| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Compliment Response Strategies Utilized by Jordanian Students: A Socio-Pragmatic Study

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| **ABSTRACT**

Complimenting is a common communicative act in daily interactions that occurs among people in their daily communication. Complimenting practices vary across societies due to social and contextual factors. This study examined compliment response strategies employed by Jordanian students in an academic setting). This study collected data from undergraduate students at Jerash University who study in the English departments. A mixed-methods approach, employing observation and interviews, was used. Chen and Yang (2010) theoretical framework was adopted to analyze the data. The results showed that Jordanian students used various types of compliment responses: acceptance, mitigation/deflection, rejection, non-response and request interpretations. They utilized different strategies for each type, such as thanking, downgrading, disagreement, and silence. This study recommends future research comparing these findings with compliment response strategies used by students in other cultural contexts.

1. Introduction

A compliment response is a speech act expressing appreciation or acknowledgment following a compliment. Cultural norms dictate the appropriate and polite ways to respond to compliments. Nelson, et al (1996) stated that compliment responses are eventually important to reflect cultural values which are considered as a kind of appreciation of others' work. People vary in their use of compliments and compliment responses. The context in which a compliment is given plays a crucial role in shaping its delivery and response.

This study investigates compliment response strategies used by undergraduate students interacting with classmates and professors. Analyzing the meaning of compliment responses provides insights into why Jordanians use them in particular ways. Understanding both the explicit and implicit meanings conveyed by students' compliment responses is crucial for those offering favors, praise, or kindness. This research addresses a gap in the cross-cultural literature on compliments by examining Jordanian compliment responses. Investigating compliment response strategies used by Jordanian EFL students will assist non-Arab students in formulating appropriate compliments when interacting with Jordanians, particularly their university classmates.

There are various purposes of compliments that motivate interactants to use them. Firstly, keeping solidarity among the interactants. When the recipients utilized a compliment, they seek to increase the social solidarity with the speaker. Compliments are expressed to strengthen solidarity and narrow the gaps that may be caused by offenses between the speaker and the recipients

Holmes (1986). (Brown & Levinson, 1987) argued that depending on how a compliment is performed, it can harm or hurt the listener's feelings. Compliments can be formed to increase the solidarity between individuals. It can be evaluated as a positive politeness strategy. (Pomerantz, 1978) stated that the recipients may feel confused about whether they have to avoid or limit self-praise.

Secondly, compliments can be performed for emotional purposes. The role of the complements in this point is related to saving the speaker's face. The usage of compliments is to have a good emotional goal that helps to keep a good relationship with the performer of the compliments Johnson and Roen (1992). Thirdly, the recipients of praises or good efforts by the complimenters in general must be polite to them. So, being polite is one of the purposes of using complements with the speakers. Brown and Levinson (1987) said that speakers have to save the hearers' faces and do what is suitable to them.

2. Literature review
A. Past studies

A lot of studies have been conducted on compliments. Part of them concentrated on the forms of the compliments and others on the response's strategies. This section will highlight the most recent studies investigating compliments in various cultures and countries. Bibi, F., & Sartini, N. W. (2023) investigated gender and social power dynamics in compliment responses among university students in Indonesia and Pakistan. They revealed that Indonesian students, perform cultural values of modesty and social harmony. They showed a preference for acceptance and amendment strategies. In contrast, the Pakistani students showed a higher propensity for no acceptance and no acknowledgment strategies, alongside acceptance and amendment strategies.

Zhuang, J. C., & He, Y. (2020) found that macro strategies (i.e., acceptance, refusal, and in betweenness) and, by implication, micro strategies (e.g. upgrade) vestige on the identities depending on context. Saadati, S., & Vefalı, G. M. (2021) examined developing EFL learners' metapragmatic awareness of complimenting. They explored that the language learners' realization of compliments and responses to compliments indicated that their pragmatic development was adequate overall. They also suggested the influence of the native socio-pragmatic schema on their pragmatic performance. Solodka, A., & Perea, L. (2018). In their research found out how native speakers tend to compliment people: syntactical structure of expressions, cultural lexicon, attributes praised and language context.

Kurita, H. (2024) investigated the potential differences in compliment responses between Japanese and American women who fall into Generation Z, while also considering the influence of both the gender of the person giving the compliments and the topic of the compliments. The result indicated that almost all the compliments were accepted and appreciated by American and Japanese participants, with no difference observed in macro strategies and minimal differences observed in micro strategies. Alharbi et al. (2024). investigated how Saudi females from two generations respond to compliments in an educational setting in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). They revealed that participants from both groups tended to accept compliments although there was a tendency to question the sincerity of the compliments.

