



# A Contrastive Analysis of Compliment Strategies and Compliment Responses Strategies on Native Javanese and Non-Native Javanese Learners of English

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## ABSTRAK

Pembelajar Bahasa Inggris mungkin terpengaruh oleh budaya saat memberi dan menanggapi pujian. Hal ini terjadi karena mereka mempelajari bahasa melalui budaya. Dalam penelitian ini, suku memiliki strategi tanggapan pujian yang berbeda. Itulah sebabnya variasi lintas budaya tidak dapat diabaikan dalam hal pragmatik. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis persamaan dan perbedaan pujian dan strategi respon pujian untuk melihat pengaruh budaya pada NJ dan NNJ saat memberikan dan merespon pujian. Penelitian ini merupakan analisis kontrastif dan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Data yang digunakan adalah jawaban dari para partisipan yang terdapat dalam kuesioner. Partisipan terdiri dari 10 orang, 5 orang Jawa asli (NJ) dan 5 orang bukan penutur asli bahasa Jawa yang belajar bahasa Inggris (NNJ) dari mahasiswa tahun pertama, kedua, dan ketiga Program Studi Magister Bahasa Inggris dengan menggunakan kuesioner dan wawancara sebagai instrumen penelitian. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa NJ dan NNJ adalah "partly correspondence" pada strategi pujian dan strategi respon pujian. Hasil penelitian pada strategi pujian dan strategi respon pujian menunjukkan bahwa NJ dan NNJ menggunakan beberapa strategi yang sama tetapi berbeda dalam frekuensi penggunaannya. Hasil penelitian pada respon pujian, ditemukan bahwa penerimaan dengan amandemen: komentar, dan penolakan: penghindaran adalah yang paling sering digunakan oleh NJ, sedangkan penerimaan: tanda apresiasi adalah yang paling sering digunakan oleh NNJ. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa NJ cenderung mengadopsi budaya Jawa, yang ditandai dengan "andhop ashor" atau kerendahan hati, sedangkan NNJ mengadopsi budaya Barat, yang lebih ekspresif dan langsung.

## ABSTRACT

English learners may be influenced by culture when giving and responding to compliments. This is because they learn language through culture. In this study, tribes have different compliment response strategies. That is why cross-cultural variations cannot be ignored in terms of pragmatics. The aim of this research is to analyze the similarities and differences of compliment strategies and compliment response strategies to see the effect of culture on NJ and NNJ when giving and responding to compliments. This research is a contrastive analysis and uses qualitative methods. The data used are the answers of the participants contained in the questionnaire. The participants are 10 speakers, 5 native Javanese (NJ) and 5 non-native Javanese speakers learning English (NNJ) from 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> students of English Postgraduate Program using questionnaires and interviews as research instruments. The findings of this research show that NJ and NNJ are "partly correspondence" in terms of compliment strategies and compliment responses strategies. The results of the research on compliments and responses show that NJ and NNJ use some of the same strategies but differ in the frequency of their use. Then, the research results on compliment responses show that acceptance with amendment: comment and non-acceptance: avoidance are the most frequently used by NJ, while acceptance: appreciation token is the most frequently used by NNJ. The results shows that NJ tended to adopt Javanese culture, which is characterized by "andhop ashor" or humility, while NNJ adopted Western culture, which is more expressive and direct.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Native Javanese (NJ) and Non-Native Javanese Learners of English (NNJ) might be influenced by Javanese or English culture while giving and responding to compliments. It happened because they learned Javanese culture as their ethnic group and English culture as their major in university. In this study, NJ and NNJ had different compliment formula, strategy, and response strategies. That's why cross-cultural variations cannot be overlooked when it comes to pragmatics.

