



A Sociopragmatic Contrastive Analysis of Compliment Responses between Native American and Native Persian Chatters – A Web-Based Study

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Empirical Study

Abstract

Background: Online social networking has reduced the distance between people with different languages and cultures through allowing individuals in distant geographical locations to form interpersonal relationships. Adopting the Internet as the medium for online interactions, the current study aimed to compare and contrast Native American and Persian speakers' compliment responses (CRs) in this environment.

Methods: Data were collected from online social networks by saving archived conversations of 15 chat participants who were selected through snowball sampling from each group of English and Persian chat users. The conversations were produced from January 2009 to May 2012. The compliment exchanges made by the two groups were examined and contrasted with each other in terms of CRs strategies.

Results: Chi-square test and z-score results indicated that the two groups of participants differed significantly in adopting strategies for responding to compliments.

Conclusion: American speakers employed acceptance significantly more than Persian speakers. This is while Persian chat participants used self-praise avoidance significantly more than their American counterparts. Comparing the results of the study with other studies on CRs realization, it is suggested that communicative acts which take place in anonymous social networks mirror the cultural values of the language community of text-talk users and the medium of interaction did not restrict participants' cultural preferences in complimenting responses. However, they used some text-talk features in the online environment which indicates the need for using compensatory strategies due to the mode of interaction.

Keywords: Compliment responses, Medium of interaction, Cultural values, Text-talk features

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Introduction

Over the past decades, the development of modern technology has brought about

dramatic changes in social interactions in terms of channels of communication. With the advent of the new technology known as Internet, the online environment and online interaction was viewed as a separate realm from the face-to-face interactions that take place in daily life. However, as more people come online, online interaction and electronic

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communication are more increasingly viewed as normal channels for communication. Online social networks have become a popular way for users to connect, express themselves, and share content with people from all over the world.

When compared to face-to-face interaction, online interaction may seem impoverished because it lacks paralinguistic features such as gaze, tone, hand gestures, facial expressions, and etcetera. This is especially evident in text-based chatting in various chat rooms, social networks, instant messaging, emails, and so on. This may influence the communication; in other words, communication may deviate from the way it occurs in face-to-face interaction. Werry (1996) asserts that this relatively new medium provides grounds for analysis since it makes possible interesting forms of social and linguistic interaction, brings into play a unique set of social interaction, and shows some parameters that determine how communicative acts are structured in the new medium of electronic communication. Similarly, Anderson, Beard, and Walther (2010) noted that participants adapt new forms of communication creatively and use different sets of resources to successfully convey their messages and achieve interactions online.

Moreover, it is now well documented that linguistic competence alone is not sufficient for effective communication, and online communications may not be an exception in this respect. Speakers of a language must also master sociopragmatic norms of the language to achieve communicative purposes appropriately in their face-to-face interaction. Among the many speech acts to investigate, the compliment act is deemed as a particularly suitable speech act to examine when comparing cultures or sociopragmatic norms underlying a given language since we can view what is valued in a particular culture through it (Wolfson & Manes, 1980).

According to Holmes (1988), a compliment is defined as “a speech act which explicitly or

implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speakers, usually the person addressed, for some ‘good’ (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer”. Holmes (1988) considered compliments to be positively affective speech acts on the one hand, and potentially face-threatening acts on the other. Downes (1998) defines compliment as a supportive action associated with offers, gifts, and congratulations which is sequentially expected to be followed by an acceptance or rejection as the second part. Similarly, Herbert (1990) explains that a compliment event consists of a two unit exchange in which the second utterance as the compliment response is conditionally relevant and sequentially dependent on the first utterance which is the compliment offered.

Compliment responses (CRs) patterns vary greatly across cultures. It has been reported that, in non-western languages, the acceptance rates are much lower than those in English speaking communities (Baek, 1998). While acceptance of the compliment is reported to be used by native English speakers (Chen, 1993; Herbert, 1986; Holmes & Brown, 1987), downgrading and rejection were usually used by speakers of other languages, especially those from Asian countries such as China, Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam (Chen, 1993; Baba, 1996; Tran, 2006; Yu, 2004). According to Ye (1995), CRs are intricate acts since they are ubiquitous and multifunctional.

