

## Interlanguage Pragmatics: Different Strategies of Compliment Responses by Madurese EFL Learners in English and Madurese

### (Pragmatik Bahasa Antara: *Perbedaan Strategi dalam Menanggapi Pujian oleh Mahasiswa Madura dalam Bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Madura*)

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#### Abstract

The less vital function of English in EFL (English as Foreign Language) context leads EFL learners to some problems. Sometimes the way they communicate in English is still influenced by their first language culture. Indonesia is one of multicultural country that learns English as foreign language. One of the cultures in Indonesia is Madurese. In Jember for instance, there are so many Madurese students learning English. Their cultural background as Madurese may influence the way they learn English. This study aims to investigate the way Madurese EFL learners respond compliments in English and Madurese to see whether they get influenced by their L1 or not. The data are collected through Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which are distributed to 20 Madurese EFL learners. They are students from academic year 2012 English Department, Faculty of Letters, Jember University. The results reveal that there are some similarities and differences found in the way Madurese EFL learners respond the compliments in English and Madurese. The similarities are found in low to high (L-H) status interaction, while the differences are found in equal status interaction.

**Key Words:** Compliment, EFL Learners, English, Madurese

#### Abstrak

Kurangnya penggunaan Bahasa Inggris di lingkungan EFL (Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing) menyebabkan pembelajar bahasa asing mengalami beberapa kesulitan. Terkadang cara mereka berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggris masih dipengaruhi oleh budaya bahasa pertama mereka. Indonesia merupakan salah satu negara multi budaya yang yang mempelajari Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Salah satu budaya di Indonesia adalah Madura. Di Jember misalnya, terdapat banyak sekali mahasiswa Madura yang mempelajari Bahasa Inggris. Latar belakang budaya mereka sebagai orang Madura bisa jadi mempengaruhi cara mereka mempelajari Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki cara pembelajar bahasa asing Madura merespon pujian dalam Bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Madura untuk melihat apakah mereka terpengaruh oleh bahasa pertama mereka atau tidak. Data penelitian ini diperoleh melalui Discourse Completion Task (DCT) yang disebarakan pada 20 pembelajar bahasa asing Madura. Mereka merupakan mahasiswa angkatan 2012 Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Jember. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya kesamaan dan perbedaan ketika pembelajar bahasa asing Madura merespon pujian dalam Bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Madura. Kesamaan strategi ditemukan pada interaksi status sosial yang lebih rendah kepada status sosial lebih tinggi, sedangkan perbedaannya ditemukan di interaksi status sosial setara.

**Kata Kunci:** Pujian, Pembelajar Bahasa Asing, Bahasa Inggris, Bahasa Madura

#### Introduction

English in EFL (English as Foreign Language) context has less vital function in people's everyday life and communication. It is only learnt in classroom instruction without being used in daily conversation. This condition leads EFL learners to some problems. The English produced by EFL learners sometimes seem to have no connection either to their first language or to the target language. According to Huang (2007: 125), the language system of the target language used by the learners of that language is

intermediate between the speakers' or the learners' native language and their target language. This stage is called as interlanguage. "Interlanguage is a stage on a continuum within a rule-governed language system that is developed by L2 learners on their path to acquire the target language"

(Huang, 2007:125). Simply, he defines interlanguage as the language used by non-native speakers of that language. Thus, when a native speaker of Indonesian learns English, the English used by this Indonesian is an interlanguage.

In recent years, the most popular study related to interlanguage is Interlanguage Pragmatics. "Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) is the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2)" (Kasper, 1993:3). It uses Pragmatics theories, principles and frameworks to examine how foreign/second language learners encode and decode meaning in their L2. In many researches, Interlanguage Pragmatics is used to examine the strategies used by non-native speakers while performing speech acts in the target language.

Speech acts as noted by Austin (taken from Schauer, 2009:7), are regarded as utterances which are used not only to say things but also used to do things. Many speech acts are culture-specific (Huang, 2007: 119). In uttering speech act, people may get influenced by their cultural background. As a result, the use of speech act or the strategies used while performing speech act can be different from culture to culture.

In respect of culture, it is interesting to see that Indonesia has a huge number of cultures. In this little country, there exists so many different cultures with different languages, norms and values. Each culture has its own language and norms. One of these cultures is Madurese. A big number of Madurese live in Java Island, especially in East Java. Although they live in Java Island, they have completely different characters and different cultures from Javanese.

