

Compliment Response Behaviour on Facebook:

A Gender Study of Compliment Response Speech Act by Iraqi Facebook Users

Adyan Abdul-Muni'm Mohammed

Directorate of Education in Babel

Adyanalrubyee@gmail.com

Amjed Kadhim Al-Rickaby

Directorate of Education in Babel

amjed.linguist@gmail.com

الخلاصة

تناولت الكثير من الدراسات فعل كلام المجاملة وفعل كلام رد المجاملة إلا ان القليل منها تطرق إلى بحث سلوك المجاملة وتأثير الجندر فيه في اللغة العربية عند العراقيين. ومن الملاحظ أيضا ندرة الدراسات النظرية لفعل كلام رد المجاملة في عالم التواصل الافتراضي (الفيديوك تحديدًا) عن المتحدثين العراقيين. تتناول هذه الدراسة سلوك مستخدمي الفيديوك العراقيين في الرد على المجاملة لغرض التوسع في مجال الدرس التداولي ليشمل اللغات الشرقية ولانتقال من دراسة أفعال الكلام في التفاعل المباشر وجه لوجه الى التفاعل في العالم الافتراضي. تطرقت الدراسة إلى ثلاثة أسئلة: (أ) ما تراكيب صيغة رد المجاملة التي يستعملها العراقيون في الفيديوك؟ (ب) هل للجندر أي تأثير في سلوك مستخدمي الفيديوك العراقيين فيما يتعلق بالرد على المجاملة؟ (ج) هل يستعمل الذكور والاناث التعديل الداخلي أم الخارجي في صيغة رد المجاملة؟ وجدت الدراسة ان جميع استراتيجيات الرد على المجاملة التي بينها العصامي وآخرون (٢٠١٥) قد استعملها العراقيون في الفيديوك وانهم فضلوا الاستراتيجيات اللغوية على غير اللغوية. اما الاستنتاج الثاني الذي توصلت له هذه الدراسة فهو ان استراتيجية قبول المجاملة الأكثر شيوعا هي استراتيجية التقدير بين الذكور بينما رد المجاملة كانت الأكثر شيوعا بين الاناث في عينة الدراسة. وأخيرا فيما يتعلق بتعديل ردود المجاملة فقد أظهرت النتائج ان كل من الذكور والاناث يولون التعديل الخارجي أولوية وان جندر صاحب المجاملة يلعب دورا مهما في تحديد نوع التعديل لكلا الجنسين.

الكلمات الدالة: المجاملة، رد المجاملة، التفاعل المباشر وجه لوجه، التفاعل الافتراضي

Abstract

Compliment and compliment responses are studied comprehensively, yet very few studies, if none, have dealt with surveying the complimenting behaviour and the gender influence on it in Iraqi Arabic. Even less scarce is the available literature on the compliment response speech act in cyberspace communication (Facebook in particular) of Iraqi speakers. This study on Iraqi Facebook users' behaviour in responding to compliments is conducted to widen the latitude of pragmatic studies to

include eastern languages and to expand the range of speech act studies from face-to-face interaction to cyberspace interaction. Three questions are sought in this study: (a) what compliment response structures are used by Iraqi Facebook users? (b) does gender have any impact on the behavior of Facebook users in regard to compliment and compliment responses? and (c) do male and female Iraqi Facebook users use internal or external modification in their compliment response strategies? The findings reveal that all the compliment response strategies outlined by Eslami et al (2015) are used by Iraqi Facebook users and that verbal response strategies are preferred to non-verbal strategies. The second finding encloses that the most frequently used acceptance strategy is the appreciation strategy in the male complimentees data while returning the compliment is the most frequently used in the female complimentees data. Finally, regarding modifying the compliment responses, the results demonstrated that both male and female complimentees give priority to external modifiers and that the gender of the complimenter plays a significant role in determining the type of modifier for both genders.

Key words: compliment, compliment response, gender, face-to-face interaction, cyberspace interaction

Introduction

The emergence of the social media (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat.. etc.) evolutionalized a range of life actions from friends and associates as well as a large number of and supportive comments and likes. “How lovely!!!” postted in response to a picture of my friend’s baby. “Looks fantastic!” replies somebody one about another friend’s motorbike. “You’re an intelligent teacher and mentor,” a woman writes on a photo of my old secondary school teacher with his students. keeping in touch with friends and associates has been made easier than ever by the vitrue Social media. Most of our social interactions are now happening online. We post, basically, to tell our friends about our life, but also because each like or flattering comment is a little signal of admiration.

Pictures and diaries posted on social media and Facebook attract a wide range of responses including compliments, and these compliments in turn, receive various types of responses. Facebook users, as the following post (photo) by a female user on her Facebook account shows, are creative in formulating compliments and compliments responses using different types of online communication apparatus and figures.

