

Compliment response strategy of Balinese women on social media

A Cyberpragmatic Study

Ni Wayan Sartini

Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga
Surabaya, Indonesia
yaniwiratha@yahoo.com

Abstract—This study is a cyberpragmatic study since it analyzes a pragmatic aspect in the cyberworld, that is social media. Social media has penetrated all people in the world, and Balinese community is no exception. This study aims at describing the strategy Balinese women utilize in responding compliment on social media. This is fascinating since there is contradiction between accepting and rejecting compliments in the ways that match the culture of Indonesia and Bali in particular. The data is taken from Facebook by collecting the sample of five Balinese women who are active on Facebook from April to May 2019. The cyberpragmatic theory by Yus (2011) as well as the compliment response strategy by Pomerantz (1978) and Holmes (1995) are employed in analyzing the data. Based on the data analysis, the compliment response strategies utilized by Balinese women are as follows: acceptance, which includes appreciation token and agreement; self-praise avoidance, which comprises downgrade agreement, disagreement, referent shifts, return compliment, informative comment, and ignore; and rejection. From those strategies, the most prominent strategies are appreciation token, rejection, and return compliment. The data also indicates the use of two strategies simultaneously, that is appreciation token and return compliment.

Keywords—Balinese woman; compliment response; cyberpragmatics; social media; strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

Giving and responding compliment become ones of the routine linguistic habits carried out by the society in their daily interaction. Giving compliment will generate admiration and appreciation toward something that is considered as good and beautiful. Generally, compliment has the positive effect to the interpersonal relationship, as stated by Holmes (1995) that giving compliment is “social lubricants which create or maintain rapport”. Nevertheless, compliment is not always considered to have positive effect since there are bad intentions and objectives. This even disrupts the interpersonal relationship. Thus, it can be said that compliments that are given sincerely can maintain the interpersonal relationship.

Not much different from giving compliment, responding compliment also requires some strategy to maintain the good interpersonal relationship. Therefore, it requires the appropriate strategies in responding compliment so as not to appear arrogant which can damage the interpersonal relationship. Pomerantz (1978) in her classical study regarding compliment response demonstrated that there is dilemma in the person who is praised, in that there is a pressure to accept the compliment on one side and to avoid the self-praise attitude on the other side.

In relation to the way of responding compliment, every community has its own ways to apply this expressive speech act. These ways are in accordance with its cultural background, as stated by Wierzbicka (1991), “different culture, different language, different speech act.” It means that every different community has different language and speech act, and the cultural values can be reflected in the speech acts.

Giving and responding compliments are not only implemented in the face-to-face communication, but the speech acts are also applied on social media. In this modern and globalization era, social media, particularly Facebook, has penetrated all community in Indonesia, and Bali is no exception. The number of Facebook users in Balinese community is also immense and they come from all levels of the community including women, both working women and housewives. A fascinating phenomenon that is related to women and social media is the way Balinese women respond compliments on Facebook. Women in general and Balinese women in particular have different linguistic characteristics in responding compliments on social media compared to men. Therefore, this paper will discuss the speech act of compliment response implemented by Balinese women on Facebook to discover the strategies they utilize in responding compliments. This study regarding the pragmatic aspect on social media is called the cyberpragmatic study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cyberpragmatics is a study which focuses on the analysis of how an information is produced and interpreted in the internet environment and how the users access the contextual information (Yus, 2011). In this case, cyberpragmatics is a study of a pragmatic aspect, that is the compliment response strategy on social media. This demonstrates how a speaker digitally writes the strategy they employ in responding a compliment.