Jember as a city in East Java becomes one of the living places for most Madurese. The large number of Madurese who are living in Jember lead to the large number of Madurese students to study in this city too. Most of them choose to study in Jember University. In English Department, Faculty of Letters for instance, there are many students who come from Madurese cultural background. They learn English together with other students from other cultures. In their learning process, their cultural background as Madurese may influence the way they learn English. This study aims to see how Madurese EFL learners respond differently to the compliments given and to see the influences of their cultural background as Madurese in responding the compliment by choosing Madurese EFL learners in Faculty of Letters, Jember University as the target of this research.

### Research Design and Methodology

This research applies both quantitative and qualitative method. The objects are 20 Madurese EFL learners taken from English Department, Faculty of Letters, Jember University academic year 2012.

There are two kinds of data that are needed in this research, which are (1) the expression of compliment responses both in English and Madurese in the form of text transcription and (2) the reason of using the different strategies of compliment responses in both languages. To collect the data above, there are two kinds of data collection methods used in this research, which are DCT (Discourse Completion Task) and Interviews. The DCT used in this research is adopted from Chen. In this DCT, there are descriptions of 8 situations, four for the situation in which

the complimenter is in equal status, and four for the situation in which the complimenter is in higher status. The DCT are made in two languages, which are Madurese and English. The DCT is used to investigate the strategies of compliment responses used by the students in both languages while the interview is used to examine the reasons of the students in using those kinds of strategies.

## Results

### 1. L-HStatus Interaction ( Low to High Status Interaction)

In responding higher status compliments, students tend to use accepting strategy. There is no evading and rejecting strategy found in this situation. The tendency of using accepting strategy is found both in English and Madurese. The distribution of this strategy in both languages is displayed in the table below.

Table 1. Accepting strategies in L-H status interaction

No	Micro Strategy	M	E
1	Giving appreciation by thanking	43	54
2	Thanking+ accepting compliment by downgrading utterance	24	24
3	Accepting compliment by downgrading utterance	11	2
4	Downgrading utterance+ thanking	1	-
5	Agreeing the compliment	1	-

From the table above, it is shown that students use more strategies in Madurese than in English. In Madurese, there are 5 accepting strategies found while in English there are only 3 strategies. Giving appreciation by thanking is one of accepting strategy that is mostly used by students. This strategy takes the first position in L-H status interaction both in English and Madurese.

### 2. Equal Status Interaction

In responding compliments given by equal status complimenter, there are various kinds of compliment response strategies used by participants. All of macro strategies consisting of accepting, evading and rejecting occur in these situations. The distribution of each strategy is elaborated in the following tables.

#### a. Accepting Strategy

Table 2. Accepting strategy in equal status interaction

No.	Micro Strategy	M	E
1	Agreeing the compliment	7	1

2	Giving appreciation by thanking+informative comment	3	7
3	Agreeing the compliment+shift credit	2	-
4	Return compliment	2	1
5	Giving appreciation by thanking+accepting compliment by downgrading utterance	1	-
6	Giving appreciation by thanking+shift credit	1	9
7	Request reassurance+challenge sincerity+giving appreciation by thanking	1	-
8	Giving appreciation by thanking	1	16
9	Agreeing the compliment+informative comment	1	2
10	Giving appreciation by thanking+return compliment	1	6
11	Accepting compliment by downgrading utterance	1	-
12	Request reassurance+giving appreciation by thanking	-	4
13	Request reassurance+giving appreciation by thanking+return compliment	-	2
14	Request reassurance+agreeing the compliment+return compliment	-	1
15	Giving appreciation by thanking+disagreeing utterance	-	1
16	Giving appreciation by thanking +accepting by downgrading utterance	--	1
17	Request reassurance+giving appreciation by thanking+shift credit	-	1
18	Request reassurance+giving appreciation by thanking+informative comment	-	1
19	Request reassurance+disagreeing utterance+giving appreciation by thanking	-	1
20	Request reassurance+return compliment	-	1
Total number		21	55

From the table above, it is shown that accepting strategy is used more in English than in Madurese. In Madurese, the most used strategy in accepting strategy is agreeing the compliment which is used for 7 times. On contrary the use of agreeing compliment is avoided in English. This strategy is only used once. In different way from Madurese, the most used strategy in English is giving appreciation by thanking.

