

Compliment Strategies: A Contrastive Study of Compliment Responses in Czech and English

Strategie komplimentů: Kontrastivní analýza odpovědí na komplimenty v češtině a angličtině

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ABSTRAKT

V této diplomové práci se zaměřuji na mezikulturní pragmatiku a analyzuji rozdíly v reakcích na komplimenty mezi českými a anglickými mluvčími, s důrazem na rozdíly mezi muži a ženami. Cílem je identifikovat rozdíly ve frekvenci a typech strategií odpovědí na komplimenty, které používají muži a ženy v angličtině a češtině. Dále zjišťuji, zda je Leechův princip zdvořilosti a teorie Brownové a Levinsona vhodná pro analýzu reakcí na komplimenty v obou zkoumaných kulturách.

Klíčová slova: kompliment, zdvořilost, reakce na komplimenty, mezikulturní pragmatika

ABSTRACT

This diploma thesis focuses on cross-cultural pragmatics by analysing the differences in compliment responses among Czech and English speakers with a special focus on gender differences. It investigates whether there are differences in the frequency and types of compliment response strategies used by men and women in English and Czech. Furthermore, this thesis explores whether the theoretical frameworks of Leech's politeness principle and Brown and Levinson's face-saving theory are suitable for analysing the compliment responses in Czech and English cultures.

Keywords: compliment, politeness, compliment responses, cross-cultural pragmatics

I hereby declare that I have authored this master's thesis independently and that I have provided a comprehensive list of all literature cited and utilized in the course of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural communication is a rich and complex field highlighting the varied nature of language and social interaction across diverse cultural contexts. Within this realm, the exchange of compliments and their responses emerge as an exciting area of study, offering insights into the interplay of linguistic and cultural factors in everyday interactions.

Compliment responses are not merely polite acknowledgments; they reflect cultural values and social norms. Understanding how different cultures navigate complimenting behaviour can provide valuable insight into the ways people communicate and relate to each other.

This study explores English and Czech speakers' distinct strategies in responding to compliments, with a particular focus on gender differences. By comparing these two linguistic and cultural contexts, this thesis seeks to uncover similarities and differences in compliment responses, offering a deeper understanding of cross-cultural communication dynamics, which is valuable for researchers and language learners.

The objectives of this research include examining the frequency and type of compliment response strategies utilized by men and women in both cultures, as well as evaluating the applicability of established frameworks in politeness theory and pragmatics to the analysis of compliment responses within Czech and English cultural contexts, namely Leech's (1983) politeness principle and Brown and Levinson's face-saving theory (1987). For the purposes of this study, the taxonomy developed by Janet Holmes (1988) is used to categorize individual compliment responses.

By addressing these research questions, this study aims to enhance our understanding of the cultural dynamics that shape complimenting behavior in English and Czech cultures. The findings of this study will contribute to the existing knowledge about cross-cultural communication.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

1 SPEECH ACTS

Communication is a vital part of our everyday life. From sharing personal experiences to engaging in casual conversations or addressing conflicts, it's how we express our desires and needs. These individual instances of communication collectively form what is referred to as a speech act. Because of this, various linguists raised the question of how the hearer can determine what kind of act the speaker wants to perform.

For a successful communication to occur, the hearer is expected to derive the correct inference about the speaker's intention. This intention can be derived from the semantics of the sentence in combination with the context of the utterance. Because of this, inferencing is fundamental to the Speech Act Theory (Birner 2013, 175). This theory is concerned with the fact that communication between individuals is more than just a mere exchange of linguistic material and information. Moreover, it highlights that speech acts are uttered to achieve a particular communicative goal.

1.1 Speech Act Theory

Compliment responses, which are the prime subject of this study, together with compliments represent speech acts. Holmes (1988, 446) defines compliments as:

“a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attribute 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.”

In *How to do things with words*, lectures published posthumously in 1962, John Austin introduced his distinction of different types of utterances. Namely, *constative utterances*, which are those utterances that provide statements about the state of affairs that are either true or false, and *performatives*, which are utterances that do not provide any statements and thus cannot be assessed as being true or false (Austin 1962, 3-6). Uttering a performative utterance is simultaneously performing the action the utterance describes. In addition, Austin (1962, 14) defined the circumstances in which a performative statement is made is essential for it to be effective and interpreted according to its intended meaning. Following Austin (*ibid.*), the circumstances are as follows:

- (1) “There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect ... include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances...”

- (2) “The particular persons and circumstance ... must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure.”
- (3) “The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and completely” (Austin 1962, 14).
- (4) If a procedure is meant to elicit specific thoughts, feelings, or behaviours from participants, those participants must genuinely possess those thoughts or feelings, and they must intend to behave accordingly during the procedure. Additionally, they must continue to act in accordance with those intentions (ibid.).

Austin, whose work was revisited and continued by Searle, added that utterances carry more than one force. For this reason, Austin defined three aspects of a speech act: a locutionary act, an illocutionary act, and a perlocutionary act (Austin 1962, 108). Firstly, a locutionary act is represented by the sentence uttered. This sentence has a certain traditional meaning and reference. In other words, it is the “what is said” part of the three acts performed. The second type of act is an illocutionary act or illocution. This act is associated with the speaker's intentions (ibid.). In other words, the speaker produces an utterance with a specific force or intention, and the hearer is expected to infer this intention. Lastly, Austin describes perlocutionary acts. These can be described as the utterance's effects on the addressee's actions or feelings.

Additionally, Austin (1962, 150) suggested a classification of illocutionary acts: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives. Nevertheless, Searle argued that Austin's classification system is inconsistent and highlighted the presence of overlapping categories. Additionally, Searle (1979, 9) proposes that Austin's classification is more concerned with English illocutionary verbs rather than solely focusing on illocutionary acts. According to Searle, Austin assumed that different verbs automatically classify distinct illocutionary acts, but this is not necessarily true. Searle exemplifies this by noting that some verbs, like “announce” denote the manner in which an illocutionary act is executed. For instance, one can announce orders, promises, and reports, but announcing is not equivalent to ordering, promising, or reporting. Announcing does not signify a specific type of illocutionary act, but rather the method by which an illocutionary act is carried out. Therefore, an announcement involves another illocutionary act, such as a statement or order. Similarly, Searle (1969, 68) criticised Austin's understanding of performatives by stating that "It is possible to perform the act without invoking an explicit illocutionary force-

indicating device where the context and the utterance make it clear that the essential condition is satisfied.”

Searle (1979, 12-15) proposed his own classification of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Moreover, he argued against the seemingly endless options for language usage. He suggested adopting illocution as the base for classifying uses of language, which would lead us to define only a “limited number of basic things we do with language:

- we tell people how things are,
- we try to get them to do things,
- we commit ourselves to doing things,
- we express our feelings and attitudes,
- we bring about changes through our utterances.

Often, we do more than one of these at once in the same utterance.”

(Searle 1979, 28-29).

In connection to the topic of this thesis, according to Searle’s taxonomy, the verb *to compliment* is classified as an English expressive (Searle 1985, 215). It serves as a means to show appreciation or approval of something about the hearer. Searle (ibid.) added that “Complimenting presupposes that the thing the hearer is complimented for is good, though it need not necessarily be good for him.” Furthermore, Searle (1979, 15) explains that expressives are used to convey feelings about a specific situation. Unlike other speech acts, there is no intention to change the world or match words to reality. Instead, the truth of what is expressed is presupposed.

In addition, Searle (1979, 30) delineates two fundamental instances of meaning: direct and indirect speech acts. In direct speech acts, the speaker’s intended illocutionary effect aligns with the literal meaning of their words, relying on mutual conversational rules for interpretation. However, indirect speech acts encompass situations where the speaker’s intended meaning diverges from the literal interpretation, often relying on shared knowledge between the interlocutors (Searle 1979, 30-31). Additionally, Searle (1979, 34) distinguishes between primary and secondary illocutionary force. While secondary illocutionary force aligns with the literal meaning of the utterance, primary illocutionary force conveys the speaker’s intended illocutionary effect, even if it diverges from the literal interpretation (ibid.).

Compliments belong to the type of speech acts that can be expressed implicitly. The context of conversation plays a vital role in interpreting these implicit compliments. In other words, the position of compliments within broader contexts allows them to be understood as compliments, even if it is not explicitly stated. Thus, it is vital to consider the conversational context to interpret compliments accurately (Bielewicz-Kunc 2010, 3).

2 POLITENESS

In lay terms, politeness may refer to the societal norms guiding behaviour and speech during social interactions. According to Penelope Brown (2017, 383), if social interaction is to be successful, it is expected that the interlocutors adhere to culturally appropriate norms that attend to the expectations and feelings of the participants. In other words, to be able to navigate in a modern society, it is necessary to hone social skills to be able to communicate effectively.

Modern linguists, particularly pragmalinguists, have explored the concept of politeness over the past three decades, turning it into a subject approached from various perspectives. As a result, the concept of politeness has challenged various linguists to explore the nature of this phenomenon. It is because politeness is not only a matter of pragmatics, but concerns other scientific branches, such as psychology and sociology. Nevertheless, because the matter is intricate and potentially ambiguous, there are differences in definitions and conclusions.