Thus far, the results of other studies have shown that compliments and CRs' realizations are varied across cultures in face-to-face interaction. There is a debate whether or not CRs are realized in online environments in the same way they are realized in face-to-face interaction. In other words, it is worth discussing how the medium of interaction influences or restricts speakers' cultural preferences in complimenting and responding to compliments. To do this, an etic contrastive analysis between two distinct cultures is more beneficial than emic comparisons to shed light

on cultural preferences of a given language community within any social setting.

Review of the literature

There is a lack of research on contrastive analysis studies on how Persian speakers achieve different speech acts, including complimenting, through distant communication compared to speakers of other languages. On the other hand, a majority of the previous studies on speech acts were not based on speakers' communicative performance adopting Discourse-Completion Tasks (DCTs). The studies on compliment speech act, and speech acts in general, made use of many data collection methods such as role playing, natural ethnographic method, use of interviews, and films; however, the online medium has been neglected for speech act realization, especially in the Persian language. Complimenting behavior, seemingly a very simple act, is in fact very intricate in different speech communities because it indicates the emphasis of different cultures on their values.

The act of complimenting requires the addressee's response. Socially preferred structures divide the second part of the speech act, which is response to the compliment, into preferred and dispreferred social acts (Wang & Tsai, 2003). By preferred, it is meant socially and structurally accepted and expected acts, and by dispreferred it is meant socially and structurally unexpected acts.

It can be implied that acceptance of, or agreement with requests, assessments, invitations, and offers is preferred, while rejecting or disagreeing with them is dispreferred. It seems that acceptance or agreement occurs more frequently than rejection or disagreement. It is expected that acceptance be usually given without delay and clearly, while rejections are given with hesitation (Levinson et al., 1983; Pomerantz, 1985). However, Pomerantz (1978), in her study on CRs in English conversations, found that most of the respondents hesitate to

accept and agree with the compliment as well as disagree with it. Generally, the recipients' internal conflict was between agreeing with compliments on the one hand and avoiding self-praise on the other. Pomerantz's conclusion shows that compliment response production is the result of multiple constraint systems. This finding is highlighted when considering that, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), compliments can be regarded as face-threatening acts. Therefore, due to the fact that complimenting is both a positive politeness device as well as a face-threatening act, its appropriate realization is deemed as complex. Besides, compliments may also threaten the face of interlocutors. For instance, if the complimentee feels that the compliments are insincere or exaggerated, have some hidden intentions, intrude into the private space of the complimentee, or compel the complimentee to share the object complimented on, they may provoke negative reactions. Therefore, compliments are very complex speech acts and may lead to misunderstanding in intercultural encounters.

Yousefvand (2010) conducted a research to examine CRs across gender among Persian university speakers using DCT. Her findings showed that Persian speakers generally tend to respond to compliments with agreement and modesty. The results she obtained indicated the significant effect of gender on CRs. She reports that men tend to reject a compliment by using formulaic expressions, whereas females in her study preferred to accept compliments or show surprise when complimented. Heidari-Shahreza, Vahid Dasjerdi, and Marvi (2011) investigated the discursual variation of CRs among male and female Iranian Persian speakers through the use of DCT. Their findings showed that the two groups of speakers mostly prefer to use acceptance strategies in almost all of the four situations mentioned. However, female speakers tended to use evasion strategies when they were complimented on their possessions.

This study explores how one particular

speech act, compliment and CRs, is realized in the two languages of Native American English and Persian by social network users, and how their realizations contrast with those in face-to-face interaction. Theoretically, it might shed light on the communicative strategies related to compliments and CRs among Persian and American speakers in online electronic environments. The findings of this study might also be helpful in understanding the nature of electronic communication and comparing it with face-to-face interaction.