In English, this strategy is used 16 times while in Madurese it only occurs once.

#### b. Evading Strategy

Table 3. Evading strategy in equal status interaction

No.	Micro Strategy	M	E
1	Shift credit	19	6
2	Informative comment	6	1
3	Request reassurance	5	8
4	Request reassurance+shift credit	3	1
5	Shift credit+informative comment	2	1
6	Shift credit+return compliment	1	-
7	Request reassurance+informative comment	1	1
8	Request reassurance+challenge sincerity	1	-
9	Shift credit+disagreeing utterance	1	-
10	Request reassurance+disagreeing utterance	1	3
Total number		40	21

In the table above, it is displayed that students use more evading strategy in Madurese than in English. In Madurese it is used 40 times while in English it is only used 21 times. Shift credit is the most used strategy both in English and Madurese.

#### c. Rejecting Strategy

Table 4. Rejecting strategy in equal status interaction

No.	Micro Strategy	M	E
1	Disagreeing utterance	7	-
2	Challenge sincerity	7	4
3	Challenge sincerity+disagreeing utterance	1	-
4	Challenge sincerity+disagreeing+return compliment	1	-
5	Challenge sincerity+shift credit	1	-
6	Challenge sincerity+return compliment	1	-
7	Disagreeing utterance+ return compliment	1	-
Total number		19	4

Rejecting strategy is the least used strategy both in English and Madurese. Although it is the the least strategy used in both languages, but there is a significant difference found in this strategy. The total number of rejecting strategy used by

the students in Madurese are 19 times while in English it is only used 4 times.

## Discussion

Based on the tables above, it is found that there are some similarities and differences found in the way Madurese EFL learners respond compliments in English and Madurese. The similarities are found in L-H status interaction. In this interaction, students tend to accept the compliment. There is no evading and rejecting strategy found in this situation. Giving appreciation by thanking is one of accepting strategy that is mostly used by students. This strategy takes the first position in L-H status interaction both in English and Madurese. This strategy becomes the most used accepting strategy in L-H interaction because this strategy is considered being the most appropriate way in responding compliment given by higher status complimenter both in English and Madurese.

### Excerpt 1

“I think saying thanks is the most appropriate way to respond higher status compliment in English. Why? Because we are talking with higher status interlocutor. The most polite way is that by thanking, I know it from movie that I ever watched and novel that I ever read. In the movie or novel, when they are complimented, they respond the compliment by saying thanks.”

In respect of culture, Madurese is one of cultures that upholds respect for older or higher status interlocutors (Wiyata, 2003:1). In Madurese, higher status interlocutors should be honored. It is believed that by saying thanks, indirectly we also show our respect towards the complimenter.

In addition to these similarities, some significant differences are also found in equal status interaction. Unlike L-H interaction, in an interaction in which both speaker and addressee share equal status, the use of compliment responses strategies are more varied. There are accepting, evading and rejecting strategy used in this situation.

In Madurese, the most used strategy is evading strategy then followed by accepting strategy and the last is rejecting strategy. On contrary, the most used strategy in English is accepting strategy which is followed by evading strategy and the last is rejecting strategy.

From the previous tables, it is shown that the most used strategy in Madurese is shift credit which is one of evading micro strategies. In different way from Madurese, the most used strategy in English is giving appreciation by thanking. It is very different from L-H status compliment responses in

which giving appreciation becomes the most used strategy both in English and Madurese.

Giving appreciation by thanking is considered to be the most appropriate and polite way in responding compliment given by equal status complimenter in English, and for some students this strategy is thought to be a neutral and safe way to avoid misunderstanding with the complimenter.

### Excerpt 2

“I do not know how to respond compliment appropriately in English. Rather than leading to a misunderstanding, I think saying thanks is the most appropriate way to respond a compliment in English.”

In contrast, giving appreciation is avoided by the students in Madurese. This strategy is only used once. Rather than thanking, students prefer to use other strategies like evading or rejecting strategy.

### Excerpt 3

“Because I do not want to be considered as arrogant, and I think this is common to evade a compliment in Madurese. Also, when our friends compliment us, usually they are only kidding or not serious so evading the compliment is the best way to be used in this situation, I think.”

