

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Review of Literature

1. Expressive Speech Acts in Talks or Interaction

Speech acts, particularly expressive speech acts, are vital in reflecting a speaker's emotions, attitudes, and psychological states during interactions. They shape the dynamics between speakers and listeners while helping to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. According to Searle (1976), expressive speech acts are utterances that convey the speaker's psychological state toward a particular situation. Through these speech acts, speakers express feelings such as happiness, gratitude, appreciation, admiration, and pride. Expanding this classification, Searle & Vanderveken (1985) identify several forms of expressive speech acts, including apologizing, thanking, condoling, congratulating, complaining, lamenting, protesting, deploring, boasting, complimenting, praising, welcoming, and greeting. Among these categories, complimenting is particularly relevant to the present study because it conveys positive evaluation and approval toward the hearer. Therefore, Searle's (1976) framework serves as the primary theoretical basis for identifying complimenting as an expressive speech act in judges' utterances.

Evidence of the broad range of expressive speech acts can also be found in literary discourse. Mustofa et al. (2019) examined the expressive speech

acts produced by male characters in *New Moon* and identified fifteen categories, including showing dislike, caring, regretting, surprising, apologizing, greeting, loving, mocking, showing relief, giving compliments, confessing, encouraging, showing anger, and thanking. Their analysis highlights that complimenting functions as one of the expressive acts through which characters communicate admiration and positive evaluation toward others. This finding reinforces the view that compliments represent an important realization of expressive speech acts across different forms of discourse.

Expressive speech acts have likewise been widely investigated in educational settings. Azhari et al. (2018) reported that greetings, thanking, and complimenting frequently occurred in classroom interaction and contributed to creating a supportive learning environment. By expressing appreciation and positive evaluation, teachers were able to strengthen interaction with students and promote more effective classroom communication.

Beyond educational contexts, expressive speech acts also play an important role in online communication. Izar et al. (2021) analyzed Comic Bintang Emon's social media content and found that expressive speech acts were employed to communicate emotions, attitudes, and personal evaluations through both literal and non-literal direct speech acts. Similarly, Irwansyah et al. (2024) investigated comments on Prince EA's YouTube vid-

eos and identified several expressive categories, including gratitude, agreement, exclamation, greetings, volition, and sorrow, with gratitude emerging as the most frequently expressed type. Together, these studies demonstrate that expressive speech acts remain essential for expressing emotions and evaluations in computer-mediated communication.

The realization of expressive speech acts is equally prominent in television programs. Malasari & Rosdiana (2024) examined *The Ellen Show* and identified eight expressive categories, namely greeting, thanking, complimenting, praising, apologizing, protesting, boasting, and complaining. Among these, complimenting and praising frequently functioned as conversational strategies for expressing appreciation, encouraging interaction, and creating a positive atmosphere between the host and guests. These findings indicate that expressive speech acts contribute not only to conveying emotions but also to maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships during public interactions.

A similar tendency can be observed in other forms of spoken media. Putri & Ariyaningsih (2023) found that interactions in the *Dive Studio Podcast* frequently contained expressive speech acts such as praising, welcoming, expressing joy, congratulating, apologizing, and thanking, all of which fostered rapport and emotional closeness between participants. Likewise, Nazrah & Rosida (2024) reported that expressive speech acts, including thanking, apologizing, protesting, and complimenting, were strategically

employed in *The Late Late Show* to engage audiences, strengthen social relationships, and create an enjoyable interaction between hosts and guests.

Taken together, previous studies consistently demonstrate that expressive speech acts are employed across a wide variety of communicative settings, including literary works, classroom interactions, social media, online discussions, podcasts, and television programs. Although the dominant expressive categories vary according to context, they share the common function of expressing the speaker's emotions, attitudes, and psychological states while strengthening interpersonal relationships. These findings support Searle's (1976) proposition that expressive speech acts constitute an important means of conveying personal evaluation in communication. Consequently, they provide a relevant theoretical foundation for examining complimenting speech acts in talent show interactions, where judges regularly express admiration, appreciation, praise, and encouragement toward contestants.

2. Objects in Complimenting Speech Acts

Compliments as expressive speech acts serve as important tools for maintaining positive social relationships while expressing admiration, approval, and appreciation. Their realization is not limited to positive evaluation alone but is also influenced by structural, pragmatic, and cultural factors. Holmes (1986) explains that compliments function as positive polite-

ness strategies directed toward someone's appearance, ability or performance, possessions, and aspects of personality or friendliness. These categories provide the theoretical basis for classifying compliment topics in the present study.