This study will centre on prominent theories relevant to compliment responses, providing a comprehensive framework for the subsequent linguistic analysis.

The following part of the thesis is dedicated to major pragmatic theories relevant to the purposes of this study. These theories are the Cooperative Principle by Paul Grice (1975), Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, and the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987).

2.1 Cooperative Principle

This view was introduced by Paul Grice (1975) in his widely known paper *Logic and Conversation*. In his work, Grice (1975, 43) describes a subclass of nonconventional implicatures – Conversational implicatures. He defines conversational implicatures as closely tied to certain general features of discourse. Grice suggests that typical conversations are not merely a series of random statements but involve a cooperative effort between participants. Each participant recognizes a common purpose or direction in the conversation, whether it is established from the beginning or evolves throughout the exchange. This purpose or direction could be specific or vague, depending on the nature of the conversation. However, Grice (ibid.) notes that certain conversational moves would be deemed unsuitable at different stages of the conversation. From this observation, he proposes a general principle called the Cooperative Principle, which serves as a rough guideline that participants are

expected to follow (Grice 1975, 45). If one of the participants fails to adhere to the expected communication behaviour, it could be deemed as conversationally inappropriate.

Furthermore, Grice supposes that this overreaching principle governs the optimal and efficient use of language to facilitate rational interaction in communication. By Grice's definition, the Cooperative Principle states: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (ibid.). The Cooperative Principle is then subdivided into four individual maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner. Grice (1975, 45-46) described these submaxims as follows:

Maxim of Quantity

- Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the purposes of the exchange)
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner

- Avoid obscurity of expression
- Avoid ambiguity.
- Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- Be orderly.

It is important to note that Grice (1975, 47) acknowledges that beyond the specific conversational maxims he outlined earlier, there are various other types of maxims, such as aesthetic, social, or moral maxims like "Be polite," which participants in conversations typically adhere to. These diverse maxims can also give rise to nonconventional implicatures, implying meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. However, Grice (ibid.) emphasizes that conversational maxims and the implicatures derived from them are uniquely linked to the specific purposes that conversations, or talk exchanges, are designed to fulfil. He initially formulates his maxims with the assumption that the primary purpose of

talk exchanges is the effective exchange of information. Yet, Grice (ibid.) acknowledges that this assumption is too restrictive, as conversations serve broader purposes, including influencing or directing the actions of others. Moreover, Grice (ibid.) suggests that talking should be viewed as a form of purposeful and rational behaviour. Therefore, the expectations or presumptions associated with conversational maxims have parallels in non-verbal transactions. In other words, the principles guiding conversation are not unique to verbal communication but also apply to non-verbal interactions. This underscores the idea that the principles governing communication, including the adherence to maxims and the generation of implicatures, are integral to human interaction in general, whether verbal or non-verbal.

Furthermore, Grice (1975, 49) argues that individuals who value the goals central to communication, such as exchanging information and influencing others, would find it beneficial to participate in conversations conducted in accordance with the CP and the maxims. He implies that under suitable circumstances, such as when seeking to achieve these communication goals, individuals would naturally have an interest in participating in talk exchanges that adhere to the CP and the maxims. Nonetheless, Grice acknowledges the matter's complexity and the need for a deeper understanding of relevance and its role in communication contexts before drawing any definitive conclusions.

Grice (ibid.) adds that “a participant in a talk exchange may fail to fulfil a maxim in various ways...” A participant may:

- “Quietly and unostentatiously violate a maxim; if so, in some cases he will be liable to mislead.”
- “He may opt out from the operation of both the maxim and of the CP he may say, indicate, or allow it to become plain that he is unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires.”
- “He may be faced with a clash: He may be unable, for example, to fulfil the first maxim of Quantity ... without violating the second maxim of Quality.”
- “He may flout a maxim; ... he may blatantly fail to fulfil it.” Grice (ibid.) explains that this situation occurs when a speaker can meet a maxim's requirements without violating another maxim (because of a clash), is not opting out, and is not intentionally misleading the hearer; the same hearer is faced with a challenge. They must reconcile the speaker's behaviour with the assumption that the Cooperative

Principle is still being followed. This often results in the generation of a conversational implicature, indicating that the maxim has been exploited. In other words, when someone blatantly ignores a maxim, it contradicts the cooperative nature of the conversation, prompting the hearer to infer additional meaning to make sense of the interaction.

Finally, Grice (1975, 49-50) explains the concept of a conversational implicature. This implicature relies on the features of the conversational context. Moreover, it is not determined by the literal meaning of the words uttered. By describing conversational implicatures, Grice (1975, 50) highlights that in conversation, what is meant goes beyond what is said. In more detail, the hearer will rely on "...the conventional meaning of the words used, together with the identity of any references that may be involved; the CP and its maxims, the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance, other items of background knowledge..." and other background knowledge relevant to the conversation which is (presumably) available to both participants (ibid.)

Grice's concept of the Cooperative Principle was revisited by Robin Lakoff, who was among the first linguists to highlight the need for a model of politeness. Lakoff (1973, 297-298) highlights the importance of minimizing conflicts at the expense of the need to attain clarity to strengthen interpersonal bonds. Lakoff defines politeness as "a device used in order to reduce friction in personal interaction" (Lakoff 1979, 64). Furthermore, she extended the work of Paul Grice, stressing the importance of pragmatic rules that should be obeyed within interaction. For this reason, she proposed two pragmatic competence rules: "be clear" and "be polite" (Lakoff 1973, 296). These guiding principles concerning politeness focus on the hearer's positive emotions. She states that in everyday conversations, politeness is more important than clarity so that the speaker does not offend the hearer (Lakoff 1973, 297).

Lakoff (1973, 298) expanded on the pragmatic competence rule "be polite" and developed it into Rules of Politeness: "Don't impose," "Give options," and "Make A feel good – Be friendly" (ibid.). She notes that these guidelines suggest a transition in the relationship dynamics during interactions, shifting from formal to friendly. Moreover, Lakoff (1973, 301) adds that rules "Don't impose" and "Make A feel good – Be friendly" seem to be mutually contradictory while "Don't impose" and "Give options" can occur with the same conversation. In connection with this, if the former combination cooccurs in the same conversation, Lakoff (1973, 301) states that "we must assume that, for any of various

extralinguistic reasons, the participants are, really or conventionally, shifting their relationships with each other.” Furthermore, she adds that the rule “Make A feel good – Be friendly” can occur in contexts in which no real friendship is felt.

Similarly, evoking this rule would be inappropriate in contexts where the speaker is of lower status than the addressee. Ultimately, the navigation in the use of the aforementioned rules is guided by the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Lakoff (1973, 302) stresses that situations in which we anticipate friendliness (rule “Make A feel good – Be friendly”) but encounter a lack of imposition (rule “Don’t impose”) result in a breach of politeness instead of a polite refusal to impose. Additionally, she notes that in American culture, friendliness overrides the other rules if applicable. However, the rule “Don’t impose” seems more prevalent in more stratified cultures.

Similarly to Grice, Lakoff (1973, 303) suggests that the rules of politeness apply to speech and actions and concludes that linguistic behaviour cannot be separated from other types of human behaviour. Nonetheless, Lakoff (1973, 297) claims that Grice’s rules of conversation (the maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner) are very often violated in everyday speech. Moreover, Lakoff notes that the maxims are in effect in situations in which the rule “Be friendly” is not applicable. In other words, Gricean maxims are relevant to situations in which the speaker does not wish to impose on the hearer and the main goal of the conversation is an efficient exchange of information (Lakoff 1973, 303). Lastly, Lakoff claims that the rules of politeness are universal, and while customs and cultural interpretations of politeness may vary, the fundamental principles governing polite behaviour remain consistent across cultures. Furthermore, she suggests that different cultures may prioritize these rules differently, leading to variations in perceived politeness (ibid.).

However, Lakoff’s account is often criticized. Tannen (2011, 25) raised doubts about the validity of Lakoff’s rules, suggesting that they only represent our interpretation of an ideal conversational pattern. Moreover, Tannen (2011, 25-26) states that “The rules, or senses, of politeness are not mutually exclusive. We don’t choose one and ignore the others. Rather we balance them all to be appropriately friendly without imposing, to keep appropriate distance without appearing aloof.”

2.2 Leech's Principle of Politeness

Geoffrey Leech was one of the linguists who contributed to incorporating politeness into general pragmatics. Leech (1983, 33) followed up on the works of Grice and Searle and applied their ideas to his own theory concerning indirect illocutions. Furthermore, Leech (1983, 32) proposed that the use of indirect illocutions, as defined by Searle, can be understood through the framework of Gricean implicature. Nonetheless, Leech lists two aspects of indirect illocutions that differ from Searle's. First, Leech (1983, 33) states that no special illocutionary rules are necessary for indirect illocutions; instead, their illocutionary force is conveyed through implicatures (additional meanings or intentions inferred from an utterance beyond its literal meaning). Leech (1983, 30) explains this in the following example:

(1) A: When is Aunt Rose's birthday?

