

# PROMOTING LOCAL WISDOM BY APPLYING ROLE-PLAY IN TEACHING COMPLIMENT AS A CONVERSATION OPENER

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## Abstract

*Speaking skill is considered as a difficult competence to be mastered by the learners since it needs great efforts to deal with. An attempt to make the learners engage with this skill is by introducing some materials that are relevant with their real life situation which can make them actively involved in the speaking activity. One material which can be used to attract the learners' attention and motivation in speaking activity is by introducing compliment as a conversation opener in which the learners can create a conversation by themselves and actively involved in it. In this paper, local wisdom is included as the topic of the conversation since the learners are accustomed with it and can make them more aware with the importance of maintaining local wisdom and its supreme values. Moreover, to make the learning of compliment as a conversation opener more effective and easily understood by the learners, it will be beneficial to apply role-play as the strategy in teaching this material. Role-play has been considered and has proven its strength to improve the learners' activeness and courage in speaking activity.*

**Key word** : compliment, conversation opener, local wisdom, role-play

## Introduction

Speaking is an important skill out of other three skills that must be learned and mastered by the students. In teaching speaking skill, teachers often face some problems and difficulties due to its complexity. Besides, the problems also come from the students themselves since they tend to be passive in speaking activities due to their fear of making mistakes. Therefore, teachers must be creative in creating a good atmosphere in the speaking activities which can attract the students' interest and motivation to be active by taking part in the speaking class. Selecting a topic can be a good way to make the speaking activities more alive by the students' participation. One topic which can be used in the teaching of speaking is complimenting.

Complimenting is a mean of establishing friendship which can create solidarity among people in many countries' culture. It also is an important social strategy which has functions as a conversation opener and allows meaningful social interaction to follow. Neglecting to give compliments may even be understood as a sign of disapproval, and the inappropriate use of compliments may cause embarrassment and even offense. Therefore, it is important to learn how to express compliment to avoid misunderstanding among the interlocutors.

For English foreign language (EFL) learners, learning English compliment is important to make them familiar and understand more about English culture especially

when they are engaging with the native speakers of English. Hence, it is essential for teacher to teach compliment to the learners with various kinds of strategy which can make the learners more attracted in learning the materials dealing with compliment as a conversation opener. It has been known that giving compliment can be one of many ways to open a conversation with other people. It can help the first speaker to start the conversation and lead it to a deeper communication. By teaching the learners of how to use compliment as a conversation opener, it is expected that the learners can engage in a real conversation. Furthermore, the students will be able to initiate a conversation with their peers or other people in the school area, family, or society in English.

In teaching compliment for EFL students, teachers must be very selective in choosing the appropriate materials. Therefore, teachers must consider the students' background so that they can decide which material is suitable for them since every student in every area has different characteristics. One material which can be used in teaching compliment is authentic teaching material. According to Guariento, & Morley (2001: 347) authentic teaching material is one 'created to fulfill some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced' With the onset of communicative movement a greater awareness of the need to develop students' skills for the real world has meant that teachers endeavor to simulate this world in the classroom. Moreover, Polio (2014:1) states that the purpose of authentic teaching materials is to prepare the students in social life or to bridge the gap between language at the class and that of real life. If the students are exposed only to textbooks, they will lose opportunity to learn how language is used in real life. Therefore, it is also important to select the appropriate authentic teaching materials for the students. One of the authentic teaching materials which can be used is local wisdom.

Indonesia is a country which has thousands of cultures in which every community in particular area has their own culture which includes local wisdom. Students especially in rural area are accustomed with the local wisdom in their society. Hence, it will be beneficial and effective for the teachers to use this local wisdom as the material especially in teaching compliment. Teachers can insert the local wisdom which exists in the students' society in the text which will be taught. Yet, it is important to simplify the text by providing simple vocabularies so that the material will be easily understood by the students.

This paper will discuss about the use of local wisdom as authentic teaching material in teaching compilment as a conversation opener by applying role play.

## **THEORETICAL BASIS**

### **1. Local Wisdom**

Teaching speaking skills in sociolinguistic competence in the second language classroom as a supplement to the immersion process may be a good way to help students learn these skills more efficiently and in less time. In order to learn appropriateness of speech in the target language culture, it is necessary for students to study culture and cross-cultural differences so that they can see where their native culture differs from the culture of the language they are learning. However, teaching culture in the classroom is quite problematic. Culture is a complex concept that is hard to define, especially to students with a limited proficiency in the language used in the classroom. Local wisdom is part of culture

which exists in every society, especially in Indonesia. By using local wisdom as teaching material, the students will easily understand the lesson since they are accustomed with it.

Local wisdom is defined as knowledge from life experience in society. This knowledge is derived from generation to generation by wise people from the society. Therefore, this knowledge is used as guidance for daily activity, oneself, family and society. According to Kamonthip & Kongprasertamorn (2007), the characteristic of local wisdom are: (1) teaching ethics and moral values; (2) knowledge that teaches people to love nature, not destroy it; (3) coming from the elders in the society. Hence, there will be many advantages gained by the students by using local wisdom as teaching material. Students will be more aware with the importance of ethics, moral values and nature. Moreover, it can change their point of view on the importance of keeping the nature save and not destroy it.