The object of a compliment may vary according to the attribute that receives positive evaluation. Válková (2013) argues that every compliment consists of a positive evaluation directed toward a particular object or attribute of the addressee. Such objects may include tangible entities, such as possessions and physical appearance, as well as intangible qualities, including abilities, behaviors, achievements, and personality traits. Consequently, the interpretation of compliment topics requires consideration of both linguistic expressions and the social context in which they are produced.

Previous studies have consistently shown that compliment topics differ according to communicative settings. In performance-oriented contexts, compliments predominantly emphasize ability and achievement. Ulfa et al. (2023), for example, investigated compliments in YouTube comments on Rihanna's *Apple Music Super Bowl LVII Halftime Show* and found that ability was the most frequent compliment topic, followed by appearance and personality. Their findings indicate that audiences tend to evaluate performers primarily based on their skills and successful performances rather than on their physical characteristics.

A similar tendency can be observed in spoken media interactions, although cultural background also influences the distribution of compliment topics. Behnam & Amizadeh (2011) examined English and Persian television interviews and reported that compliments in both languages focused on ability, personality, appearance, and possessions. However, ability constituted the dominant topic in the English interviews, whereas personality occurred most frequently in the Persian data. This variation suggests that although speakers share similar compliment categories, the prominence of each topic reflects different cultural preferences and interactional norms.

Different patterns emerge in online communication, where the object of evaluation is strongly determined by the platform and the content being discussed. Maíz-Arévalo & García-Gómez (2013) found that Facebook users commonly complimented appearance, personality, skills, and possessions when interacting with others online. Likewise, Vlachaki (2023) reported that compliments on Bookstagram were predominantly directed toward possessions, particularly books, followed by performance, appearance, and personality. The study also introduced an additional *other* category for compliments whose topics could not be clearly classified within conventional categories. These findings illustrate that digital environments shape compliment topics according to the interests and interactional practices of their respective communities.

Media discourse demonstrates a comparable pattern, although the focus of compliments is often influenced by institutional roles and communicative purposes. Claudel & Moallemi (2026) observed that compliments in French and Persian talk shows were commonly directed toward professional achievements, skills, personal qualities, physical appearance, and possessions. While French hosts primarily praised guests' professional activities, Persian hosts tended to emphasize moral qualities and professional accomplishments. These differences further highlight the role of interactional context in determining the object of positive evaluation.

Variation in compliment topics is also evident in second-language communication. Solodka et al. (2019) found that Ukrainian learners of English commonly complimented physical appearance, possessions, abilities, talents, and personal qualities. Although learners successfully employed a variety of compliment topics, they also experienced pragmatic difficulties in selecting expressions that were culturally appropriate. This finding suggests that producing compliments requires not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic and sociocultural awareness.

Taken together, previous studies demonstrate that compliment topics are shaped by multiple factors, including communicative purpose, interactional setting, cultural background, and the object being evaluated. Although the dominant topic varies across contexts, ability, personality, appearance,

and possessions consistently emerge as the principal targets of positive evaluation. These findings provide a strong theoretical foundation for examining compliment topics in talent show discourse, where judges are expected to evaluate contestants' performances while simultaneously maintaining supportive interpersonal relationships.

3. Syntactical Structure in Complimenting Speech Acts

Complimenting speech acts are commonly realized through formulaic syntactic structures that enable speakers to express admiration, appreciation, and positive evaluation in socially acceptable ways. According to Manes & Wolfson (1981), compliments in American English are highly conventionalized and are typically expressed through nine recurrent syntactic patterns, namely *NP + BE/LOOK + (INT) + ADJ*, *I + (INT) + LIKE/LOVE + NP*, *PRO + BE + (INT) + ADJ/ADJ NP*, *You + V + (DET) + (INT) + ADJ + NP*, *You + V + NP + ADV*, *You + HAVE + (INT) + ADJ + NP*, *What + (a/an) + ADJ + NP!*, *ADJ + NP!*, and *Isn't + NP + ADJ!*. These recurring structures allow speakers to communicate positive evaluations efficiently while maintaining interpersonal solidarity. Accordingly, the present study adopts Manes and Wolfson's framework to analyze the syntactic realization of compliments produced by judges in *America's Got Talent* (AGT) and *Britain's Got Talent* (BGT).

