CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of the study were to investigate the types of compliment responses 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 and to observe the similarities and differences of compliment responses strategies employed among the groups. With reference to the purpose of this study, summary of the research findings and discussions are presented in this chapter.

5.1 Summary of Compliment Responses Strategies by Three Groups of Myanmar

1. Accept

In the macro level of MA responses, 57% of the compliment responses fell into the first category "Accept", while 45% and 41% in MS and MM responses. This data showed that MA preferred accepting compliments than other groups.

2. Reject

The data showed that MA group rarely rejects compliments unlike MS and MM in the second category "Reject". MA group fell into this category for 3% but MS and MM fell for 7% and 8% respectively.

3. Deflect or Evade

In MM compliment responses, 22% fell into the third category "Deflect or Evade", when MA and MS applied for 14% and 15%, less than MM.

4. No Response

Similarly, "No Response", the fourth category was highly used by MM for 7% where MA and MS only applied for only 1% in each group.

5. Non-Verbal Response

MS responses highly fell into the last category "Non-Verbal Response" for 31% while others, MA and MM responses fell for 26% and 21% respectively.

5.2 Comparison of Compliment Responses Strategies among Three Groups of Myanmar

  5.2.1 Similar Compliment Responses Strategies among Three Groups of Myanmar

    1) Returning Compliment

    In the micro level of compliment responses under the macro level "Accept", the most significant similarity three groups was "Returning Compliment" that both MA and MS responded for 7% each and 9% in MM response. The difference between them was only 2% and regarded as a similar pattern of compliment responses by three groups of Myanmar.

    2) Question Accuracy

    Under the macro level "Reject", all the groups were close to each other in terms of the same percentage of using "Question Accuracy" for 1% in the micro level of compliment responses.

    3) Request Reassurance

    Under the macro level "Deflect or Evade", the use of "Request Reassurance" strategy in the micro level was similar between the groups at 1% to 2%.

  5.2.2 Different Compliment Responses Strategies among Three Groups of Myanmar

    Different use of compliment responses strategies in the micro level under the macro level "Accept" were Appreciation Token, Agreeing Utterance and Downgrading Qualifying Utterance, under "Reject" were Disagreeing Utterance and Challenging Sincerity.

    1) Appreciation Token

    Frequency of the use of "Appreciation Token" by MA, MS and MM were 32%, 26% and 22% so that there were slight differences between MA and MS by 6%; MS and MM by 4% whereas there was a high difference between MA and MM by 10%. By looking at the differences, MS seemed to be similar with MM in using this strategy.

    2) Agreeing Utterance

    "Agreeing Utterance was highly used by MA 11%, then MM 8% and MS 7%. Thus, MM and MS had a similar use of this strategy which was different from MA.

3) Downgrading Qualifying Utterance

For the strategy "Downgrading Qualifying Utterance, the results showed that MA and MS had 6% and 5% respectively and MM had 3%. The use of this strategy by MA and MS were nearly the same but 2 to 3% of difference was found between them and MM.

4) Disagreeing Utterance

The usage of Disagreeing Utterance under the macro level "Reject" employed by MA was 2% while MS and MM groups applied this strategy for 6% each. In this case, MS and MM were similar and MA was different from them.

5) Informative Comment

MA and MS applied this strategy for 5% and 3% while MM employed for 8% which was 3 to 5% higher the former groups. MA and MS were close in terms of a small proportion but they are different in terms of a high proportion with MM.

5.2.3 Special Cases of Compliment Responses Strategies among Three Groups of Myanmar

1) Challenging Sincerity

From the result, Challenging Sincerity was the least used strategy by the participants. None of the participants in MA and MS applied in their responses but a little use of this strategy can be found by MM that applied for 1%.

2) Shift Credit

The pattern showed that the use of the Shift Credit by MS was similar to both MA and MM since the frequency of the use of this strategy by MS is 10% which was 2% higher than by MA and 2% lower than MM.