Compliment responses taxonomies: CRs have been one major focus for research on the issue of compliment speech act. According to Pomerantz (1978), CRs represent the recipient's resolution of conflict between two conversational constraints. She explains that the preferred second part in a compliment speech act would be in an agreement with what the compliment giver has said. This puts pressure on the recipient of the compliment to be in agreement with the complimenter. Paradoxically, accepting the compliment or agreeing with the compliment may be regarded as self-praise. Pomerantz found that her American participants did not follow her acceptance model of CRs as was expected, but rather they tended to disagree with compliments or reject it to avoid self-praise. She believes that this is due to another constraint system that functions to minimize self-praise (1978, p. 81). Therefore, Pomerantz (1978) classifies CRs into three main categories of acceptance, rejection which deals with disagreement tokens, and self-praise avoidance which aims to minimize positive evaluation of the compliment (as cited in Jucker, 2009). Other taxonomies include those of Holmes (1988, as cited in Jucker, 2009) and Herbert (1989, as cited in Tran, 2006).

Methods

Using snowball sampling, 15 Native American and 15 Native Persian profile users on the social network, Facebook, were

selected regardless of their gender, age, educational background, and social status. Snowball sampling was used as a guarantee that all the participants were native speakers and all of them logged into the network with their real identities. With the consideration of ethical issues, the 15 profile users' archived conversations with their friends were saved for later analysis. Referrals or mutual friends helped reveal other chat users' native language when necessary. The corpus of the study consisted of text-based written conversations which contained compliment speech act sequences in the two languages of American English and Persian. The two data sets were obtained from naturally occurring conversations which had taken place among chat participants in Facebook from January 2009 to May 2012, the time of data collection. Such data was not elicited by the researcher for the purpose of research. Therefore, although in written form, it can be counted as naturally occurring data as it was originally produced to a communicative end (Jucker, 2009). For coding the data, a modified version of Pomerantz's (1978) taxonomy of CRs was employed. However, some other categories were added to Pomerantz's model to fit all the patterns observed in the data.

The data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative analysis was employed for examining complimenting behavior in terms of compliment strategies, functions they serve, and compliment response patterns. Qualitative analysis of the data was used to discuss the nature of online interaction and its effect on the complimenting behavior of chat participants.

Results

Having examined the compliments, the patterns of (explicit) acceptance, self-praise avoidance or deflection, and rejection were identified at a macro-level (their distribution is displayed in figure 1).

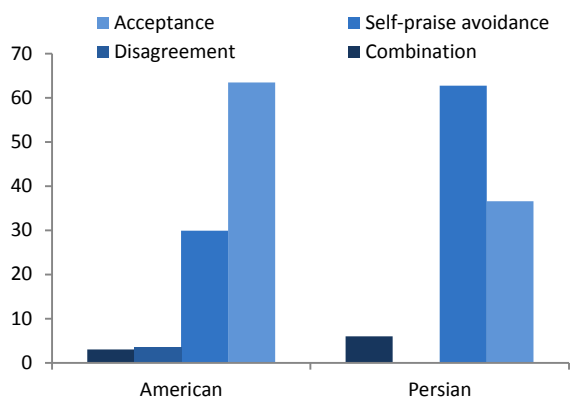


Figure 1. Distributions of compliment response strategies at macro-level

The results of chi-square test shows that there exists a significant difference between the two groups' use of CR strategies at significance level or alpha level of 0.05 ($\chi^2 (3) = 127.561, P < 0.05$; asymptotic significance < 0.001), and the effect size of 0.345 (Cramér's $V = 0.345$).

Further examination was conducted by z-score to see which particular strategies at the macro-level significantly differ in terms of frequency between the two groups. The z-score computation shows significant difference in adopting all four strategies between the two groups of participants at the alpha level of 5%. This means that acceptance, disagreement, and combination strategies are more likely to be used by American speakers, and Persian speakers are more likely to use self-praise avoidance strategies (Table 1).