B: It's sometime in April.

B's response gives rise to implicatures. According to Leech (1983, 33-34), these implicatures include (assuming the speaker follows CP and other rhetorical principles):

(2) B believes that Aunt Rose's birthday is in April (via Maxim of Quality).

(3) B is not aware of which day in April is Aunt Rose's birthday (via Maxims of Quantity and Quality).

Second, Leech (1983, 22) does not differentiate between direct and indirect illocutions. Leech (1983, 33) states that "all illocutions are 'indirect' in that their force is derived by implicature." He notes that illocution can vary in their level of directness, with some being more direct than others. The most direct illocutions are those where the intended illocutionary force can be readily inferred from the literal meaning of the utterance without the need for additional context or interpretation. In the absence of contradictory evidence, we can apply what Leech (*ibid.*) calls the "default interpretation." This interpretation represents the straightforward understanding of an utterance based on its surface-level meaning and the typical expectations of communication in a given context. In other words, it is the interpretation we would arrive at if no specific contextual or linguistic cues suggest otherwise. In connection to previous examples, If B said: "It's on 10 April." Leech (*ibid.*) states that the default interpretation would be as follows:

(4) B believes that Aunt Rose's birthday is on 10 April (via Maxim of Quality).

Furthermore, Leech (ibid.) expanded Grice's concept of conversational implicature. In the previous examples, Grice would apply this term to only the (3) example, while Leech extended it to include the default interpretation of (2) and (4). Leech (1983, 33-34) argues that this is due to the assumption that utterances have both a sense and a force. Leech (1983, 17) describes sense as "meaning semantically determined" and force as "meaning as pragmatically, as well as semantically determined."

Leech (1983, 33) incorporates insights from Grice's conversational implicature theory and Searle's speech-act theory. Moreover, Leech (1983, 34) suggests that utterances having both sense and force allow for a unified framework that combines Grice's and Searle's theories. In this framework, Searle's speech act theory can be seen as a generalized version of Grice's theory of conversational implicature. Leech (1983, 34) illustrates this by stating that "Searle's sincerity rules are treated simply as cases of s obeying the Maxim of Quality."

For the purposes of this thesis, it is necessary to introduce Leech's Principles of Politeness (PP). The core of this principle is as follows: "Minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs ... (Maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs) which is somewhat less important" (Leech 1983, 81). Leech (ibid.) describes polite and impolite beliefs as those that are "favourable and unfavourable to the hearer or to a third party." Moreover, Leech (1983, 132) elaborated on Grice's and Lakoff's work and proposed the maxims of politeness:

- * Tact maxim: minimise cost to other; maximise benefit to other.
- * Generosity maxim: minimise benefit to self; maximise cost to self.
- * Approbation maxim: minimise dispraise of other; maximise praise of other.
- * Modesty maxim: minimise praise of self; maximise dispraise of self.
- * Agreement maxim: minimise disagreement between self and other; maximise agreement between self and other.
- * Sympathy maxim: minimise antipathy between self and other; maximise sympathy between self and other.

According to Leech (1983, 80), Grice's CP "in itself cannot explain (i) why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean; and (ii) what is the relation between sense and force when non-declarative types of sentences are being considered." In his work, Leech (ibid.) sought to explore how various societies prioritize maxims, for example, by favouring

politeness over cooperation in specific contexts or prioritizing one maxim of politeness over another. Leech (*ibid.*) adds that the CP faces challenges when it fails to adequately explain apparent exceptions and further states that this underscores the importance of viewing the PP not merely as an additional principle alongside the CP but rather as an essential complement that helps resolve significant issues faced by the CP. Leech (1983, 82) elaborates that the CP allows participants in a conversation to assume that each other is being cooperative. It regulates what people say so that it aligns with the assumed goals of the conversation. In contrast, Leech (*ibid.*) sees the PP as having a broader and more significant role. It is not just about regulating speech to ensure cooperation; rather, it is about maintaining social harmony and friendly relations. The PP helps preserve “the social equilibrium” that allows us to assume cooperation in the first place. In other words, it ensures a positive social atmosphere that supports cooperation. Furthermore, Leech (*ibid.*) states that politeness is not as important in a context in which the exchange of information is equally important to the speaker and the hearer. However, Leech (*ibid.*) highlights the fact that situations in which the PP can override the CP exist. For example, there are situations in which the speaker assumes that it is justified to tell a white lie (*ibid.*).

In addition, Leech (1983, 83) differentiates between absolute and relative politeness. He describes absolute politeness as “a scale, or rather a set of scales ... having a negative and a positive pole.” Leech (*ibid.*) follows this by stating that “some illocutions (e.g., orders) are inherently impolite, and others (e.g., offers) are inherently polite.” Moreover, Leech (1983, 83-84) defines negative politeness as “...minimizing the impoliteness of impolite illocutions” and positive politeness as “...maximizing the politeness of polite illocutions”. In contrast, Leech (1983, 84) sees relative politeness as a relative concept that is guided by the set of standards connected to a particular social group or culture.

To continue, Leech (1983, 107) describes politeness as asymmetrical and claims that his maxims “explain such asymmetries, and their consequences in terms of indirectness.” Leech (1983, 108) states that indirect illocutions are typically more polite “because they increase the degree of optionality, and ... because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be”. It is important to note that Leech (1983, 109) highlights that if the speaker is proposing something beneficial to the hearer, an increased indirectness would lead to a less polite form than the direct one. Leech (*ibid.*) exemplifies this by the following example: “Would you mind having another sandwich?” which would suggest that the hearer would do the speaker a favour by accepting the offer. In connection

with this, Leech (1983, 123) defines three pragmatic scales tied to politeness (s – speaker, h – hearer):

- The **cost-benefit scale** on which is estimated the cost or benefit of the proposed action A to s or to h.
- The **optionality scale** on which illocutions are ordered according to the amount of choice which s allows to h.
- The **indirectness scale** on which, from s's point of view, illocutions are ordered with respect to the length of the path (in terms of means-ends analysis) connecting the illocutionary act to its illocutionary goal.

To summarize. Leech (1983, 127) provides a brief overview of parameters that influence the need for indirectness in connection to the tact maxim:

- The greater the cost of A to h,
- The greater the horizontal social distance of h from s,
- The greater the authoritative status of h with respect to s,
- The greater will be the need for optionality, and correspondingly for indirectness, in the expression of an impositive, if s is to observe the Tact Maxim.

The most relevant maxims of politeness for the purposes of the thesis will presumably be the maxims of Agreement and Modesty. Leech (1983, 84) himself states that each culture prioritizes each maxim differently. Furthermore, Leech (1983, 136) elaborates on the maxim of Modesty. According to him, it is considered polite to agree with someone else's praise of others; however, agreeing with praise directed at oneself is generally not considered polite. Leech (ibid.) uses the following examples to illustrate this claim:

(1) A: They were so kind to us.

B: Yes, they were, weren't they. (polite)

(2) A: You were so kind to us.

B: Yes, I was, wasn't I. (impolite)

Leech (ibid.) considers the example in (1) polite, while the example in (2) results in the breach of the maxim of Modesty. Similarly, self-dispraise, even if exaggerated for humour,

is seen as harmless. According to Leech, it is more socially acceptable to criticise oneself than to boast. Leech (ibid.) uses these examples to provide evidence for this claim:

(3) How stupid of me! (self-dispraise)

(4) How clever of me! (self-praise)

Moreover, understating one's generosity is seen as normal and conventional politeness, while exaggeration can be seen as a breach of modesty. Leech (ibid.) supports this statement with the following examples:

(5) Please accept this small gift as a token of our esteem. (understatement)

(6) Please accept this large gift as a token of our esteem. (exaggeration)

Hence, Leech (ibid.) concludes that breaking the Modesty maxim by boasting, as seen in (2) and (6) is considered socially inappropriate.

In addition, Leech (1983, 136-137) suggests that the Modesty maxim can often result in a "pragmatic paradox" when it conflicts with other maxims. To illustrate, Leech (1983, 137) claims that in English-speaking societies, it is more customary to "graciously" accept a compliment, while the Japanese tend to deny it. Leech adds that English speakers often seek to find a compromise between violating the maxims of Modesty and Agreement. In connection with this, Leech (ibid.) highlights the fact that there are "trade-offs between different maxims of the PP," similar to what we see in the CP. Sometimes, the Modesty maxim clashes with other maxims, requiring us to prioritise one maxim over another.

In terms of the maxim of Agreement, Leech (1983, 138) suggests that a partial disagreement is typically more desirable than a complete disagreement. He supports this by providing the following examples:

(7) A: It was an interesting exhibition, wasn't it? B: No, it was very uninteresting.
(complete disagreement)

(8) A: English is a difficult language to learn. B: True, but the grammar is quite easy.
(partial disagreement).