Shift credit is one of evading micro strategies which is often used by students in Madurese. This strategy is used 19 times in Madurese while in English it is only used 6 times. The tendency to use this strategy in Madurese is motivated by a reason that this strategy is common to be used in Madurese equal status interaction, or in other words, this strategy is thought as an appropriate way to respond a compliment given by equal status complimenter. Most of students claim that they are not sure with the compliment given by their friends. A compliment given by a friend is considered as a joke or not seriously given. Thus, in order not to be thought as an arrogant, they prefer to evade the compliment to show that they are also kidding and not taking this compliment as a serious compliment.

## Conclusion

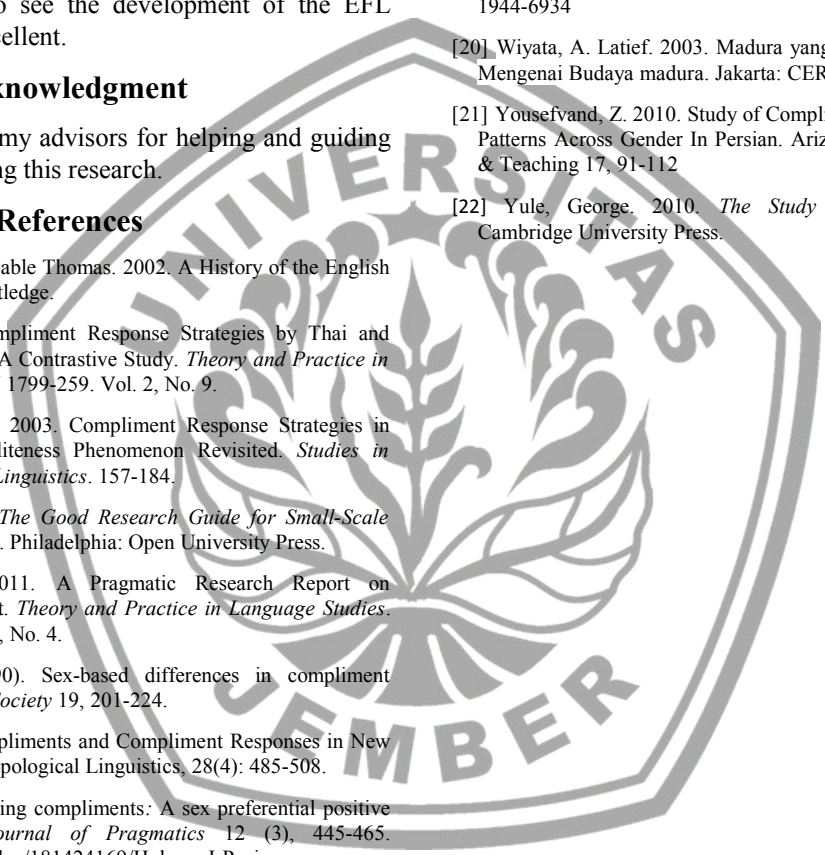
The results of this study show that there are some similarities and differences found in the way Madurese EFL learners responding the compliment in English and Madurese. The similarities are found in L-H status interaction. Giving appreciation by thanking strategy is thought to be a polite way to respond a compliment given by higher status complimenter both in English and Madurese. In contrast, there are some significant differences found in equal status interaction. In this interaction, students use different strategies in English and Madurese. In English, the order of the preferences is accepting, evading and the last is rejecting strategy, while in Madurese, the students tend to use evading, then followed by accepting and the last is

rejecting strategy. Finally, the study is hoped to be a worth consideration for English teachers and the students that language teaching and learning process cannot be separated from what is called as culture. We need to be aware to our first language culture and we need to pay attention to the target language culture. As this study only comparing the compliment responses used by Madurese EFL learners in English and Madurese, a developmental study towards this research is needed to examine the perception of Madurese EFL learners and the native speakers of English themselves towards compliment responses. It is also worth to investigate the different strategies used by Madurese EFL learners in different proficiency levels to see whether the advanced EFL learners can be a native like or it is the low proficiency level of students that can reach a native like compliment responses. Furthermore, a longitudinal research related to this study to see the development of the EFL learners will be also excellent.

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