Alsuhaibani, Z. (2022) investigated the effect of consciousness-raising instruction and corpus-based instruction on EFL (English as a foreign language) students' development of compliment responses. The results indicated the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction of compliment responses through consciousness-raising instruction and corpus-based instruction. Moving from instructional interventions to the practical application of compliments, Abdikarimova et al. (2024) investigated Kyrgyz learners' use of compliments in English. This study offers a practical perspective on how learners utilize compliments in real-world communication Shifting from spoken compliments to the digital realm. Ruytenbee & Vanderhasselt (2024) explored the role of evaluative language in online compliments and complaints. This study highlights the increasing importance of understanding how compliments function in online communication and their impact on readers.

Building on online communication, Derakhshan & Shakki (2024) investigated complimenting norms and patterns in both face-to-face and online contexts. This comparative approach provides a valuable framework for understanding how different communication modes influence complimenting behavior. They revealed that explicit and formulaic compliments are used more frequently than implicit and non-formulaic ones in both settings. While Derakhshan & Shakki focused on explicit compliments, Endarti, E. (2024) explored the implicit meanings embedded within compliments. This shift in focus from overt to covert communication reveals the complex interplay between politeness, face-saving, and emotional expression in complimenting. Yang, S. (2024) investigated pragmatic transfer in compliments responses by Chinese college EFL learners. The researcher found out that Chinese college EFL learners and American English NSs apply different responding strategies in compliment responses. This indicates that pragmatic transfer was hard to avoid because Chinese and Americans hold different pragmatic norms and politeness principles in their cultures.

According to the results of Duwila et al. (2024) research, the compliment types that women receive from men are in the form of evaluations or appreciations. The patriarchal system in Indonesia does not serve as a barrier for Indonesian women to

participate in politics actively. Men will appreciate and respect women who demonstrate competence and good traits. Al-Natour et al. (2025) examined the congratulation strategies written in the graduation notebooks for undergraduate students at Jerash University. They found that the students employed various congratulatory strategies, including congratulatory statements, happiness clauses, compliments, good wishes, and the ability to attach presents. Ed-deraouy Sana (2024) delved into the pragmatic competencies in interlanguage of Moroccan EFL learners, focusing on the speech acts of requests, apologies, and compliment responses. The study concluded with a call for more explicit and targeted instruction in interlanguage pragmatics within the Moroccan EFL educational setting to better prepare students for authentic interactions.

Hasan Almansoob& Munassar Awadh (2024) investigated the appropriateness of the translations of Badawi and Ramiz of the speech act of compliments of the Shakespearean play 'King Lear'. The results indicated a reasonable number of similarities between the original version of the play and the TTs. 75% of Ramzi's translations and 65% of Badawi's translations seemed identical to the original contexts in preserving the function of the speech act of compliment in the selected 20 texts. Al-Natour, M., & Banat, S. (2023) investigated the politeness strategies undergraduate students use with their professors using WhatsApp messages. They found that the undergraduate students employed different politeness strategies in communicating with their professors using WhatsApp. Moalla, A. (2013). Attempted to compare aspects of discourse and sociolinguistic competence among speakers of American English (AE) and Tunisian learners of English concerning the communicative act of compliment response (CR). The study showed that accepting was the most frequently used strategy among the American participants. The study revealed that CRs can be placed between accepting the compliment (59%) and mitigating it (36%). Migdadi et al. (2024) conducted a study on the compliments of judges to contestants on the TV talent show *Arab Idol*. They found that most judges' compliments on the show were explicit compliments based on three syntactic patterns and four types of positive semantic carriers conveying complimenting adjectives, verbs, nouns, and adverbs.

Al-Natour et al. (2024) study sought to examine the positive politeness strategies used by English professors towards their students. The results found that the professors preferred to use eight positive politeness strategies with their students. The positive politeness strategy was the most preferred because, generally, it is used to encourage the students to feel comfortable and participate in the class. It minimizes the distance between the professors and their students, making them feel closer to one another. Al-Natour et al. (2024) investigated the usage of terms of address by Jordanian students from a sociolinguistic view. This study revealed that Jordanian students desire to use the terms of address. They are keen to use them in order to soften their speech with others. Moreover, they considered that using them saved the face of the hearers.