Evidence of the formulaic nature of compliment structures can also be found in English language teaching materials. Jalilian & Roohani (2016)

reported that compliment expressions in ELT textbooks are predominantly realized through simple adjective-based constructions, particularly *NP looks/is + ADJ*, whereas exclamatory and more complex structures occur considerably less often. This distribution suggests that instructional materials emphasize conventional compliment forms because they are easier for learners to recognize and produce in everyday communication. As a result, learners are primarily exposed to direct and structurally uncomplicated compliment expressions.

A similar tendency appears in learner language. Investigating compliments produced by Iranian EFL learners, Tajeddin & Yazdanmehr (2012) found that statement forms constituted the dominant syntactic realization, followed by exclamatory and interrogative constructions. Although the learners generally understood the pragmatic purpose of complimenting, many encountered difficulties in producing expressions that reflected native-like syntactic conventions. Their study demonstrates that mastering compliment structures involves not only grammatical competence but also pragmatic awareness of how positive evaluations are conventionally expressed.

Studies conducted in naturally occurring interactions likewise confirm the stability of compliment syntax. Bordbar et al. (2017) found that compliments across different speech situations shared highly similar syntactic and

lexical characteristics, with *NP (BE) (INT) ADJ* emerging as the most frequently occurring pattern. Likewise, Shezi (2005), drawing upon Manes & Wolfson (1981), Holmes (1986; 1988), and Ylännä-McEwen (1993), explains that compliments generally rely on a relatively limited number of recurring structures, particularly *NP + BE/LOOK + (INT) + ADJ* and *I (really) like/love NP*. The study further notes that positive adjectives such as *good, nice, beautiful, and great* constitute the core lexical items used in compliment expressions. Together, these studies reinforce the view that compliments are characterized by recurrent adjective-based constructions that function as conventional linguistic resources for expressing admiration and strengthening interpersonal relationships.

The persistence of these conventional patterns is also evident in computer-mediated communication. Ghosheh (2020) examined compliment patterns in English and Arabic Facebook interactions and reported that compliments directed to both family members and public figures generally followed similar syntactic and lexical realizations. Although slight differences appeared in the frequency of individual patterns, the social status of the addressee did not substantially influence the overall structural organization of compliments. This finding suggests that conventional compliment patterns remain relatively stable even when speakers communicate across different online social relationships.

Research conducted in talent show settings further demonstrates both the consistency and flexibility of compliment structures. Agustiyani (2023) applied Manes & Wolfson's (1981) framework to analyze compliments produced by judges in *Indonesian Idol* and *American Idol 2019*. The study found that conventional patterns such as *NP BE (INT) ADJ*, *I (INT) LIKE NP*, *PRO BE (INT) ADJ*, *What (a) ADJ NP!*, and *ADJ NP!* were frequently employed throughout judges' evaluations. Nevertheless, several compliment expressions appeared in modified forms, including personalized constructions, superlative expressions, shortened syntactic realizations, and other creative patterns that did not fully correspond to the original classification. These results indicate that while conventional compliment formulas continue to dominate evaluative discourse, speakers frequently adapt them to suit spontaneous interaction and communicative intentions within televised talent competitions.

Besides interactional context, cultural background also contributes to differences in compliment realization. Novitasari (2024) compared compliment strategies in American and Indonesian talk shows and found that American speakers tended to employ short, formulaic constructions characterized by positive adjectives and evaluative verbs such as *look* and *love*. Indonesian speakers, in contrast, preferred more indirect and context-dependent expressions that were often accompanied by descriptive elaboration. These findings suggest that although compliment patterns are generally

formulaic, their realization is influenced by cultural norms governing politeness, directness, and interpersonal communication.

Overall, previous studies consistently demonstrate that compliment structures are shaped by the interaction between linguistic convention and communicative context. Across educational materials, learner discourse, everyday conversation, social media interaction, cross-cultural communication, and televised entertainment, speakers generally rely on a limited number of conventional syntactic patterns while simultaneously adapting those patterns to meet specific interactional purposes. Nevertheless, research directly comparing compliment structures across English-language talent shows remains limited. Most existing studies examine either educational settings, online communication, or cross-cultural comparisons rather than interactions between judges in comparable televised competitions. Therefore, by comparing *America's Got Talent* and *Britain's Got Talent*, the present study seeks to extend previous research by examining how compliment syntactic patterns are realized within two closely related performance-based contexts and whether similar institutional settings produce comparable linguistic realizations.

