



Compliment Responses Among Sudanese Learners at Sudan University for Science and Technology

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Article Info.

Article history:

Received 3 September 2023

Revised 22 November 2023

Published 30 December 2023

Keywords:

communicative competence, compliments, strategies, Sudan, student

How to cite:

Tahani Yusuf, Mohamed Al-Amin Al-Shingeeti, Nagla Taha Bashri, Abbas Mukhtar Mohamed Badawi (2023). Compliment Responses Among Sudanese Learners at Sudan University for Science and Technology. Aca. Int. J. Soc. Sci. H. 2023; 1(2) 91-103

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Abstract

Speech acts that express and indicate cultural values are compliments. Many of the values represented by means of compliments are possessions, personal appearance, new acquisitions, skills, and talents. It is particularly significant when it comes to social language interactions. According to the data, the most employed strategy types in formal and informal contexts fall within traditionally indirect strategies. Participants' responses of compliment analyzed by following strategies that conducted by Holmes' (1986). The result is that, almost all students tend to accept compliment in one way or another. The study recommends that advanced English language students should be aware of the sociolinguistic aspects of communicative competence, and teachers and lecturers should educate their students those conversations cannot be built only with a good sentence structure, but they need to know social and cultural aspects of communication, along with other recommendations.

Introduction

As speech actions, compliments represent and convey cultural values. Some values expressed in praise include one's elegance, gaining, belongings, abilities, and skills. It is especially significant for human language engagements. Speaking and understanding a language need linguistic knowledge and being able to communicate effectively in cultural and social contexts calls for further language proficiency. Learners must be able to apply their vocabulary and grammatical skills correctly based on the situation and the audience they are talking to effectively communicate in the target language.

Statement of the Problem

- Although compliments have been studied in other Arabic-speaking contexts. In Yemen (Qanbar, 2012), in an interlanguage study, found that among (132) Jordanian compliments and (400) Yemini compliments the most frequent compliments occur in female-female interactions (52%, 50%) compared to male-male (33%, 22%) or opposite gender

interactions. Females focus was on complementing appearance whereas males focus was on personality and ability,

- Kuwait (Farghal & Haggan, 2006) found that the percentage of acceptance responses among Kuwaiti subjects was higher than was found in the native English -speaking subjects of other studies but was similar to those found in studies on other Arabic -speaking subjects.
- Nelson et al., (1996) in Egypt, studied two groups (of 240 each) of American and Egyptian university students, each in their native language. The findings revealed the tendency of Egyptians to use longer compliments compared to Americans. A more distinct difference was apparent in the subject of the compliment: the Egyptians mostly complimented personal traits while the Americans' focus was on work and skills. However, both agreed on adopting a direct rather than indirect means of complimenting

Arabic compliments and complimenting replies are mostly from religious phrases, widespread throughout the Arab world. But lifestyles vary from one Arab nation to another. The present study sheds light on how Sudanese learners respond to compliments. By observing how Sudanese EFL learners respond to compliments, this study investigates the speech community and society.

Theoretical Framework

Definition

Various definitions of the speech act of "compliment" have been presented from multiple points of view. According to France (1992: 11–15), the Italian complement is where the term "compliment" originated; "Compliment refers to an action done on one hand by obligation and, on the other hand to a sentiment of gratitude which comes from the heart and reflects the truth and sincerity of the soul". Yet, the following definition of the specific relationship between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is provided by Schmidt & Kasper (1996): (Whether it says outright or implicitly that the person who is being mentioned is good at something—a quality, ability, possession, etc.) is seen favorably by the S and the H as a "compliment" speech act. (p. 446-448). Chung-Hye (1992) defines a compliment as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for 'good' (possession, characteristics, skill etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (p.18).

According to Holmes (1986), a complement 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" (p.485). According to Farghal and Haggan (2006), a complement is an expression of agreement with the actions and attempts of the recipient. According to Fraser (1990), complements are favorable assessments that attribute direct or indirect attributes to the giver. Herbert (1986) asserts that praise signifies gratitude and positive interpersonal relationships. Herbert (1986) argues that praises are phatic remarks that seek to create connections via word interaction because of their friendly character. Accordingly, a complement includes appreciating the other person's qualities and typically results from the social relationships between the individuals involved in the conversation. There are several societal purposes for compliments (Leech, 1983).

