The Use of Compliments in English by Kyrgyz Learners

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Abstract: People always deal with a certain speech act concerning on the purpose and reasons of communicating. Here when we are concentrated on speech acts, there is a need to have knowledge of different language means from phonemes to the whole text. Within different types of speech acts there is an issue of giving compliments to another one and at the same time responding to this or that compliment which takes one of the most crucial discussions and investigations throughout different languages considering their cultural backgrounds as well. These pre-study observations cause the relevance of this research. Therefore, the main aim of the article is to identify the ways and roles of using compliments in EFL classroom in Kyrgyzstan. The study reveals the fact that complimenting lessons sound more natural and live during different learning sessions and circumstances. The results of the study may be helpful and beneficial for English language instructors and learners as obtaining pragmatic ability and getting ready for further cross-cultural communication stages.

Key words: Compliments, Speech act, Pragmatics, EFL Classroom

Introduction

Nowadays, English is considered the main language of correspondence in global relations. Although English is taught in schools and colleges in Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz speakers are not well prepared to communicate properly in English. Numerous studies have highlighted the need for proper learning of English by Kyrgyz students in educational institutions of Kyrgyzstan. Research shows that teachers' attitudes influence classroom climate and student achievement.

When communicating between each other people deal with pragmatic competence in socio-cultural perspective. Pragmatics investigates the relationship between contexts and conversational conventions that speakers follow in order to cooperate and be socially acceptable to each other (Cutting, 2002). Pragmatic competence is defined as the ability to communicate effectively and involves linguistic knowledge beyond grammar (Thomas, 1983). There is variability across cultures regarding linguistic and social behavior. This is evident in the way a person uses speech acts such as apologizing, requesting effusing, thanking and complimenting. The linguistic and social

variability depends on linguistic, social, and cultural conventions. However, if the underlying linguistic and social norms differ, cross-cultural misunderstanding or miscommunication can occur.

The ability of learners to use speech acts in socially appropriate ways is part of a speaker's knowledge of the target language (Kasper, 1989). Holmes states that a compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some "good" possession, characteristics, skill, etc., which is valued by the speaker and the hearer (Holmes, 1986).

E.g.: - *You did a good job! – You really handled that situation well! – Nice game! – You have such beautiful hair!*

Different cultures have their own system in giving compliments, not only the formulation utilized but also their frequency of occurrence, the context where they were expected to be appropriate, the responses from the addressee, how the utterance is recognized as a compliment and the function of the speech act performed (Garcia, 2018).

Responding to Compliments Samples

1. A: That's a nice shirt you are wearing!
B: *Well, I just got it. It was pretty cheap.*
2. A: You did an excellent job yesterday, Jim! I really enjoyed your presentation.
B*: Do you really think so?*
A: Oh, yeah, it was fabulous!
3. A: I love your clock. It looks great in your living room!
B: *Thanks. A friend of mine brought it to me from Oregon.*
4. A: You're looking well!
B: *Thanks. So you are!*

In general, compliments are presented as positive politeness strategies, because they indicate that the complimenter notice or attends to the addressee's face desires. The formula of compliments was found and it gives learners the possibility to enhance and use them according to the following nine syntactic formulas:

1. NP is/ looks (really) ADJ – Your hair looks fantastic!
2. I (really) like/ love NP – I really like your hair!
3. PRO is (really) a ADJ NP – This was really a great dinner!
4. You V a really ADJ NP – You have a wonderful idea!
5. You V (NP) really ADV – You really handled that situation well!
6. You have a really ADJ NP – You have such beautiful hair!
7. What a ADJ NP – What a lovely baby you have!
8. ADJ NP – Nice game!
9. Isn't NP ADJ – Isn't your bag beautiful! (Wolfson and Manes, 1980)

Methodology

The Observatory of Student Life regularly publishes data reported in the media who report psychosocial aspects of student life. It showed how students are gradually gaining autonomy vis-à-vis their family friendly environment and adopt a new lifestyle and a new network of relationships. Here are probably many reasons and perhaps, admittedly, a kind of wisdom in skepticism and resistance from teachers to fully chambered their ways and adopt, without resistance, approaches educational fashion. These deviate indeed much of the classical education model, which comes significantly change the role of teachers, their knowledge, their skills and attitudes. If we address the educational problems in another way rather than seeking to implement at all costs-called educational models as "ideal", like little or not at all applied by the vast majority of teachers, we can try the most effective practices not simply to identify, from research undertaken in regular classrooms. Our intention is not to examine the most innovative approaches that only a minority of teachers favor but rather to identify what works well in those which are the lot of the vast majority of them. Data analysis was done by quantitative research method even the nature of data collected was qualitative, so quantitative research design was used for the present research study.