Before the internet, most of the compliments whether prompting someone, to grieve and indicate response used to be given face to face. When being paid a compliment in person, receivers are left with a big trouble whether to accept the compliment and seem conceited or reject it and be unappreciative!

1. The Speech Act of Compliment Response

Herbert (1997:7) states that “compliment events (compliment and compliment response) provide interesting information on socio-cultural values and organization”, and “the topics of compliments reveal the values which are positively regarded within some particular society”. According to textbooks, Lewis (2004:5) suggests, for learners of English as well as instructions that parents give to their children, the “correct” routine answer for a compliment is “thank you”. However, research on these two speech acts reveals that speakers use a variety of response strategies deviating from the prescriptive form of thanking.

In response to a compliment, Lee (2018:44) asserts that the complimentee may feel constrained to denigrate the compliment, or give a compliment in return, damaging the complimentee's positive face in Brown and Levinson's framework model (1987). Herbert (1989:5) on the other hand draws the interaction chain of compliment and compliment response as follows:

1. A compliments B
2. B responds/acknowledges that A has spoken.

Compliment response, in Farenkia's view (2014:7), is the second part of an adjacency pair, i.e. reaction to a compliment, the initiative act. Referring to politeness, he further states that it is difficult to classify the types of compliment response as positive or negative due to situational, individual and cultural differences in terms of

the preferred and non-preferred response types. Al-Gamal (2017:22) defines compliment response as an utterance used to respond to another utterance that refers to something which is positively valued by the participants and attributed to the addressee is called compliment response.

The social function and positive connotation associated with compliments lead to the importance of this speech act. "Compliments are traditionally associated with positive emotions such as happiness and joy and are part of positive politeness strategy, a social strategy aimed at creating bonds between people and maintain solidarity" (Manes et al. 1982:33).

Pomerantz (1978:81-82) is the first researcher who discusses compliment responses from a pragmatic perspective. She stated that when responding to compliments, Americans face two problems. Firstly, they need to agree with the speaker. Secondly, they need to avoid self-praise. Urano (1998: 134) furthermore, adds that this problem by stating that "when a recipient of a compliment responds by agreeing with the speaker, it violates to avoiding self-praise as this response goes against the sociolinguistic expectations of the speaker". On the other side, if the speaker doesn't take the compliment to avoid self-praise, it will be a face-threatening response as it breaches the first condition. To settle this conflict, compliment recipients adopt a diversity of solutions: (1) Acceptance, (2) Rejection, and (3) Self-praise avoidance.

2. Compliment and Compliment Responses

'Compliment' as a word has its origins in the Italian "complimento". "Complimento" denotes an action done by obligation and, to "a sentiment of gratitude which arises from the heart and reflects the truth and sincerity of the soul". Complimento, on the other hand, is borrowed from the Spanish "complimento" (which itself is derived from the Latin "comolere") (France 1992: 11-15). From the

seventeenth century onwards, the concept 'compliment' signifies a word or an action collected by politeness towards others (Chick, 1996 cited in Yousif, 2003:4).

Golato (2005:85) states that compliments are very prescribed expressions since they are formed using a limited number of syntactic expressions and a restricted number of adjectives carrying the positive force of the compliment. These features of compliments have been found the same in different varieties of English. Wolfson (1983:89) argues that "one of the reasons that compliments are said to grease the social wheels and thus to serve as social lubricants arises from the fact that the formulaic nature of the compliments is not immediately obvious to the interactants".

Manes (1983:97) defines compliments with indication to culture. He represented a compliment as a window through which a society as a whole or an individual in particular can view what is appreciated by a relevant culture. Compliments, according to Jaworski (1995:67), can be both direct and indirect expressions expressing the speaker's positive view about the addressee's external appearance, work personality character, possessions and about third parties closely related to the addressee (e.g. children).

Compliments and compliment responses are culture-specific speech acts in social interaction. Patterns of compliments and compliment responses observed in different cultures can, in part, be accounted for by their conception of notations of "face" and "politeness" (Cheng, 2003: 24). Oleshtain and Cohen (1991:25) uses 'compliments' to meaning as socializing tools. "It is the most appropriate way of expressing solidarity". Kasper and Schmidt (1996:446-8) give, however, the following definition about the meticulous connection between the speaker(S) and the hearer (H):"(Whether it openly or indirectly attributes credit to the person addressed for her / his good (characteristic, skill, possession, etc) is valued positively by the S and the H as a 'compliment' speech act)".

Compliments can also be used to construct and reinforce social relationships due to their functions as "social lubricants". People tend to compliment each other from time to time to make them feel appreciated and generally better (Holmes, 1988:486).

