

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Compliments are parts of speech acts, positive expressive that frequently occurred in verbal communication and are intended to have positive effects for interpersonal communication. Complimenting generally has two or more turn-takings like other speech acts, normally structured in adjacency pairs (Schegloff and Sacks. 1973). The first part consists of the formulation of the compliment by the compliment giver, while the second turn in the reply of the compliment recipient (Herbert. 1990). This process is well known as compliments and compliment responses in the sociolinguistics field and is regarded as “important speech act in a socio-cultural context as well as a serious socio-linguistic function” (Heidari, Rezazadeh and Resekh. 2009). One’s cultural and social values can be learnt from the studies of compliments and compliment responses that improve the social relationship and reduce misunderstandings and communication breakdowns between the interlocutors. Studying compliment responses enhance our understanding of a people’s culture, social values, social organization, and the function and meaning of language use in a community (Yuan. 2001).

Relating to compliments and compliment responses, scholars conducted research studies, stated the definitions of the terms and revealed the principles, frameworks and strategies such as Pomerantz (1978) Principles of Compliment Responses, Manes and Wolfson (1983) Syntactic Patterns of Compliments, Holmes (1986 ; 1988) Compliment Responses Strategies and Herbert (1986 ; 1989) Taxonomy of Compliment Responses. Based on the research findings, a number of researchers conducted various compliment and compliment responses studies, mainly the comparative studies which compare native and non-native speakers of English or two different non-native speakers of English regarding the similarities and differences between language patterns, pragmatic transfer, behaviour, culture, social status and genders in different society and in language classrooms. Ghawi (1993) studied the compliment responses strategy preference of Asian non-native speakers of English and the results

came up with “Rejecting compliments”, having difficulties for not knowing how to respond appropriately to compliments.

In contrast to Ghawi’s study, Cedar (2006) observed that Asian non-native speakers of English accept the compliments that Thai people show their acceptance by a smile without any responses or elaborations. In a different trend, Oatey and Patrick Ng (2002) compared two different groups of non-native speakers of English, Korea and Japan and their compliment responses strategies. The most frequent types of compliment responses of Korean and Japanese are “Appreciation” and “Denial”, saying thank you for complimenting or denying the compliment. In another trend of comparing the use of compliment responses strategies by non-native speakers of English and native speakers of English was carried out by Qu Jing and Wan Li-ying (2005). In their study, non-native speakers of English, Chinese use Comment Acceptance (Agreement) and Disagreement (Non-agreement) strategies while native speakers of English, Americans who use Appreciation Token (Agreement) with less disagreement.

Regardless of the above research studies and trends, it was found that there is a lack of compliments and compliment responses strategies research relating to Myanmar people. Therefore, it is a good opportunity to carry out this research to discover new findings of the use of compliment responses strategies by Myanmar people. The researcher is interested to find out the use of compliment responses of Myanmar people in different countries and to compare the strategies employed by the foreign countries and the mother country to learn the similarities and differences between them. Therefore, Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles of English becomes a component of this research in order to compare Myanmar people in three different circles (countries).

Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles of English was constructed due to the Non-native speakers of English who bring different varieties of English and the spread of English around the world produce World Englishes. A U.S linguist Braj Kachru developed a model of World Englishes named Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles of English (consists of three circles named Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding or Extending Circle) to represent the spread of English and groups of English language which has been acquired and currently used in the world. Myanmar is a non-native English speaking country belongs to the expanding or extending circle where English

language is regarded as a foreign language. In this research, however; two groups of Myanmar participants are in English speaking foreign countries of inner and outer circles, the language used in the data collection process is chosen to be conducted in English.

## 1.2 Research Questions

1. What types of compliment response strategies are employed by three groups of Myanmar in Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English in the United States of America, the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar?

2. What are the similarities and differences of compliment responses strategies employed by the three groups of Myanmar in Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English in the United States of America, the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar?