This is a contrastive analysis study. Contrastive analysis (CA) is the systematic comparison of two or more languages, with the aim of describing their similarities and differences linguistically (Al-Sobhi, 2019; Iskhakova et al., 2020). Based on these expectations, one of the fundamental and applied objectives of CA is to provide insights into similarities and differences between languages. The primary objective is the examination of systematic correspondences and non-correspondences between aspects of languages concerned (Asri, 2018; Susanto et al., 2020). The goal of contrastive analysis is to find out whether 1) Correspondence: the relation of correspondence is consequently a relation between units which show sufficient similarity. 2) Partly correspondence: when the element of two language systems which are at least somewhat different cannot be absolutely the same. 3) Non-correspondence: there are no similarities found between the two languages (Al-Sobhi, 2019; Rezaei & Naghibian, 2018).

This study includes in pragmatics study to discuss about cross-cultural study about compliments and responses strategies in Javanese and English. Pragmatics study discusses speech act. There are at least three kinds of acts, i.e. locutionary act which is concerns with the act of saying something, illocutionary act which is concern with the act of doing something, and perlocutionary act which is concern with the act of affecting someone (Supeni et al., 2019; Suyana et al., 2022; Zaim, 2019). There are five categories of classification of illocutionary acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Compliment includes in expressive category.

A compliment is a communicative action in which the speaker explicitly or implicitly ascribes positive qualities to someone other than themselves, typically the person being addressed, highlighting their positive attributes or actions (Selvaraj et al., 2021; Simamora et al., 2019). Compliment behavior will pair with compliment responses, in other words, interlocutors will respond to the compliment behavior from the speaker (Papachristou et al., 2022; Simamora et al., 2019). Their responses could be in the form of accepting or rejecting. The responses given to compliments fall under the category of compliment response strategies, and these strategies can be categorized into various types (Holmes, 1988). Compliments are inherently linked to culture, as the manner in which compliments are expressed can significantly differ across different cultural contexts. Therefore, it can be observed that the expression of compliments in one culture may vary considerably from that in another culture (Yana, et al., 2016). So, knowing the culture of people is important. It used to help people to produce effective communication while giving and responding to compliments.

Javanese ethnic group was chosen because Javanese is the biggest ethnic group in Medan with 33,03%, followed with Batak 20,93%, Tionghoa 10,65%, Mandailing 9,36%, Mainangkabau 8,6%, Melayu 6,5%, Karo 4,10%, and Aceh 2,78% (Arrovia, 2021; Asiyah, 2019) This data is taken from a news website namely iNews Medan published on January 13th, 2023. Because of the large number of Javanese in Medan, it gives many opportunities to engage in conversation with Javanese, so that it is important for us to understand about Javanese culture in giving and responding to compliment to make the compliment and response well delivered and avoiding miscommunication (Sulistyoningsih et al., 2021; Yurika et al., 2022).

Then, language has a significant effect on a person. When a person learns another language for a long time, it is likely that he/she will be affected by the culture of the language he/she learns. Language can also affect people's attitudes and behavior. The work that is done will create habits, and habits that are continuously practiced will become traits. Traits that are sustained will form character, and character that is accepted by a society becomes a culture (Alenezi, 2020; Supeni et al., 2019). Students in the Master of English study program have been learning English and its culture for more than 6 years. Therefore, it is important to see whether the culture of English has affected the way they give and respond to compliments, or they still maintain their local culture when giving and responding to compliments (Agholor et al., 2017; Reswari & Alfariisy, 2020).

Some previous studies that have analyzed this subject studied Javanese compliment response in English department students at Jember University (Supeni et al., 2019). The research found that while Javanese culture values modesty in response to compliments, learning English made students more likely to accept compliments, following western culture. Other study looked at how non-native English-speaking students give compliments (Payant, 2014). They noticed some students used the English form, and some of them also used the Indonesian form in giving compliments. Some students showed that they adopted English culture in compliment talks and some students maintained Indonesian culture. Previous study focused on Javanese speakers in Semarang (Rubaidi, 2019). They found that Javanese people followed their cultural. They often downplay compliments and add modest remarks, reflecting their cultural values of humility. Other study analyzed how cultural differences affect Javanese learners of English in their responses to compliments (Supeni et al., 2019). They found that students balance between respecting Javanese values and using Western-style direct compliments. Other study studied how Javanese speakers respond to compliments in English (Surono, 2018). They noticed many participants adopted Western ways of accepting compliments, moving away from traditional Javanese modesty.