3. Compliment Response Taxonomies

Previous studies on compliment response suggest different frameworks of compliment response classifications. Therefore, it is not easy for researchers to decide upon the one to be adopted. The basic frameworks of compliment response categorizations are the ones suggested by Pomerantz (1987) and Herbert (1989) shown below:

3.1. Pomerantz Taxonomy

The categorization of compliment response suggested by Pomerantz (1978) reads as follows:

1. Acceptances

- a. Appreciation token
 - That's nice.
 - Thanks.
- b. Agreements
 - Oh it was just amazing
 - You know, I thought it was quite good.

2. Rejections

- a. Disagreements
 - you did a perfect job cleaning the car.
 - Well, I guess you haven't seen the rear seat!

3. Self-praise Avoidance Mechanism

a. Praise downgrades

- Agreement
 - That's fantastic
 - Isn't it good?
- Disagreement
 - Good shot
 - Not very solid though.

b. Referent Shifts

- Reassignments
 - you're a good rower, honey.
 - These are very easy to row. Very light.

Return

- Ya' sound real nice.

- Yeah, you sound real good too.

The framework of compliment response suggested by Herbert (1989:10) was based on American and South Africans ethnographic corpus. Below is Herbert framework with instances from American ethnographic corpus:

1. Agreements

Appreciation Token

Well, Thanks/ Thank you.

Comment Taking

F1: I like your hair car.

F2: Me too. I'm never getting another car again.

M1: I like your shit.

M2: Yeah, it's nice.

Praise Upgrade

F: I like that jacket you're wearing.

M: You're not the first and you're not the last.

Comment History

F1: I love that suit.

F2: I got it for the trip to Texas.

Reassignment

F: That's a beautiful pullover.

M: My cousin gave it to me.

Return

F: You're hilarious.

M: You're a good spectator.

2. No agreements

Scale Down

F: That's nice shoes.

M: It's all spoiled up. I'm getting a new one.

Disagreement

F1: Nice haircut.

F2: Yeah, I look like Buster Brown.

F1: Your haircut looks good.

F2: It's too short.

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M: Those are nice shoes.

F: They hurt my feet.

F1: Nice haircut. You look good.

F2: I hate it.

Qualification

F1: Your portfolio turned out great.

F2: It's alright, but I want to retake some pictures.

M: You must be smart. You did well on that last linguistics test.

F: Not really. You did better.

Question/ Question Response

M1: Nice sweater

M2: You like it?

M1: Yeah

M2: Why?

M1: It's a nice color.

M2: Yeah, it's a nice color.

M: Nice sweatshirt.

F: What's wrong with it?

M: That's a nice sweater.

F: Do you really think so?

No Acknowledgement

M1: That's a beautiful pullover.

M2: Did you finish the homework for today?

3. Request Interpretation

F: I like your jacket.

M: You want to borrow this one too?

5.Compliment Response and Gender

Talbot (2010:86) defines the giving of compliments as "one of the most interesting, and perhaps, most obvious ways of being positively polite". He further

adds that in most of the previous empirical research in this regard, women have been recorded to use politeness strategies a great deal less than men in different situations, languages and cultures..The connection between gender on one hand and compliments and compliment responses on another hand is a topic of massive importance for previous studies done in this regard. Mane and Wolfson (cited in Trosborg, 2010:80) states that women give and get more compliments than men and that women's responses to compliments are more geared towards social harmony than men's.

Eckert and Ginet (2003:152) show that responses to compliments often indicate ambivalence. They further claim that in my Englishspeaking communities, simple thanks is a common response. Outright rejection or disagreement was relatively from both women and men whereas some kind of deflection or evasion was fairly common from both sexes

Based on a corpus of 1,062 compliment events, Herbert (1990:2013) notes several differences in the form of compliments used by women and men. He finds out that compliments from men are generally accepted especially by female recipients, whereas compliments from women are met with a response type other than acceptance, that compliments given by men are less likely met with agreement-particularly by females. Compliments given by men to men are the most likely to be met with acknowledgements.

6.Functions of Compliments and Compliment Responses

Compliments and compliment responses are phatic speech acts that " grease the social wheels" (Wolfson,1983:89). In Holmes (1988:462) terms, "As positively affective speech acts, the most obvious functions they serve is to oil the social wheels, paying attention to positive face wants and thus increasing or consolidating solidarity between people".

The basic function of complimenting act, according to Manes and Wolfson(1981:68), is "to create or reinforce solidarity by expressing appreciation or approval". Second language learners don not always identify these bounding moves. It is also why many speakers apt to use the "compliment formulas". They just want their expressions to be easily identified as compliments.According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 165) there are numerous functions of complimenting. People pay

compliments to each other to preserve or re-build a social relationship, to reinforce a desire action (e.g. teacher-student interaction), or to lessen a speaker's discourse before uttering a face threatening act (FTA).