Functions of Compliments

Austin (1962) asserts that when we use a language, we actively utilize it to accomplish things in addition to just saying the words. Yet, since cultures differ, a speech in one language may

not sound the same in another. a study by Searle (1975), complement is a frequent descriptive speech act that may be applied to everyone, every day, and in a variety of situations. A compliment, according to Holmes (1988), is a verbal act that expressly or implicitly gives praise for a good (a quality, feature, ability, ...) towards someone besides the speaker, often the person being addressed. It accomplishes several goals, such as initiating a discussion, enabling it, and offering encouragement to someone to keep people together. When examining the purposes of compliments, Holmes, and Brown (1987) found that compliments aim to highlight a person's positive traits to build social bonds and create harmony. According to Holmes (1986), affirmations emphasis unity and close any gaps that offences may have created. Compliments are meant to make other people feel happy and at peace. While most praises are for emotional reasons, Johnson and Roen (1992) assert that certain compliments have strong instructive goals. Brown and Levinson (1987) declare that speakers must attempt to satiate the face desires of others while also taking into account their own. When praising, speakers must consider the words they choose to use and the statements they make.

Compliments and Gender

These pioneer academics are also looking at the connection among compliment and complement response behavior and gender on the one hand. Numerous studies have revealed variations in how men and women employ praises. Holmes (1995) examined how complement use differed by gender in her research conducted in New Zealand. According to the results of her research, women complement and get complimented more frequently than men. She also discovered that compliments are not often provided by male speakers. More specifically, Herbert (1990) examined how gender affects the giving and receiving of compliments. Based on his collection of 1062 compliment incidents, he finds that "women are twice as likely as men to accept a compliment, that men's compliments are accepted twice as often, that men's compliments are far more likely to be met with agreement", especially from a female respondent, and that men's compliments are the most likely to go unanswered out of all interactional pairs (men-to-men, men-to-women, women-to-women, and women-to-men).

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study presented here is to determine the pragmatic competence of English language learners at both the tertiary and postgraduate levels in relation to the speech acts of requests and compliments

The study attempts to achieve the following aims:

- Shedding light on the importance of knowing how to respond compliments for Sudanese English.
- Pointing out that Sudanese English learners accept compliment more than evade or reject it.
- Stating how far females use the speech act of compliment more appropriately than males.

Questions of the Study

The study attempts to answer questions such as:

- Is developing pragmatic competence in Sudanese learners of English as a foreign learner important?
- Do the subjects have enough knowledge about the pragmatics of English language compliment?

- Is there a significant difference in the compliment responses between males and females of the study population?

Materials and Method

The data were collected in October 2021. A group of eighty-six students were recruited from two faculties of Education. The students were divided into the above mentioned three groups. All of the students are English major students. They are all Sudanese natives. Their ages are between seventeen and thirty-nine and have all studied English as a school subject for at least six years before college. They have all been taught the same syllabus before college. The researcher uses the DCT which consists of twelve different situations with different power and social distance. The researcher commented on each table of percentages shedding lights on observations and differences between the groups' scores, it has been examined using the statistical analysis package for Microsoft Excel data.

Participants

The sample of the study will consist of seventy-two students at two different universities in Sudan. The subjects are tertiary and advanced level students, both males and females, forty-one females doing their BA in education in the Gezera university, English department. Twenty-two males are doing their BA beside nine male students doing M.A. at the faculty of Arts and Education in the Sudan for science and Technology University. All the participants were randomly selected.

Tools

The discourse completion test (DCT) is the main technique to collect the data of the study. The main advantage of this technique is that it is an appropriate data collection instrument provides clearly defined instructions for their correct use in reducing the probability of errors occurrence and subjective judgement of these errors by the examiner. The female students are forty-one in Bachelor program from the Gazera university, and the males are twenty-six from Sudan University beside 9 Master students from Sudan university.

