, modify criticism, encourage people, express the admiration of people, express positive evaluation to the hearer. The result is presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Functions of Compliments

No.	Functions of Compliments	Data Number	Percentage
1.	To express admiration	3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34 and 35	66%
2.	To maintain rapport	8, 13, 14 and 33	11%
3.	To modify sarcasm	1, 2 and 22	8%
4.	To encourage	19, 20, 21 and 31	11%
5.	Positive evaluation	5	4%

In Table 2, there are only five functions of compliments occurring in the movie entitled *The Spectacular Now*. They are to express admiration or approval (66%), to maintain rapport (11%), to modify sarcasm (8%), to encourage someone (11%), and positive evaluation (4%).

Examples:

- 1) To express admiration

Sutter: "Nice."

Ricky: "Thanks, man."

Description:

Sutter gives compliment about Ricky’s ability in his relationship by saying “Nice.” Sutter is happy because he has managed to allay Ricky's fear of having a relationship. The function of this compliment is to express Sutter’s admiration with Ricky’s work. (Data 03/EA/Fri)

- 2) To maintain rapport

Cassidy: "You'll always be my favorite ex-boyfriend, Sutter."

Sutter: "Yeah. Thank you"

Description:

Cassidy gives Sutter compliment by saying “You'll always be my favorite ex- boyfriend, Sutter.” The compliment has function to maintain the rapport between Cassidy and Sutter. (Data 33/MR/Fri)

- 3) To encourage

Sutter: "You are Marcus West, man. You're the star athlete. You're the class president. You are awesome!"

Marcus: -----

Description:

Sutter tries to convince that Marcus is an ideal man of many women. He could get any girl he wants. Sutter and Cassidy are perfect match. His compliment functions to encourage Marcus because he feels depressed. (Data 19/En/Fri)

- 4) To modify sarcasm

Sutter: "Marcus West! Speaking to me?! What an honor!"

Marcus: "Come on man, let's go out to my car."

Description:

Sutter interrupts the conversation by saying “Marcus West! Speaking to me?! What an honor! The phrase “an honor” contains negative meaning because Sutter utters it in sarcastic expression. He was in the bad condition. This compliment functions to modify sarcasm. (Data 02/MS/Fri)

5) Positive evaluation

Mr. Aster: “You button up!”

Sutter’s friend: (just leave the classroom)

Description:

Mr. Aster gives Sutter compliment by saying “You button up!” which is to give positive evaluation to Mr. Aster’s student. This shows that Mr. Aster has a power in this situation because he is a teacher. (Data 05/PE/Fri)

5.1.3. Compliment Responses.

Through the analysis of the intention and purpose of the speakers to give the compliment, the study indicates that the addressees’ response compliments differently. The analysis was done based on Herbert’s classification of compliment responses. They are appreciation tokens, comment acceptance, praise upgrade, comment history, reassignment, return, scale down, praise down rate, qualification, no-acknowledgment, and request interpretation.

Table 3. Compliments Responses

Data Number	Topics of Compliments	Responses
1	Appearance	Appreciation token
2	Ability	Request
3	Ability	Appreciation token
4	Ability	Comment Acceptance
5	Ability	No-acknowledgement
6	Ability	Return
7	Ability	Comment Acceptance
8	Ability	Appreciation Token
9	Ability	Question
10	Ability	No-acknowledgement
11	Ability	Request
12	Ability	Question
13	Ability	Appreciation token
14	Personality	Appreciation token
15	Ability	Comment Acceptance
16	Ability	Appreciation token
17	Ability	Scale down
18	Appearance	Disagreement
19	Ability	No-acknowledgement
20	Ability	Disagreement
21	Ability	Appreciation token
22	Personality	No-acknowledgement
23	Appearance	No-acknowledgement
24	Ability	No-acknowledgement
25	Ability	Comment Acceptance
26	Ability	Appreciation token
27	Ability	Scale down

28	Appearance	Appreciation token
29	Appearance	Appreciation token
30	Personality	Question
31	Personality	Scale down
32	Ability	Question
33	Personality	Appreciation token
34	Personality	Comment Acceptance
35	Personality	Disagreement

Table 3 shows the compliment responses used by the characters in the movie entitled *The Spectacular Now*. The table indicates that the addressees give various responses to the speakers' compliments. There are eleven data showing that the addressees respond to compliments with appreciation token. No-acknowledgement is used in six situations by some characters. The addressees in the movie also use five comment acceptances for responding to compliments. There are four data showing response to the compliment using question. Furthermore, disagreement and scale down have the same total of three data. Response with request to the speaker is also found in the movie twice. Lastly, response with returning the compliment to the speaker is only found once.