Compliments serve various functions, the most important six functions they perform are listed below:

1. To show approbation or approval of someone's work/ appearance/ taste (Manes, 1983; Herbert, 1990).
2. To build/ verify/ preserve solidarity(Manes&Wolfson, 1981; Wolfson, 1989).
3. To soften or replace greetings/ gratitude/ apologies/ congratulations (Wolfson, 1983, 1989).
4. To soften face threatening act such as apologies, requests and criticism(Brown &Levinson, 1978; Wolfson, 1983).
5. To open and keep up conversation/ conversation strategy(Wolfson,1983;Billmyer, 1990; Dunham, 1992).
6. To strengthen desired performance (Manes, 1983). (Takenfrom[Http://www.Carla.umn.edu/speechacts/compliments/American.html](http://www.Carla.umn.edu/speechacts/compliments/American.html)).

The primary function of complimenting in human interaction, as Lewis (2003:3) suggests, is a positive politeness strategy, which creates and maintains solidarity between the participants. He further adds that by uttering a favorable opinion towards the interlocutor, speakers demonstrate that they share the addressee's interest or taste concerning a certain aspect.

Wolfson and Manes (1980:391) identify both discourse and social functions of compliments. They claim that compliments can be restored to open conversation or to alter the topic of the conversation. Socially, they are used as tools of establishing or reaffirming a common ground, "creating a sense of rapport" or as "social lubricants". On the other hand, Cirillo (2010:8:) remarks that compliments "function mainly as conversation starters, attracting other users' attention" and "getting into their good

books". She underlines their rapport building function in a context "where words are at the very basis of every relation".

Compliment responses, compared to compliments, provide much more complex functions. Compliment responses differ from culture to culture in relation to what makes a suitable response. In English- speaking cultures, for example, the only response necessary is that accepting the compliment by saying "thank you". Cheng (2003:26), however, mentions that numerous English speakers sense a simple "thank you" is not sufficient as a compliment response.

7.Face-to-face Versus Facebook Complimenting Behaviours

Although there has been an extensive body of studies on compliments and compliment responses in face-to-face conversation, online complementing behaviours received the least attentions by researchers. Only few studies has been done in this regard.

Placencia and Lower (2013:128) studied compliments made by individuals of a network of a family and friends on Facebook in the America. Their findings showed that compliments made on Facebook, like compliments in face-to-face interactions, are largely formulaic. In addition, they found out that topics of compliments on Facebook fell within the same category as those noted in face-to-face communications, with a predominance of compliments of appearance. Furthermore, females were found to give and receive compliments more often than males.

Maíz-Arévalo and García-Gómez 2013 examined the way Facebook handlers gave compliments to appraise others and reinforce social connection in English and Spanish. 50 compliments in every language were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively using a systemic functional framework. Their work showed that several communication means and choices available on Facebook assessed users to instruct their compliments from variable points. They also found that compliments in the two languages go after dissimilar frequencies of use, which shows profound cultural differences.

Eslami and Jabbari (2019:68) study verbal and non-verbal compliment forms produced by Iranian Facebook users. The second overpoweringly expressed by 'likes', a suitable way of giving compliments, although the precise goal of the 'like'

keeps unclear. The verbal compliments, they claim, engage diverse formulae of adjustment and take explicit (often elliptical) and implicit forms. The explanation of implicit forms necessitates the complimentee to deduce indirect meaning based on common background knowledge reflecting group rules and values.

Cirillo (2012:49) conducted a study on 74 compliment and compliment response pairs taken from communications recoded from Facebook. She found out that users of Facebook are considerably more likely to not respond to a compliment than speakers in the off-line world. Moreover, she added that about one-third of the compliments detected were not recognized in any form, and also observed that many users would not give any remarks after getting a compliment, possibly demonstrating that they had gone off-line.

In regard to the functions of compliments, Ogiermann and Blitvich (2019:73) state that Facebook communication is mainly driven by two motivational forces. First, individuals use Facebook to maintain and improve social relationships. Second, Facebook is used as a platform for self-representation. Moreover, they affirm that posting photos on Facebook can act as a kind of summons to acknowledge presence on the platform and membership in the group. The response the initiating act "may be interpreted as a kind of affirmation of the relationship". Placenecia and Lower (2013:639) indicate when compliments or "likes" are offered, the compliments seem to reaffirm the relationship and enhance it at the same time.