B.   Analytical Framework

This study adopted (Chen and Yang 2010) analytical farmwork. He divided the compliment into five types in terms of acceptance, mitigation/deflection, rejection, no response, and request Interpretation. Under each one of these types, there are various strategies. All of these types and strategies are explained in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Chen and Yang (2010) Analytical framework for the compliment response strategies

NO.	Types of compliments	Strategies
1	Acceptance	Appreciation Token
		Agreement by means of a comment
		Upgrading the praise
2	Mitigation/Deflection	Account about history
		Shifting the credit
		Question
		Returning
		Downgrading
3	Rejection	Disagreeing
4	No Response	silence
5	Request Interpretation	Parden, I do not understand

As noted in the Chen and Yang (2010) Analytical framework, there are five complement response types CRs: acceptance, mitigation/deflection, rejection, no response, and request interpretation. Part of these types have more than one strategy. The first type is acceptance. It has three strategies: appreciation token, agreement by means of a comment, and upgrading the praise. An example of an appreciation token is saying '*thank you/ thanks*'. Agreement using a comment can be implemented by saying '*Yeah, I like it, too*'. '*Yeah, I can play football well too* 'are examples for upgrading the praise.

The second main type of compliment is *mitigation/deflection*. Under this category there are five strategies: account history '*bring it from USA*, shifting the credit employed by saying '*My father gave it to me*'. Question strategy indicated by saying '*You look nice, too*' and lastly Downgrading which can implemented by saying '*It's really quite old*'. The third main type of compliments is rejection. It consists of one sub-category that disagrees. An example for this strategy is '*A: You look good and healthy. B: I feel fat.*' The fifth type of the compliment is no response. It can be appeared by keeping silent without saying anything. The last main category of compliment is *request interpretation*. This category of compliments can be performed by saying, '*Parden, I do not understand*'.

All the compliment response strategies CRs that appeared in the data were categorized based on the main types and strategies mentioned in the above analytical framework. They were listed and classified to analyze them adequately.

3. Methodology

This qualitative research sought to identify the compliments response strategies employed by the students with their classmates and their professors at Jerash university. So, identifying these strategies required a detailed analysis of the utterances they utilized while communicating with each other. For this purpose, the researcher preferred to use qualitative instruments: observation and note-taking. More details about these instruments will be explained in the next sections.

3.1 Participants

The participants of this research were undergraduate students at Jerash University. All of them study in the English departments. The number of the participants was 28. The researcher continued collecting the data from the participants until he reached saturation. No new information can be collected from more participants because the information repeatedly occurred. According to Hennink, M., Hutter I., & Bailey, A. (2020) once the researcher collects more data and no new information can be collected, the researcher reaches saturation and does not need to collect more data.

3.2 Instruments

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. Two data collection instruments were employed: observation and semi-structured interviews. Observations of student interactions in lectures and office settings were conducted to identify compliment response strategies. Following the observational guidelines outlined by Musante and DeWalt (2010), researchers distinguished regular from irregular activities, investigated the rationale behind observed behaviors, identified exceptions and variations, and planned systematic observations to capture the event's entirety from multiple perspectives

Because of using a mixed method approach in this research, the researcher decided to use another instrument: an interview. Structured interview was used. Creswell & Creswell (2017) describe qualitative data as information obtained through purposefully selected informants. The researcher adopted situations from Rabab'ah (2024). After three experts in the field reviewed the ten situations adopted from Rabab'ah (2024) study, three situations were canceled because they did not benefit from achieving the objective of this study. So, they chose 7 situations from them to be used in the interview of this study. The students were asked verbally to imagine that they were in those situations. The researcher used these situations in his interviews and asked the students to explain their compliments response strategies in the contexts of those situations.

3.3 Data collection

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher utilized two instruments as explained in the instrument section. So, the first instrument was a structured interview with the students. In this interview, the researcher read the situations one by one and asked them to imagine that they were in the context of that situation. Then, they were asked to explain their responses to extract the compliment response strategies. While answering the situations, the researcher wrote his observation on the participant's reaction once they listen. The researcher prepared the situation in an organized form to collect the data from each student circumstantially. Beside each response for the situations, the researcher wrote his observation. Moreover, the researcher wrote his observations on the students while they were in his lectures and office. He observed their compliment response strategies while communicating with him or their classmates. After collecting the data, the researcher classified the compliment strategies used by the students based on the strategies proposed by Chen and Yang (2010) analytical framework. Then, each strategy that the students used was analyzed.

