

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**COMPLIMENT RESPONSES OF MALAY AND
CHINESE IN A MALAYSIAN CONTEXT : A
CASE STUDY**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the Malay's and Chinese's values and norms of the English compliments. This study aimed at studying the similarities and differences of the compliment response strategies employed by them. The similarities and differences were analyzed based on the Holmes (1988) compliment response strategies categories. From the qualitative and quantitative analysis conducted, the common linguistic features of the compliment responses structured by both races were then examined. Those are the three aims of this study which were achieved by taking the MSU students as the participants. Each respondent was given a discourse completion task (DCT) exercise and asked to write their responses based on the stated situations. Through the analysis carried out, it is revealed that the Malays and Chinese exhibited some similarities; it is observed that they tended to accept/reject the compliments on a personal achievement and belonging close to a person yet accepted or deflected/evaded the compliment on a skill. On the other hand, a few differences were also shown. It is revealed that the Malays and Chinese accepted the compliments on a job well done and a personal achievement respectively. Moreover, it is also examined that the Malays rejected the compliment on a personal achievement yet Chinese opted for the same strategy for the compliment on a belonging close to a person. Besides, it is also revealed that the Malays deflected/evaded the compliment on a non-personal item close to a person yet Chinese did the same for the compliment on a skill. From the analysis of the similarities and differences, three common linguistic features of the compliment responses were found; a variety of thank you was written when they opted for the appreciation token strategy, the word 'no' was chosen to indicate rejection and the word 'really' was used in expressing their deflection/evasion to the compliments. All these significant findings are beneficial to those who frequently engage in intercultural communications. In return, they will be able to hold conversations without fear of causing any misunderstandings and communication breakdowns especially when they take part in the act of complimenting with Malays and Chinese, since this study presents some socio cultural and pragmatic knowledge of the Malay and Chinese compliment responses.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah mengenai persamaan and perbezaan strategi-strategi yang digunakan dalam respon terhadap pujian oleh bangsa Melayu dan Cina. Sepertimana yang diketahui, setiap budaya mengamalkan nilai-nilai dan norma-norma yang berlainan (Othman, 2011; Ahmah U.K et al., 2007). Walaubagaimanapun, terdapat beberapa faktor yang menyumbang kepada persamaan seperti pengaruh bahasa yang dipelajari dan interaksi yang kerap antara sesama budaya. Ini akan menyumbangkan kepada persamaan dalam ciri-ciri gaya bahasa antara budaya. Ini adalah salah satu objektif kajian ini. Dalam mencapai objektif-objektif kajian ini, pelajar-pelajar dari 'Management and Science University' (MSU) yang sedang menjalani kursus Bahasa Inggeris telah dipilih sebagai subjek kajian. Subjek-subjek telah diberikan 'discourse completion task' (DCT). Respon yang telah diberikan, dikaji secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Kuantitatif analisis menghasilkan pembentangan data secara visual dan kualitatif analisis memberikan penjelasan lanjut mengenai persamaan dan perbezaan strategi-strategi yang dipilih. Analisis yang dijalankan adalah berdasarkan kategori-kategori strategi dalam memberi-respon kepada pujian (Holmes, 1988); ianya mengandungi tiga paten-utama dan beberapa paten-sampingan. Menurut analisis yang dilakukan, didapati bangsa Melayu dan Cina lebih memilih kepada menerima/menolak pujian terhadap kejayaan dan barangan persendirian. Selain itu, mereka juga didapati menerima/mengelak pujian terhadap bakat. Dari kajian ini juga, didapati subjek menggunakan pelbagai gaya bahasa untuk berterima kasih. Mereka juga menggunakan perkataan 'tidak' apabila menolak suatu pujian. Subjek juga dilihat menggunakan frasa 'iya ka?' apabila mengelak suatu pujian. Kajian ini bermanfaat kepada mereka yang terlibat dalam interaksi antara budaya. Hal ini kerana, mereka telah diberikan ilmu-ilmu praktikal dan sosio budaya dalam memberi respon kepada pujian oleh bangsa Melayu dan Cina.