8. Research Questions

Basing on the aforementioned theoretical background and the importance of investigating the behavior of interlocuters in regard to compliments and compliment responses, the current study seeks to answer the following three questions:

1. What compliment response strategies do Iraqi Facebook users use?

2. To what extent does gender impact the behaviour of Iraqi Facebook users as far as the speech act of compliment response is concerned?
3. How do Iraqi Facebook users employ internal and external modification in responding to compliment?

9. Data Analysis

To analyse the data, qualitative and quantitative approaches are implemented. The collected data comprises both verbal and non-verbal replies to compliments. Holmes' (1986) taxonomy for head-on context and Maiz-Arevalo's (2013) adjustment for cyber context are adopted to categorize the collected compliment responses. The analysis is backed by tackling the internal and external modifiers using the combined framework of Placencia and Lower (2013) and Blum-Kulka et al (1989).

To ensure a maximum level of validity in analyzing the data, the data we analyzed twice by the researchers and then the results were compared. Both analyses are found identical.

10. Taxonomy of Compliment Responses

Eslami et al (2015) model is adopted to categorize and analyze compliment responses in this study. This model is based on Holmes' (1986) model of English compliment responses which are classified into three principal categories subclassified into twelve sub-categories and Maiz-Arevalo's (2013) model of Spanish Facebook compliment responses.

The researchers also tallied, compared and analyzed the verbal responses and non-verbal responses to compliments for both genders in four dual types including identical gender and cross gender interactions.

11. Results Discussion

The response system on Facebook allows users a wide array of responding options. Facebook users can also choose not to respond. Yet, this option may require further consideration. It is clear that when a person chooses not to respond to a compliment, this act will be interpreted as an act of impoliteness. This is not always the case with cyberspace interaction. Unlike face-to-face interaction, cyberspace interaction is affected by how often Facebook users log in and how long they stay online and also by the realization of the indirectness of the communication means.

Also, the complimentees may choose not to respond to a compliment to try to avoid self-praise (Pomerantz, 1987).

Table (1) below shows that (20%) of the received compliments by males were not responded and (7%) were received by females were not responded.

Table (1): Distribution of compliment response

Complimentee gender	No	Yes	Total
Male	56 (20%)	224 (80%)	280
Female	21 (7%)	266 (93%)	287
Total	77 (11%)	290 (89%)	667

Going further into the details, table (2) demonstrates that verbal responses to compliments constituted (69%) of the compliment responses. The predominant non-verbal response strategy is clicking LIKE and using emoticons is just scarcely used. However, gender divergence here matters. As can be seen that clicking LIKE as a response to compliments is only (24%) among females but it is (38%) among males. In the current analysis, the use of LIKE function is treated as an acceptance strategy whether it is used alone or in combination. Yet, it is treated as external modification when it is used with verbal compliment responses.

Table (2): Frequency of verbal and non-verbal strategies

Gender of complimentee	Verbal	Non-verbal	Total
Male	137 (61%)	87 (38%)	224
Female	203 (76%)	63 (24%)	266
Total	340 (69%)	150 (31%)	490

As for non-verbal responding strategies, the analysis shows significant difference across males and females use. For males, the most repeatedly used compliment response strategy is LIKE (54%) then by LIKE plus emoticons (33%) and

the least was only emoticons (12%). On the other hand, the most frequently used strategy for females is clicking LIKE plus emoticons (36%), then only LIKE (34%) and mere emoticons is the least (28%).

Table (3): Strategies of non-verbal compliment response

Complimentee gender	LIKE	LIKE + Emoticons	Emoticons	Total
Male	47 (54%)	29 (33%)	11 (12%)	87
Female	22 (34%)	23 (36%)	18 (28%)	63
Total	69	52	29	150

The patterns of the implementation of compliment responses as revealed by the analysis are different across gender groups. There is a higher rate for non-verbal compliment responses among males (38%). Females' use of verbal compliment responses, on the other hand, is three times as much the number of non-verbal compliment responses. In the following screenshot (figure 1), an example where LIKE is used by the picture owner (complimentee) is shown. The letter M is used in this study to stand for male and the letter F is used to stand for female. Numbers are added to these letters to identify different Facebook users and the letter U is used to stand for Facebook users.

Figure (1)



Non-verbal responses such as eye gaze, laughs, and blushing are often used involuntarily by the face-to-face conversation participants. However, the case is different in Facebook exchange conversations as these non-verbal compliment responses are thought upon and, thus, used intentionally (Yus, 2011). For this reason, they are analyzed here as such.

Table (2) also demonstrates that verbal compliment responses override non-verbal compliment responses for both genders (male 61% vs. 38%, female 76% vs.