The Results

The technique of data analysis was done qualitatively by means of describing Participants' responding to the different situations in the DCT. The data of the compliment has been analyzed following Holmes' (1986) categorization.

The Inferential Hypotheses

The inferential hypotheses of the study can be stated as the data collected in DCT is treated statistically through the analytical inferential illative statistics.

Hypotheses of the Study

The study is conducted to test the following hypotheses:

- Developing pragmatic competence in learners of English as a foreign learner is important.
- The subjects' knowledge about the pragmatics of English language compliment is limited.
- There is a significant difference in responding compliment between males and females of the study population.

Descriptive statistics

Using Holmes' (1986) categorization, "AC" stands for acceptance, "EV" is for evasion and "RE" is for rejection.

Female of Bachelor

Prompt One

Table (1) shows the results of the subjects' responses to prompt one in which they were asked to react freely reflecting their own culture. The majority of the females; 71%; accept the compliment and 29% evade from it in different ways. However, none of the subjects reject it.

Table 1: Female subjects' responses to prompt 1

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P1	29	12	0	41
	71%	29%	0%	100%

Prompt Two

Table (2) clarifies the results of the subjects' responses to the second situation, and it shows that most females (73%) tend to accept the compliment and no rejection, whereas (27%) turn from the answer.

Table 2: Female subjects' responses to prompt 2

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P2	30	11	0	41
	73%	27%	0%	100%

Prompt Three

More than half of the total number of the students in table (3) accept the compliment; (56%) and the rest of respondents gives an indirect response or pretend as if they do not hear it.

Table 3: Female subjects' responses to prompt 3

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P3	23	18	0	41
	56%	44%	0%	100%

Prompt Four

Acceptance in table (4) is the dominant type within the three classifications. A percentage of (71%) agree on it and (27%) deviate from responding it. We have only one out of 41 students (2%) who refuses it. The percentage of the students that deviate from the answer are 27% of the total.

Table (4): Female subjects' responses to prompt 4

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P4	29	11	1	41
	71%	27%	2%	100%

Prompt Five

A high percentage in table (5) agree on to the compliment; (95%). A minor 5% evade from responding and no one reject it.

Table5: Female subjects' responses to prompt 5

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P5	39	2	0	41

	95%	5%	0%	100%
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Prompt Six

(85%) percent of the respondents in the table (7) listed under the acceptance column. (12%) under the evasion and only one (2%) reject the compliment.

Table 6: Female subjects' responses to prompt 6

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P6	35	5	1	41
	85%	12%	2%	100%

Prompt Seven

The participants' number of both acceptance and evasion responses in table (7) are equal. The percentage is (49%) for each. Only one respondent among the forty-one subjects rejects the compliment in this situation.

Table 7: Female subjects' responses to prompt 7

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P7	20	20	1	41
	49%	49%	2%	100%

Prompt Eight

Respondents in the situation, analyzed in table (8) show a great tendency towards accepting, (85%) whereas (10%) is evade responding. The participants' percentage falling under the rejection category is (5%).

Table 8: Female subjects' responses to prompt 8

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P8	35	4	2	41
	85%	10%	5%	100%

Prompt Nine

In table (9) the acceptance percentage of the students represents 85% in comparison to 15% who evaded responding. None of the respondents rejected being complimented.

Table 9: Female subjects' responses to prompt 9

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P9	35	6	0	41
	85%	15%	0%	100%

Prompt Ten

In table (10), 71% of the subjects' responses are acceptance. Those who evade from the answer represents 27% beside 2% who reject the compliment.

Table 10: Female subjects' responses to prompt 10

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P10	29	11	1	41
	71%	27%	2%	100%

Prompt Eleven

The table below shows the results of the subjects' responses of the eleventh situation. The majority of the participants accept the compliment, and they represent 80% percent of the total number, followed by the evasion column since representing 17% of the subjects. The lowest number goes to those who reject the compliment; only (3%).