In his later publication, Leech (2014, 274) stated that the maxim of Quality is at play when responding to compliments, stating that "...it will be difficult to accept them as sincere if they are manifestly exaggerated." Moreover, Leech (ibid.) argued that thanking does not necessarily mean agreement and possibly avoids agreement altogether. He highlighted the

difference between agreeing and thanking as follows: "... 'I agree with your complimentary remark,' which goes against the Modesty Maxim, and saying 'Thank you for your compliment,' which expresses appreciation of the remark itself and avoids both agreement and disagreement" (ibid.). Furthermore, Leech (2014, 92) added a new maxim: the maxim of Obligation which he associates with (among others) thanking. Leech (2014, 96) relates this maxim to "... the expression of gratitude for some favor H has done to S." Consequently, Leech (2014, 280) criticises studies and taxonomies that combine agreements and thanking, as only agreements imply "... a low regard for the Modesty Maxim."

In summary, Leech (2014, 189) states that when a compliment addressee is faced with the decision of whether to agree or disagree with the compliment, they are navigating between the Modesty and Agreement maxims. They are placed in a "double bind" because they must consider both the Modesty maxim, which encourages modesty and humility and the Agreement maxim, which requires them to acknowledge and accept the compliment. Furthermore, Leech (2014, 274) concluded that in CRs "three maxims (Agreement, Modesty, and Quality) are in play..." Lastly, Leech (2014, 280) stressed the need to differentiate between agreements and expressions of thanks, with only the former having little regard for the Modesty maxim.

2.2.1 Criticism of Leech's Theory

Leech's approach to politeness is criticized by Wierzbicka (2003). Wierzbicka (2003, 68) highlights the fact that the widely known politeness theories (Leech's Politeness Principle and Brown and Levinson's theory) are rooted in Anglocentrism (her criticism of B&L is mentioned in section 2.3.5). Wierzbicka (ibid.) claims that even though Leech is aware that "the weight of maxims ... may vary from culture to culture," he suggests that "apart from quantitative differences they are in essence universally valid." Wierzbicka (ibid.) claims that that is not the case. The evidence for this can be found, for example, in the work of Mizutani (1987, 45-46), who states that in Japanese culture, "praise of other" is typically discouraged.

Additionally, Leech (2014, 189-191) revisited his theory in his 2014 publication and included examples of compliment exchanges in Chinese and Japanese. Nevertheless, Terkourafi (2015, 958) notes that Leech still relies heavily on English data.

Despite the criticism, Leech's Principle of Politeness and its maxims are still considered to be an appropriate framework for compliment response (CR) research (Chen 1993; Arabski 2004). Pomerantz (1978) referred to Leech's maxims of Tact and Agreement

in her study of CRs in the context of American English. Various linguists have widely cited her framework; thus, Leech's theory's contribution to the study of politeness cannot be disputed.

2.3 The Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson

The Face-Saving view established by Brown and Levinson (1987) is a widely accepted and often cited politeness theory. Brown and Levinson drew on the ideas of an American sociologist, Erving Goffman (Brown 2017, 386). Goffman defined the concept of face as the public display of an individual's self-esteem. In more detail, Goffman described the arbitrary notion of face as a dynamic concept closely tied to social interactions. It includes how individuals present themselves through their actions and how others perceive and attribute social value based on those actions. Thus, the face is not entirely subjective since the positive social value (or face) is constructed based on behaviours and qualities that a particular society deems acceptable or desirable (Goffman 1967, 5). Goffman worked with the assumption that face is consistently at a potential risk. According to Goffman (1967, 12), facework involves "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face-work serves to counteract "incidents" - that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face." Goffman (1967, 15) proposed that any behaviour that to some extent affects one's face constitutes a face-threatening act. In other words, Goffman (ibid.) stressed that any interaction involving a social or relational aspect inherently threatens one's face and requires adjustment through suitable forms of politeness.

Brown and Levinson expanded on Goffman's work by taking cross-cultural and cross-linguistic approaches. Their research focused on the similarities in how polite expressions are constructed across different cultures and languages. As a result, Brown and Levinson observed similarities in the way politeness is expressed globally, leading them to propose the existence of universal principles in the construction of polite utterances (Brown 2017, 386). Concerning universal principles, Brown and Levinson observed that politeness varies depending on the social context and the individuals involved. The way politeness is expressed is affected by three key social factors: social hierarchy (one is more likely to be polite to their social superiors), familiarity (one is more likely to be more polite to strangers), norms and values (in every culture, these are the aspects that impact how much an utterance is perceived as imposing or unwelcome; thus individuals tend to be more polite in a situation involving more serious impositions) (Brown 2017, 386).

In relation to Grice's theory, Brown and Levinson build on his idea of the rational and efficient nature of speech. Brown and Levinson (1987, 5) support Grice's assumption of cooperation. Additionally, Brown and Levinson (1987, 4) criticise Leech's expansion of the Gricean framework of maxims by introducing the Politeness Principle (PP). Brown and Levinson (1987, 4-5) argue against this idea for several reasons. Firstly, they state that creating a maxim for every language use regularity would result in an infinite number of maxims, making pragmatic theory too unconstrained to recognize counterexamples. The authors also point out that the distribution of politeness in language use is socially controlled, unlike Grice's CP and maxims which "generally obtain, principled exceptions though there are" (ibid.). Additionally, Brown and Levinson emphasize that not every observable language use pattern needs a maxim or principle to explain it. Brown and Levinson (1987, 5) assert that Gricean maxims are not just descriptions of regular behaviour patterns but are deeply ingrained assumptions about how communication works. The CP and the maxims serve as a background framework that guides our understanding of language use. Brown and Levinson (ibid.) further argue that Gricean maxims are generally resilient to counterevidence despite occasional deviations. Even when someone does not fully adhere to a maxim in a particular instance, the assumption of cooperation underlying the conversation remains intact. This "robustness" allows us to maintain the cooperative framework of communication, even in the face of occasional breaches and deviations. Brown and Levinson (ibid.) support this claim by providing an example of a partial answer to a question. Partial answers might seem like a violation of the maxim of Quantity and uncooperative behaviour, but in reality, the assumption is that the speaker is cooperating but might be constrained by factors like memory or time limitations. In simpler terms, Brown and Levinson highlight the "robust" nature of Gricean maxims as foundational assumptions that shape our interpretation of communication, allowing us to maintain a cooperative framework even in the presence of occasional deviations.

Brown and Levinson (ibid.) suggest that the CP fundamentally differs from the PP. The CP establishes a default framework for socially neutral communication, emphasizing rational efficiency without deviation unless there is a reason. In contrast, the PP provides those reasons for deviations from the default framework. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (ibid.) add that unlike the CP, which operates as a default presumption, politeness must be actively communicated. The absence of communicated politeness may be interpreted as the absence of a politeness attitude.

Brown and Levinson's (1987, 5-6) model states that people are mutually aware of other people's faces (the concept of face is discussed in section 2.3.1). This "face-sensitivity" influences how they communicate. In addition, the aforementioned awareness of the face of others causes people to consider the consequences of their words and actions. They use this reasoning to achieve their communication goals while preserving each other's face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, 6), mutual awareness of face-sensitivity, "means-end reasoning," and the CP allow us to infer politeness implicatures. In other words, we can understand politeness by considering people's sensitivity to face, the reasoning behind their words, and how they adhere to the CP. Moreover, Brown and Levinson (*ibid.*) add that when someone does not follow the CP and we know they are using face-saving strategies (discussed in section 2.3.3), we can infer their polite intentions.

2.3.1 Face

Brown and Levinson tie their concept of face to the English folk term "losing face" which is associated with one's feelings of embarrassment or humiliation (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). The authors proposed that an individual's face consists of two aspects, which they claim to be universally applicable. The first aspect is the positive face. Since Brown and Levinson build upon Goffman's ideas, their definition of the positive face is similar: "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 62). In other words, every individual has a positive face (the desire for approval, admiration, liking, and validation). The second aspect is the negative face. Brown and Levinson define the negative face as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" (*ibid.*).

The concept of face does not stand for the norms and values of a given society but represents the fundamental needs that every member of society is aware that others desire, and which, overall, are in the best interests of each member to fulfil to some extent (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, Brown and Levinson acknowledge that face can be ignored in urgent situations for the sake of urgency and efficiency. Moreover, face can be lost, maintained, or improved and requires continual attention during interactions. In everyday conversations, people assume each other's cooperation since they are mutually aware of the vulnerability of each other's face. If threatened, most participants will typically defend their face, and in doing so, they will inevitably threaten the face of others. Thus, upholding the face of others is in everyone's best interest (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). Moreover, Brown and Levinson

(1987, 61-62) add that face needs will vary depending on the culture; however, they assume that the shared awareness of a member's public self-image and the social obligation to align with it during interactions is universally applicable.