This study involved 32 third-year students of English Philology Department of Osh State University in academic year 2023-2024. The participants were asked to fill the written task from Google Form online testing system. The aim of the method was to analyze the English compliment responds of Kyrgyz speakers and highlight the possible differences or similarities of the compliment and respond occurrence between English and Kyrgyz cultures. Participants were expected to read the written situation in each item and complete the blank with their own responses.

Results and Discussion

Items Containing English Compliment Situations and Responses

There were conducted 4 situational items.

Item 1

Situation: Your invited friend compliments your cooking after dinner. He says: "Your food is so delicious. You're a fantastic cook!"
Your response ………………………………….
The participants' response examples included the following answers:
Acceptance: "Yeah, I know. Thanks."
Positive Elaboration: "Thanks. I can give you the recipe if you like."
Neutral Elaboration: "Really?"
Negative Elaboration: Thanks, but I didn't do much, anyone could do it."
Denial: no occurred.

Item 2

Situation: You had project work presentation. Your report was complimented by one of the members of your company. He says: "Your report was very thorough. Great job you did!"
Your response ……………………
Acceptance: "Thanks for noticing it."
Positive Elaboration: "Thank you! I'm glad you found it informative and engaging."
Neutral Elaboration: "Thanks. I wanted to make sure we covered all aspects."
Negative Elaboration: "I appreciate your words. I couldn't have done it without the support of our team."
Denial: no occurred.

Item 3

Situation: You have started a new job. Your new colleague says: "You adapted to the changes so well."
Your response ………………………………….
Acceptance: "Yeah, I know. Thanks."
Positive Elaboration: "Thanks. Being adaptable and flexible is crucial in our fast-paced environment."
Neutral Elaboration: "Do you think so?"
Negative Elaboration: Thanks, but it's the same that I handled in my previous job."
Denial: no occurred.

Item 4

Situation: In a party of your friend you have new acquaintances. They say: "You're a great communicator!"
Your response ………………………………….
Acceptance: "I really appreciate your words."
Positive Elaboration: "Thank you so much! Clear communication is something I really strive for. You are the best communicator too!"
Neutral Elaboration: "I'm glad to meet your expectations."
Negative Elaboration: Thanks, but I'm the ordinary-skilled communicator."
Denial: no occurred.

Results of this study indicate pragmatic transfer from Kyrgyz into English because there was no significant difference between the compliment responses given in English. But the variability of compliment responding means which are obviously used by native English speakers was not used properly by Kyrgyz learners. The compliment responses were analyzed by categorizing them into followings:

- Acceptance
- Positive Elaboration
- Neutral Elaboration
- Negative Elaboration
- Denial

The means and Standard Deviations (SD) for the five categories can be seen in Table 1. In Table 1 Acceptance is the category with the highest SD, Positive Elaboration is the second highest category, whereas Neutral elaboration is the medium degree category. Negative Elaboration is the lowest category, and category of Denial responses has not occurred.

Table 1. Frequencies of items' categories

Item	Acceptance	Positive Elaboration	Neutral Elaboration	Negative Elaboration	Denial
1-item	16	12	2	2	0
2-item	8	14	4	6	0
3-item	11	15	5	1	0
4-item	18	6	6	2	0
All responses	53	47	17	11	0

The data in Table 1 suggests that the Kyrgyz learners accept the compliment with positive elaboration more frequently, and neutral elaboration has also a significant place in complimenting pragmatics. But with comparison between previous research works on compliment responses by the other native and non-native English speakers in Kyrgyz culture the responses on denial category were not occurred as it shows 0 SD.

Conclusion

Since the group of Kyrgyz informants were students as a second language at the Osh State University, their proficiency might have been above the national average, and consequently this group may not be representative of the Kyrgyz population as a whole. However, this does not imply that the informants had a higher level of pragmatic competence, and it is assumed that pragmatic transfer most probably has occurred.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

Acknowledgements or Notes

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