The results indicate that American speakers are more likely to use acceptance

category to respond to the compliments ($Z = 8.79$) which is larger than the critical value 1.96 at confidence level of 95% ($P \leq 0.05$). All the subcategories of the category of acceptance (appreciation token, agreeing utterance, praise upgrade, informative comment, and non-verbal clues) share the feature of acceptance of the offered compliment, not necessarily agreeing with the compliment force. In contrast, Persian speakers tended to make more use of avoidance strategy ($Z = 10.77$). It should be mentioned that the shared characteristic of self-avoidance strategies (including praise downgrade, return, deprecating expressions, shifting credit, humorous comment, disregard, and legitimate evasion) is lack of positive elaboration in responses. Z-score also shows that speakers made use of combination strategies and disagreeing utterance significantly less than their American counterparts ($P \leq 0.05$).

Glancing at figure 2, one can grasp the tendency of the two groups to use strategies at the micro-level. However, to find significant differences between the two groups and the relationship of language and culture, z-score and chi-square test were conducted.

Chi-square testing on CR strategies at the micro-level showed a significant relationship between the language used and the compliment response adoption ($\chi^2 (13) = 446.621; P < 0.05$; asymptotic significance < 0.001 ; Cramér's $V = 0.543$). The z-score also showed which cells contributed more to the chi-square value (Table 2).

Table 1. Distributions of compliment responses strategies at macro-level and results of significance testing of individual cells

Compliment response strategies	Persian n (%)	American n (%)	Z-score
Acceptance	185 (36.6)	359 (63.5)	8.79*
Self-praise avoidance	317 (62.8)	169 (29.9)	10.77*
Rejection	0 (0.0)	20 (3.5)	4.27*
Combination	3 (0.6)	17 (3.0)	2.91*
Total	505 (100.0)	565 (100.0)	----

* Significant difference

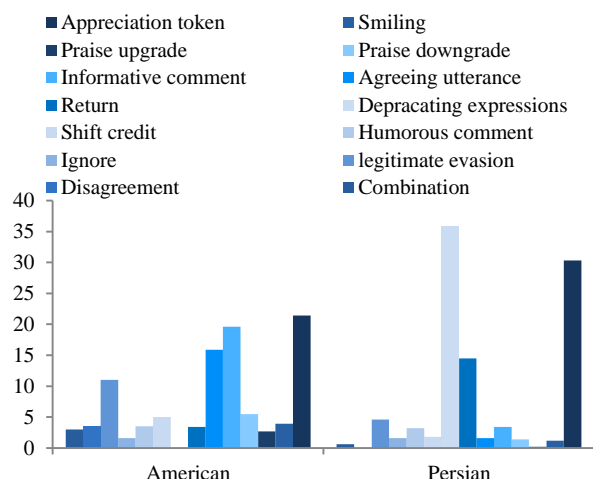


Figure 2. Distributions of compliment response strategies at macro-level

The results suggest that American speakers tend to use all four subcategories of acceptance category, except smiling and appreciation token, significantly more than Persian speakers. Informative comment ($Z = 8.19 > 1.96, P \leq 0.05$) and agreeing utterance were used with the highest significant difference by American chatters.

The two next strategies with the highest significant difference between the groups were praise upgrade ($Z = 3.3 > 1.96, P \leq 0.05$) and smiling ($Z = 2.77 > 1.96, P \leq 0.05$). It

should be mentioned that in smiling category, complimentees choose to respond to the compliment offered by smiling in their conversational turns. Due to the restrictions of the medium, this strategy was realized through the use of emoticons. Within the self-praise avoidance category, the highest significance was observed in the use of deprecating expressions ($Z = 15.61 > 1.96, P \leq 0.05$) and returns ($Z = 6.46 > 1.96, P \leq 0.05$) which were used by Persian speakers in a very high frequency compared to their American counterparts. By using deprecating expressions, the compliment recipient humbles himself/herself and exalts the compliment giver. The significant differences also show that American speakers are more likely to use praise downgrade ($Z = 3.62 > 1.96$) and shift credit ($Z = 2.83 > 1.96$) to deflect a compliment at alpha level of 5% when compared to Persian speakers. However, legitimate evasion was the most significant strategy used by American chatters in deflection category ($Z = 3.88 > 1.96, P \leq 0.05$). In this strategy, compliment recipients attended to other moves which had come with the compliments, such as requests, questions, and comments.

