

# THE COMPLIMENT RESPONSES USED BY HERBALIFE'S MALE AND FEMALE CUSTOMERS IN SURABAYA

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## **Abstract**

This journal mainly deals with the males' and females' compliment responses from Herbalife following up system. The focus of my analysis is the types of the males' and females' compliment responses that occurred most frequently by both genders, the differences or/and similarities of males' and females' compliment responses types. To analyze the data, I used Holmes' (1995&2006) and Wolfson's (1989) theories. I used Lesmana's research (2009) as well the contrast between an online communication research and an offline communication research as supporting thesis. For the methods, I used a descriptive qualitative approach to be supported by quantitative data in developing my research. Then, from my analysis, I found that the both male and female interlocutors tended to accept the compliments given by me as the female complimenter.

Keywords : Compliment, Compliment Responses, Gender.

Compliment responses are one of the interactive languages that we use in our daily conversation. People use compliment responses in order to respond or give feedback to their addressee's opinion. It can express the speaker's feeling about the addressee's opinion in the way how they give compliment responses. By knowing the speaker's thought about their feeling through their compliment responses, the addressee can easily decide or know how to give the right compliment, so it can function as the right tools to encourage or reinforce the speaker's behavior.

Herbalife is a direct selling company from the United States of America. In Herbalife, compliment is one of the interactive language function communication which can be used to encourage or reinforce customers' behavior. Like many direct selling companies, Herbalife also has many marketers called consultants in order to distribute the product. Their job is to encourage customers to do the program in the right way. In order to encourage their customers, mostly, consultants use compliments as their strategies to reinforce their customers. By using the right compliment, of course, customer can find their spirit to do the right program and the right compliment is determined by compliment responses which are used by the customers.

Mostly, the compliment responses occurs in following up the customer because in the Herbalife's guide book (book 3, page 4), it is stated that the consultants have to focus on the positive result that means that the consultants have to give the compliments in order to reinforce the customer's behavior to make them do the right program. This makes me interested in doing a research on compliment responses in Herbalife follow-up system.

Herbalife customers can be both men and women. However, men and women differ in all areas of their lives. According to Coates (2004) men and women speak differently in terms of using cooperative and competitive speech style. She adds that cooperative strategy in speech is the characteristic of women's language while competitive strategy in speech is the characteristic of men's language. Holmes (2006) also notes that in using interactional style, women are more supportive than men, while men tend to be aggressive (p.6). In terms of receiving compliment responses, according to Holmes (1995), men and women are likely to accept with an agreeing comment and unlikely to reject a compliment by challenging complimenter's sincerity. Moreover, women tend to disagree more often than men in responding to compliments. Men tend to ignore or evade the compliments – they usually change the topic.

## Compliment Responses

Compliment responses according to Holmes (1995) can be divided into three major categories, e.i. *accept*, *reject*, and *deflect* or *evade*. In the three major categories, *accept* has four kinds of compliment responses, *reject* has three kinds of compliment responses and *deflect* or *evade* has five kinds of compliment responses. Overall, there are twelve kinds of compliment responses. For example, when a consultant states a compliment to a customer, and the customer can respond to the compliment by *accepts*, *reject* or *deflect*. The consultant will respond: “*Wah, luar biasa ya, hanya dalam satu minggu, sudah turun 1kg*” (**You’re amazing, only in a week, you have lost 1kg**) and the answer from the customer: “*Iya? Senang-nya...*” (**Really? I’m so glad to hear that...**). From the example it can be seen that the customer accepts the compliment given by the consultant. Here, I only focus on the ability compliment because in the first week, their appearance does not change too much so the compliment is to insist on their ability.

This research seeks to investigate the types of compliment responses in Herbalife’s customer expressions based on the gender differences. In order to find the answers to this problem, this research is aimed at answering these following questions:

1. What types of compliment responses are mostly used by male costumers?
2. What types of compliment responses are mostly used by female customers?
3. What are the similarities and/or differences of compliment responses used by male and female customers?

## METHODS

In doing this research, I used descriptive qualitative approach since in this research I counted, compared, and analyzed the kinds of compliment responses which were would be produced by Herbalife’s customers based on their gender differences.

The sources of the data were fifteen females and fifteen male customers of my friends. In this case, I gave four situations of compliment to each of the fifteen female customers and to each of the fifteen male customers in Surabaya. All the customers used the Herbalife products for losing weight so it had the same comparison to be analyzed. These compliments were produced in Bahasa. Therefore, got the Indonesian version for the compliment responses.