Ayatrohaedi (1986:40) states that a knowledge and habit can be assumed as local wisdom if they are: (1) capable of surviving the erosion from foreign culture; (2) capable of accomodating elements from foreign culture; (3) capable of integrating elements of foreign culture with local culture; (4) capable of controlling; and (5) capable of giving directions on culture development. In addition, Kartawinata (2011) sees local wisdom as the realisation of endurance and capability to grow manifested through way of life, knowledge, and life strategies in the forms of various activities done in local society to solve various problems in meeting their needs, while protecting the culture itself.

## **2. Compliment**

According to Austin (1962), when we speak a language, we do not say the words for no purpose, actually, we use it for doing things as well. However, the thing that an utterance does in one language may be different from another language due to culture diversities. Complimenting is a very common expressive speech act according to Searle (1975) which can be used to anyone, everyday and in many circumstances. Moreover, Holmes (1988: 485) notes that a compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some good (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer. Compliment serves many functions such as starting a conversation, keeping the conversation go smoothly, and making a positive comment to someone in an attempt to maintain solidarity among people. There will be a confrontation or misunderstanding among people if we fail to achieve the above purposes by misusing compliments, which will lead to a breakdown of successful communications. The speech act of complimenting is composed of two parts: how to make compliments and how to respond to compliments.

Wolfson (1983) summarizes some major topics for complimenting into two major categories: appearance/possession and ability. One of the most striking aspects of American English compliments is the overwhelming number of compliments on personal appearance, most particularly clothes and hairdos. In addition, by far the most frequent types of compliments are those on addressee's skill or effort: such as a well-done job, a skillfully played game, and a good meal.

In addition, one of the most striking features of compliments is remarkably formulaic. Formulaicity in speech is supposed to be a universal phenomenon, sometimes

even native speakers are not aware of it. Manes & Wolfson (1981: 120-121) gathered six hundred and eighty-six compliments through observation of everyday interactions. The semantic, syntactic and discourse features of compliments formulae are examined, 97% of them consists the following nine patterns, which can be used as analytical framework in the data analysis.

1. NP {is, looks} (really) ADJ PP
2. I (really) {like, love} NP
3. PRO is (really) (a) (ADJ) NP
4. You V (a) (really) ADJ NP
5. You V (NP) (really) ADV PP
6. You have (a) (really) ADJ NP
7. What (a) (ADJ) NP!
8. ADJ (NP)!
9. Isn't NP ADJ!

Among these nine types, 80% of compliments in data are adjectival type, such as type 8, 3, 1, 4, and 6. Among them, 72% adjectives make up only five frequently used responses (nice 22.9%, good 19.6%, beautiful 9.7%, pretty 9.2% and great 6.2%). Besides adjectives, verbs are also used to carry positive semantic evaluation, such as type 2 and 5. Here are the top 3 compliment formulas as proposed by Manes and Wolfson (1981: 120-121):

1. NP is/look (really) ADJ (*Your skirt is really beautiful; Your hair looks great!*)
2. I really like/love NP (*I really like your bag; I love your new apartment*)
3. PRO is (really) ADJ NP (*That's a really nice rug.; That's a great looking car*)

An additional six formulas

1. You have such beautiful eyes.
2. What a lovely painting you make!
3. Isn't your bracelet beautiful!
4. You (really) did a good job!
5. You (really) handled that situation well!
6. Nice performance!

Here is the table of Compliment Response Formulas as proposed by Billmyer (1990:36)

Responses to compliments	Response types
A: That's a nice shirt you are wearing!	
B: Well, I just got it in Target, though. It was pretty cheap	<i>Downgrading</i>
A: You did an excellent job yesterday, Jim!	

I really enjoyed your presentation.	
<b>B:</b> Do you really think so?	<i>Questioning</i>
<b>A:</b> Oh, yeah, it was fabulous.	
<b>A:</b> I love your clock. It looks great in your living room!	
<b>B:</b> Thanks. A friend of mine brought it to me from Oregon.	<i>shifting credit</i>
<b>A:</b> Y're lookin good!	
<b>B:</b> Thanks. S're you!	<i>returning</i>

As has been mentioned that the compliment is used as a conversation opener by the speaker, here is the example of the conversation:

*A & C = daughters*

*B = mother*

A : That's a nice sweater, Mom.

B : Thanks.

C : It really is very nice. Where did you get it?

B : I got it at Second Time Around in exchange for the red bag.

A : Oh, you got rid of the red bag?

B : Yeah. Well, what else was I going to do with it?

A : But it was a gift from Jenn.

B : I know, but that's okay, she wouldn't mind. We've used it enough.