Table 2. Distributions of compliment response strategies at micro-level and results of significance testing of individual cells

Compliment response strategy	Persian n (%)	American n (%)	Z-score
Appreciation token	153 (30.3)	121 (21.4)	0.32
Smiling	6 (1.2)	22 (3.9)	2.77*
Praise upgrade	1 (0.2)	15 (2.7)	3.3*
Agreeing utterance	8 (1.6)	90 (15.9)	8.12*
Informative comment	17 (3.4)	111 (19.6)	8.19*
Praise downgrade	7 (1.4)	31 (5.5)	3.62*
Return	73 (14.5)	19 (3.4)	6.46*
Deprecating expressions	181 (35.8)	0 (0.0)	15.61*
Shift credit	9 (1.8)	28 (5.0)	2.83*
Humorous comment	16 (3.2)	20 (3.5)	0.34
Disregard	8 (1.6)	9 (1.6)	0.011
Legitimate evasion	23 (4.6)	62 (11.0)	3.88*
Disagreement	0 (0.0)	20 (3.5)	4.27*
Combination	3 (0.6)	17 (3.0)	2.91*
Total	505 (100.0)	565 (100.0)	

* Significant difference

Considering the results, the null hypothesis was rejected both at the macro-levels and the micro-levels of CR strategies at alpha level of 5% ($P \leq 0.05$). It can be concluded that the two groups of chat participants culturally preferred different strategies to respond to compliments.

Discussion

The findings on CRs showed significant differences between the two groups of speakers. Generally speaking, American chat participants used acceptance strategy almost twice as much as Persian participants, while the latter group was likely to use self-praise avoidance strategy almost twice as much as the former group.

Although significant differences were observed in most CR subcategories at the micro-level, the cells were contributed more to the overall significant difference related to informative comment and agreeing utterance (favored by American participants), deprecating expressions and returns (favored by Persian speakers), and disagreement (favored by American participants), respectively. American speakers also used a combination of these strategies significantly more than Persian speakers.

It can be implied from the findings that Persian speakers' responses to preferred compliments lack positive elaboration. Although no significant difference was observed, Persian chatters used appreciation token in the acceptance category slightly more than their American counterparts. Seemingly, acceptance of compliments in the American language is characterized by positive elaboration, while the very low acceptance responses in Persian were in the form of ritual *thank you*. Compared to other subcategories of acceptance, appreciation token has the least force and is the most conservative strategy in accepting the compliment; it rather equals with seemingly agreeing with the compliment. It does not show whether the complimentee has actually accepted the compliment or just superficially

expressed his/her acceptance. Interestingly, Persian chatters were very conservative in other strategies in the acceptance category. In cases of praise upgrade and agreeing utterances, which were low in frequency, Persian chatters often used some emoticons like winking which seems to minimize the force of their acceptance. Even in respect to informative comments, Persian speakers mainly made use of neutral comments, while American participants tended to utilize more positive comments on the compliments. This shows American participants' enthusiasm to give detailed, often positive, comments on the topic of the compliments to be certain that the complimenter is informed of all the aspects of the topic.

Praise downgrade is the second most frequent strategy used by American speakers in the deflection or self-praise avoidance category. The first distribution belongs to legitimate evasion which is related to the procedural function of the compliments, and thus, intentional or unintentional neglecting of the compliment acceptance. Praise-downgrading used by American speakers is the negative elaboration of the compliment by the recipient.

However, praise downgrading is the least used strategy among Persian chatters. It seems that Iranians even evade from negative elaborations when avoiding compliments. In contrast, they use two other strategies (self-deprecating expressions and returns) which do not endanger the face of the complimenter (to minimize the compliment he/she has offered) and endanger their own face to the least possible extent.