4. Analysis and Findings

As the data indicated, the students performed various compliment response strategies with him and their classmates. These strategies were classified based on the analytical framework adopted in this research. Then each of them analyzed in detail to elaborate on the intended goals of using them by the students. Moreover, the preferred compliment response strategies were identified. Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 explain the frequencies and percentages of students using these compliment response strategies in this study.

Table 4.1 The frequencies of compliment response strategies that were used by the students

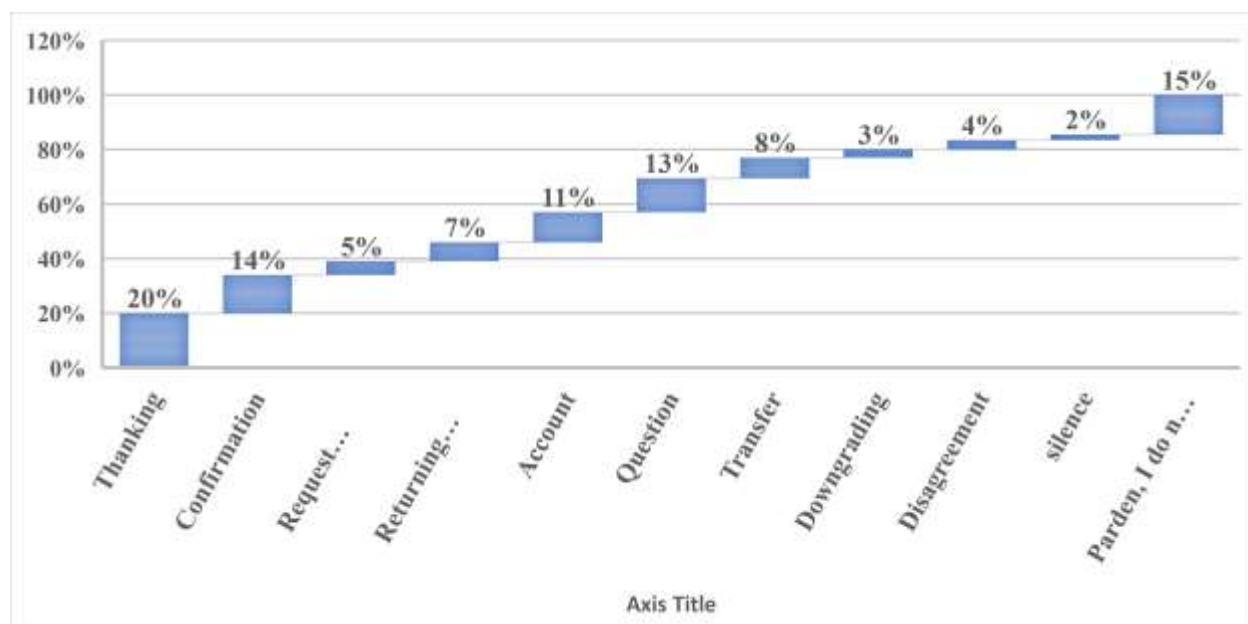| NO.	Types of Compliments responses	Compliment Response Strategies CRs	Frequencies
1	Acceptance	Thanking	37
		Confirmation	25
		Request Information	9
		Returning Compliment	13
2	Mitigation/Deflection	Account	21
		Question	23
		Transfer	14
3	Rejection	Downgrading	6
		Disagreement	7
4	No Response	silence	4
5	Request Interpretation	Parden, I do not understand	26
Total			185

Figure 4.1 The percentages of the compliment response strategies that the students used

4.1 **Acceptance**

The students utilize this type of compliments once they accept the compliments stated by the other party of the interaction. Under this type, there were four sub- strategies: *thanking, confirmation, request information, and returning compliment*. Each one of these strategies is explained in detail with examples to be analyzed.