2.3.2 Face-Threatening Acts

Brown and Levinson's central concept of their theory is based on the idea that acts of a specific nature inherently pose a threat to one's face, specifically, those acts that go against the desired face of either the addressee or the speaker "...and thus require 'softening'" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 24). Brown and Levinson (1987, 60) call these acts that inherently threaten the speaker, the hearer, or both Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs). In addition, Brown and Levinson (1987, 65) distinguish between acts that threaten the positive face and those that threaten the negative face.

2.3.3 Politeness Strategies

Since members of society are supposedly aware of the mutual vulnerability of the face, Brown and Levinson propose that a rational individual will try to avoid performing FTAs or will implement specific strategies to mitigate the potential threat (Brown and Levinson 1987, 68).

Brown and Levinson propose several super-strategies for expressing politeness. The choice among those strategies is influenced by the extent of the face threat (Brown and Levinson 1987, 68-70). The table below shows Brown and Levinson's possible strategies for doing FTAs:

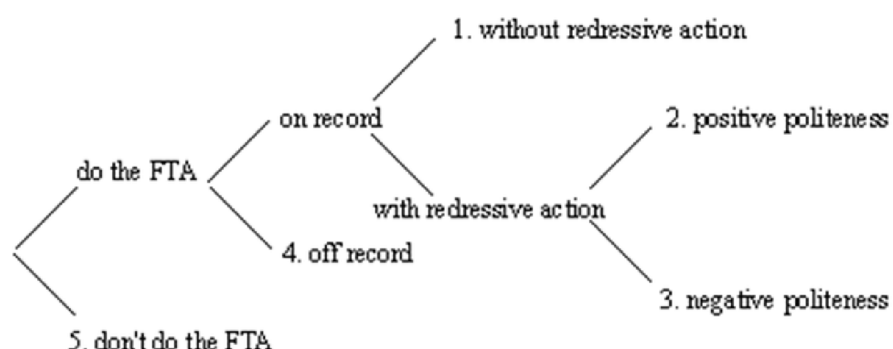


Figure 1. Possible strategies for doing FTAs (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69)

Redressive actions aim to mitigate or counterbalance the potential harm to one's face caused by the FTAs. In addition, these actions are done with a clear indication that the

speaker does not intend or desire to threaten the hearer's face. This means that the speaker is aware of the hearer's face wants and wishes to fulfil them. Brown and Levinson differentiate between two forms of redressive action, depending on whether the emphasis is on the negative or positive aspect of the face (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69-70).

Strategies that the authors call **bald on-record** are carried out without redressive action. This means the speaker executes the FTA effectively by being straightforward, brief, and clear. The speaker then essentially aligns with Grice's maxims. These are used in situations in which the speaker is not concerned about potential retaliation from the addressee. This approach is commonly employed in urgent situations, in instances with minimal face threat (e.g., speech acts that are in favour of the hearer's wants and at the same time require minimal sacrifices of the speaker), or when the speaker holds significant power over the listener (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69).

Redressive actions that are aimed at the positive aspects of face (the hearer's face wants) are labelled as **positive politeness**. In other words, positive politeness is a response or remedy to a potential threat to the hearer's desire to have their wants and associated actions, acquisitions, or values seen as appealing by others. The speaker tries to communicate to the hearer that they share particular desires or values, providing a form of redress that contributes to the maintenance of positive social relationships. Brown and Levinson note that positive politeness differs from negative politeness by the fact that the latter addresses specific face wants infringed by the FTA. On the other hand, positive politeness offers more possibilities for redress that go beyond the specific infringement caused by the FTA. Within positive politeness, the speaker can either appreciate the hearer's general wants or express the similarity between the speaker's and the hearer's desires. This emphasizes shared values or common interests (Brown and Levinson 1987, 101). Culpeper and Haugh (2014, 210-211) offer some examples of such positive politeness strategies. These include "paying attention to the hearer (*Hello*), expressing interest, approval or sympathy (*That was awful, my heart bled for you*), using in-group identity markers (*Liz, darling...*), seeking agreement (*Nice weather today*), avoiding disagreement (*Yes, it's kind of nice*), assuming common ground (*I know how you feel*) and so on."

Equally important is the concept of **negative politeness**. Brown and Levinson define this type of politeness as "...redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded" (Brown and

Levinson 1987, 129). As mentioned earlier, negative politeness reduces the specific imposition that the FTA inevitably brings about. Realizations of negative politeness strategies involve assuring the addressee. The speaker communicates that they will either not interfere or will only minimally interfere with the addressee's freedom of action. Furthermore, the use of formal language and polite expressions contributes to negative politeness, maintaining a respectful tone. Negative politeness employs various redressive mechanisms (such as apologies, hedges, passives, etc.) to address FTAs. These mechanisms aim to provide the addressee with a way to save their face and ensure that their response is voluntary. In addition, Brown and Levinson argue that negative politeness represents the most conventional strategy for FTA redress in Western cultures (Brown and Levinson 1987, 129-130).

Another super-strategy introduced by Brown and Levinson is the **off-record** strategy. This strategy entails the speaker executing the FTA in a manner that allows them to evade accountability for its performance. This strategy includes metaphors, irony, rhetorical questions, understatement, tautologies, and hints regarding the speaker's intentions. This is done so that the meaning of the utterance is to some extent negotiable (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69).

The last course of action the speaker can take is to **not perform the FTA**. This happens in situations that are considered to be too threatening to the hearer. Thus, in favour of social balance, the FTA is not performed (Brown and Levinson 1987, 72). Brown and Levinson (*ibid.*) add that this particular strategy has “no interesting linguistic reflexes.” Interestingly, Brown and Levinson (1987, 295) note that silence can be employed to achieve specific communicative goals, even when the preferred strategy is to avoid FTAs altogether. In their words, silence can convey politeness (e.g., polite acceptance of a request). In essence, Brown and Levinson (*ibid.*) highlight the strategic use of silence as a means of accomplishing politeness goals, even in situations where directly refusing or accepting might be considered FTAs.

Furthermore, when choosing a strategy for mitigating FTAs, variables affecting face threat play a crucial role. The evaluation of the degree of face threat of a specific act entails considering three sociological variables: the social distance (D) between the participants, the relative power (P) of the speaker and the hearer, and the absolute ranking (R) of impositions in that specific act (Brown and Levinson 1987, 74). In addition, Brown and Levinson argue

that these three variables encompass all other factors influencing the evaluation of face threat and propose assigning a numerical value to each variable. This would allow the quantification of face threat by summing up these values based on the proposed formula. The purpose of this calculation of face threat is to determine the level of politeness with which an FTA would be communicated (Brown and Levinson 1987, 76).

2.3.4 Compliments and FTAs

On the one hand, compliments can be recognized as face-enhancing speech acts since they are generally intended to positively affect interpersonal relations. On the other hand, Brown and Levinson (1987, 66) propose that compliments and CRs are often perceived as FTAs.

Based on the classification by Brown and Levinson, compliments threaten the negative face of the receiver of the compliment. They note that the negative face of the receiver can be threatened by “Those acts that predicate some desire of S toward H or H’s goods, giving H reason to think that he may have to take action to protect the object of S’S desire, or give it to S” (ibid.).

Acceptance of a compliment directly threatens the positive face of the speaker – “S may feel constrained to denigrate the object of H’s prior compliment, thus damaging his own face; or he may feel constrained to compliment H in turn” (Brown and Levinson 1987, 67).

In connection with Leech (2014) and his perception of thanking, Brown and Levinson (ibid.) propose that by expressing gratitude (by thanking), the speaker “accepts a debt, humbles his own face.” Thus, the speech act of thanking offends the speaker’s negative face.

In summary, compliments and CRs may serve not only as a redressive strategy during more threatening acts, but they themselves can also be perceived as FTAs. Similarly, Holmes (1988, 448) applied Brown and Levinson’s theory in her research and suggested that CRs may jeopardize the speaker’s positive or negative face.

2.3.5 Criticism of Brown and Levinson’s Theory

The primary weakness of Brown and Levinson’s theory is that the authors pitch their methods as universal; however, several researchers have argued that the individualism found in Brown and Levinson’s definition reflects the values of Anglo-Saxon culture. Thus, their definitions are supposedly not universally applicable (Culpeper and Haugh 2014, 206; Alabdali 2019, 74). Unlike Western cultures, some cultures are rooted in collectivism, such

as Japanese (Matsumoto 1988, 405). Similarly, Yu (2003, 1694) argued that in Chinese culture the negative face needs, which involve concerns for one's autonomy and privacy, do not hold the same importance as in Western cultures. Yu (*ibid.*) suggests that the traditional conception of face needs based on Western individualism may not fully explain politeness behaviour in these societies.

In the same spirit, Wierzbicka (2003, 6) heavily criticized Brown and Levinson's conclusion that "interactional systematics are based largely on universal principles" (Brown and Levinson 1978, 288). Wierzbicka (*ibid.*) highlighted a growing recognition that variations in speech and interaction styles are not merely superficial. Rather, they are primarily attributable to diverse cultural attitudes and values.