Table 11: Female subjects' responses to prompt 11

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P11	33	7	1	41
	80%	17%	3%	100%

Prompt Twelve

80% of the participants in table (12) expressed their acceptance of the compliment in the situation. The second column of those who evade responding represent 15% and there is no rejection in the situation.

Table 12: Female subjects' responses to prompt 12

C/F BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P12	35	6	0	41
	85%	15%	0%	100%

Bachelor Male Subjects**Prompt One**

The table below shows the results of the subjects' responses to prompt one in which they were asked to choose between the three options. In this situation, all the participants accept the compliment which excludes any rejection of or evasion from the answer.

Table (1): Female subjects' responses to prompt 1

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P1	22	0	0	22
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Prompt Two

Most of the participant in the below table accepted the compliment (90%). The percentage of the evasion column and the rejections are the same, 5% each.

Table (2): Female subjects' responses to prompt 2

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P2	20	1	1	22
	90%	5%	5%	100%

Prompt Three

The acceptance of the third situation is 82% of the total. 14% are in the evasion classification and those who reject it are 5%.

Table (3): Female subjects' responses to prompt 3

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P3	18	3	1	22
	82%	14%	5%	100%

Prompt Four

The majority of the students in the below table accept the compliment, 95% response or agree with it and only 5% evade or giving no answer, whereas no one reject it.

Table (4): Female subjects' responses to prompt 4

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P4	21	1	0	22
	95%	5%	0%	100%

Prompt Five

The table below reflects the complete acceptance from the whole participants. It means that there is no rejection or escaping in this situation.

Table (5): Female subjects' responses to prompt 5

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P5	22	0	0	22
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Prompt Six

The table below shows the results of the subjects' responses to prompt six in which they were asked to choose between the three options. The result is that the acceptance column gains the largest percentage within the rest, it is 91%. Equal percentages in the two other columns, 5%.

Table (6): Female subjects' responses to prompt 6

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P6	20	1	1	22
	91%	5%	5%	100%

Prompt Seven

All participants in the below table which is the sixth one accepted the compliment which means no one reject or evade in any way from the response.

Table (7): Female subjects' responses to prompt 7

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P7	22	0	0	22
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Prompt Eight

Subjects who reject it represent the 5%, no one evade from the response and 95% of them accept it.

Table (8): Female subjects' responses to prompt 8

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P8	21	0	1	22

	95%	0%	5%	100%
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Prompt Nine

The table of prompt nine below shows 0% percent of rejection. Subjects' number under the evasion column are 32% and the dominant percentage is for who accept it, they are 68%.

Table (9): Female subjects' responses to prompt 9

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P9	15	7	0	22
	68%	32%	0%	100%

Prompt Ten

The table below shows the results of the subjects' responses to prompt ten which reflects that all students accept the compliment.

Table (10): Female subjects' responses to prompt 10

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P10	22	0	0	22
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Prompt Eleven

The eleventh table below shows the complete acceptance from the whole.

Table (11): Female subjects' responses to prompt 11

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P11	22	0	0	22
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Prompt Twelve

All responses in the last situation are in the column of the acceptance (100%). No one reject or stary from the answer.

Table (12): Female subjects' responses to prompt 12

C/M BA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P12	22	0	0	22
	100%	0%	0%	100%

1.0.2 MA Participants

Prompt One

The subjects in the first prompt show great tendency towards accepting the compliment. The percentage of them is the largest. It is 89% from the total. The rest of the participants deviate from the answer, and no one shows rejection.

Table (1): Female subjects' responses to prompt 1

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P1	8	1	0	9
	89%	11%	0%	100%

Prompt Two

The table below shows the results of the subjects' responses to the second prompt as zero rejection, 11% evasion and the majority who accept the compliment represent 89% within the three classifications.

Table (2): Female subjects' responses to prompt 2

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P2	8	1	0	9
	89%	11%	0%	100%

Prompt Three

Prompt three below shows equal percentage of both who evade or reject the compliment in the situation, it is 11% .78% from the total number is under the acceptance column.

Table (3): Female subjects' responses to prompt 3

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P3	7	1	1	9
	78%	11%	11%	100%

Prompt Four

Subjects' responses to prompt four in which they were asked to choose between the options explain that there aren't any rejection and the percentage of those who under the evasion column represent 22%, where as 78% accept it.