4.1.1 Thanking

This strategy is one of the most preferred strategies that the students use. 20% of the students preferred to use it to respond to compliments. They either used this strategy in abstract form or with other utterances. The following examples show the usage of this strategy by the students:

P. 10: Sukran (Meaning: Thanks(

P17: Jazeel Al-Shokor (Meaning: Thanks a lot)

P 21: Mashkoor (Meaning: Thank you)

P26: Jazak Allahu Khairan (Meaning: May Allah reward you)

As illustrated in the above examples, Jordanian students used different forms in this compliment response strategy. Sometimes they used the abstract thanking form such as 'thanks, thank you, thanks a lot' to represent their appreciation to the person who compliment them. They used these forms once they wanted to show their positive feeling for the efforts that occurred by the other parties. Some of the compliments responses consisted of religious terms like the one mentioned in example P:26, which said 'Jazak Allahu Khairan (meaning: May Allah reward you). This response clearly represented the impact of Islamic religious principles they liked to follow in their interactions. This term was acquired from their prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him). He recommended that Muslims use this expression to show their appreciation. In this expression, they asked Allah to reward the person who made a good effort to them. They wanted to say that they could not reward the complimenter for this great compliment, therefore they asked Allah to reward him instead of them.

4.1.2 Confirmation

This strategy was used by 14% of the students. They wanted to support the utterances that were used by others. The confirmed their happiness for those utterances. Many examples showed this strategy. The following are part of them:

P. 1: Yom elahad monasib illna (Meaning: Sunday is suitable for us")

P. 15: Ktheer qwais hatha elwaqit alilna (Meaning: This time is good for us)

P.19: E3tamadnah doctor (Meaning: confirmed Doctor)

P: 25: Akeed Momtaz lainee ana eli amaltoh. (Meaning: For sure, because I did it)

P. 28: Hada elhaki elmazboot. (Meaning: This the right speech)

All the above examples showed the positive effect of the compliments. The students represented that by using polite utterances to ensure their confirmation for the other party of speech. For example, in P.1, the student wanted to safeguard the professor's disclosed the exam date. He confirmed the date of the exam by directly confirming with the professor. P.15 was reiterated by the exam date, but he confirmed the date by saying that the date was suitable for him.

In examples P.19, P25 and P.28, the complimentees were highly confirmed with the exam date. They expressed using clear and direct compliments such as, *E3tamadnah doctor* (Meaning: confirmed Doctor), Akeed *Momtaz elianee ana eli amaltoh*. (meaning: For sure, because is did it) and *Hada elhaki emazboot*. (meaning: This is the right speech). Their compliments responses enhanced their acceptance of the date that their professor appointed. They wanted to show their respect for the professor's decision regarding the date of the exams by using this strategy in their compliments. Their insistence on using this strategy was related to two reasons. Firstly, they wanted to be polite with their professor by agreeing with him on the exam date. Secondly, the date was suitable for them because they did not have any other exams on that day of the exam. In both cases, they utilized the same strategy of compliments in order to show their acceptance to their professor.

4.1.3 Request Information

This is one of the rare acceptance compliment response strategies that the students use. 5% percent of the students used it. They used this strategy once they wanted to get approval from the complimenters. Moreover, they use it once they feel happy about the complimenters' utterances. They tried to show their happiness by requesting more information about the efforts employed by the complimenters. The following examples represent the utterances of the students that formed these strategies.

P. 3: Jad (meaning: really)

P. 8: Billah Alaik (meaning: By Allah)

P. 10: Inta ma btimzah (meaning: You are not joking)

P. 14: Sah haik elmo3ed elmonasib (meaning: The date is suitable, isn't it)

In all of the examples above, the students wanted to get more information about their speeches. They requested that explicitly as in example P. 14 or implicitly as in examples P.3, P.8 and P.10. Saying 'Jad' which means 'really' by P.3 explicitly requested information from the complimenters to give more information about the deeds that the compliments needed. P.8 said 'Billah Alaik' which means literally 'By Allah' and pragmatically 'are you serious'. Other meanings represented that the students requested more validations about their responses. This guided to know that they requested improvement from the complimenters. P. 10 used another form in his compliment. He said he was surprised and wanted to ensure his complimenter was not joking. These forms are used once the students want to be sure that what they did was acceptable to the other party of the interaction. They made sure about that by requesting more information from the complimenters.

