
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Navigating Compliment Responses among Jordanian and Omani Students: A Conceptual Study

Mouad Mohammed Al-Natour

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan

Wuroud Hosni Ateeq

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan

Abdul Raheem Al Jaraedah

Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan

Faisal Lafee Alobeytha

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan

Abdallah Mohammed Mufadi Alharahsheh

Department of Translation, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan

Zainab Yousef Musa

Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan

Zakaryia Almahasees

Translation Department, Faculty of Arts, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan

Haitham M.K AlYousef

Department of Translation, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan

Corresponding Author: Mouad Mohammed Al-Natour, **E-mail:** msgmouad@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

Compliment is one of the linguistic aspects used by Jordanian and Omani speakers. Therefore, understanding the strategies of compliments is essential to improve communication during interactions. This study aimed to investigate the pragmatics of compliment responses between Jordanian and Omani students, highlighting the differences and similarities in their use of compliment strategies in their interactions. A quantitative approach, in the form of a questionnaire, was adopted to collect data from both student groups. This study employs Herbert's (1986, 1990) theoretical framework to analyze the data. It categorizes compliments into five types: acceptance, mitigation/deflection, rejection, no response, and request interpretation. It is expected that there will be some differences and similarities, although the forms of their compliments may vary considerably. Thus, the hypotheses to be examined are: First, the Jordanian and Omani students' compliment strategies are different. Second, the compliment strategies used by both groups are largely similar. Third, the forms of compliments differ between the two groups despite speaking the same language.

| KEYWORDS

Compliment, Oman, Jordan, pragmatics, sociolinguistics

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Compliments were examined by several researchers, but no one has previously conducted research comparing the compliments used by Jordanian and Omani speakers. This study aims to explore such results that can help both communities gain a full understanding of the types of compliments they use to enhance their relationships. Understanding the role of compliments by Jordanians and Omanis helps them recognize the value of using them in their interactions. This can help increase their solidarity and provide a deeper comprehension of their role, especially when building strong relationships. As stated by Holmes (1988), several factors can be investigated in compliment responses, which include the universality of compliment responses across different societies.

Compliment responses are used in various forms, making their examination essential. The linguistic structures of different types help explore the differences in how they are employed, which relate to shared or distinct strategies influenced by cultural values and interaction contexts. For example, every community uses compliments in their congratulations, but the forms and types of those compliments are not similar. The frequency of using these compliment responses varies (Golato, 2002). Therefore, analyzing the hidden meanings behind compliment responses is important to help interlocutors achieve successful communication.

This study seeks to elaborate on the major role of compliment responses to mitigate the hearer's face from damage. Saving face of the hearer is vital to have closeness and strong relationships. Thus, this research examines the pragmatics of compliment responses between Jordanian and Omani students to shed light on the differences and similarities in their employment of the compliment strategies in their interactions. Although they speak the same language, they employ compliment responses differently, which exhibits the role of their culture and their linguistic varieties in their speeches. This study examines the similarities and differences in the compliment responses that are utilized by both societies, and sheds light on the similarities and differences in their compliment forms that they employ in their interactions.

2. Literature Review

Many researchers have inspired researchers to investigate compliment responses for their importance in human interactions. Part of them examined this speech act in one society, Al-Natour (2025), and others compared it with other societies, Chen, R. (1993). This research is conducted to compare Jordanian and Omani compliments to reveal beneficial insights for both societies. It contributes to the literature with meaningful results that help societies to have successful communication. As this study investigates compliment responses, we need to define this linguistic aspect as the theorist did. One of these definitions was stated by Holmes (1986). He defined a compliment as "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). Compliment as "an act which attributes credit to another for some characteristic, attribute, skill, etc., which is positively valued by the person" Hyland (2000). Compliments are indications of appreciation and good relations with others (Herbert, 1986). The definitions of compliments, as mentioned by the theorists, ensured that it is a good speech that is performed by the speaker to the hearers to encourage them for a deed or to appreciate them for doing good things for them. Accordingly, these definitions support what has been stated by Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face, which they divided these concepts into two types of face wants that are mostly preferred by the interactants. They claimed that *negative face* refers to "the want to be unimpeded by others" and positive face to "the want to be desirable to at least some others".