24% respectively). Responding to a compliment may take the form of acceptance, rejection, evasion or a combination of all these strategies. Responders (complimentees) can choose verbal strategies, non-verbal strategies or a combination of the two for each of these three options. As shown in table (4), accepting the compliment is the most predominant compliment response strategy (95%, n = 464). Comparing the results of the analysis, it is found that there is slight difference across genders in the use of compliment response options. The least frequently used strategy is rejecting the compliment, particularly for females (0%). It is also found that evading the compliment is the second frequently used responding strategy (3%, n = 18) for both males and females respondents.

Table (3): Strategies of compliment response

Complimentee gender	Accept	Evade	Reject	Combination	Total
Male	211 (94%)	8 (3%)	2 (0.89%)	3 (1%)	224
Female	253 (95%)	10 (3%)	0 (0%)	3 (1%)	266
Total	464	18	2	6	490

The strategy of accepting the compliment is composed of a number of sub-strategies. These sub-strategies are displayed with examples in the following sections. Because the examples are originally written in Arabic, translation is provided for each example. To keep the identity of the interlocutors hidden, their names and pictures were blurred. Their names were substituted by the letter U (standing for user) and numbers were given to identify their positions in the conversation. As such, U1 is used to stand for the complimenter who initiates the conversation and U2 is used to stand for the complimentee who responds to the

compliment. As mentioned previously, M (for male users) and F (for female users) are used to identify the gender of the interlocutors.

Table (5) shows that using a mix of verbal strategies and non-verbal strategies constituted the highest percentages of acceptance responding strategies (60%, n = 280). Non-verbal strategies come in the second rank in terms of frequency. They constituted (32%, n = 150) of the responding strategies while purely verbal acceptance strategies were the least used in the data (7%, n = 34). Again, gender divergence in the use of these strategies is clear. Pure verbal compliment response (without clicking LIKE or emoticons) is hardly used by females complimentees (only 5%). Males used non-verbal strategies almost double the use of females. Also, females seem to give remarkable priority to combined response strategies (69%) whereas only half of the male complimentees used this strategy.

Table (5): Strategies of Acceptance

Complimentee gender	Verbal	Non-verbal	Combination	Total
Male	21 (9%)	87 (41%)	103 (48%)	211
Female	13 (5%)	63 (24%)	177 (69%)	253
Total	34	150	280	464

Table (6): Sub-strategies of verbal accepting

Complimentee gender	Appreciation	Agreeing	Downgrading	Returning	Combination	Total
Male	47 (37%)	3 (2%)	7 (5%)	38 (30%)	29 (23%)	124
Female	68 (35%)	1 (0.5%)	4 (2%)	82 (43%)	35 (18%)	190
Total	115	4	11	120	64	314

Appreciation

The analysis shows that the sub-strategy of appreciation is the second most common one among all the other accepting sub-strategies for male and female

Facebook users. Appreciating the compliment is (37%) by male users and (35%) by female users in response to the posted compliments.

Expressions such as “thank you”, “thanks”, or “I am grateful” are most common as responses to appreciate the complimenter. These are usually accompanied by the strategies of non-verbal responses to intensify the appreciation force such as LIKE, letter repetition or smileys.

Figure (2)



Agreeing

The agreement sub-strategy is the least used in the data under investigation. As table (6) demonstrates, the total number of agreeing with the complimenter sub-strategy is only (4) out of (314) compliment response (3 by male users and 1 by female users). This indicates that agreement with the compliment is not favoured among Iraqi Facebook interlocutors due to the high consideration for modesty in responding to complimenters. Even when used, this strategy is used ironically jocular manner (consider figure3).

Figure (3)

U 1
F

هاي الصورة من اجمل صورج

This is one of your most beautiful pictures.

U 2
F

اي روعة. ضروري تجين لهذا المكان

Yes, magnificence. It is necessary that you come to this place.

Downgrading the compliment

This strategy is also very rarely used and no significant gender variation can be noticed. Male and female users use this sub-strategy to compromise between modesty and agreement principles. They downgrade the intensity of the compliment by adding some other expressions while accepting the compliment. The total percentage of downgrading the compliment among all other sub-strategies is (3%).

Figure (4)

U 1
M

شنو هل الصورة اللطيفة كلها شباب وحيوية

What a beautiful picture full of youthfulness and energy.