B. Review of Relevant Research

Previous studies on complimenting behavior have explored various dimensions, including gender, individual style, interactional context, and cross-cul-

tural differences. These studies provide important insights into how compliments function as expressive speech acts, although they often focus on specific aspects rather than offering an integrated analysis. Gender-based compliments used by judges in *America's Got Talent* 2019 were investigated in relation to topic, strategies, functions, and syntactic patterns. Hanifah & Marlina (2022) analyzed 72 compliments and found that male judges produced more compliments than female judges, with most compliments focusing on contestants' performances. In terms of strategies, both groups frequently used explicit and implicit forms, while explanation strategies were more dominant among female judges. Compliments were found to function mainly as expressions of admiration and approval, as well as other related acts such as gratitude, greetings, and congratulations. Three main syntactic patterns were identified, namely *I (really) like/love NP*, *PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP*, and *PRO is/are/was/were (really) ADJ*, indicating a tendency toward impersonal and formulaic structures. This finding highlights how gender influences both the frequency and form of complimenting behavior in evaluative contexts. However, the study does not fully integrate pragmatic and syntactic dimensions within a unified framework.

Compliment strategies used by Simon Cowell in *America's Got Talent* and *Britain's Got Talent* from 2016 to 2020 were also examined to identify patterns of evaluative language across different programs. Charoenroop (2021) found that Cowell produced more compliments in AGT than in BGT, while consistently employing both explicit and implicit strategies in both shows. Explicit strategies were slightly more dominant in AGT, and positive adjectives such as

amazing and *great* were frequently used. Compliments were also commonly realized in predicative structures, although the overall differences between AGT and BGT were relatively minor. Despite these findings, the study does not provide a detailed structural classification of compliments nor examine how syntactic forms contribute to meaning in depth. Similarly, Keshavarz et al. (2020) investigated compliments and compliment responses in *America's Got Talent* 2017. The study found that ability was the most dominant compliment type, while explicit compliments were the most frequently used strategy employed by the judges and the host. In addition, appreciation tokens, particularly "thank you," were the most common compliment responses produced by the contestants. However, the study did not examine the syntactic patterns of compliments or compare compliment use across different talent show contexts.

In addition to spoken interaction, research in digital communication also contributes to understanding complimenting behavior. Compliment acts used by Facebook users on the *America's Got Talent* page in response to Putri Ariani's Golden Buzzer performance were analyzed based on topics and functions. Dwiarman & Ariatmi (2024) found that general ability was the most dominant topic, followed by specific-act ability, possession, and personal appearance. In terms of functions, positive evaluation was the most frequently used, followed by admiration, encouragement, and rapport maintenance. The study concluded that online users primarily focus on talent and performance when giving compliments. Similarly, compliment acts on Instagram posts featuring artists' works were examined in terms of syntactic patterns, strategies, topics, and

emoji usage. ALsaqr & Mahzari (2025) found that adjective-based structures were the most dominant syntactic form, reflecting a preference for short and simple expressions. Possession and ability were the most frequent topics, while emotional and religious expressions were commonly used as strategies. Emojis were also widely used to intensify emotional meaning. Female users tended to produce more compliments and use more varied strategies than male users. Likewise, Fajri & Sudarwati (2024) compared compliment strategies and syntactic patterns in celebrity Instagram and TikTok comments using Ye's (1995) compliment strategy framework and Manes & Wolfson's (1981) syntactic pattern classification. The study found that direct compliments were the most frequently used strategy on both platforms. In terms of syntactic patterns, the *ADJ NP!* form was more common on Instagram, whereas the *NP is/looks (really) ADJ* pattern predominated on TikTok. However, the study was limited to comments from three celebrities, included only English-language data, and focused exclusively on social media interactions rather than spoken communication. Although these studies provide valuable insights into online complimenting behavior, they do not focus on spoken interaction in talent show contexts and do not explicitly connect syntactic patterns with pragmatic categorization.