Several studies have been conducted nowadays to investigate compliment responses in various societies. Zhang et al. (2025) aimed to understand how people react to compliments on online social platforms, spot important themes and patterns, and investigate the social and psychological effects of these exchanges, which are the objectives of the analysis. Nizamova, K. (2025) analyzed the pragmatic features of compliments and evaluative speech acts. The study revealed that compliments are manifested as a means of expressing a positive attitude to the interlocutor, creating a warm atmosphere, and strengthening friendly relations.

Sarkhosh & Alizadeh (2017) investigated the shifting of CR patterns across generations within the same speech community. They revealed that the new generation of Persian speakers, regardless of their gender, had shifted their CR patterns and overwhelmingly accepted compliments. Moalla (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 results revealed that there were several cross-cultural similarities and differences between the two groups.

Rahmayani (2020) aimed to compare the patterns of compliment response strategies used by two British and Indonesian talk shows. The results showed that the British tends to receive praise and respond to what was discussed, and they provided additional information with the intention of keeping the communication going, it means that they are open in responding about what was discussed, but that contrasts with Indonesia culture, Indonesian people intended to humble themselves and minimize the things commented on praise as an expression of humility. Tang, C. (2022) examined whether and, if so, how Taiwanese Mandarin speakers' compliment-responding behaviors are related to their gender and the gender and relative social power of their addressees. The

result exhibited that there are also some interactive effects between these variables on the complimentee's compliment-responding behavior. Different micrstrategies were employed to react to the given compliments according to the social expectations of the complimentees in different social positions and different biological gender identities, as well as the complimentees' psychological perceptions of the given positive remarks.

Azadbakht & Heidari (2025) investigated compliment responses in cross-cultural communication between EFL Persian and Arabic learners. They concluded that both groups indicated their struggles with the pragmatic norms of English, such as how to appropriately make requests, apologize, or refuse offers. Al-Ghamdi et al. (2019) investigated the possibility of pragmatic failure in the L2 production of Yemeni EFL university learners. The results revealed that pragmatic failure is highly evident in the learners' L2 production. L1 negative pragmatic transfer occurred in the response strategies of 'Comment Acceptance', 'Comment History', 'Praise Upgrade', 'Return', 'No Acknowledgement', 'Offer', 'Promise', and 'Wish'.

The politeness strategies in WhatsApp messages used by undergraduate students with their professors were examined by Al-Natour, M., & Banat, S. (2023). They concluded that the undergraduate students employed different types of politeness strategies in their WhatsApp messages with their professors. Alamri, S. (2021) investigated compliment production and compliment responses in Saudi English learners and British English native speakers. The study found that Saudi KSA respondents used deflection and shifted credit more, employing a larger number of religious and cultural references that reflect Saudi social norms. British participants tended to accept compliments or respond to compliments by giving information. Duwila et al. (2024) found that the compliments 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 actively participate in politics. Men will appreciate and respect women who demonstrate competence and good traits. Czerwionka & Dickerson (2022) examined compliment responses among English-speaking individuals. They compared L2 learners of Spanish and the L2 group to native speakers of Spanish and English. Results revealed cross-cultural differences in the use of appreciation tokens (e.g., "thanks"), nodding, and compliment-compliment response discourse structures (i.e., English: pragmatic routine with appreciation; Spanish: co-constructed agreement).

Patwary et al. (2025) examined the direct relationship between perceived credibility, the need for interaction, and experiential trust and satisfaction. The study indicates that experiential trust and satisfaction control the influence of the relationship between perceived credibility, the need for interaction, and the intention to compliment restaurant service of Generation Z consumers. Xia et al. (2025) revealed that the participants' thanking responses operate within a self-contained framework, characterized by a range of pragmlinguistic forms with varying degrees of politeness and few westernized examples (returning thanks). Kurita (2024) stated that almost all compliments were accepted with appreciation by both American and Japanese participants, with no difference observed in macro strategies and minimal differences observed in micro strategies. Alharbi et al. (2024) revealed that participants from both groups tended to accept compliments, although there was a tendency to question the sincerity of the compliments.