C : Speaking of Jenn, I wonder how she's doing. We haven't heard much from her these days, have we?

B : No, not much, which doesn't surprise me since she's gone on a whale-watching tour off the coast. She must be traveling in Canada by now.

C : Oh, really? I never knew that! How did I miss such news?

A : You never knew that? Oh, that's right.. You were out of town on business the last time she stopped by.

### 3. Role-Play

In the teaching of compliment which includes local wisdom to EFL learners, it is important to select a good technique or strategy. The strategy used to teach the students how to use compliment as a conversation opener in this paper is by applying role-play. This strategy is considered as one best strategies in teaching speaking especially in making a conversation. Role-play gives many advantages in the teaching of speaking since it gives students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social context and roles.

Moreover, it also allows students to be creative and to put themselves in another person's for a while. They can use their imagination when they become another person in the conversation context which will enhance their intuition and creativity in creating a conversation.

Gillian Potter Ladousse illustrates that when students assume a 'Role', they play apart (either their own or somebody else's) in specific situation. 'Play' means that is taken on in safe environment in which students are as an inventive and playful as possible. In learning speaking skill, the student often found some problems. The problem frequently found is that their native language causes them difficult to use the foreign language. They are also too shy and afraid to take part in the conversation since they are afraid of making mistakes. Many techniques can be applied including role play because many research finding say that this technique is effective to use in teaching speaking.

Many had agreed that learning takes place when activities are engaging and memorable. Jeremy Harmer (1989) advocates the use of role-play because it is fun and motivating, quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way, and the world of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world - thus offering a much wider range of language opportunities. In addition to these reasons, students who are willing to travel to an English-speaking country are given an opportunity to practice their English in a safe environment. Furthermore, real situations can be created and students can get benefit from the practice.

## **TEACHING PROCEDURES**

### **Pre-Teaching**

1. Teacher introduces the concept of compliment by providing related vocabulary which close to local wisdom.
2. Teacher warms the class up by playing a video that consists of a conversation about giving compliment as a conversation opener and how to respond it. Teacher then asks the students about the topic of the conversation played in the video.

### **Whilst-Teaching**

3. Students work in a group of three and are given a copy of conversation about giving compliment that includes local wisdom. Students then practice the conversation with their group. Each group will have different topic in the conversation.

#### **The conversations script are as follows:**

**Conversation 1.** The conversation between Tami, Fima, and Andi

**Tami** : What a nice shirt you wear, Fima. I really like your shirt.

**Andi** : Yeah, I love it too, Tam. Is it made of 'Batik'?

**Fima** : Thank you guys. You are right, it is made of 'Batik'. My mother bought it for me yesterday.

**Tami** : The colour and the pattern are lovely. Do you know how to make 'Batik'?

**Fima** : Yes, my mother once asked me to watch how the 'batik' maker makes it.

**Andi** : Is it easy to make 'Batik'?

**Fima** : No. It's a difficult job. We need some days to finish a single 'batik.'

**Tami** : I want to have a 'batik' shirt like it. Can you accomapny me to buy it

tomorrow, Fim?

**Andi** : I want it too. We can buy it together

**Fima** : Okay guys.

**Conversation 2.** The conversation between, Ira, Budi, and Dinda

**Budi** : You look great with that costume.

**Ira** : Really? Thanks Budi. My mother made it for me.

**Dinda** : Why do you wear a costume like this, Ir?

**Ira** : Don't you know that today the villagers in my village will hold a ceremony called 'Sedekah Bumi.'

**Budi** : What is it? I just hear it from you.

**Dinda** : Really? 'Sedekah Bumi' is a ceremony held by the villagers to show their gratitude to God. The villagers in my village also hold it once a year.

**Ira** : Yeah, that's right. It is also held in my village once a year after we have great harvest. I wear this costume because I want to participate in this event.

**Budi** : May I join you, Ir? I want to know more about this ceremony.

**Ira** : Certainly. You can join us to, Dinda.

**Dinda** : All right. Let's go now.

4. Students identify the social function, text structure and language features found in the conversation script in group. Each group compares the expression of compliment in their conversation with another's group expression of compliment.
5. Still working in group, students are asked to make a simple conversation with different situation given by the teacher. Each group then practices the conversation in front of the class.

### **Post-Teaching**

6. Teacher gives feedback to the students

### **CONCLUSION**

In teaching speaking skill, teacher should apply an appropriate strategy so that the learners will actively involved in the learning process. Hence, in the teaching of compliment as a conversation opener, teacher can use role-play as an alternative strategy to attract the students' interest and improve their motivation in learning speaking. This strategy has some advantages since it can make the students more active in the learning activity and increase their creativity in improving their speaking ability. Furthermore, the use of compliment as a conversation opener also gives positive impact to make the students able to start a conversation in English and go deeply through it. As an authentic material, local wisdom play an important role in attracting the students' interest and motivation to be active in the speaking activities since they are accustomed with its existence. Local wisdom also can strengthen the students' character as required by the government.

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