4.1.4 Returning Compliment

In this strategy, the students returned the compliments to the complimenters. They wanted to show their acceptance in a respectful utterance. 7% percent of the students utilized this strategy. The students used this strategy in their speeches as a kind of respect to the complimenters. The following examples elaborate on the usages of this strategy:

P.1: Min zogak elra2e3. (This comes from your fabulous view)

P.4: hatha min teeb aslak. (This is because of your extraordinary descent)

P. 11: 3eonak elheloeen. (This comes from your beautiful eyes)

P. 18: Inta elahla. (This is because of your beauty)

The examples represented that the students wanted to appreciate the complimenters by returning their compliments to them. They accepted their compliments and returned it to them using a very polite form in reaction. In example P.1, the complimenter complimented on him and the complimentee returned his compliment by ensuring he had the same thing by saying 'Min zogak elra2e3. (This comes from your fabulous view)'. Example P.4 represented a cultural aspect in his utterances once he returned the compliment by saying 'hatha min teeb aslak. (This is because of your extraordinary descent)'. This kind of complement is preferable among Jordanians because it is a compliment that is related to the complimenters and their families. The complement is not returned to the complimenters alone but also to their tribes and roots. P.11 example is one of the politest returning compliments strategies. Describing the beauty of the eyes is common among Arabic societies in general and Jordanian society in particular. Even the poets once they wanted to describe the beauty of the girls, they always described their eyes. So, this complement is considered one of the politest compliments for males and females in the context of interaction in various settings. It is not common to be used between males and females who have no strong relationship. So, returning this compliment by the complimentees was accepted by the complimenters. P. 18 also used another polite utterance to return the compliment to the complimenter by saying 'Inta elahla. (This is because of your beauty)'. So, he returned the same compliment in different form.

4.2 Mitigation/Deflection

The students performed this type of compliment strategy once they did not know if they wanted to accept or evade the compliments. They sometimes tried to be in the neutral zone in their reactions. This type of compliment strategy occurred mostly between male and female's interactions. The reason for occurring like this strategy is related to the cultural perspectives of Jordanians when the males and females communicate. So, it was used frequently by the females once they wanted to reply ambiguously to the addressers' complements. The students used three compliment response strategies for this type: account, question, *and transfer*. Each one of them will be explained with examples.

4.2.1 Account

P.5: Benshoof in sha Allah. (meaning: Hope Allah willing, we'll see)

P.13: Taib khair. (meaning: Okay, good)

P.16: Wakilha la Allah. (Leave it to Allah)

P.23: In sha Allah. (Hope Allah willing)

11% of the students used this strategy in their responses to the compliments. In this strategy, the students indicated in their responses that they did not give a clear agreement on the compliments. They give general replies to respect the complimenters.

They want to show their solidarity in a respected form. They do not want to accept or reject the compliment. They tried to save the face of the complimenters. In example, P.5, they used a religious expression which have dual meanings. In example P.5, he used 'Benshoof <u>in sha Allah</u>'. (meaning: Hope Allah willing, we'll see) This expression was integrated with another dual word, ' Benshoof,' which meant 'we'll see,' leaving two possibilities for the complimenters who were accepting their compliments or avoiding direct reactions to them. It was a polite way to avoid the direct rejection. Females preferred to use like this expression to close the interaction or to give a hint to the addresses to avoid talking to them. P.13 used another indirect rejection of the compliments by saying 'Taib khair. (meaning: Okay, good)'. This response indicated they wanted to stop talking and leave the addresses. 'Wakilha la Allah. (Leave it to Allah)' was used by P.16. This strategy indicates that they did not accept or reject the compliments because they asked the addresser to leave the decision to Allah. P.23 used almost the same form of the strategy as P.5 by saying 'In sha Allah. (Hope Allah willing)'. This is a common response that males and females used in their responses to avoid replying directly on the addresser's compliments. Using this strategy as illustrated in the above examples, demonstrated the concepts of politeness by the Jordanians even if they did not like the compliments, they preferred to be in the neutral zone to save their faces.

4.2.2 Question

This is another response strategy the students used to avoid accepting or rejecting compliments, and 13 % of the students used it. Using this strategy helps the complimentees positively to escape from responding to the compliments. Examples of this strategy were exhibited by the students in their responses such as,