(Self)Deprecating expression, the most frequently used strategy among Persian speakers, belongs to the category of deprecating expressions or self-denigrating expressions. To be specific, no sign of disagreeing or downplaying the complimentary force is observed using these expressions. It seems that adopting such expressions is mostly a modest way to agree with the complimentary force. Furthermore,

the recipient lowers or downgrades himself/herself not the complimentary force. To be specific, the recipient humbles himself/herself and exalts the complimenter by giving credit to him/her in most of such expressions. Three patterns of deprecating expressions were observed in the Persian data. The first pattern is when the complimenter asks the complimentee not to continue complimenting, like when they say *ekhtiar darin* (literally means the choice rests with you), *kharesh mikonam* (literally means you are welcome), and *sharmande mifarmayin* (literally means you are embarrassing me). The second type are expressions of affections which can be regarded as self-lowering returns such as *ghorbanat* or *fadat sham* (literally means I am ready to sacrifice my life for you), *dar khedmatam* (I am at your service), and *chakerim* or *mokhlesim* (I am your humble servant). The third type of these expressions is when the compliment recipient attributes the compliment to the complimenter, that is, when they say *cheshmat ziba mibine* [it is your eyes that see beauty (I am not as beautiful as that which your eyes see)], and *lotf darid* [it is kind of you; complimenting me is a sign of your kindness (that you pay attention to me)]. Even offering expressions given in response to a compliment on possession is in this category. In such situations, recipients usually offer the object to the compliment giver by saying *ghabeli nadare* (it is not worthy of you, take it). This means that although the object is good or acceptable for me, your position requires you to have a better object of this kind.

Return was the second most frequently utilized strategy by Persian speakers; the frequency of its use was significantly higher than that among the American participants. Returns occur when the complimentary force is shifted to the complimenter by returning the same compliment offered or by offering another compliment.

Both of these most used strategies offer something to the complimenter. It seems as if Iranians feel indebted when complimented.

Therefore, they pay back their debt by equal gifts through return acts [*to khodet zibatari* (you yourself are more beautiful than me)] or more expensive ones in case of self-deprecating expressions. It is worth noting that most of the acts used for this category are frozen expressions which are the least face-threatening for the complimentee.

The two groups were almost equal in terms of using the disregard strategy. However, this cannot be regarded as a cultural scheme due to the asynchronous environment in which the conversation has taken place and its multilogue nature, it is very probable that some have missed the comments that others have posted. However, in some cases the complimentee had shifted the topic of the compliment, for instance, to greet the complimenter [*chetoriyayi?* (how are you?), *che khabar* (what's up?)].

As for the third category, it appears that Persian speakers do not use disagreement strategies to reject compliments. In the Persian culture, disagreeing with others is a sign of rudeness and regarded as a threat to the audience's face. Disagreeing is not the expected acceptable response for compliments. Disagreeing with compliments conveys the message that the complimenter is a liar and ruins the relations as opposed to what the complimenter intended – as the broader research by Motamedi et al. (2013) showed that compliments function as phatic communion in the Persian culture significantly more than the American culture.

Moreover, Persian speakers are concise in responding to the offered compliments, since any elaboration other than positive extension is also considered as recipients' seeking or waiting for more compliments. This may be the cause of Persians' lack of use of the combination category.

Seemingly, CRs pattern schemes in the Persian language include:

1. One pattern is self-humbling and other-exalting. Using returns, the compliment recipient also gives credit to the compliment giver. It seems that exalting and giving credit

to the compliment giver is the most prominent characteristic of Persian CRs.

2. It seems also that Persian speakers face a dilemma when they want to respond to a compliment. This may be partially due to the fact that the boundary between sincerity and insincerity of compliments in the Persian culture is rather blurred and not clear-cut. Thus, Persian speakers take the middle stance by adopting deflection strategies, mostly through the use of deprecating expressions and returns, and lack of use positive elaborations. This is a conservative way they adopt to minimize the threat to their own face and, at the same time, to the relationship existing between the complimenter and complimentee.

3. They also choose the strategies with the most minimal degree of endangerment of their own face and that of the complimentee in order not to be rude and also maintain the solidarity between them.