Here, the compliment responses from me to the female and the male customers were the data which were taken from direct communication. Later on those responses were used and classified in the analysis of the data. Furthermore, those interlocutors had similar range of age (20-35) because in those ages, the respondents were caring of their appearance. Also, their social distance with me was the same.

After getting the recording, I transcribed and translated the data into English. The purpose of translating the data into English was to ease readers in understanding the meaning of the data because the language style was mostly informal. After putting the data into the table, I then classified the data based on the types of compliment responses and analyzed them one by one.

The instrument would be a role-play situation with the given situation. This instrument was chosen in order to create similar situation to the all respondents in order to create the same situation and got the validity of the data.

In this research, the role-play was done in the first period when the consultant had to come to the customers’ house to control their programs. During the follow up period, the consultant talked and discussed many things about the customers’ daily activities and she was going to compliment whatever the customers did as their abilities. The situation was given orally by the consultant so the customers could clearly understand the role play.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Since I wanted to do a research on the types of males’ compliment responses in Herbalife following up communication from my compliments that occurred the most frequently, thus the explanation used both tables directly. I explained the males’ responses from my compliments using

table 1.1. Therefore, I studied the types of the males' responses that occurred the most frequently in Herbalife following up communication as such also happened as well for the females' responses. After all, I studied further about the differences of the males' and the females' response types in Herbalife following up communication in the next part.

Table 1.1 Male and Female Compliment Responses to my Compliments

Types of Compliment	Types of Compliment Responses																							
	Accept						Reject						Deflect / Evade											
	AT		AU		Do U		RC		Di U		QA		CS		SC		IC		Ig		LE		RR	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	1	1	8	5	3	2	2	5					1	2										
2	1		1	12	1	2													1					
3	1	1	5	14	5				1							1		2						
4		4	9	10	2	1	1											1		2				
	3	6	3	41	1	5	3	5	1	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	-	3	1	2	-	-	-
	M: 52						F: 57						M: 2		F: 2		M: 6				F: 1			

From Table 1.1, most of the male respondents accepted the compliments given by me who was female. This could be seen from the number of Accept type was 52 out of 60 conversations. If it was examined carefully, still, the type appeared the most frequently was Agreeing Utterance that belongs to Accept group. At the second place, Deflect/Evade appeared 6 times. Finally, Reject type got also third place by collecting 2 numbers. All of them were 60 tokens because of fifteen respondents received equally four types of ability compliments according to Nessa Wolfson's (1989) theory. Therefore, these female to male compliments were responded well because most of the type that appeared was Accept type.

Here, the males tended to respond to the compliment given by appreciating the object being complimented. Appreciating Utterance means showing an agreement toward the compliment and added some comment through the compliment responses which were related to the object. Probably, a close relationship had been made so they did not feel shy or awkward to be complimented by a woman. Those fifteen males still considered my compliments as positive features because they tended to accept them.

These conditions more or less also happened in the female to females' conversations. Me, who was a female, gave four types of ability compliment based on Wolfson's theory to each of the 15 female respondents. Hence, there were 60 dialogues collected. First of all, the most frequent type that appeared was Accept type as well. If this was analyzed further, still, the most frequent type appeared is Agreeing Utterance that belongs to Accept group. Secondly, Reject type was in the second position which appeared twice. It was different from the female to male compliment responses which were the second place, i.e Deflect/Evade. Lastly, Deflect/Evade only appeared only once. Therefore, these female-to-female compliments were responded well enough because most of the type appeared was Accept type.

There were a lot of possibilities that appeared in my opinion regarding the reasons why Accept type reached higher rather than female to male compliment responses. In fact, female and female relationship tended to be very close and no distant. We usually shared stories among us. Probably, they

did not pay attention that I did give compliments to them. In their opinion, they probably just wanted to share a story or ask something to me but still related to the compliment, so they enjoyed it as our daily communication. Here, Accept type was the highest type that collected 57 tokens. In my opinion, most of the regarded who were very confident about themselves gave acceptance toward my compliments.