In contrast, Chen (2010, 179-181) highlights that the discussion of whether there can be a universal framework has been present since Austin, Searle, and Grice. On the one hand, Chen (2010, 179) mentions Leech (1983; 2014), who suggests that East and West can be understood within the same theoretical framework. On the other hand, Chen (2010, 179) notes that some scholars (Wierzbicka 2003) argue against the universality hypothesis in pragmatics, suggesting that concepts like politeness are culture-specific rather than universal. Chen (2010, 179-181) contends that the scholars who defend the possibility of a universal framework interpret findings from cross-cultural studies differently and aim to discover general principles underlying language use across cultures rather than emphasizing surface differences.

It is worth mentioning that Culpeper and Haugh (2014, 206) stress that the analysis of Brown and Levinson is derived from the examination of three distinctly different languages, with English being just one of them.

2.4 Criticism of Classic Approaches to Politeness

One of the major downfalls of classic approaches to politeness, including those aligned with the maxim and face-saving perspectives, is their emphasis on politeness stemming from departures from the Cooperative Principle. Classical approaches tend to overlook politeness that does not involve such departures (Culpeper and Haugh 2014, 204). Many linguists argue that politeness can be anticipated, ordinary, and go unnoticed, thereby not constituting a departure from the Cooperative Principle (*ibid.*). Fraser (1990, 25) named this type of politeness as anticipated politeness.

In summary, the classic politeness theories mentioned above have faced substantial criticism over the years. Despite this, a singular alternative model has not yet emerged (Culpeper and Haugh 2014, 214).

Nonetheless, three distinct but partially intersecting approaches have emerged. Culpeper and Haugh (*ibid.*) label these approaches as discursive, relational, and frame-based approaches. Recent research on politeness has emphasized that politeness is not inherently embedded in linguistic structures but rather is a judgment dependent on the context (*ibid.*). However, the mentioned contemporary approaches will not be elaborated upon, as they are not the main subject of this thesis.

3 COMPLIMENTS AND THEIR FUNCTION

Within interpersonal communication, compliments play a vital part in forming relationships. Consequently, several linguists have studied the function and definition of compliments. This section investigates the complexities of compliments and their diverse functions. By doing this, this thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the use of compliments within different types of interactions and contexts.

First and foremost, one should seek to answer the question: What is a compliment? Several linguists provide some clues in an attempt to answer that question. Based on their research, it is possible to perceive compliments as:

- (1) One of several politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987);
- (2) "...positive politeness devices which express goodwill and solidarity between the speaker and the addressee" (Holmes 2013, 118);
- (3) "Speech acts with a positive affective nature aimed at enhancing or strengthening the sense of solidarity between the speaker and the addressee" (ibid.);
- (4) Social lubricants which "create or maintain rapport" (Wolfson 1983, 86);
- (5) A favourable comment (Holmes 2013, 116);
- (6) In specific contexts, some compliments are expressions of praise and admiration (Herbert 1990, 220);

Holmes (1986, 485) provided a more complex definition of a compliment (this definition can be found in section 1.1). Moreover, Holmes (2013, 117) added that compliments may sometimes be implicit and thus may require a certain level of inferencing based on an understanding of the cultural values within the community. According to Holmes (ibid.), compliments can be indirect in more ways. She claims compliments typically focus on "something directly attributable to the person addressed (e.g. an article of clothing)." However, Holmes (ibid.) suggests that this is not always the case and provides the following examples:

- (1) *Rhonda is visiting an old schoolfriend, Carol, and comments on one of Carol's children.*

Rhonda: What a polite child!

Carol: Thank you. We do our best.

(2) *Ray is the conductor of the choir.*

Matt: The choir was wonderful. You must be really pleased.

Ray: Yes, they were good weren't they.

In certain scenarios, a complimenter's utterances may initially appear as general positive evaluations, but in these specific contexts, the purpose of that utterance is unambiguously a compliment (Holmes 2013, 117-118). In other words, although the initial comments may seem general, in context, they serve the function of compliments, indirectly attributing credit to the addressee for their accomplishments.

The speech act of a compliment stresses cultural distinctions, as diverse cultural contexts embrace different values. Hence, it is reasonable to expect variations in the selection of subjects of compliments across different cultures, given that distinct items or their attributes are deemed worthy of appreciation. Researchers have extensively investigated the realm of divergent cultural assumptions, with numerous linguists providing insight into cultural disparities when compared to the British or American context.

Janet Holmes (1988) examined complimenting behaviour in New Zealand with a particular focus on the differences between men and women and compared them to the data provided by Manes and Wolfson (1981). This provides evidence that linguists have focused not only on cultural differences but also on the distribution of compliments among members of different genders or statuses. Similarly, Robert Herbert (1990) explored variations in complimenting behaviour among men and women in English.

The primary purpose of compliments is more related to emotions and social aspects rather than being informative or referential (Holmes 2013, 118). However, other than being politeness devices serving affective function, compliments may "convey some information in the form of the particular 'good' the speaker selects to comment" (ibid.). Furthermore, Holmes (ibid.) suggests that compliments offer a positively constructive assessment of a chosen aspect of the recipient's behaviour, appearance, or other attributes. In specific contexts, compliments may carry communicative significance. Holmes (ibid.) elaborated on this idea and stated that certain compliments are expressed and interpreted as having a more pronounced referential message than others. As a result, Holmes (ibid.) concludes that the dynamics of the relationship between the complimenter and the recipient play a pivotal role in deciphering the possible functions of a compliment.

Manes and Wolfson (1981) propose that compliments are commonly formulaic. However, they also note that understanding that compliments often follow a predictable pattern or formula is just the beginning of explaining why they consistently have specific meanings and structures. In other words, while recognizing that compliments tend to have a set form is important, it does not fully explain why they always convey certain meanings or follow specific linguistic rules. There may be deeper reasons or factors influencing the way compliments are constructed and understood beyond just their formulaic nature. The authors acknowledge that native speakers are capable of using an extensive range of syntactic and semantic options. However, these speakers often opt for only a limited range of lexical items and syntactic structures. This is because speakers use compliments to reinforce or establish at least a basic level of solidarity. Understanding this function helps us comprehend why speakers tend to favour conventional compliment patterns. If any aspect of the compliment or its structure contributes to social distance, it undermines the expression of solidarity, which is the primary purpose of the compliment. Using a conventional pattern helps to mitigate this potential issue (Manes and Wolfson 1981, 123-124).

In broad terms, speakers tend to avoid strongly marked syntactic structures, colloquial expressions, culturally specific words, etc., to prevent potential misunderstandings. However, within the same social group, it is common to employ marked expressions to emphasize belonging and strengthen solidarity among community members. Consequently, when individuals lack familiarity or come from diverse backgrounds, they often opt for generic, unmarked expressions and share the most general cultural values (Manes and Wolfson 1981, 124-125).

Similarly, Holmes (2013, 119) notes that compliments may be interpreted as offensive flattery, patronizing, and even sarcasm or irony. In connection with this, Holmes adds that compliments may have a “darker side.” This means that in certain contexts, an explicit compliment may be perceived negatively or as a threat to one’s face. In the same way, if the content of a compliment is seen as non-realistic, it may be interpreted as sarcastic or ironic criticism. Moreover, Holmes highlights Brown and Levinson’s interpretation of compliments as FTAs implicitly expressing the complimenter’s envy or want of something that belongs to the recipient (*ibid.*). To illustrate, this interpretation is thus more prevalent in certain cultures where praising an object obligates the recipient to offer it to the person giving the compliment. Similarly, in various cultures and social circles, compliments can also be perceived as FTAs, as they can express a certain degree of envy and a desire to possess

something that belongs to the recipient, whether it's an object, desirable attribute, or skill. Lastly, a compliment may offend people if the complimenter assumes a greater intimacy between the participants (Holmes 2013, 119-120).

To sum up, compliments have the potential to be a source of embarrassment and possibly be perceived as an FTA despite the complimenter's good intentions. Not only that, but compliments may serve as a tool to fulfil the ulterior motives of the complimenter and thus not fulfil their primary purpose as positive devices. In other words, the compliment giver may simply exploit the expected purpose of a compliment to pursue their ulterior motives.

Based on observation, various linguists have identified numerous functions of compliments across diverse contexts. This is because compliments are not always used to express solidarity. Holmes (2013, 121) provided a summary of possible compliment functions. According to her, compliments are used:

- (1) to express solidarity;
- (2) to express positive evaluation, admiration, appreciation, or praise;
- (3) to express envy or desire for the hearer's possessions;
- (4) as verbal harassment.

It is important to note that these functions are not mutually exclusive. In addition, the various possible functions of compliments highlight that the relationship between the complimenter and the addressee is crucial for interpreting the primary purpose of a specific compliment. Thus, context plays an essential role in analysing the main purpose of a compliment (ibid.).

Another set of compliment functions was provided by Manes and Wolfson (1981, 128). The authors suggest that compliments serve not only as standalone speech acts but also as a way of expressing gratitude or greeting. In such instances, compliments are frequently, but not always, accompanied by conventional expressions of thanks or greeting. They demonstrate their argument with the following two examples:

Example 1. – Greeting

A: *Hi, you look sharp today.*

B: *Thanks.*

Example 2. – Thanking

A: Thank you so much, darling. You really are a good kid.