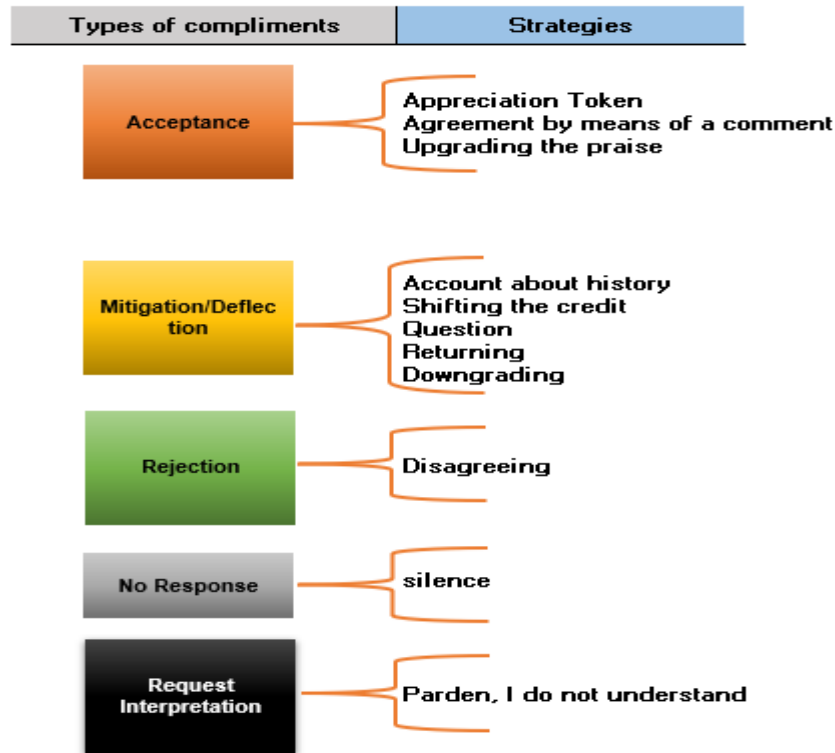
Rodríguez-Castro et al. (2025) sought to evaluate the frequency with which boys "compliment" girls, know their perceptions about whether girls like compliments, and discern whether they believe that society expects them to make such comments. The main results obtained show that younger boys more frequently emit objectifying messages about women's bodies than older boys. They believe these comments positively impacted girls' thinking as they are appreciated. Alsaqr & Mahzari (2025) aimed to investigate the Arabic compliments posted by Instagram users on artists' works on Instagram. The results found that the use of an adjective as a syntactic pattern and the use of religious expression of interjection as a compliment strategy were used more frequently than others. The implicit meanings embedded within compliments, as Endarti, E. (2024) explored. The result showed the complex interplay between politeness, face-saving, and emotional expression in the use of compliments. Saadati, S., & Vefali, G. M. (2021) 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 in their pragmatic performance.

Al-Natour et al (2025) investigated the congratulatory strategies written in the graduation notebooks for undergraduate students at Jerash University. The study revealed that the students employed various congratulatory strategies, including congratulatory statements, happiness clauses, compliments, good wishes, and the ability to attach presents. Akkawi et al. (2025) sought to explore the use of positive politeness strategies in requests made by Jordanian and Omani students within an academic context. Jordanian students prefer to utilize the four positive politeness strategies of giving reasons, concern for the hearer's wants, promises, and in-group identity. On the other hand, Omani students prioritized the four positive strategies of giving reasons, assuming reciprocity, giving sympathy, hedging, and seeking agreement. Mehawesh et al. (2025) investigated the adaptation of negative politeness strategies in Jordanian and Omani students' requests in digital communication. This research investigates the adaptation of negative politeness strategies in the requests of Jordanian and Omani students in digital communication. The study finds variations across cultural expressions. For example, Omani students mostly put their questions in pairs, but they find single questions acceptable, while Jordanian students generally ask for things in single questions.

A. Analytical Framework

This study adopted Herbert's (1986,1990) analytical framework to examine participants' compliment responses. He categorized CRs into five main strategies: accepting, mitigating, rejecting, no-response, and requesting interpretation. There are various strategies within each of these types. Figure 2.1 shows the types and the compliment strategies associated with each.