Related to theory by Holmes (1995), Holmes notes that women received significantly more compliments than men do. These differences might lead to the conclusion that women and men perceive compliments function differently. This theory was not in favor of the theory. From the Herbalife data, the ways women and me perceived the compliment functions were not too different. Both genders tended to accept the compliments primarily as positively affective speech acts, for instance, expressing solidarity and positive politeness. In this case, this theory could be applied in this research because women tended to consider the compliments given as positive features to express solidarity and close relationship.

In a conclusion, almost all of the males' and females' responses tended to aim at Accept types. Even though Accept type had four kinds of categories and varied their answers in those four types, but still, Accept type reached the highest occurrences. The female-to-male compliments got 52 responses and the female-to-female compliments got 57 responses. The basic reason why all of them tended to accept the compliments was that the close distant relationship could have played an important factor. All of them were be friends of mine so they did not have to be reluctant and ashamed to accept the compliments both directly and indirectly.

#### **Differences and/or Similarities between Males' and Females' Compliment Responses Type**

This part discussed the differences and/or similarities of the males' and the females' compliment responses total result. Below, there was a table that explained about the total number of each of the compliment response types. The significant number was that both genders chose accept type.

Table 1.2 Total result of Males' and Females' Compliment Responses

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Accept</b>	<b>Reject</b>	<b>Evade/ Deflect</b>
FM	52	2	6
FF	57	2	1

FM: Female to Male

FF: Female to Female

From this total number, it could be concluded that both the males and the females preferred to answer with Accept type as their type to respond to the compliment given. There were 52 males' accept responses out of 60 responses for the compliment given by me. This result was not that far from the females' one, there were 57 females' accept responses out of 60 responses for the compliments given by me. Even though the numbers of the males' and the females' responses were not the same; however both the genders tended to accept the compliment given.

In my opinion, the tendency to accept the compliment was related to the following up communication itself. Those interlocutors could have accepted the compliments sent because of the face-to-face communication. What I meant here was that those interlocutors faced or saw the complimenter's face that accepting the compliment was not that shameful anymore. They might not be that reluctant to accept the compliments because they have close relationship with me. Eventhough the answers varied in the four types that were under the major type, accept, still the interlocutors had the tendency to accept the compliments given both directly and indirectly.

However, there was a difference between male and female interlocutors in terms of Evade or deflect the compliments. Males tended to evade the compliments given rather than females. It might be because of the relationship itself. Those male interlocutors had close relationship to me so that I

thought they might interpret the compliments as phatic or just opening statements. Another possibility was that those female interlocutors felt awkward to be complimented by me who is their consultant. They hence evaded or deflected the compliment and might consider it as phatic only. In addition, the personality of each customers also play a big role which make men tend to evade the compliment given.

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, I explained some findings in the follow up communication research based on Holmes' theory (1995). First of all, related to the first research question which was the types of the males' compliment responses in Herbalife's following up, there were only 9 types appearing – Appreciation Token, Agreeing Utterance, Downgrading Utterance, Return Compliment, Disagreeing Utterance, Challenge Sincerity, Informative Comment, Ignore, and Legitimate Evasion. However, the major type, Accept type, dominated the male interlocutors' responses. Secondly, related to the second research question which was the types of the females' compliment responses in Herbalife's follow up, there were only 6 types of females' compliment responses - Appreciation Token, Agreeing Utterance, Downgrading Utterance, Return Compliment, Challenge Sincerity and Ignore. But still, the Accept type dominated the females' responses in this research. Therefore, Accept type dominated the males' and females' responses in this offline communication research. In terms of gender complimenting, most of the male and the female interlocutors tended to answer the compliment by accepting it. The difference between the male addressees' and the female addressees' responses lies in the second type of the responses in which the males used Deflect or Evade type while the Females used Reject.

Based on those findings, I could conclude that both genders still tended to answer the compliment given by accepting it. Related to this result, close relationship played an important part. Those interlocutors could have tended to accept the compliment because we have good relationship so that they did not feel reluctant or ashamed to accept the compliment given by the same sex or even different sex.

Related to the main theory used by Holmes which was about the twelve types of compliment responses, I believed that Holmes' theory was applicable enough for Indonesian respondents because most of the types appeared in my follow up data, except Question Accuracy, Shift Credit and Request Reassure.

At last, I hoped this research will be useful for others to do other researches dealing with compliment responses behavior and relationship between sex-differences. I do really hope as well that my study would be worth enough as an additional reference for those who also want to make a further study in this field and also for those who want to study about other politeness or still related to compliment responses.

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