The research of compliment response has been conducted by pragmatic scholars, such as Pomerantz (1978), Holmes (1995), and Ye (1995). The research conducted by Pomerantz (1978) discovered that the strategies used by English people in responding compliments are: (a) acceptance, which includes appreciation token and agreement; (b) self-praise avoidance, which comprises praise downgrade agreement (downgrade), shift, return compliment, disagreement, and referent; as well as (c) rejection, which covers disagreement. Meanwhile, Holmes (1995) stated that in English, the strategies in responding compliments are divided into three categories, that is: (a) acceptance; (b) rejection/deflection; and (c) evasion/self-praise avoidance. The similar thought was declared by Ye (1995) who conducted the research on Chinese people, which found that the strategies they utilized in responding compliments are: (a) acceptance; (b) acceptance with amendment; and (c) non-acceptance.

III. METHOD

The data was taken from the communication of Balinese women who were active on Facebook in May 2019. The data collection was taken by utilizing the observation method with the note-taking technique, that is recording the compliments with the responses given by Balinese women. All the given responses would be classified based on the categories and types of compliment responses.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There are various ways and strategies applied by Balinese women in responding compliments on Facebook. To discover the compliment response strategies, some dialogue pieces which contain compliments and the responses given by Balinese women were displayed in the following section. From the collected data, various strategies employed by Balinese women in responding compliments were discovered. The following are the strategies utilized in responding compliments.

A. Acceptance

Responding compliments with acceptance is a strategy provided by receiving the compliments given by the interlocutor. Compliments are given when someone posted a picture and the compliments are given by her friends by saying, "You are beautiful." The following are several strategies applied in responding compliments.

- a) *Suksma nggih.* ("Thank you.")
- b) *Terima kasih Ibu.* ("Thank you, Ma'am.")
- c) *He he suksma.* ("Tee-hee, thanks.")
- d) *Manik. Suksma Gek.* ("Manik. Thanks, Pretty.")
- e) *Makasih Luh.* ("Thanks, girl.")
- f) *Thanks adikku.* (Thanks, sister.)
- g) *Mks say.* ("Thanks, babe.")

From these various compliment response, they basically have a similar meaning, that is receiving the given compliments. The women also received the compliments by adding the smile emoticon. In the face-to-face communication, a smile that is given when praised also means receiving the given compliment (Holmes (1995).

B. Return Compliment

Return compliment is responding compliment by giving the compliment back to the person who gives the compliment. The following are the strategy of return compliment given by Balinese women on social media.

- a) *Intan juga cantik.* ("You are also beautiful.")
- b) *Suksma kakakku yang lebih cantik.* ("Thanks, my prettier sister.")
- c) *Makasih adikku ganteng.* ("Thank you, my handsome brother.")
- d) *Suksma Bu Cantik.* ("Thanks, Mrs. Beautiful.")
- e) *Makasih Bu Jegeg 'cantik'.* ("Thanks, Mrs. Beautiful.")
- f) *He he... Ibu Agung lebih cantik.* ("Tee-hee... You are more beautiful.")

- g) *Ah yang bilang juga cantik.* (“No, you are also beautiful.”)
- h) *Makasih Wik, Wik juga cantik, awet lagi.* (“Thanks, Wik. You are also beautiful and young.”)

C. Shift Credit

Shift credit is a compliment response strategy that transfers the compliment to other people or object. This strategy is mostly implemented by Balinese women in responding compliments in the context when someone posted a picture and other people gave many compliments to the post. The compliment responses are as follows:

- a) *Bajunya yang bagus kok, jadinya kelihatan bagus.* (“It’s the dress that is beautiful, so I look good, too.”)
- b) *Kameranya bagus, hasil fotonya jadi ok deh.* (“The camera is great. That’s why the picture is good.”)
- c) *Cantik karena salonnya.* (“I’m beautiful because of the salon.”)
- d) *Pengarah gayanya dong yang bagus.* (“It’s the style director who is great.”)
- e) *Fotografernya profesional.* (“It’s the photographer who is professional.”)

D. Rejection

Rejection is a compliment response strategy which refuses the given compliments. A type of rejection is disagreement. In responding compliments given on social media, Balinese women also applied this strategy. The following are the responses of rejection.