Examples:

1) Appreciation Token

Sutter: "That's awesome. I'm proud of you."
Aimee: "Thank you."

Description:

In this conversation, Aimee is an addressee. Her response belongs to the category of appreciation token. She is proud because she has managed to be firm to herself, not to fight her mother but to pursue her dream. (Data 26/AT/Fri)

2) No-acknowledgement

Mr. Aster: "You botton up!"
Sutter's friend: (just leave the classroom)

Description:

In this scene, the addressee is a student. He just bends down to show respect to his teacher and immediately leaves the classroom. In this context, the type of response is no- acknowledgement. (Data 05/Na/Fri)

3) Comment Acceptance

Aimee: "That was funny."
Sutter: "It was really funny."

Description:

In this scene, Sutter is an addressee. He responds the compliment by giving a comment acceptance. He responds that way because he is enjoying his funny story with Aimee. (Data 07/CA/Fri)

4) Question

Sutter: "You're a wonderful teacher, Ms. Finecky." *Aimee: "So you understand it?"*

Description:

In this scene Aimee is an addressee. The type of her response is question. She tries to ask if Sutter understands Aimee's explanation because Sutter continues looking at Aimee's face when she is explaining. (Data 12/Qu/Fri)

5) Disagreement

Sutter: "You're absolutely beautiful."
Aimee: "Oh, my God. No!"

Description:

In this scene, the addressee is Aimee. Aimee's response is disagreeing utterance. She feels that Sutter has misjudged her because she thinks that she is not beautiful. (Data 18/Dis/Fri)

6) Scale Down

Sutter: "It was funny."

Sutter's sister: "It was embarrassing."

Description:

In the scene, Sutter's sister is an addressee. The type of her response is scale down because she feels it is a very embarrassing moment for her. She only has a few memories with his father. She realizes that her past would not repeat because her father and mother has separated. (Data 27/SD/Fam)

7) Return

Aimee: "That's amazing. That's awesome."

Sutter: "Look at you, you're such a great listener."

Description:

In the conversation, Sutter is an addressee. The type of his response is return. He realizes that Aimee listens to his story very well. (Data 06/Ret/Fri)

3.2. Discussion

The topic of appearance deals with fashion style, makeup, or all attributes attached to the human body. In general, the commonly used term is physical appearance. This topic can be found in data 1, 18, 23, 28, and 29. In this topic, the speaker gives a positive compliment to the addressee's physical appearance. The second is topic of ability, taste or skill. This topic deals with taste and skill of an addressee. This topic can be found in data 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,

12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 32. The last is topic of personality. In general, this topic deals with non-physical appearance of the addressee, such as their characters. This topic can be found in data 14, 22, 30, 31, 33, 34, and 35.

Data 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, and 35 show that the compliments function to express admiration to the hearer. Data 8, 13, 14, and 33 show that compliment has a function to maintain the rapport between the speaker and the hearer. Data 1, 2, and 22 have a function to modify sarcasm. In this function, compliment occurs on different topics and domains. Datum 1 shows that the function of modifying sarcasm occurs in the topic of appearance in the friendship domain. The speaker and hearer have an equal position but the speaker tries to be nice even though he has been betrayed, thus the compliment given becomes sarcastic expression. Data 19, 20, 21, and 31 refer to a compliment functioning to encourage people. The last function found in the movie is compliment as a positive evaluation. Datum 5 is in the topic of ability in teacher domain. The speaker gives a compliment as a positive evaluation for his student.