U 2
M

يمعود هاي الصورة قديمة

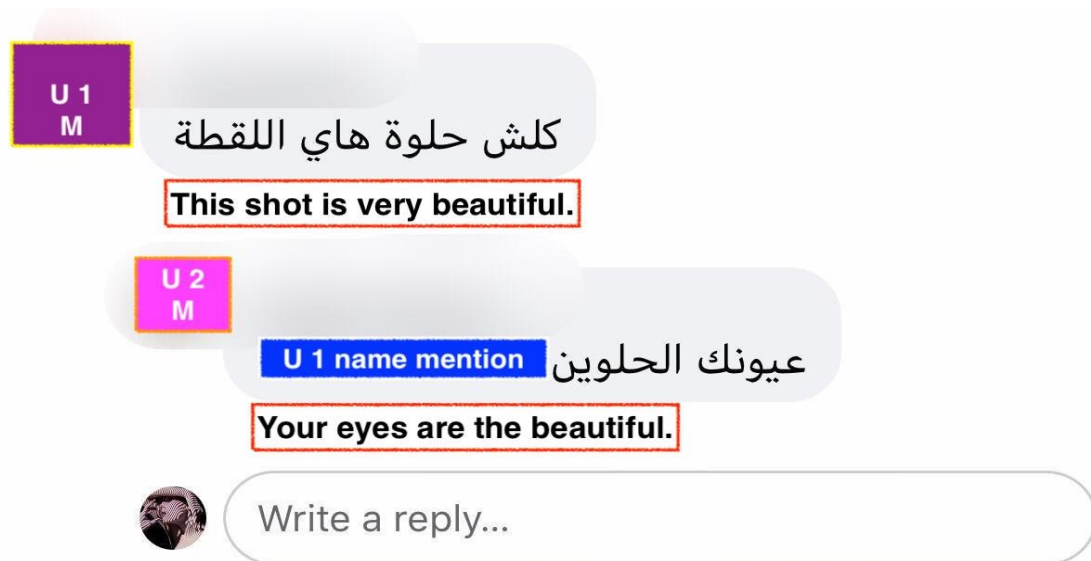
Oh man. This is an old picture.

Returning the compliment

Considering the overall percentage of verbal accepting sub-strategies, returning the compliment is found to be the most predominant one. It reached (30%) and (43%) out of the whole corpus of male and female accepting sub-strategies respectively. As with the other sub-strategies, the response is often accompanied by a

non-verbal strategy such as smileys or LIKEs. The plausible explanation for this high percentage can be attributed for the high regard of modesty in the Iraqi society.

Figure (5)



Evading the compliment

In response to compliments, speakers can choose to evade the compliment. On average, the strategy of evading the compliments comprised (3%) of the collected data and no gender variation is seen here. The low percentage of this strategy can be explained with reference to the modesty maxim.

Figure (6)

U 1
F

لقطة رائعة اخي العزيز

Wonderful shot, dear brother.

U 2
M

U 1 name mention

هذا تصوير المبدع أبو شهاب

This is the photography of the inventive Abu Shihab.

Rejecting the compliment

The least used response strategy is rejection. Only one instance of this strategy is found in our data as far as female complimentee are concerned and (2) instances are found in the male compliment responses. Compliment rejection is a face-threatening act and, taking into consideration the interlocutors' expectations, their use would be overtly inappropriate. Even the two instances found in the corpus, they are used in a jocular way and consequently their use would have a positive effect of solidarity and intimacy between the complimenter and the complimentee.

Figure (7)

U 1
F

شنو هل الصورة الكيوت. طالعة قمر

What a cute picture. Looking like the moon

U 2
F

U 1 name mention

يمعودة فلتراقبل صدك اني هيچ حلوة

Oh girl, this is a filter, as if I were that beautiful.

12. Internal and External Modifications

As mentioned in the research questions section, the third objective of this study is investigating the types and numbers of modifiers employed in responding to compliments. The procedure through which these modifiers were analyzed is to first

identify the head acts. Then, internal and external modifiers accompanying the head acts were identified.

12.1. Internal and External Modifiers Frequency

As table (7) shows, the current corpus included a total of 180 modifiers (37 internal and 143 external) by male complimentees and 266 modifiers (69 internal and 197 external) by female complimentees in their verbal responses to the received compliments. The analysis reveals that the mainstream modifiers are external (77%) and no significant differences are noticed across the two genders regarding internal versus external modifiers.

Table (7): Internal and external modifiers frequency

Complimentee gender	Internal	External	Total
Male	37 (20%)	143 (80%)	180
Female	69 (25%)	197 (75%)	266
Total	106	340	446

12.2. Frequency and Types of Internal Modifiers

The analysis shows that female complimentees used more internal modifiers than their male counterparts. They used a total of 69 (25%) of internal modifiers while male complimentees used a total of 37 (20%) of internal modifiers (see table 8). More notable significant differences across the two genders can be seen when comparing the frequency of the types of internal modifiers (see table 8). In the corpus of male complimentees, the intensifying adverbs internal modifiers is the most predominant one (59%) while letter repetition and multiple exclamations are the least (8%). In the female corpus on the other hand, intensifying adverbs percentage is (39%) and multiple exclamations are the least while letter repetition is the second more frequently used modifier.