- a) *Cantik? Ah... kamu bisa aja.* (“Beautiful? You must be kidding.”)
- b) *Cantik dari mana? Hong Kong?* (“Beautiful? From where? Hong Kong?”)
- c) *Ngga, yang cantik situ lho.* (“No, it’s you who are beautiful.”)
- d) *Ah, sudah tua, cantik dari mana?* (“No, I’m old. Beautiful? From where?”)
- e) *Kamu belum lihat aslinya... He he* (“You haven’t seen me directly... Tee-hee.”)

The compliment response strategies applied by Balinese women are previously mentioned above. This indicates that the way of responding compliment is closely related to the culture of Balinese community. Generally, it can be said that Balinese women did not explicitly say their gratitude in responding compliments. It occurs since it is considered as a reflection of high confidence and self-glorification. In Balinese culture, this is considered as the less polite attitude. Although someone attempts to accept a compliment, yet the response is accompanied by other markers, such as mentioning names, showing expressions, and using emoticons, which pragmatically becomes a way of servility and appreciating the given compliments. This strategy is included into appreciation token and return compliment.

Besides the strategies previously mentioned, the strategies that are mostly utilized were return compliment and rejection. As the society that lives in the eastern culture, the best response given is a rejection. As stated by Ye (1995), “the best response to compliments in Chinese is traditionally thought to be a rejection or denial.” Of course, there is a similarity in this case since it is related to the eastern cultural values and customs.

The strategies Balinese women employed in responding compliments indicated humbleness. Leech (1983) related this thing with the maxim of modesty. The maxim of modesty has two components, that is minimization of self-praise and maximization of self-dispraise. Modesty in those strategies demonstrate the polite attitude. The ways Balinese people implemented in responding compliments are related to their culture. In this case, language becomes the reflection of the culture of the community. Similar to Javanese people who understand two basic principles which determine their social interaction pattern, that is the principle of harmony and courage, which refers to the obligation of every member of the society to show some respect and modesty toward others regarding their statuses and positions in the society (Geertz via Suseno, 1985), Balinese people also has a deep philosophy in the idiom “*ede ngaden awak bisa, depang anake ngadanin,*” which means do not act as the smartest and kindest person since there are still many smarter people. Act humble and not arrogant, and let people assess what we have done.

In relation to the speech act of compliment response as a language behavior, Gunarwan (2007) emphasized that a speaker should utilize language in a way that the interlocutor knows that he is being humble or not arrogant. Then, it is also said that the interlocutor knows that the humble speaker will feel that he is being praise. The humbler the speaker, the higher the compliment. Thus, (1) utilize language in a way that the speaker feels that he is being complimented; (2) do not use honorifics to refer to ourselves.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the conducted data analysis, the compliment response strategies utilized by Balinese women were as follows: acceptance which includes appreciation token; disagreement; referent shifts; return compliment; and rejection. From those strategies, the most prominent strategies were appreciation token, rejection, and return compliment. The data also indicated the

use of two strategies simultaneously, that is appreciation token dan return compliment. The way Balinese women responded the compliment on social media became the cultural reflection of the community. The point is, the cultural values contained in the speech act did not show self-glorification and depicted modesty. Responding compliments by dissociating the compliments from oneself became the polite attitude and was in accordance with the politeness principle by Leech (1983) and the maxim of modesty.

References

- Dwipayana, A. A. (2001). *Kelas kasta: Pergulatan kelas menengah Bali*. Yogyakarta: Laper Pustaka Utama.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of cultures*. Princeton: Basic Books.
- Gunarwan, A. (2007). *Pragmatik: Teori dan kajian nusantara*. Jakarta: Universitas Atma Jaya.
- Holmes, J. (1986). Compliment and compliment responses in New Zealand English. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 485-508.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principle of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Pomerantz, A. (1978). Compliment responses: Note on the co-operation of multiple constraints. In J. Schenkein (Ed.), *Studies in the organization of conversational interaction* (pp.79-112). New York: Academic Press.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2000). *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Yus, F. (2011). *Cyberpragmatics: Internet-mediated communication in context*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.