P. 27: 'Hasa fhimit alay'. (Now you understand me?)

P. 22: Laish inta ma khabarook? (Why? Do you mean that they did not tell you?)

P. 26: Sho ea 7eloo? (what is up honey?)

These examples explain why the students used this strategy to indicate their polite reaction to the compliments they received from the complimenters. They preferred to be indirect in their question to leave the chance for the complimenters to give more explanations, but they avoided accepting or rejecting the compliment. Example P. 27, 'Hasa fhimit alay'. (You understand me now?) indicated that the complimentee looking for information from the complimenter. Example P. 22, Laish inta ma khabarook? (Why? Do you mean that they do not tell you?) Similarly, the complimenter requested more information, which required more information from the addresser. P. 26 expressed a polite reaction to his question by saying 'Sho ea 7eloo? (what is up honey?)'. He used the word 'honey' to be kind to the addresser. Using these question forms in this strategy helped the complimentees evade replying directly to the complimenters by leaving the decision to them. The flow of the interaction between the interactants identifies the decision of the complimenters. So, understanding the acceptance or the rejection is decided based on the social factors that affect the interaction between the complimentees and complementers.

4.2.3 Transfer

8 % of the students used this strategy. Using this strategy by, the students represented that they transferred the compliment to another person. In this strategy, the responses of the complimentees are redirected to a third person who did something good for them. The following examples represent the strategies used by Jordanian students.

P. 16: Malee7 illi gal lal doctor. (Meaning: It is good that he told the professor)

P.7: Wallah inha momtazih eli jawabat 3ala so'al el doctor. (Meaning: She was excellent once she answered the question for the professor)

P.8: Alhamdolilah elei najahni fe elimte7an. (Meaning: Praise to Allah who helped me to pass in the exam)

As noted in the examples above, all the students exchanged compliments to a third party. In example, P.16, he transferred the compliment to the student who told the professor about their problem. In example P.7, a female student appreciated her classmate for responding to the professor's question. For example, in P.8, the student transferred his compliment to Allah because Allah had helped him pass the exam. So, this strategy clearly demonstrated their compliments to another party who was not talking to them directly. They tried to show appreciation for that party by giving a clear compliment to them. The student employs a polite strategy to appreciate an absent party who was not with them while interacting.

4.3 Rejection

Part of the responses of the students represented their rejections for the compliments. The showed their rejection in various strategies. In this study, the students used two compliment response strategies for rejection: *downgrading and disagreement*. More elaboration on the usage of these strategies is explained in the following sections.

4.3.1   Downgrading

The complimentees use this strategy once they want to represent modesty or decrease the level of the compliments. The lowest percentage out of all strategies was for this strategy. 3% of the students used this strategy in this study. They preferred to use this strategy to show their respect to the complimenters by using an utterance that minimized the efforts that they made for them. This strategy was one of the common strategies the students used and the following examples represent their occurrence.

 P.21: A: Shukran ink sa3ditni fe elmo7adarah. B: Wlal ehemak ma 3milt shee. (Meaning: A: Thanks for helping me in the lecture. B: Do not worry, I did not do anything.)

P.24: A: Shukran Yousif inak sa3ditna wkalamit eldoctor. B: Ma fe she min elwajeb. (A: Thanks, Yousif for helping us by talking to the professor. B: It is less than my deserve.)

P.27: A: Asfeen galabit Halak btasweer lkitab elna. B: Bekol soror. Ma fe she min elgalabih. (A: Sorry, we disturbed you. You have made a textbook copy for us. B: It is my pleasure. There were no worries.)

In example P.21, the students decreased the level of the compliment by claiming that he did nothing. He wanted to show that his efforts were very simple to show his pleasure in helping his classmates. In example P.24, The student responded that helping his classmates is one of his responsibilities. He downgraded his efforts by explaining that he did something less than simple for them. The last example which is P.27 indicated that the students were so happy and decreased the force of the complimenters' compliment by saying that there were no worries. He told them that they did not disturb him. As the examples represented, the students formulated different utterances while implementing the downgrading strategy. The used this strategy to save the addresses' faces. The wanted to reply politely to make them happy and avoid reiteration in future interactions.

4.3.2 Disagreement

The students used this strategy indirectly to respond to the complimenters' complements. They student rejected the compliments by disagreeing with the complimenters. 4% percent of the students used this strategy out of the rest percentages of other strategies. The following examples represent the usage of this strategy by Jordanian students.

P. 11: A: Ea salaam ma ajmal jaketek. B: A3takid inha khamka ktheer. (Meaning: Oh, your jacket is nice. B: I think it is so dark.).

P.7: Sho halalaamih elmomtazih. B: Wallah konit metwage3 akthar. (Meaning: What an excellent mark you got. B: Actually, I thought I will get more than this mark.)

