
Implicit Compliments in the Performance of Iraqi Arabic Speakers**Keywords: Pragmatics compliments implicit complimenting****Dr. Mazin Jasim Al-Hilu****Wasit University / Iraq****College of Arts****malhilu@uowasit.edu.iq****Abstract**

The current research study tackles the speech act of implicit complimenting from a pragmatic perspective among Iraqi Arabic native speakers. The choice of this topic for detailed investigation is ascribed to the fact that it has not received due attention as far as Iraqi Arabic is concerned. Being an expressive speech act, like request, apology, etc. implicit complimenting is commonly used in everyday discourse since interlocutors usually pay and receive compliments in their daily interaction. The current study comprises two parts: A theoretical framework which unveils definitions of compliments, types, salient features of compliments, in addition to their syntactic and pragmatic structures. The second part constitutes the practical part of the topic which is in the form of tape – recorded conversations conducted with students of the third and fourth grades at the Arabic Department / Wasit University/ Iraq. These students have been chosen since they are supposed to be more proficient than other grades in the use of language functions. Results have shown that Iraqi students still need much more pragmatic instruction concerning the speech act of implicit complimenting to be able to use it properly and efficiently in their everyday communication. The study has also found that implicit compliments seldom take place in conversations

Part One: Theoretical Background**1.1 Introduction**

Being an essential part of communication, compliments vary from language to language (Chen, 1993). It takes a combination of verbal and pragmatic skills to deliver praises well, which is why some English speakers may misinterpret the language feature by which Arabic speakers insult one another by way of flattery. However It's possible that a lack of familiarity with local customs is to blame for these sorts of mistakes are the ties that hold them together. According to Al-Falasi (2003, citing Rizk, (2003). This paper addresses this issue, arguing that the cause of such misunderstandings is "the influence of learners' pragmatic knowledge of language and culture other than the target language on their

interpretation, production, and acquisition of L2 pragmatic information." According to Goffman (1967), compliments are primarily intended to sustain, enhance, or support the addressee's face. He adds further that one of the purposes of compliments is to communicate respect or approbation of a person's work, looks, or taste. Maintaining social harmony and generating unity between the speaker and hearer are further grounds for complementing or giving credit to someone other than the speaker (Holmes, 1986, cited in Othman) (2011). Van Dijk (1998:383, quoted in Batayna, 2013) suggests that pragmatics focus on discourse-specific speech acts, and limiting analysis to single examples as "speech acts normally do not arrive alone, but appear as operational parts in sequential patterns that make sense both locally and generally.

1.2 Compliments: Definitions

Being one of the performative speech acts, a compliment is used by language users in their daily interactions. Because of the favourable influence it has on the person being complimented, it serves as a significant social function in most languages and cultures. There is a widespread belief that this illocutionary behaviour is shared by people everywhere because it is not tied to any one language or culture. Generally speaking, a compliment can be defined as a positive statement or action that shows appreciation for another person or object. However, a compliment is linked to culture being a mirror that reflects cultural values (Manes 1983, P. 83). However, Olshtain and Cohen (1991) claim that compliments "keep the social wheel turning," echoing similar sentiments expressed by Holmes (1986b: 485), who emphasizes the beneficial social features of compliments by emphasizing their power to develop and maintain solidarity among interlocutors. Holmes (1986, P.485) defines a compliment as a "speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually addressed for some good (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) that is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer. In the same vein, Wolfson (1983, P. 88) defines a compliment as a speech act that, in addition to having its own status and function, can reinforce or even replace other speech act formulas like apologies, thanks, and greetings, and can lessen the force of face-threatening acts like criticism, reproaches, and directives of various types. Other scholars define a compliment as a vehicle for stating the hearers' approval for something and as direct or implicit utterances praising the recipient's physical attributes, accomplishments, personality, or material goods, as well as those of people who are intimately connected to the addressees (Searle and Vanderveken (1985, P. 215; Jawarski,1995, P. 64). To sum up, a

compliment is a speech act, whether explicit or implicit is employed to express positive evaluation of the complimentee for some good attributes.