From all the previous studies, researcher found that there is a lack of research that analyzes the strategies and compliment response strategies in master students using contrastive theory. This study offers novelty by comparing how Javanese and non-Javanese cultures (who have other Indonesian cultural backgrounds) influence

compliment strategies and responses to compliments. By analyzing these two groups, the study can provide in-depth insights into how local cultural values influence social interactions in English. So, this study aims to address this gap by examining whether Native Javanese (NJ) and NNJ (Non-Native Javanese) is fully correspondence, partially correspondence, or non-correspondence in their use of compliment and responses strategies. Therefore, by using contrastive analysis, the cultural effects of Javanese and English on NJ and NNJ while giving and responding to compliments can be seen more clearly.

## 2. METHOD

This research used qualitative methods. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2018). The source of data of this study were 10 speakers. 5 Non-Native Javanese Learners of English (NNJ) to answer questionnaire and interview using English language. 5 Native Javanese (NJ) to answer questionnaire and interview using Javanese language. The speakers are English Post Graduate students in Universitas Sumatera Utara. From 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester. The data are the words and sentence found in the questionnaire and interview.

The research instruments of this research are questionnaire and interview. Each questionnaire is distributed to the participants by WhatsApp's private chat to ensure that participants are suitable informants and help them with questionnaires. The WhatsApp is chosen because it is the only way to connect with all the students from any semester. The subjects were given enough time to fill the questionnaires and then the researcher collected them. Therefore, the questionnaires were well controlled. The questionnaire consists of sixteen situations of compliment giving and compliment response, including eight situations for compliment giving and eight for compliment response. The sixteen situations such as clothing/appearance, ability/accomplishment are familiar to Javanese and English participants. The interlocutors are friends or classmates without any status differences. Then, in interview, it conducted offline or face to face interview after schedule confirmation with all the NNJ and NJ speakers. From 10 participants, researcher took 6 participants: 3 of NJ and 3 of NNJ to do the interview. The length of interview is between 5-7 minutes per participants.

After sorting the questionnaires and done the interview, data analysis started with categorizing the data which were collected from the questionnaires. The data were analyzed from 2 perspectives: compliment strategies and compliment responses strategies, and cross-culture of Javanese and English. Compliment strategies were analyzed based on theory proposed and compliment responses strategies used theory. First, the data obtained in the questionnaires were categorized and calculated, then presented by tables; percentages were used in statistical calculation. Second, the examples which were collected in the questionnaire are categorized according to the new classification scheme and using explanations below the table. Third, the data from the interview was collected and explained in paragraphs to support the finding from the questionnaire.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

Here are the Compliments Strategies Used by NJ and NNJ found in the questioner. Here are the explanations as show in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution Compliments Strategies Used by NJ and NNJ

Compliment strategy	Javanese		English	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Explicit compliment	26	65%	33	82.5%
Implicit compliment	11	27.5%	3	7.5%
Non-compliment	3	7.5%	4	10%
No response	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

From Table 1, it is found that explicit compliment strategy is the most dominant compliment strategy used both NJ and NNJ, with a frequency of use of 26 times with a percentage of 65% in NJ, and a frequency of 33 times with a percentage of 82.5% in NNJ. It is because in NJ: Javanese culture places a strong emphasis on politeness and maintaining social harmony. Explicit compliments are often seen as a way to show respect and create positive social interactions. By expressing admiration or appreciation openly, individuals contribute to a positive social environment.