3) No Response

No Response was the mostly preferred strategy of MM, 7%. On the other hand, only 1% use by MA and MS were found.

4) Non-Verbal Response

Non-Verbal Response was the mostly used strategy by MS for 31% which was followed by MA for 26% and MM for 21%. In this case, using this strategy by MA was 5% lower than MS and higher than MM.

5.3 Discussion of the Research Findings

In response to the research question, all Myanmar participants in the study applied almost all compliment responses strategies and the findings showed that Myanmar people greatly accept compliment responses since the percentage of "Accept" in the macro level by all three groups of participants was the highest compared to other strategies. However, accepting compliments is a commonly used strategy by all groups and each group has their significant strategies such as "Accept" is the significant use of MA, Myanmar in the United States of America (Inner Circle), "Reject" and "Non-Verbal Response" are the major use of MS, Myanmar in the Republic of Singapore (Outer Circle) and "Reject", "Evade" and "No Response" were the prominent use of MM, Myanmar in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Expanding or Extending Circle).

5.3.1 Compliment Responses Strategies by Myanmar in the United States of America

The findings revealed that Myanmar people in the United States of America (MA), native English speaking country had a great influence on the type of compliment response "Accept". MA accepted compliments more frequently than MS and MM, countries where English is used as a second language and a foreign language. The most significant strategy of MA under the macro level "Accept" was appreciation. Other acceptance strategies such as agreeing, downgrading and returning a compliment were commonly used by MA.

Compliments were accepted by saying "Thank you, Thanks, Yes, Yep" and agreed something positively was consistent with Heidari et al (2009) study, revealing "Appreciation Token" and "Agreeing Utterance" that were employed as explicit compliment responses strategies. Applying "Appreciation Token" and "Returning Compliment" strategies by MA was similar to Sharifian (2005 ; 2008) proposal, when a person from Iran is complimented, it is customary to accept and return the compliment to either the giver of the compliment, to God, to a family member, or to a friend. However, Accepting and agreeing compliments were normally used by the Americans, native speakers of English in the Inner Circle. Accepting the compliment and agreeing with the complimenter were found to be the significant responses of

American people in the studies of compliment response speech act and concluded that American compliment responses were elaborated and straight forward in order to enhance the social relationship and communication. This was also consistent with the claim made by Holmes (1986) who suggested that compliments are generally paid and appreciated in the Western culture and agreement responses happens just about one third of the time in American English according to Herbert (1989).

Participants explained for agreeing and accepting compliments. Rejecting compliments is regarded as an impolite and inappropriate manner in their society. Thus, the Myanmar participants in the States responded to the compliments as the Americans do, accepting the compliments and showing their appreciation to the compliment giver. In this case, culture plays in an important role for Myanmar people in the United States of America, forced and encouraged them to learn the cultural values and social factors from the native people and the environment to fit in the host society and to improve social communication. Porter and Samovar (1991) suggested that social environment is culture and if one truly understands communication, he/she must also understand culture. It also proves that social, culture and communication are linked as a chain that cannot be separated and supported for the people to make cultural adjustments for harmonization in the host culture.

5.3.2 Compliment Responses Strategies by Myanmar in the Republic of Singapore

The results showed that Myanmar people in the Republic of Singapore (MS), English as a second language country greatly applied on the type of "Reject" and "Non-Verbal Response". MS rejected compliments more than MA but similar to MM. Moreover, MS used non-verbal responses more repeatedly than both MA and MM. The most prominent strategies of MS under the macro level "Reject" were disagreeing and non-verbal response while rejecting and disagreeing to the compliment giver was found to be high in MS and MM.

Using non-verbal language such as smiling or laughing played an important role for MS since the participants believed that action speaks louder than words where smiles and laughs carries appreciation and modesty, regarded as a polite response in other way. Smiling reduce the embarrassment and pressure of the complimentee

without a verbal response. Moreover, non-verbal responses can be seen together with verbal responses in order to support the utterances between the interlocutors.