1.3 Research Questions

The current research tries to find answers for the following questions:

1. Do Iraqi Arabic speakers have adequate knowledge about implicit compliments?
2. What the most recurrent syntactic patterns used to express implicit compliments?
3. Is there any significant differences in using implicit compliments on the variable of gender?

1.4 Explicit vs. Implicit

The definitions aforementioned have indicated that compliments could be either explicit or implicit. To illustrate the distinction between these two terms, Boyle (2000, P.18) states that compliments are "recognized as compliments outside of context, being realized by a small number of standard formulae," making them what we call "explicit." Putting aside context-dependent difficulties like irony or sarcasm, the following expressions can be understood as compliments by any average speaker:

a. *What a nice shirt you are wearing!*

b. *I really like your watch.*

Implicit compliments, however, are those in which the value judgment is presupposed by Gricean maxims" are said to be implicit (Boyle 2000:28). They require the hearer to infer the matching implicature, unlike explicit compliments which have a "fixed" linguistic form. The following are a few examples of implicit complimenting in English, as provided by Boyle (2000:28).

c. *I wish could speak French fluently like you.*

d. *Your child is a very lucky one!*

1.5 Topics of Compliments

Complimenting, when not done dishonestly, is a form of communication in which the speaker attributes positive qualities to the listener. This appears to provide up a wide range of options for compliments to be made. According to Herbert (1997: 497, emphasis added), "Compliment events provide interesting information on sociocultural values and organization," and "the topics of compliments reflect the ideals which are positively considered inside certain particular community". The definitions mentioned above in (1.2) exhibits some topics, such as personality traits, appearance, possession, etc.

1.6 Syntactic Patterns

Manes and Wolfson's (1981) ground-breaking explication of the key regularly repeating grammatical patterns of speech acts is widely acknowledged by the academic community as the definitive work on the topic of complimenting behavior. Many following research have relied extensively on the model given in the aforementioned study for describing compliments in American English (henceforth AE). According to Manes and Wolfson (1981), a corpus of 686 compliments was researched and analyzed. The people they studied belonged to

the middle class in the United States and ranged in age from 18 to 60 and were of both sexes. Their research demonstrated that praises follow predictable syntactic and semantic patterns. That is to say, there exists a small subset of such patterns that are typically employed while delivering a complement. Thus, we can deduce that compliments are quite formulaic phrases that their targets (the complimentees) readily understand.

Many linguists have pointed out the most recurrent salient structures (patterns) used by interlocutors when express compliments (Wray, 2002; Wray and Perkins, 2000; Cruz, 2002; Ylänee-McEwen. 1993. These patterns can be summarized as follows:

1. Noun phrase + is / looks (really) + Adjective
You are really amazing!
2. I (really) + like / love + Noun phrase
I like your neck-tie!
3. Pronoun (really) (a) Adjective + Noun phrase
They are really excellent players!
4. You + Verb + (a) + Adjective + Noun phrase
You sent a great message.
5. You + Have (really) (a) + Adjective + Noun phrase
You have really a wonderful watch.
6. What (a) + Adjective + Noun phrase
What a nice performance!
7. Adjective + Noun phrase
Good-job!

The aforementioned patterns are used explicitly when expressing compliments. However, some are expressed implicitly. Boyle (2000) identified two commonly used patterns used in everyday life communication: the first type in which the speaker acknowledges a hearer's achievement, whereas the second constitutes a comparison between a hearer and someone else. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that implicit compliments have not been given due attention except by very few linguists from a pragmatic point of view (Batayneh, 2013).