Figure 2.1. Herbert (1986, 1990) CRs Analytical Framework



As noted in Herbert (1986, 1990) analytical framework there are five types of CRs which are acceptance, mitigation/deflection, rejection, no response, and request interpretation. Each one of these types includes strategy(ies). There are three strategies encompassed under the *acceptance* strategy, which are appreciation token, agreement by means of a comment, and upgrading the praise. *'Thank you/ thanks'* are examples of the appreciation token. Agreement by means of a comment can be employed by saying *'Yeah, I like it, too'*. Examples for upgrading praise are *'Yeah, I can play football well too'*.

mitigation/deflection is the second type of compliment, as stated by Herbert (1986, 1990). This type comprises five strategies. Firstly, account of history *'bring it from the USA'*. Secondly, shifting the credit, which is illustrated by saying *'My father gave it to me'*. Thirdly, a Question strategy that can be depicted by saying *'You look nice, too'*. Fourthly, returning, which is noted by saying *'Your eyes are nice too'*. Fifthly, downgrading, which can be realized by saying *'It's really quite old'*. Rejection is the third main type of compliments. It involves one sub-category, which is disagreeing. An example of this strategy is *'I disagree with you'*. The fourth type of compliment is no response. It can be seen by keeping silent without saying anything. The fifth main type of compliment is *requesting interpretation*. *'Pardon, I do not understand'* is an example of this type. The data of this study were analyzed and classified based on these strategies to shed light on the similarities and differences between their usage by Jordanian and Omani students.

3. Methodology

This is quantitative research that aims to identify the Jordanian and Omani students' compliments response strategies with their classmates at Jerash University and Sultan Qaboos University. So, A detailed analysis of the utterances they utilized is required to recognize these strategies. To delve into the conceptual understanding of their usage of these strategies, a DCT questionnaire instrument is adopted.

3.1 Participants

The participants of this research were undergraduate students at Jerash University and Sultan Qaboos University. They are undergraduate students studying in the English department. 50 participants responded to the DCT from each university. The researchers collected the data progressively until they reached saturation, and once no new information could be collected from other participants, the information had repeatedly occurred. The researchers in this case reach the saturation point, and no need to collect more data. Once the researcher collects more data and there is no new information can be collected, he/she reaches saturation Hennink, M., Hutter I., & Bailey, A. (2020).

3.2 Instruments

This study employed a quantitative approach in the form of DCT, which was developed by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984). The scenarios utilized in this research were established by Moalla, A. (2013). The DCT was organized by telling participants to imagine that they were in the scenarios. Then, they were requested to replay those scenarios as they happened in real-life communication. The DCT of this study consists of eight scenarios. These scenarios inquire the respondents about their haircut, brand new car, cooking, tennis game, essay writing, smart clothes, interpersonal skills, and beautiful eyes. The data collected to identify the compliment response strategies based on the scenarios in the DCT. The students were asked verbally to imagine that they were in DCT scenarios to explain their compliment response strategies in the contexts of those scenarios.

3.3 Data collection

As explained in the previous section, the researchers adopted the DCT questionnaire to collect the data from the participants. Thus, they employ the following procedure to collect data from the students in their universities. Firstly, they got permission letters from the universities to collect the data from their students. Secondly, they meet with the head of the English departments to gather the students in a suitable place to get their responses. Thirdly, they request the students to sign a consent form to participate in this research. Fourthly, they distribute the DCT to the students to respond to them. Fifthly, they collect the responses from the students and tell them that their answers will be used just for the research. After collecting the data, the researchers will categorize the compliment strategies that were utilized by the respondents based on the classification that is stated in Herbert's (1986, 1990) analytical framework.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the similarities and differences between Jordanian and Omani compliment responses. It seeks to explore the strategies of compliments they employ in their interactions. To reveal a rich result, the study adopted the DCT questionnaire to collect the data from the participants. Then, the data are analyzed based on Herbert's (1986, 1990) analytical framework to classify the compliments into five types. Under each type, there are several strategies. This conceptual research has thoroughly examined the hypotheses that are related to the employment of complementary strategies by Jordanian and Omani students. Indeed, concentrating on their employment of their compliment strategies in their interactions. The hypotheses under consideration seek to provide a specific insight revealing the expected consequences derived from it. This research proposes three hypotheses harmonious with the research objectives. The first hypothesis advocates that Jordanian and Omani students utilize the same compliment strategies in their responses. The second hypothesis proposes that Jordanians and Omanis do not employ the same compliment strategies in their responses. The third hypothesis suggests that either the compliment strategies utilized by Jordanian and Omani students are similar or different, or the forms of those strategies of the compliments could be different. In conclusion, to prove or disprove the hypotheses, in-depth analysis is required. Future research could be conducted to reveal such results that can enrich the literature with a new contribution in the linguistics and sociolinguistics disciplines.

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