

Compliments across Gender and Power Relation among Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the complexities of compliments faced by English as foreign language (EFL) learners. It covers several aspects such as how interpersonal relationships relate to complimenting behaviour. In addition, it examines how the culture of complimenting is relevant with some conditions such as power relation, and gender. The significance of the study is to explore the cultural transfer might appearing in complimenting. The subjects of research in this study are EFL learners at State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Indonesia. It employs ethnographical method to gain the explanation for the phenomenon underlying the complexities in complimenting behaviour. The complexities concern with the interference of culture, the influence of gender and power relation. The finding shows that female learners tend to use more complimenting strategies compared to males. The complimenting expression is also various affected by the relation with the hearers. Some variations occurring in complimenting cover overstatement, mixed language, non-sensical, no compliment and question. The context of Islamic institution also results in specific expression related to power display in complimenting strategies used. However, in EFL context, complimenting becomes an issue as there is lack of authentic English examples in course books and the inefficient instructions English learners receive which particularly expose them to variation in English compliments. Therefore, further studies are needed to develop teaching construct that accommodates the improvement of pragmatic competence particularly in complimenting for politeness awareness which today becomes a significant value.

Keywords: complimenting behaviour, Indonesian EFL learners

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