Then, in NNJ: English culture also values politeness, and explicit compliments are a common way to convey positive feelings and make others happy. Compliments help build rapport and can be a social lubricant in English-speaking societies. In English-speaking cultures, particularly in certain contexts, directness is often appreciated. Explicit compliments can help convey sincerity and avoid misunderstandings. In the interview, NNJ participants said that giving compliments such as: “that’s good”, “that’s nice”, “your face is beautiful”, which is included in explicit compliments is a common expression. That is the reason why explicit compliments become the most dominant compliment strategy. Then, in NJ, the most frequently used compliment strategy after explicit compliment is implicit compliment with a frequency of use of 11 with a percentage of 27.5%. Javanese communication tends to be more indirect and nuanced. Javanese people avoid expressing opinions directly because they avoid making their interlocutors feel bad, so they prefer to express opinions implicitly, as in this compliment strategy, especially when praising appearance. Because of that, the frequency of implicit compliment strategies in Javanese is also big. In the interview, NJ said that they give implicit compliment because if they talk to other Javanese, they will understand about the meaning of that implicit compliment: In this case, they adopted Javanese culture namely *Tanggap ing sasmita* which can be translated as the ability to read between the lines, this is because Javanese people avoid expressing their opinions directly to avoid making their interlocutors feel bad. Meanwhile in NNJ, the next strategy is non-compliment with a frequency of use of 4 with a percentage of 10%. This is caused by Javanese culture values modesty and humility. Implicit compliment strategies become less used in NNJ because they are adopted western culture, they are more expressive than Javanese. English communication values clarity and transparency. Expressing thoughts and feelings directly is often seen as an efficient and straight forward way to convey information. Explicit compliments contribute to this emphasis on clear communication. Directly acknowledging and appreciating someone's achievements or positive qualities is considered normal and is often seen as constructive in fostering positive relationships.

Then, the use of non-compliment here because they didn’t give a compliment in the scenarios, they just say something like “lol, new haircut?” and it consider as non-compliment. Here are the Compliments response strategies used by NJ and NNJ found in the questioner. Here are the explanations as show in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2.** Distribution of Compliments Response Strategies in NJ and NNJ

Compliment Response Strategies		Javanese		English	
		F	P	F	P
Acceptance	Appreciation token	3	7.5%	13	32.5%
	Agreement	0	0%	6	15%
	Pleasure	0	0%	3	7.5%
	Smile	0	0%	2	5%
Acceptance with amendment	Return	5	12.5%	5	12.5%
	Downgrade	7	17.5%	6	15%
	Upgrade	0	0%	0	0%
	Confirmation	1	2.5%	1	2.5%
	Transfer	0	0%	0	0%
	Comment	9	22.5%	2	5%
Non-acceptance	Denial	5	12.5%	0	0%
	Qualification	0	0	1	2.5%
	Idiom	0	0	0	0%
	Diverge	1	2.5%	0	0%
	Avoidance	9	22.5%	0	0%
No Response		0	0%	0	0%
Combination	Confirmation	0	0%	0	0%
	appreciation token				
	Appreciation token scale down	0	0%	1	2.5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Base on [Table 2](#), when the research results are separated into compliment response strategies according to language, namely Javanese used by NJ participants and English used by NNJ participants, it is very clear that the differences between the two cultures when responding to compliments.

In NJ, it was found that the most dominant compliment response strategies were non-acceptance: avoidance with a frequency of use of 9 and a percentage of 22.5%, it was found that NJ more often rejected by avoiding when given a compliment. After avoidance, NJ also often accept compliments by giving comments that are used as an explanation that the achievements or good things on themselves are not only because of their own

efforts, but there are other people who help, therefore they also often use acceptance with amendment: comment with a usage frequency of 9 and a percentage of 22.5% on compliment response strategies.

Then, the third compliment response strategies is acceptance with amendment: downgrade with a usage frequency of 7 and a percentage of 17.5%. this finding explains that although they accept compliments by using the word "*matur nuwon*", they will give another sentence behind the word "*matur nuwon*", a sentence that explains humility. The use of compliment response strategies acceptance is the lowest compared to acceptance with amendment, non-acceptance, non-response, combination. The frequency of use is only 3 with a percentage of 7.5% and is only found in appreciation tokens, the other acceptance divisions are not used or 0%. This is because Javanese feel uncomfortable if they only answer compliments with "*matur nuwon*" without giving comments or others. The following is acceptance compliment response strategies. This is of course in contrast to NNJ when using English language. They will more often receive compliments, this is evidenced by the use of acceptance: appreciation tokens in the most dominant compliment response strategies with frequencies of 13 and a percentage of 32.5%. All acceptance divisions such as Agreement, Pleasure, Smile are also frequently used. NNJ participants also use the word "buddy" as a term of address for their interlocutors, this proves that NNJ participants have adopted western culture when giving compliments, because they use "buddy" "bro" instead of using Javanese terms of address such as mas/mbak when giving compliments in English. NNJ also very rarely reject compliments, it can be seen that the frequency of rejecting compliments is only once which is avoidance with a percentage of 2.5%.