1.7 Uses of Compliments

According to Manes and Wolfson (1981) quoted in (Al-Jamal, 2017:13), complements serve multiple purposes, may be more than any other speech act. Research on the speech act of complimenting has shown that it is most often employed to reiterate a favorable assessment (See also Manes and Wolfson (1981); Homes (1986), and Cohen (1991). to boost people up and encourage them regularly. This use of compliment can be shown vividly when a teacher praises his students for their good performance trying to foster a positive classroom environment or when an officer encourages his soldiers for their hard work. Holmes (1986; 1988) suggests that compliments have various purposes, such as expressing thankfulness, as in the following line spoken by a dinner party visitor to her host: "The meal was delicious!" According to Herbert's (1990) examination of over a thousand American compliments, the functions of

compliments including praise and encouragement. Because these roles occasionally overlap, it may be difficult to make a clear distinction between them. For instance, the complimentary line, "Your baby is very clean," implicitly praises the baby for being neat while overtly praising the parents for raising such a well-behaved baby.

Scholars and researchers who have studied the complimenting speech act (see Herbert, 1990; Jaowrski, 1995; Chen, 1993; have shown that the primary purpose of a compliment is to build and strengthen rapport and solidarity between the interactants. (See also, Holmes (1986); Manes (1981); Wolfson (1983). Thus, Wolfson (1983) characterizes compliments as "social lubricants" that help keep conversations going smoothly by evaluating certain topics (skills, personal traits, appearance, etc.) favorably, thereby fostering a sense of solidarity and rapport between the interlocutors.

Section Two: Practical part

2.1 Participants and Instrument

The current section is dedicated to research methodology followed throughout the study. First an overview about participants in the audio-taped conversations is given and the rationale for adopting these data collection method is given. The participants in this research study constitute both third and fourth grade students, studying at department of Arabic, College of Education for Human Sciences / Wasit University. The total number of population involved in the current study is (40) students: (20) males and (20) females, randomly chosen. The main variable in this study is gender. The reason behind this selection of this sample lies in that these students are supposed to be more proficient in and aware of language functions / uses, the speech act of implicit complimenting is one of them which are used in their everyday interaction.

Quantitative information was gathered through face to face conversations since it provides the natural data by evoking the same discourse context and can describe actual language use (see Golato, 2003). Conversations recorded on tape, allows the researcher to take into account all aspects of the exchange (such as pauses for laughter or silence) when drawing conclusions. The recording device used in recording conversations is the researcher's own mobile Black Shark. Then, these conversations are transcribed by the researcher himself to be remembered well for analysis.

2.2 Results and discussion

There are various subheadings for implicit compliments based on the distinct categories in which they are encountered. The speech act in question is related to two broad groups, namely formulaic and non-formulaic, and each type is subdivided into numerous subcategories. A careful examination of the answers given by the participants in the current study has revealed that the majority of answers tend to follow certain formulaic (fixed) syntactic patterns. Let's have a look at the following example taken from the tape-recorded conversations"

1. Background information: *A woman comes carrying her well-dressed daughter.*

S1: shlown libis yijannin!

'What a nice dressing!'

In the above quoted example, the participant / speaker although he admires / compliments the little girl's dressing, yet, he indirectly compliments the mother for choosing such a very nice-looking clothes. On expressing such an implicit compliment, the speaker does not resort to a fixed syntactic pattern (formulaic); rather, s / he tends to employ expressions according to their context, which are employed as implicit praises. and it is asserted that they serve distinct purposes: resolving the verbalization issue and preventing possible issues. Since the age group for participants is almost the same (20 -21) years. Thus, it has been noted no significant difference as far as gender is concerned.