A cross-cultural perspective further shows that complimenting behavior varies across linguistic and cultural settings. The use of compliment strategies in *America's Got Talent 2023* and *Indonesia's Got Talent 2023* was analyzed in terms of syntactic structures, strategies, and functions. Anindita (2025) found that English female judges produced more compliments than male

judges, while Indonesian judges showed a more balanced distribution. Both groups predominantly used direct strategies, although indirect strategies were more frequent among English speakers, particularly females. In terms of syntactic structure, English compliments showed greater variation and frequently used personal pronouns such as *I*, *he*, *she*, and *they*, while Indonesian compliments tended to avoid pronouns and rely on noun phrases referring directly to the target. Both contexts shared similar functions, such as expressing admiration and encouraging positive behavior, although differences appeared in the use of face-threatening act mitigation. However, the study does not provide a detailed classification of compliment topics nor a unified analysis linking syntactic realization with pragmatic functions.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that complimenting behavior is influenced by various factors, including gender, communicative context, interactional setting, cultural background, compliment strategies, and syntactic realization. Nevertheless, previous studies have generally examined these aspects separately, focusing on either compliment topics, strategies, functions, responses, or syntactic patterns. Although several studies have investigated compliment speech acts in talent shows and social media contexts, few have integrated Holmes' (1986) compliment topic classification and Manes & Wolfson's (1981) syntactic pattern framework within a single analysis. Moreover, comparative studies examining judges' compliment speech acts across *America's Got Talent* and *Britain's Got Talent* remain limited. Therefore, this study seeks

to address these gaps by integrating the analysis of compliment topics and syntactic patterns while providing a comparative investigation of judges' compliment speech acts in *America's Got Talent* and *Britain's Got Talent*.

C. Conceptual Framework

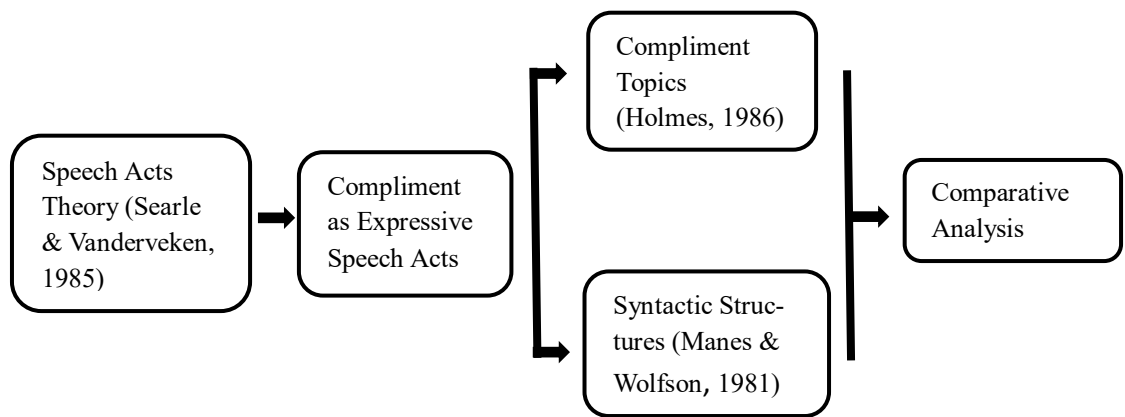
This section presents the conceptual framework of the study, illustrating the process through which the data are analyzed based on the theories discussed in the previous sections. The study begins with the collection of data in the form of judges' utterances from America's Got Talent (AGT) and Britain's Got Talent (BGT). These utterances are then identified to determine which ones function as compliments. The identification process is based on the classification of expressive speech acts proposed by Searle & Vanderveken (1985), in which compliments are categorized as expressive speech acts that convey positive evaluation.

After identifying the complimenting utterances, the analysis proceeds to classify them based on their topics using the framework proposed by Holmes (1986). The compliments are grouped according to the aspect being evaluated, such as ability or performance, appearance, and possession. In addition, this study includes character as a more specific category to capture compliments related to personal qualities. Following the topic classification, the analysis moves to the structural level. Each compliment is examined in terms of its syntactic form using the patterns proposed by Manes & Wolfson (1981). This step aims to identify the syntactic patterns used in expressing compliments and to determine the dominant forms.

Finally, the findings from both analyses are compared between AGT and BGT to identify similarities and differences in the use of compliment topics and syntactic structures. Through this framework, the study reveals how compliments function as expressive speech acts within similar evaluative contexts.

Based on the analytical steps described above, the conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 2.1. The diagram presents the sequence of analysis, starting from data collection to the final interpretation of findings.

Figure 2.1 The Conceptual Framework of Complimenting Speech Acts in AGT and BGT



As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the analysis begins with identifying complimenting utterances based on speech act theory, followed by classifying their topics and examining their syntactic structures. The final step involves comparing the findings between AGT and BGT to identify patterns and differences in the use of compliments. This framework serves as a guide in conducting the analysis and answering the research questions of the study.