## Discussion

In the compliment strategy, the use of many implicit compliment strategies in NJ participants is because Javanese communication tends to be more indirect and nuanced. Quoted from other study Javanese people avoid expressing opinions directly because they avoid making their interlocutors feel bad, so they prefer to express opinions implicitly, as in this compliment strategy, especially when complimenting appearance (Beijer, 2002; Keleş et al., 2023). In this case NJ adopted Javanese culture that is *tanggap ing sasmita* (the ability to read between the lines). Meanwhile, implicit compliment strategies have become less used in NNJ because they have adopted western culture, they are more expressive than Javanese (Munandar, 2016; Sulistiyoningsih et al., 2021; Wahyudi, 2019). In English-speaking cultures, particularly in certain contexts, directness is often appreciated. Explicit compliments can help convey sincerity and avoid misunderstandings (Afriansyah, 2022; Mustafida, 2016).

Then, in compliment response strategy, the dominant used of acceptance with amendment: comment and non-acceptance: avoidance used by NJ is because it explains that although NJ accept compliments by using the word "*matur nuwun*" in English "thank you", they will give another sentence behind the word "*matur nuwun*", a sentence that explains "*andhop ashor*" or humility. Here is the example of acceptance with amendment: comment "*Matur nuwun tenan. Iki sepatu saka bapakku. Aku seneng banget nganggone.*" In English "Thank you very much, this is from my father, I really love to wear it". NNJ is different because they tend to accept the compliment. NNJ participants adopted western culture because they tend to accept the compliment more than rejecting. Western people most likely accept the compliment and appreciation token is aimed to apply politeness in English culture (Rohmah, et al., 2015). Studying English as the second language made NNJ adopt the second culture, English. It is because they learn the English language, it means they learn its culture too, so they perform the language culture in their speaking too. The other factor is because they also watch western movies and hear western songs, so it can make them imitate their culture (Rohmah, 2013).

The findings show that NJ and NNJ are partly correspondence in compliment strategies and compliment responses strategies. The utilization of compliment strategies and responses shows the effect of Javanese culture on NJ and English culture on NNJ (Imaningtyas et al., 2016; Murthy & Ishlahiyah, 2023). Implicit compliments are prevalent in NJ, reflecting their adoption of Javanese culture, known for indirect communication and the avoidance of expressing opinions directly. Conversely, explicit compliment strategies are prominent in NNJ, aligning with their embrace of Western culture, characterized by more expressive and direct communication. In compliment responses, NJ tends to provide comments and deflect compliments, embodying "*andhop ashor*" or humility in line with Javanese cultural norms (Selvaraj et al., 2021; Simamora et al., 2019). In contrast, NNJ generally accepts compliments, showcasing their adoption of Western cultural norms.

The finding of this research about compliment strategies is in line with: Krisdiyanta' research (2019) which found that compliment is affected by the language that the people use and the culture of that language affected the way the participants giving a compliment, as well as Oktiva's research (2019) which found that NJ tends to not accept the compliment, if they receive compliments, they will add some information behind it. Despite that, this research is in contrast with one of the findings from Masykuroh (2021) because her research found that NJ tend to accept the compliment, while this research did not.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The study shows partly correspondence between NJ and NNJ in their compliment strategies and responses, affected by their respective cultural contexts. There are similarities and differences between NJ and NNJ to show that culture plays a significant role in compliment strategies and compliment responses strategies. NJ often uses implicit compliments and deflects compliments, reflecting Javanese cultural norms, while NNJ prefers direct compliments and readily accepts them, aligning with Western culture.

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