Table (8): Internal modifiers types and frequency

Complimentee gender	Intensifying adverbs	Emotional expressions	Vowel lengthening	Multiple exclamations	Total
Male	22 (59%)	9 (24%)	3 (8%)	3 (8%)	37
Female	27 (39%)	13 (18%)	17 (24%)	12 (17)	69
Total	49 (43%)	22 (20%)	20 (18%)	15 (14%)	106

12.3. Frequencies and Types of External Modifiers

Although female complimentees used more external modifiers (197) than did male complimentees (143), no significant differences can be noticed in the frequency of the types of the used modifiers across male and female corpora. Table (9) below demonstrates that in both corpora the endearment modifier stands out as the most dominant one (40%) whereas supportive move is only rarely used (6%). All the other types of external modifiers are almost used equally by male and female complimentees except for emoticons and LIKES which were the second more prominent external modifiers in the female corpus (28%) while they are only used 23 times in the male corpus (16%).

Table (9): External modifiers types and frequency

Complimentee gender	Title	First name	Endearment term	Supportive move	Emoticons and likes	Total
Male	17 (11%)	25 (17%)	69 (48%)	9 (1%)	23 (16%)	143
Female	23 (11%)	37 (18%)	67 (34%)	13 (6%)	57 (28%)	197
Total	40 (11%)	62 (18%)	136 (40%)	22 (6%)	80 (23%)	340

14. Gender Analysis of Modifiers

Table (10) shows that significant variations can be seen when comparing the complimentee-complimenter exchanges across the two genders. On average, female complimentees used more modifiers in their responses than did their male

counterparts. However, in both sets of data, it is noted that both male and female complimentees used more external modifiers than internal modifiers.

Table (10): Gender analysis of internal and external modifiers

Complimentee gender	Internal modifiers	External modifiers	Total
M-M	14	195	209
M-F	23	75	98
F-F	51	209	260
F-M	18	57	75
Total	106	446	552

Interesting findings exist when comparing the M-F/M-M responses to F-F/MF-M. As far as internal modifiers are concerned, males implemented more internal modifiers in their compliment responses to females complimenters than male complimenters. Female complimenters had a different tendency. They used more internal modifiers in their responses to female complimenters than male complimenters. As for external modifiers, the case is quite the opposite for male Facebook users. They used more external modifiers in their responses to male complimenters. Their external modifiers accounted for (105) for male complimentees versus (75) for female complimenters. Females Facebook users, on the other hand, have the same tendency as with internal modifiers. Their use of external modifiers to female complimenters is four times as much as their use of external modifiers to male complimenters. They used (209) external modifiers to respond to the formers and only (57) to respond to the latter.

15. Conclusion

The issues that this study attempted to study and discuss include: (a) the linguistic and non-linguistic strategies and tools Iraqi Arab speakers use to respond to

Facebook compliments, and (b) the gender differences, if any, in responding to a compliment.

The results show that the options available to Facebook users in replying to comments play a crucial role in how the complimentees respond to the compliments. As a result of this, some strategies not available in face-to-face interactions have become popular among Facebook users and brought in a different responding system. The findings disclosed that hyper-communication tools on Facebook have given some novel and inventive compliment response strategies, which are unavailable in face-to-face communication. In this regard, the study found that non-verbal response strategies (emojis and LIKES) are preferred on Facebook as a compliment response. Moreover, very few evasion and rejection strategies are used on Facebook.

Concerning the first question, the current study finds that most of the complimentees respond to the compliments regardless of gender, notwithstanding that male complimentees' non-response to compliments is slightly higher than female complimentees' (20%, 7% respectively). Moreover, verbal compliment response is much preferred to non-verbal response for both genders with a higher percentage for females.

Diving deeper into the details, the study reveals that in response to the received compliments, male and female Iraqi Facebook users very rarely used evasion strategies and no rejection strategies were noted (except for two jokingly used ones in the male corpus). As for non-verbal response strategies, clicking LIKE is found to be the most used one, followed by clicking LIKE and emojis and then emojis only which is the least used one.

Further analysis of the acceptance strategies has been conducted because it is found to be the most prevalent response strategy in the collected data. Cross-gender variation is noted across the two sets of data. Firstly, it is found that the most frequently used acceptance strategy is the appreciation strategy in the male complimentees' data. Secondly, returning the compliment is the most frequently used in the female complimentees' data. Thirdly, agreeing and downgrading strategies are the least used acceptance strategies in both corpora.

Finally, regarding modifying the compliment responses, it is demonstrated that both male and female complimentees give priority to external modifiers and that the gender of the complimenter plays a significant role in determining the type of modifier for both genders.

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