The findings of this study on CRs showed the same preferences that Sharifian (2005) and Yousefvand (2010) reported. Sharifian found that Iranians used formulaic expressions to avoid the acceptance of compliments. The present study's data show a similar preference among Persian speakers. Yousefvand (2010) also found that speakers rarely reject compliments with negative answers, but rather utilize formulaic expressions such as "I have done nothing" and "You make me feel ashamed". Examination of the Persian data showed the same preferences. Persian speakers did not use disagreeing utterances at all. However, the current study findings are in contrast with those reported by Heidari-Shahreza et al. (2011), who claimed that Persian speakers, both men and women, mostly prefer acceptance strategies. However, the findings cannot be compared with other studies in details since other variables may have contributed to their results. For instance, Heidari-Shahreza et al. and Yousefvand examined the impact of gender on the use of CRs, a variable which was not considered in

this study.

In respect to strategies used by chatters to realize compliment speech acts in online settings, the influence of the online medium on speech act realization can be discussed at two levels. The first level was participants' way of complimenting which is explained in detail by Motamedi & Biria (2013). For the purpose of this study, it suffices to say that the findings of the mentioned study showed the same cultural schemes as those of this study in the two speech communities.

Secondly, it was revealed that the main difference between face-to-face compliments and online compliments is in the mode of interaction. Two general patterns were found in the two corpuses of online compliments as text-talk features. The first pattern was that of *shorthand* which works as a system of using shortened forms and logograms to increase the speed and brevity of typing. The second pattern of text-talk features is related to *compensatory strategies* which tackle the lack of paralinguistic features and non-verbal clues in the offline environment. Compensatory strategies consist of punctuations and pictograms which create interpersonal engagement between the interlocutors.

Seemingly, pictograms are not only used to intensify or color the messages or show the attitudes or feelings of the participants, but also to have an illocutionary force of their own. In the two data sets, the participants sometimes took their turns to talk in the form of pictograms. As such, a smiling emoticon may mean I am happy with what you have said, uploading a heart shape ♥ may mean I love you, or thumbs-up may mean that I agree with you.

The chat participants also made use of word intensifiers and sentence punctuation to convey their meaning. This means that without such practices, the complimentary force was not conveyed or the intention of the speakers' compliments was misunderstood. These include exclamation marks with written compliments which are associated with rising intonation showing

surprise. Using multiple dots show the same tendency to intensify the act which they come with. Capitalization has the intensifying function in compliment exchanges, like the functions repetition and quotation marks serve. In this sense, the words, including verbs or adjectives, that are responsible for conveying the complimentary force are capitalized, put in quotation marks, or repeated in different ways.

The other interesting pattern was that Persian speakers used roman typography to write Persian words, or write their messages in English or a combination of English and Persian. This may mostly be due to keyboard characteristics. Using a Farsi keyboard, they cannot use logograms such as :) and :P.

Conclusion

The examination of the complimenting behavior of the two groups of participants from two distant cultures showed that no single universal model is representative of compliments and their responses in the two languages since different cultural norms and scripts cause variation in realizing the speech act in different languages. It seems that cooperative manners are realized culturally, that is there are variations from culture to culture. While a certain way of complimenting or responding to a given compliment is considered as cooperative or the sign of agreement in one culture, it may be regarded as discordant in another.

The results on compliment speech act suggest that communicative acts realized in social networks do not differ from their realization in offline face-to-face interactions. Seemingly, it is the culture of a given speech community which is framed in the new mode of conversation. Online interaction, as a new form of communication, occurs within the native language of participants with all its features and norms. However, in online text-based chat, people are able to express online what is nonverbal in offline face-to-face conversation. This causes an emergence of a text called hybrid text by Crystal (2001).

Furthermore, using these features show participants' proficiency in text-based conversation.

Limitations

There exists a methodological constraint in online research. This shortcoming is the inability to retrieve findings for verification which consequently leads to the lack of generalizability of the research findings. The other shortcoming relevant to computer mediated communication (CMC) studies is that it is impossible to guarantee participants identities; in the current study, it was attempted to mitigate this problem through the use of snowball sampling to select those people who log into their profiles with their real names or those who have offline, real life relationships with each other. The results obtained examining chat style through analyzing the corpus of this study is not generalizable to other online environments either, since text-talk features may vary from one online environment to the other. In addition, literature on speech acts suggests that there are several variables influencing the use of compliments by participants, among them are gender, age, educational level, and social status, which were neglected in this research.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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