Non-verbal response was used when the participants were not comfortable to elaborate or talk about the topic of the compliment they received. Thus, they just accepted the compliment by thanking the compliment giver with a smile or a laugh to be polite and modest. Most of the participants responded to the compliment with both verbal and non-verbal expressions.

5.3.3 Compliment Responses Strategies by Myanmar in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

The findings showed that Myanmar in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (MM) where English is used as a foreign language had a number of frequently used compliment responses strategies, "Reject", "Deflect or Evade" and "No Response". The most significant strategies of MM under the macro level "Reject" were disagreeing and challenging sincerity; shifting topics and giving information were commonly used strategies under the macro level "Evade" and lastly giving no response to the compliment giver was one of the commonly used strategies by MM. This group was significant for employing various compliment responses strategies, being the highest group in evading compliments, giving any responses and using challenging sincerity.

Disagreeing and challenging were used to reject the compliments while shifting topics and giving information helped to evade the compliments; then no response was applied to avoid the compliments by pretending that the participants did not hear the compliment. However, participants in this group had individual perspective upon the compliment responses.

MM participants who rejected the compliments by disagreeing with the compliment giver assumed that they were unqualified or dissatisfied with themselves. This was similar to the findings of Diakuhara's (1986) study, Japanese suggested denial of compliments, frequently explaining that they did not deserve such compliments.

MM participants who evaded the compliments by shifting the compliment topic or giving more information about the received compliment because they believed that it helps to avoid either acceptance or rejection indirectly without losing face. This was consistent to Gu (1990) and Chen (1993), compliments are either

rejected or denied in Eastern culture. By doing so, they were not necessary to accept or reject the compliments, a nice way to reply the compliment giver and maintain the social harmony between the interlocutors.

No response occurred more in this MM group than MA and MS groups. Some of the participants in this group avoided the received compliments without giving any verbal expression or feedback. Responding with a non-verbal response, smile or laugh without a verbal response was another way to avoid the compliments for the participants in this group. Participants admitted the reason for not giving any response that they were ashamed or awkward for the compliments and they did not know how to reply, then they decided not to give any response was the best way to get over the compliment.

5.3.4 Similar Compliment Responses Strategies by Three Groups of Myanmar

Investigations in comparing compliment responses strategies produced by three groups of Myanmar suggested that there are three types of compliment responses strategies similarly employed by all groups. As for the findings, all the Myanmar participants in three different countries produce similar use of compliment responses strategies: Returning Compliment, Question Accuracy and Request Reassurance.

1) Returning Compliment

Returning Compliment was the strategy that was used by all groups of participants at similar frequency among four types of compliment responses under the macro level "Accept". The strategy of Returning Compliment normally took place after Appreciation Token in the utterances. Generally, participants thanked first and gave a compliment to the compliment giver in return. They revealed that giving a compliment in return is a common response in Myanmar people's conversation and society. It is also regarded as a polite response, adding that it also gives pleasure and social harmony between the interlocutors.

In conclusion, Myanmar people mainly employ Returning Compliment strategy as a social communication tool for greetings, accepting compliments politely and maintaining a healthy social relationship between the interlocutors. Coincidently, these results were found to be similar with the studies of Korean compliment responses,

showing respect or politeness to the complimenter in order to maintain social relationship between the participants (Kim. 2003). However, it is a commonly found compliment response and widely used strategy when Myanmar people meet each other; giving compliments each other as a warm up to start a conversation and to be harmonized. This finding was consistent with Wolfson (1981) who claimed that the compliment functions in a number of ways within discourse: greeting, thanking, opening a conversation, etc.