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the types of compliment response strategies employed by three groups of Myanmar in Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English in the United States of America, the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

2. To observe the similarities and differences of compliment responses strategies employed by the three groups of Myanmar in Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English in the United States of America, the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

## 1.4 Limitation of the Study

According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, the total population is crucial in determining the sample size for the research to provide accurate results. The number of samples used in this study is 45 which is lower than Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table due to the time constraint of getting a specific number of population in three countries under Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English: the United States of America (the Inner Circle), the Republic of Singapore (the Outer Circle) and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (the Expanding Circle).

Regarding to the model of Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English (1985), Kachru noted that the concentric circles may be oversimplified and fuzzy areas existed. In later years, he made some adjustments of the concentric circles especially the Outer Circle. He stated that countries in the Outer Circles such as India, Nigeria, Singapore, Pakistan, the Philippines are using English for a number of purposes including education, communication and official purposes and English in those countries is also required as the first language, functioned as a native language by a large population and is used as a national identity. These varieties of English have been frequently referred to as nativized or indigenized or institutionalized Englishes. In his update, Singapore which was originally in the Outer Circle (norm-developing) fell under the Inner Circle (norm-providing) but the model of Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English (1985) was employed in this research study, regarding Singapore as an Outer Circle.

Data collecting instrument used in this research was a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) questionnaire, constructed with 9 given scenarios, based on Manes and Wolfson (1981) compliment topics of appearance/possession, performance/skills/abilities and personal traits. Those scenarios in the questionnaire were attempted to be an authentic social verbal communication, on the other hand; the scenarios were limited that there are other possible situations of giving compliments and receiving or returning responses in a real social communication.

Social relationship between the interlocutors, the compliment giver and the receiver (participant) in the questionnaire, was another factor of limitation in this research. Among the interlocutors, the compliment givers were assumed to be friends or colleagues of the participants so that only one type of social relationship status, power and distance can be found in the questionnaire of the study.

According to the use of Discourse Completion Test (DCT), real interaction such as pragmatic cues, paralinguistic and non-verbal features cannot be seen but the checklists were given for "Non-Verbal" and "No Responses" in the questionnaire in order to study the strategies use of non-verbal responses and no responses by the participants. Moreover, the questionnaire is only a computer-based file so that the participants can only read and imagine the situation in their mind and, give their desirable responses in the checkboxes of the questionnaire.

## **1.5 Definition of Terms**

### **1.5.1 Compliments**

In this study “compliment” is defined as a verbal positive comments made to show one’s appreciation on other persons’ noticeable appearance, possession or personal traits and successful performance, skills or ability which take place in any relationships and situations that develop, maintain or improve social communication.

### **1.5.2 Compliment Responses**

The term “compliment responses” in this research is defined as verbal recognitions and non-verbal expressions that the complimentee heard and reacted to the compliment given by the complimenter.

### **1.5.3 Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles of English**

The U.S linguistic scholar Braj Kachru suggested the model of the spread of English in three circles which is known as Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles of English: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and Expanding or Extending Circle. These three circles ‘represent the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages’ (Kachru. 1985 : 12).

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This research is conducted in the combination of two different fields, World Englishes and sociolinguistics in order to explore and compare the speech act of compliment responses strategies produced by Myanmar people in the foreign countries and in the mother country. Thus, the classification of World Englishes: Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles of English (1985) can be regarded as a significance of this study. Population of the study must be residing in three countries under the Kachru’s Three Circles of English: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding or the Extending Circle. The mother country, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar belongs to the Expanding or the Extending Circle and the foreign countries, the United States of America and the Republic of Singapore are selected as countries in the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle. Therefore, the similar and different use of compliment responses strategies by the Myanmar people and their behavior in employing the strategies in different countries and cultural settings can be observed from this study.

The findings of the study offer the reflection of Myanmar culture, social value and communication. The knowledge gained from this study will help the people who do not know about Myanmar people, make them understand the nature, culture and their function of the speech act of compliment responses that helps to maintain social harmony and communication. Moreover, the responses, behavior and perspectives of the Myanmar people in the foreign countries and the mother country are interesting in finding out the reasons why they are the same and/or different in giving back the compliment responses.