2. *Your neighbor has a son who is very helpful.*

S1. MashaAlla ʔla hal tarbiya

'God bless your son for being good-bred'

Again, in this example, the addressor praises the good qualities of the boy, but implicitly compliments his family for implanting good attributes in them. So, the implied deduction is that ' you did a great job by bringing up that good-natured boy'. Other examples taken from other imaginary situations have resulted in nearly similar answers as follows:

Out of (40) answers, (21) ones used non-formulaic patterns in expressing implicit compliments using the expression, ' Shlown +NP+ VP', constituting a percentage of

(52.5 %); whereas. the second expression which scored the highest frequency of occurrence, (16) (with the percentage of (40%) is the fixed religious expression:

Allahuma Salli Ala Mohammed wa ala ali Mohammed

'Allah blessings and peace be upon His messenger and his progeny'

This phrase is usually said when someone is shown a newly born baby or a fancy car, etc. The aforementioned phrase is also used extensively to give an impression that the speaker is stating envy. The third expression used to express implicit compliment is via comparing the addressee with a famous figure, as in the following example:

You come across a very talented person:

mashaAllah! Inta tushtugul wia Adel Imam?

'God bless you. Are you working with Adel Imam?'

In the last example, the addressee is compared to a famous figure, Adel Imam, who is a very famous actor. The third most recurrent expression in the data is somehow a formulaic expression, that is, You + have + V + (a) Adj + NP, with a score of (3) cases, with a percentage of (7.5 %). It is noteworthy, in this regard, that the variable of gender has no effect on the performance of the participants while responding to the situations.

As far as the research questions raised at the beginning of the current study, the first question which reads ' *Do Iraqi Arabic speakers have adequate knowledge about implicit co*

compliments?', it has been observed that most Iraqi Arabic speakers lack the adequate knowledge concerning the speech act of implicit complimenting; that is why the patterns used are not varied. The second question, however, which reads 'What the most recurrent syntactic patterns used to express implicit compliments?' it has been found that the highest frequency of occurrence is non-formulaic expression, followed by a religious expression usually said hinting that the addressor does not mean to envy the addressee. However, the lowest percentage of expressions used in expressing implicit compliments is a formulaic one, i.e., 'You + have + (a) + Adj + NP. The last research question which reads. 'Is there any significant differences in using implicit compliments on the variable of gender?. Results have shown that this variable (gender) has no effect on the performance of participants since both genders have no social distance and power between interactants in addition that these respondents are of the same age group.

2.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusion(s) have been proposed: Firstly, the implicit complimenting, as a speech act, does not follow the rules of explicit complimenting in that it does not have the same syntactic patterns; secondly, Iraqi Arabic speakers need adequate knowledge concerning the manner of expressing them using suitable and varied pragmatic constructions; thirdly, on the level of social variables, both age, gender, and social distance have no effect on the performance of participants since they belong to the same age group. Finally, implicit complimenting is used to convey more than one function depending on the context in which such compliments occur. The current research study recommends increasing the pragmatic instruction in the Iraqi Arabic classroom

الإطراءات الضمنية في أداء الناطقين بالعربية العراقية

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية، أسلوب الإطراء، أسلوب الإطراء الضمني

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الملخص

تتناول الدراسة الحالية فعل الكلام ، الإطراء غير المباشر بصورة تداولية ، بوصفه أحد أفعال الكلام التعبيرية التي تستعمل على نطاق واسع في الحياة اليومية. تتضمن الدراسة جانبين : نظري يسلط الضوء على مفهوم التداولية وأسلوب الإطراء : تعريفاته وأنواعه وخصائصه ، فضلا عن السمات النحوية والتداولية له . أما الجانب العملي فإنه يتضمن مهارة اكمال الخطاب حيث تم اعطاء طلبة المرحلتين الثالثة والرابعة في قسم اللغة العربية في جامعتي واسط وديالى واجب يتمثل بمواقف حياتية تضم حالات من الإطراء

الضمني حيث طلب منهم استعمال الصيغة المناسبة لكل موقف . أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الطلبة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الانكليزية لايزالون بحاجة الى المزيد من التدريب التداولي ليتمكنوا من استعمال فعل الكلام ، الإطراء الضمني بصورة صحيحة وفاعلة ، فضلا عن ندرة استعمال أسلوب الإطراء الضمني في المحادثات اليومية .

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