P.9: A: Nahfaan ea mohammad. B: Jad, hass hali bedi kman shwae. (A: You are being fit Mohammad.) B: Really, I think I need to lose more weight)

The rejection of the compliments in the above examples was very clear. The student's rejection was kind and polite because they represented their rejection using kind utterances that represented their opinions. Example P. 11, rejected the complimenter's compliment by saying that her jacket is dark "I think it is so dark". So, it is clearly that she rejected her classmate's compliment indirectly. In example P.7, the student indicated in his response that he was not convinced with the complimenter's complement because the student expected that he expected to get a higher mark in the exam. So, although he had a sad situation, he did not attack the face of the complimenter. He expressed his opinion politely by rejecting the compliment in that form. P.9 also rejected the compliment by replying to the complimenter contrastively. He did not agree with his classmate and rejected his compliment. He thought he needed to lose weight to be fit, as his classmate had claimed. To conclude, the rejection strategy was used indirectly by the students because they felt that their classmates were polite to them while they were complimenting them. They rejected their compliment by expressing their opinions to let their classmates understand their views on the subjects they discussed.

4.4 No Response

Under this strategy, there was just one strategy which was silence. This strategy was used rarely by the students in their interactions. 2% percent of the students utilized this strategy in their responses. The researcher explained the silence strategy with examples to represent the usage of the students for it clearly.

4.4.1 Silance

2% of the students who used this strategy in their interactions. The response to the complimenters compliments was by being silent without any reaction. Most of the users of this strategy were females. The reason was related to the cultural practices preventing females from communicating with male students even if they are studying with them at the university. The following examples represent this strategy:

P.16: A: Ktheer inti jamilah eleiom. B: (Sukot). A: You are so pretty today. B: (Silent)

P. 20: A: Tro7ee ma3ana 3ala eldoctor. B: (Sokot). A: Would you like to go with use to the professor. B: (Silent).

The above examples elaborated on the students' usage of the silence strategy. The did not respond to the complimenters' compliments. The preferred to avoid talking to them by being silent. This silence strategy sometimes understood positively and sometimes negatively. Once the relationship between the interactants were strong, it could be understood negatively. So, once females who did not have strong relationship with males, the complimenters understood their silence positively. Context analysis is vital in this case to be able to understand if the complimenters positively or negatively comprehended the silence strategy.

4.5 Request Interpretation

The request interpretation strategy was one of the Jordanian students' rejection strategies. 15% percent of the students used this strategy in their responses once they understood the complimenter's compliment as a request. Therefore, they used this strategy to reply on that compliment, as illustrated in the following examples:

P.13: Etha bidak elmolahadat khothha. (Meaning: If you want to take the notes, take them)

P.16: Ma ba3rif anak. Arooh ma3a etha bedak. (Meaning: I do not know! Shall I go with you.)

P.18: Bideak liktab khothoh. (Would you like to take the book. Take it)

As shown in the above examples, the students used request interpretation complements in their responses once they interpreted the complimenter's compliments as a request. They responded to those compliments as they got a request from them. Example P.13 understood his classmate once he was talking about the notes he requested. So, the students replied by asking whether he was requesting to get the note. In this example, the student needed more information from the complimenter because he did not understand if the complimenter was requesting or just explaining his opinion. In example P.16, the student was direct and very clear with the complimenter once he said 'I do not know' which meant that the compliment was not clear. Then he requested an interpretation for the students compliments once he told him 'Shall I go with you.'. This interpretation request sheds light on misunderstanding the compolementer's compliment. The last example manifested the need to interpret the compliments once the students directly requested the complimenter to explain if he wanted the book. These examples clearly represented the usage of the request interpretation strategy that the Jordanian students used while interacting with their classmates.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the compliments response strategies used by Jordanian students at Jerash University. A mixed method was used in the form of observation and structured interviews. 28 students who were studying in the English departments of Jerash University participated in this study. The results showed that the student used various complements such as acceptance, mitigation/deflection and rejection. Under each one of these types, there were strategies. These strategies were analyzed with examples. It was clear that religion, culture, and context played a crucial role in the forms of compliments response strategies that the students produced. Moreover, relationships and gender changed the forms of their compliment response strategies. Future research can investigate the impact of religion on the utterances of the compliments that Jordanian students produce in an academic setting. This recommendation for future research can be linked with the results of this research to highlight the reasons for using some religious terms in their compliments.

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