Most of the characters in *The Spectacular Now* movie respond to compliments given by using the first type of response, which is appreciation token. Data 1, 8, 13, 14, 16, 21, 26, 28, and 33 show verbal responses, such as thank you. Meanwhile, data 3 and 29 show responses in non-verbal form, such as smiling as a sign of agreement. Data 4, 7, 15, 25, and 34 are categorized as comment acceptance. Data 5, 10, 19, 22, and 24 show that the hearer responds to compliment with the type of response of no-acknowledgment. In data 9, 12, 30, and 32, the hearer responds to compliment with question. The hearer questions the truth of the compliment given by the speaker. Data 17, 27, and 31 are those showing response to compliment using scale down. It means that the hearer does not feel worthy of the praise given by the speaker. The next type of response is found in data 18, 20, and 35, which is disagreement. It shows that the hearer refuses to be praised by the speaker. Data 2 and 11 are the examples of the use of request interpretation. It means the hearer responds to the compliment given by the speaker by turning the compliment.

5.2.1 The Responses to the Compliments

The classification put forward by Herbert was used as the base for the analysis to obtain the result of the investigation on compliment. The classification includes appreciation token, comment acceptance, disagreement, request, no-acknowledgement, return, question, scale down, qualification, reassignment, praise upgrade, and comment history.

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5.2.2. Comparisons to Previous Studies

Some researches on compliment in film have been done by several researchers. The first research by Mahmudah (2017) focuses on the types of compliments and responses used by all characters in a film. The result of the study shows that there are two types of compliments used by all characters in the film, namely Appearance and Ability. Compliments on appearance which are identified are personal appearance and possession. Meanwhile, the compliments on ability found are categorized into two categories, namely general ability and speech act ability. In conclusion, there are four types of compliment used by all characters in *The Ugly Truth* movie.

Mahmudah also found the types of compliment responses. There are appreciation token, returns, questions, and no acknowledgments.

The second research is the study conducted by Wahyuningsih (2017) entitled *Compliment and compliment responses used by the characters in pretty woman movie*. This study focuses on the types of compliments and their responses that appear in the movie. It also investigates the type of politeness strategy. The result of the study shows that the most common type of compliment is personal appearance, while the types of compliment responses in the movie are appreciation token, comment acceptance, praise upgrade, reassignment, return, scale down, questioning, disagreement, and no-acknowledgment. Wahyuningsih also identified several types of politeness that emerge in the film, namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record indirect strategy.

The next research is a study conducted by Widyaningrum (2013) entitled *A Pragmatic Analysis of Compliment Topics Used in the Romantic Movies Manuscript*. This research focuses on the compliment types of male and female that appear in the film. The results of this study indicate that the dominant compliment topic that appears in male to male is possession. In contrast in male to female, the most common type of compliment is the Appearance. Besides, the type that appears the most in female to female is ability. Meanwhile, the type used by female to male is the type of physical appearance.

In contrast to all the previous researches, this research has several differences. Firstly, the previous researches analyze the compliment in terms of gender while this study tries to analyze the compliment by looking at the context based on the social status in society. Secondly, in the previous studies, all of the researchers direct investigations on the types of compliment and their responses that most often appear in the sources of data. On the other hand, this study does not only attempts to find the types of compliment and their responses but also the function of each compliment uttered by the speakers. The functions of compliments provided in this research can show the true intentions of the speakers conveyed to the addressees.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The conclusion is drawn based on the results of data analysis as the answers to problem statements. Employing Holmes' classification, the researcher reveals that the characters in the film *The Spectacular Now* utilizes three topics of compliment, namely topic of appearance, topic of ability and topic of personality. All topics of compliments have different functions. In this research, the author refers to the Wolfson classification of the function of compliment. These functions are to affirm solidarity, create or manage the rapport, modify criticism, encourage people, express the admiration of people, express positive evaluation to the hearer. Based on the results of the investigation, most of the characters in the movie *The Spectacular Now* compliments the hearers to reveal the admiration to someone. Besides, two functions are not identified throughout the movie, namely to soften criticism and to strengthen other speech formulas. Also, based on the intention and purpose of the speaker to give compliment, the study uncovers that the hearers respond every compliment differently. The researcher uses Herbert's classification of compliment responses. The responses are appreciation tokens, comment acceptance, praise upgrade, comment history, reassignment, return, scale down, praise down rate, qualification, no-acknowledgment and request interpretation.

Based on the analysis, the most widely used type of response is appreciation token. From the film, the characters use verbal responses and say "thank you" to the speaker of compliment. The response with disagreement is used three times. Meanwhile the type of response of comment acceptance is used in five data. The response with

no acknowledgment is employed five times. Besides, the topic of scale down is identified in three data. The response in the form of question also occurs in four data. Meanwhile, the topic of return is employed twice.

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