To provide a full picture of the possible functions of compliments, Hatch (1992, 138-139) outlines the social functions of compliments. According to her, compliments:

- (1) help establish rapport and smooth the transition from greeting to the first topic of conversation;
- (2) reinforce and encourage good performance;
- (3) are expressions of thanks;
- (4) soften criticism.

3.1 Compliment Structure

The structure of compliments has been a target of several studies. Janet Holmes (1986; 1988; 2013) examined the use of compliments in New Zealand. In her research, she focused, among other factors, on the structural features of compliments. Holmes (2013, 127) reached the same conclusion as Manes and Wolfson (1981), who concluded that compliments tend to be considerably formulaic. The following section will focus on the extensive research conducted by Manes and Wolfson (1981), which is mentioned in this thesis in section 3. In their article *The Compliment Formula* (1981), the authors present the results of their analysis of 686 compliments collected by observing ordinary interactions. The results proved that the lack of originality and repetitiveness is a prominent characteristic of compliments in American English. However, the authors stress that a closer investigation is necessary to understand underlying patterns across different linguistic and social levels, including syntactic discourse and semantic aspects. In addition, Manes and Wolfson (1981, 115) argue that compliments function as formulas, although this might not be immediately apparent due to their complex interplay across various discourse functions. They highlight that the formulaic nature of compliments and their functions within interactions are closely linked.

3.1.1 Semantic Aspects of Compliments by Manes and Wolfson (1981)

Compliments often convey positive evaluation; thus, each compliment should incorporate at least one term with a positive semantic load. Surprisingly, despite the numerous options available, the vast majority of compliments feature one of "...a highly restricted set of adjectives and verbs" (Manes and Wolfson 1981, 116).

In their research, the authors observed 72 distinct adjectives. A certain number of these adjectives carried a heavier semantic load. These include adjectives that are: “topic specific (*delicious, curly*)..., extremely general (*beautiful, fantastic*) ... quite strong in their expression of positive evaluation (*fantastic, gorgeous, stupendous*) while others carry a much weaker semantic load (*nice, good*)” (Manes and Wolfson 1981, 116-117). Nonetheless, the majority of included adjectives do not appear regularly in the compliment structure. On the other hand, the adjectives with a weak semantic load (*nice, good*) are the ones that occur most frequently. Out of the total number of compliments examined (686) 546 compliments express their positive semantic load through an adjective. From this number, 42.5% utilize either *nice* (22.9%) or *good* (19.6%). Just three additional adjectives (*beautiful, pretty, and great*) are present in more than 5% of compliments that feature adjectives. Therefore, most adjectival compliments utilize just five adjectives. The authors admit that further research would reveal a greater range of adjectives. However, their research proved that even though speakers have a wide choice of linguistic items, they tend to favour a limited range of vague adjectives (ibid.).

In comparison to the wide variety of adjectives with a positive semantic load, the authors observed only a small number of semantically positive verbs occurring in compliments. These verbs include *like, love, admire, enjoy, and be impressed by* (Manes and Wolfson 1981, 118). Furthermore, this small group of verbs follows a usage pattern that is similar to that of adjectives. The two verbs *love* and *like* appear in 86% of all compliments containing a verb with a positive semantic load. Thus, the semantic formula utilizing verbs with positive semantic load is *I like/love NP* (ibid.).

While 96% of the dataset comprised compliments featuring semantically positive verbs and adjectives, there were instances of other structures. Some verbs, while not inherently positive, can function as compliments when used in the appropriate context, often with an intensifier *really*.

Example 1. – V + really

(1) You've really fixed this place up since the last people were here.

(ibid.)

Moreover, Manes and Wolfson observed other intensifiers used in compliments. These intensifiers are *some* and *quite*.

Example 2. – intensifiers *some, quite*

(2) *That's quite a record collection you've got.*

(3) *That's some birthday cake.*

(ibid.)

The authors add that while not essential components of the compliment structure, intensifiers appear often enough to be regarded as a common characteristic of compliments.

Although the significance of adjectives and verbs in compliments is undeniable, other word classes with positive semantic load also appear. These examples of compliments feature a positive adverb and a noun:

Example 3. - ADV, N in compliments

(4) *You do this kind of writing so well.*

(5) *You're just whiz at sewing.*

(ibid.)

Another common characteristic of compliments involves the utilization of specific deictic elements, particularly second-person pronouns and demonstratives.

Example 4. – deixis in compliments

(5) *Mary, I like that coat on you. It looks just super.*

(Manes and Wolfson 1981, 119)

Deixis in compliments serves to identify the individual or object receiving the compliment. However, deictic elements are not consistently present in compliments because the same function can be achieved through alternative methods. Nonetheless, one can conclude that second-person pronouns and demonstratives can be observed to fulfil a crucial discourse role (ibid.).

In summary, while compliments in English may appear to have endless variations, only a handful of semantic elements are exceptionally common. These include a limited selection of adjectives and verbs, a small number of intensifiers, and specific deictic elements. This indicated that when giving compliments, the majority of American English speakers rely on what the authors describe as semantic formulas (ibid.).

3.1.2 Syntactic Analysis of Compliments by Manes and Wolfson (1981)

It may seem like there is no reason to use a particular syntactic structure when expressing a compliment. However, the analysis conducted by Manes and Wolfson (1981) proved that the syntactic structure of compliments is even more restrictive than structures on the semantic level. The majority of the compliments analysed utilized one of the following syntactic patterns:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| * NP <i>is, looks/ (really)</i> ADJ | <i>Your hair looks nice.</i> |
| * <i>I (really) /like, love/</i> NP | <i>I love your hair.</i> |
| * PRO <i>is /really/ (a)</i> ADJ NP | <i>That is a nice piece of work.</i> |
| * <i>You V (a) (really)</i> ADJ NP | <i>You did a good job.</i> |
| * <i>You V (NP) (really)</i> ADV | <i>You really handled the situation well.</i> |
| * <i>You have (a) (really)</i> ADJ NP | <i>You have such beautiful hair.</i> |
| * <i>What (a) (ADJ)</i> NP! | <i>What a lovely baby you have!</i> |
| * ADJ (NP)! | <i>Nice game!</i> |
| * <i>Isn't NP ADJ!</i> | <i>Isn't it pretty!</i> |

(Manes and Wolfson 1981, 120-121)

The structure NP *is, looks/ (really)* ADJ appeared in 53.6% of the compliments collected, and thus, based on the research by Manes and Wolfson (1981), it is one of the most common occurring structures in compliments in American English. The other most common structures are *I (really) /like, love/* NP, which appears in 16.1% of the compliments, and PRO *is /really/ (a)* ADJ NP which represents 14.9% of used structures when expressing a compliment. These three structures appeared in 85% of the total number of compliments collected for the analysis. This finding confirms that syntactic structures of compliments are even more restrictive than structures on the semantic level (as discussed in section 3.1.1.).

The compliment can also appear embedded within a larger structure since speakers sometimes precede the compliment with clauses such as *I think*, or *I wanted to tell you*. Thus, the following examples show that compliments may appear in a more complex structure without disrupting the compliment form.

Example 1. – compliment preceded by *I think/I wanted to tell you*.

(1) *I think your hair looks good this way.*

(2) *By the way, I have to tell you how professional I thought your magazine looked.*

(Manes and Wolfson 1981, 120-121)

3.1.3 Commentary on Morphology

As mentioned, verbs and adjectives represent the majority of the items used when expressing a compliment. However, these devices are limited by semantic and morphological constraints. The analysis by Manes and Wolfson (1981, 122) observed that adjectives tend to appear in their base forms, while comparatives and superlatives appear only rarely.

Similarly, verbs tend to appear in the simple present or past forms. The analysis did not register any use of compliments that would include future tense. In addition, the aspect of verbs was found not to be as restricted as the use of future tense. Nonetheless, these cases were found to be extremely rare. Hence, it is evident that compliments lean towards using "...verbs which are not marked for aspect" (ibid.).

3.1.4 Summary of the Function and the Form of Compliments

This linguistic research sheds light on the motivations behind speakers' linguistic choices. An elucidation provided by Manes and Wolfson (1981) is remarkably straightforward; the linguistic form of compliments should be simple enough to effectively serve their intended purpose. Given that the primary function of compliments is to foster or enhance solidarity, compliments must be unambiguous to prevent misunderstandings or the creation of social distance. By employing pre-established and widely accepted formulas, compliment givers minimize the risk of failing to achieve the fundamental function of compliments (ibid.).

3.2 Compliment Topics

The following three sections explore compliment topics and their correlation with gender, culture, and social distance, recognizing the substantial impact of all three factors on complimenting behavior.

Several linguists have carried out research regarding the effect gender has on complimenting behaviour and confirmed that gender indeed plays a nuanced role in shaping compliment exchanges (the specific linguists and their findings will be discussed below).

Thus, compliment topics can reflect and reinforce gendered and cultural perceptions and power dynamics within interpersonal interactions.