2) Question Accuracy

"Question Accuracy" was the strategy that was used by all groups of participants at similar frequency among three types of compliment responses under the macro level "Reject". Firstly, questions were produced as a response, and then followed by other types of compliment responses such as Appreciation Token, Downgrading Qualifying Utterances, etc. Most of the participants in all three groups commonly used this strategy in the scenario of complimenting on having a nice painting (under the topic Possession). From the interviews, it was found that participants applied this strategy for having a sense of disagreement and doubt in mind and hesitate to reject the compliment directly by saying "NO", a Disagreeing Utterance.

According to the participants' responses regarding the use of Question Accuracy (R2), it can be generalized that Myanmar people utilize this strategy when they are confused or something doubtful in mind and different opinion with the compliment giver. They also use to avoid a direct reject to the compliment giver which Myanmar people regard it as an inappropriate response to the compliments. Although, a question is made in the responses but there is no expectation to receive an answer from the compliment giver since the intention of making up a question is to avoid a direct reject only.

3) Request Reassurance

"Request Reassurance" compliment responses strategy was also similarly shared by all three groups of Myanmar which was one the strategies under the macro level of "Deflect/Evade". Participants mostly applied this strategy at the end of the conversation just after accepting a compliment. Most of the participants in all three groups commonly used this strategy in the scenario of complimenting for

having good voice after singing a song at Karaoke (under the topic Performance). The interview results came up with that some participants are happy with the compliment and make the complimenter keep giving more compliments and some of them use this strategy to avoid both acceptance and rejection.

A conclusion can be drawn based on the feedback of the participants regarding the use of compliment responses strategy Request Reassurance. Employment of this strategy by Myanmar people are to evade the compliments at the time they neither accept nor reject, force the compliment giver to keep on telling more compliments and assure something that they already known. Moreover, it helps extending the conversation between the interlocutors. Myanmar people mostly employ this strategy, only with their family members, relatives, friends or colleagues who are close with them. Employing this strategy offers a friendly and delightful conversation and maintains a social harmony as a result.

5.3.5 Different Compliment Responses Strategies among Three Groups of Myanmar

1) Appreciation Token and 2) Agreeing Utterance

The two strategies fell under the macro level "Accept", frequently found as a pair where Appreciation Token took the first place then followed by Agreeing Utterance in the utterances. Both of these strategies were used by all groups but MA was found to be the highest among three groups since they accepted and agreed with the compliment giver more than the participants in MS and MM. During the interviews with the participants from MA group, they consistently revealed that positive response is a must for them to being complimented and they were reluctant to refuse the compliment.

2) Downgrading Qualifying Utterance

Downgrading Qualifying Utterance was also under the macro level "Accept" similarly applied by MA and MS groups were higher than MM. According to the interviews with the participants in MA and MS who employed this strategy stated that they were confident with themselves and ready to help others. They would give a hand to someone in need with their efforts and they did not mind to help others. It is unimportant and unnecessary for them to be thanked by others. A possible reason for the lower use of Downgrading Qualifying Utterance by MM participants

who were less confident compared to MA and MS groups so that they were not dare to response although they gave a hand to others like the latter groups.

3) Disagreeing Utterance

The use of Disagreeing Utterance was one of the strategies under the macro level "Reject", relatively high strategy for both MS and MM; contrasted from MM. This was an evident that MA highly accepted and agreed the compliments by Agreeing Utterance and Appreciation Token strategies more than MS and MM whose acceptance and agreement rate was lower and disagreement rate was higher than the former group. Participants who employed Disagreeing Utterance disagreed with the compliment giver by telling them they were unqualified or dissatisfied with themselves. Similar to the findings of Diakuhara's (1986) study, Japanese suggested denial of compliments, frequently explaining that they did not deserve such compliments.

4) Informative Comment

Informative Comment was one of the evading compliment responses strategies under the macro level "Deflect/Evade" which was highly employed in the compliment responses of MS and MA. Participants were interviewed to find out the reasons for using this strategy. From the interview results, participants responded that when they were complimented, many of them gave a piece of information or reasons, sometimes; explained on the topic of the compliment to evade the complimenting conversation between the interlocutors. By giving an instance where the compliment giver made a compliment over a painting of the participants, they may provide some information about the painting, how they got from whom, where, or why they had it or who painted the picture, etc.