Table (4): Female subjects' responses to prompt 4

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P4	7	2	0	9
	78%	22%	0%	100%

Prompt Five

The table of the fifth situation below shows that 89% from the total accept the compliment. 11% evade and zero rejection.

Table (5): Female subjects' responses to prompt 5

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P5	8	1	0	9
	89%	11%	0%	100%

Prompt Six

The table below shows the results of the subjects' responses to evade

Table (6): Female subjects' responses to prompt 6

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P6	9	0	0	9
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Prompt Seven

In the seventh situation, all the subjects are under the acceptance column. No rejection or escaping from replying.

Table (7): Female subjects' responses to prompt 7

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P7	9	0	0	9
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Prompt Eight

89% of the subjects' responses to prompt eight accept the compliment and no one reject it, whereas 11% evade from the answer.

Table (8): Female subjects' responses to prompt 8

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P8	8	1	0	9
	89%	11%	0%	100%

Prompt Nine

The table below shows no rejection. The acceptance percentage is 67% and the evasion is 33%. No subject rejects it. The classification below reflects the greatest number of those who accept the compliment throw the whole participants.

Table (9): Female subjects' responses to prompt 9

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P9	6	3	0	9
	67%	33%	0%	100%

Prompt Ten

As the below table shows, there is no rejection. Students' number of those who evade from the reply is the lower than those under the acceptance column, their percentage is 11% and the acceptance' is 89%.

Table (10): Female subjects' responses to prompt 10

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P10	8	1	0	9
	89%	11%	0%	100%

Prompt Eleven

The below table which shows the analysis of the eleventh situation tells us that all the participant responses are acceptance and 0% percent in the other two columns.

Table (11): Female subjects' responses to prompt 11

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P11	9	0	0	9
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Prompt Twelve

The last situation shows that there are no one of the participants evade or reject the compliment. Obvious tendency towards accepting compliment. They represent 100%.

Table (12): Female subjects' responses to prompt 12

C/M MA	AC	EV	RE	TOTAL
P12	9	0	0	9
	100%	0%	0%	100%

Discussion

The data analysis came to light that comparing the results obtained with compliment on the subject area, The students' responses of the situations. The results displayed that most of the individuals involved tend to accept compliment using different formulas which are varies within genders. Also, the group of participants had a high degree of similarity in the variety of compliments used, and there was a consistent pattern to their use, which was a remarkable finding. The group complimented one other with adjectives instead of verbs. It seems that Sudanese students' usage of praise is heavily impacted by their societal responsibility to avoid offending others. Therefore, Students need to develop pragmatic competence in real English situations as they culturally and religiously affected.

Findings

- The research found out that the predominant forms compliment's responses within Sudanese students were unbound and displayed in different semantic formulas that are either explicit or implicit influencing by the cultural background and religious belief, consequently, the subjects haven't got enough knowledge about the pragmatics of English language compliments.
- Both in formal and informal situations, there is an obvious tendency towards using ritual expressions especially within B.A males in whatever type of situations.
- Sudanese students' usage of praises is heavily impacted by their religious and social obligations to accept them.

Conclusion

The researcher selected a sample of eighty-six students in both The Sudan for Science and Technology, English department, both juniors and seniors. To respond to situations using Discourse Completion Tests DCT, the researcher commented on tables pointing out the associations between the groups' choices of the students. The study finds that all students tend to accept compliments strongly affected by their cultural background and religious beliefs using specific types of expressions as they frequently use social or local expressions in displaying responses which are similar between genders Which means that the participants are in need to know how to develop responding to compliment in real English situations.

Recommendation

Advanced English language learners should be aware of the sociolinguistics' aspects of communicative competence in different cultures. The researcher suggested that teachers and lecturers should enlighten their students those conversations can't be built up only with good structure of sentences but they need to know the sociocultural aspects of communication. Also, book writers of English curriculums at all levels should also be aware of phenomena of sociolinguistic aspects in both request and compliment strategy realizations.

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