5) Non-Verbal Response

Non-Verbal Response was one of the additional compliment responses strategies added in this research. The use of this strategy by MA and MS participants was found to be higher than MM. Participants expressed their feelings and emotions, facial expression, body language or gesture by using Non-Verbal Response.

From the questionnaire, two groups of Myanmar MS an MM were used to express their feelings through facial expression such as smiling and laughing while MA; on the other hand; used body language such as look over, nod, shake hands,

thumbs up, etc. to reinforce the verbal responses. Purposes of using Non-Verbal Language by individual groups were different. From the interviews, MA participants elaborated that using a body language helps show their interest in the topic of complimenting and promote the conversation flow between the interlocutors.

Both MS and MM participants, on the other hand; used to smile or laugh in order to show their modesty to the compliment giver. Non-verbal language of smiling and laughing were observed as a response with or without verbal communication. Some of them agreed that smiling is the simplest way to show interest and acknowledge the compliment from the giver. Other perspectives came up from the participants that smiling or laughing is another way of saying "Thank You" in a silent way without requiring to talking a lot.

5.3.6 Special Cases by Three Groups of Myanmar

1) Challenging Sincerity

"Challenging Sincerity" can be regarded as one of the significant strategies for two reasons. The first reason was that this strategy was only applied by MM group surprisingly where no utterances were found in the other groups and second, there was only one participant applied in his responses for 1%. It can be concluded as a rarely used compliment responses strategies by Myanmar people.

Compliment responses of Challenging Sincerity can be found in the questionnaire that compliments made on the sub-categories, "Physical and Clothing" under the main category "Appearance". According to the participant, he did not want to accept the compliment in the first place so that he started with a rejection "You must be kidding" before accepting a compliment for the first situation. In the second situation, he did not feel comfortable with the received compliment and thought that he was overly complimented. Thus, he decided to answer "You must be joking", and shifted the credit by making a joke "I don't have enough money to treat you".

2) Shift Credit

"Shift Credit" was highly used by the MS participants and the significant of this strategy was being similar in with other groups, MA and MM in terms of frequent application. Results showed that all groups highly employed this strategy in the situations of compliments about "Skill" and "Attitude", under the topics of

"Performance" and "Personal Trait". Moreover, MA also applied this strategy in another complimenting topic "Person" under "Possession".

Participants were interviewed and asked questions to identity the use of compliment responses in the questionnaire. All of the participants' perspective regarded giving a credit to the compliment giver was the most appropriate and polite way to evade both acceptance and rejection without losing face. Moreover, some of the participants got pleased when they were complimented and recognized by others for their help or effort. These findings were the reasons of using this strategy by Myanmar people, evading compliments by showing their happiness and politeness.

3) No Response (NR)

The use of No Response (NR) strategy was a newly added strategy in this research which belonged to a large number of MM participants while it was rarely found among MA and MS participants. Observing from the results, a number of participants did not response to the compliment giver especially in three situations under the topic of compliment "Possession" namely "Physical", "Person" and "Thing". Compliments given in the questionnaire were made upon the participants' physical appearance for having nice legs, having a good friend and having a nice thing.

Interviews were done with the participants who applied this strategy in the questionnaire. Participants in MM told that they were not comfortable to be complimented relating to their physical appearance. It made them feel ashamed or awkward and they were not willing to continue a conversation with this topic. In the study of Kim (2010), Korean participants also applied this strategy when they were awkward for the compliment, keep silent without giving any verbal expressions. In this kind of situation, participants in Myanmar did not return a verbal response to the compliment giver, pretending that they did not hear compliment from the compliment. By this way, they made the compliment giver stop talking about the compliment to get over politely without losing face. When interviewed with MA and MS participants, No Response (NR) was regarded as an inappropriate response, impolite and disrespectful to the compliment giver and it could lead to communication breakdown.

5.4 Conclusion

This study had attempted to explore the use of compliment responses strategies and to discover the similar and different uses by three groups of Myanmar, in the United States of America, the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English. Results from the questionnaire and interviews have shown that Myanmar people's speech act of responses to compliments were "Acceptance" and the reason was observed that Myanmar people are reluctant to refuse or to make out right refusal or feedback to the compliment giver. It represents a common characteristic of Myanmar culture which is called "Ar Nah" in Myanmar language which as no equivalent word in English but it can be closely translated as "hesitation", "reluctance" or "avoidance". It is a fear that it will offend someone or cause someone to lose face or become embarrassed. Thus, accepting a compliment is an easier response that helps harmonize social communication. Coincidently, it was found to be similar with Western responses as Holmes (1986) suggested that compliments are generally paid and appreciated in the Western culture. On the other hand, it was not consistent with Gu (1990) and Chen (1993) who stated about the Eastern culture that when compliments are paid, they are either rejected or denied.

When studying three groups of Myanmar under Kachru's Three Circles of English, individual group possessed its significant strategy or strategies. The first group, MA, Myanmar in the United States of America (Inner Circle) was significant for accepting compliments as discussed in 5.2.1, similar to the American compliment responses. The second group, MS, Myanmar in the Republic of Singapore (Outer Circle) was significant for its large use of non-verbal response and the last group MM, Myanmar in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Expanding or Extending Circle) was prominent for using various compliment responses strategies, "Reject", "Deflect/Evade" and "No Response". These findings were more or less similar to Wierzbicka (1991) research since the findings proved that Myanmar in the United States accepted the compliments more than Myanmar in Singapore and the mother country. According to Wierzbicka (1991), compliment responses are differ from culture to culture, and the major difference between Western and Asian compliment

responses is that the former tends to accept the compliment, while the latter tends to amend or reject it. Myanmar people in the foreign countries need to adjust and integrate themselves to fit in the new environment and it was consistent with Perry (1999), individuals acquire a bicultural perspective by integrating at least some of the ideas and values of the other culture into their own way of thinking.

In this research, similarities and differences of the use of compliment responses strategies by three groups of Myanmar were investigated. Three strategies namely Returning Compliment, Question Accuracy and Request Reassurance were similarly employed by all three groups of Myanmar. Among three groups, two groups of Myanmar live in the foreign countries are long term residents who have learnt and integrated themselves to blend in their new culture and environment. Nevertheless, those groups have the sameness with the mother country, without any changes and integration in using these strategies even though there is a sufficient period of time to changes for them.

This study also depicted Myanmar people's attitude, tradition, culture and social value, thus; it improves intercultural understanding and awareness that helps avoid communication breakdowns and also proves that culture can be learned, influenced and changed social perception and interaction. Having the knowledge of the speech act of compliment responses by Myanmar people enhances social communication and interaction to achieve a successful communication in real life.

5.5 Recommendation

The results of the study have implications for teaching and learning of speech acts, compliments and compliment responses strategies for the teachers and learners of English in building up the language, communicative competence and cultural knowledge. Findings of this study can be applied in the development of teaching materials and supported for further research studies. From the teaching aspect, comparing the similarities and differences of the use of compliment responses strategies by native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English helps the learners realize that speakers of different countries and cultural background may apply the speech act of compliment responses strategies variously. It improves the knowledge and understanding of the learners in the use of compliment responses strategies and cultural values by Myanmar.

This research finding also gives opportunities for further research in the near future in terms of studying compliment responses strategies by Myanmar people and correlations with other factors such as nationalities, age, gender and social distance/relationships could be taken into account since a number of variations could be observed due to these factors. Having a knowledge of speech acts and social factors make to be able to establish and improve for good social communication.