Janet Holmes (2013, 130) summarized the most common compliment topics. She stressed that even though speakers have a plethora of different possible topics for compliments, her data revealed that people refer to only a few broad topics:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| (1) Appearance compliment. | <i>I like your outfit Beth. I think I could wear that.</i> |
| (2) Ability/performance compliment. | <i>Wow, you played well today Davy.</i> |
| (3) Possessions compliment. | <i>Is that your flash red sports car?</i> |
| (4) Personality/friendliness. | <i>I'm very lucky to have such a good friend.</i> |

(ibid.)

Holmes (2013) confirmed that most compliments refer to appearance. The second most frequent topic of compliments is tied to abilities/performance. Furthermore, she suggested that there is a consensus between the norms of New Zealand and American English regarding suitable topics for compliments (Holmes 1986, 496-497).

In the context of Czech speakers, Válková (2008) utilized prior research on compliment topics conducted by Manes and Wolfson (1981) and Herbert's (1991) data on Polish complimenting behaviour, to compare her findings in her research on commonly occurring compliment subjects in Czech. She collected 353 compliments in Czech and pointed out the most prevalent topics:

- (1) Appearance (40%)
- (2) Ability/performance (37%)
- (3) Possessions (13%)
- (4) Personality/Friendship (5%)
- (5) Others (5%) – “used for those compliments which did not clearly refer to any of the above mentioned topics or might refer to more than one” (Válková 2008, 140)

(Válková 2008, 139-140)

Compliments and their topics vary across cultures, reflecting the diverse values and norms that shape social interaction. People from different cultural backgrounds appreciate

and prioritize distinct values, which are often reflected in their complimenting behaviour (Wierzbicka 2003, 144-148). Nonetheless, the above information suggests that the compliment topics of English and Czech are quite similar.

The following section discusses how gender plays a significant role in shaping complimenting behaviour. Research suggests that men and women express and receive compliments differently based on societal expectations and gender norms.

3.3 The Role of Gender in Complimenting Behaviour

As previously discussed in this thesis, compliments seem to operate differently in interactions between men and women. Various linguists have regarded gender as a significant factor influencing compliment behaviour (Tannen 1990; Holmes 1988; Coates 2013).

Various research suggests that men and women interpret compliments differently, which is consequently reflected in the subjects of compliments. In women's interactions, compliments tend to focus first on appearance and family before acknowledging abilities and intellect. In contrast, men tend to offer compliments regarding achievements or possessions rather than appearance (Bolton 1994, 11; Holmes 1988, 455). In addition, compliments occur more frequently in women's interactions rather than among men (Wolfson 1983, 92; Holmes 2013, 122). Similarly, women are complimented more often than men (by men and women) (Wolfson 1983; Herbert 1990).

Based on the differences in the complimenting behaviour among men and women, Holmes (2013, 123) suggested that men and women may approach the function of compliments differently. Women may view compliments primarily as positively affective speech acts, like solidarity and positive politeness, while men may prioritize their evaluative judgments or potential face-threatening features. In connection with the subjects of compliments, compliments regarding a man's appearance may come across as FTAs "because they ignore the negative face-needs of the addressee" (Coates 2013, 100). Furthermore, it is worth adding a comment by the sociolinguist David Britain: "To compliment another man on his hair, his clothes or his body is an extremely face-threatening thing to do, both for speaker and hearer. It has to be very carefully done in order not to send out the wrong signals" (Britain, personal communication, cited in Coates 2013, 99-100).

One can find several different accounts explaining why women receive more compliments than men. Wolfson (1984, p. 241) suggests that women's subordinate role in society allows them to be perceived as appropriate targets for various social judgments. However, Holmes (1988, 452) disagrees with this conclusion and argues that men view "...compliments as FTAs, as embarrassing and discomfoting..." which may be why compliments occur more rarely within men's communication. This may be because men use other means to express solidarity and friendship. Similarly, women tend not to pay as many compliments to men as they do to women since they are sensitive to men's attitudes about compliments (ibid.).

3.4 The Role of Status and Distance on Complimenting Behaviour

First and foremost, in discussing the influence of social distance on complimenting behaviour, it is worth mentioning the Bulge Theory proposed by Nessa Watson (1986). Wolfson (1986, 74) explains that the Bulge Theory states that the frequency of the usage of certain types of speech behaviour is inherently linked to the social distance between the interlocutors. She adds that this is because "the more status and social distance are seen as fixed, the easier it is for speakers to know what to expect of one another. Furthermore, Wolfson (ibid.) in her study of American English argued that intimates and strangers, representing the extremes of the social distance spectrum, exhibit a comparable pattern and that the middle section represents the "characteristic bulge". In connection with compliments, even though Wolfson (1986, 75) acknowledges that compliments do occur between speakers who are "intimates, status unequals, or even strangers," she states that the great majority ("the bulge") occurs in interactions between speakers who are neither intimates nor strangers. In interactions where there is a notable difference in status between speakers, Wolfson (ibid.) suggests that compliments on performance are the most common (e.g., between a boss and an employee or a teacher and a student). However, regarding compliments about appearance, Wolfson (1986, 75) argues that the speakers' gender is a significant factor, surpassing status in all instances.

The connection between status and compliment behaviour was observed in the study by Knapp et al. (1984). Their study observed that the majority of compliments were paid in relationships of equal status (71%). Compliments given by a person of higher status represented only 22%. The rarest cases were compliments given by a person of lower status, representing only 7% of the total number of analysed compliments (Knapp et al. 1984, 27).

Similarly, Janet Holmes (1988) in her analysis of compliments considered the role of status in complimenting behaviour. Her findings align with the Bulge Theory, as 79% of the compliments occurred in interactions among interlocutors of equal status (Holmes 1988, 456). She acknowledged that the data was collected from informal interactions between friends; nonetheless, she supports her findings by highlighting Wolfson's research. Furthermore, Holmes' analysis showed that women of higher status receive more compliments than higher-status men. She explains that high-status women may appear less intimidating than high-status men. This holds no matter whether the compliment giver is a man or a woman. Moreover, men are more likely to compliment women of high status than women. Hence, high-status women are possibly more receptive to compliments than high-status men. She concludes that "high status males may be perceived as high risk addresses by both sexes (Holmes 1988, 457). This supports the idea that individuals giving compliments recognized the potential risk of causing discomfort to higher-status men by imposing FTA. The table below shows the distribution of compliments by status and gender within Holmes' research (1988):

Table 5
Distribution of compliments by relative status and sex of participants.

Relative status	Sex of Complimenter-Recipient			
	F-F	M-F	F-M	M-M
Recipient is higher in status	31 (12.5)	17 (15)	5 (6.3)	4 (9)
Recipient is equal in status	193 (77.8)	84 (75)	70 (87.5)	34 (77.3)
Recipient is lower in status	24 (9.7)	11 (9.8)	5 (6.2)	6 (13.6)
Total	248	112	80	44

Note: Percentages are given in parentheses.

Figure 2. Distribution of compliments by relative status and sex of participants (Holmes 1988, 457).

In her study, Holmes observed that status also influences the topic of compliments. Compliments directed either downwards or upwards tended to focus more on work performance or skill (54%) compared to appearance (27%). In contrast, among equals this trend proved to be the opposite. Compliments occurring in interaction among equals were

predominantly on appearance (57%) rather than performance or skill (25%). The table below shows the distribution of compliments by status, gender, and topic:

Table 6
Distribution of compliments by status, sex of participants and topic.

Relative status	Sex of Complimenter–Recipient			
	F–F %	M–F %	F–M %	M–M %
<i>Recipient is higher in status</i>				
Appearance	4.8	1.8	–	2.3
Possessions	2.4	0.9	1.3	2.3
Skill	4.8	11.6	3.8	4.6
<i>Recipient is equal in status</i>				
Appearance	50.4	45.5	40	31.8
Possessions	8.9	0.9	8.8	22.7
Skill	12.9	23.2	27.5	15.9
<i>Recipient is lower in status</i>				
Appearance	5.7	–	–	2.3
Possessions	0.8	–	1.3	–
Skill	2.4	8.9	3.8	11.4
Total	86.5	92.8	93.1	93.3

Figure 3. Distribution of compliments by status, sex of participants, and topic (Holmes 1988, 458).

This table shows that compliments on appearance are most prevalent in women’s interactions regardless of their status. Holmes’ data supports the idea that differences in status typically decrease the probability of appearance compliments (this applies especially to male compliment givers) (Holmes 1988, 458). Holmes’ results were supported by the analysis conducted by Bolton (1994).

In summary, compliments related to skills are more commonly exchanged between individuals of different statuses compared to those focused on appearance (Holmes 1988, 458; Wolfson 1986, 74). Furthermore, Holmes’ (1988, 458) research suggests that gender identity appears to play a significant role, particularly in mitigating the distancing effect caused by status differences. In other words, it suggests that women may experience a reduced distancing effect compared to men when complimenting individuals of higher status, especially in terms of skills rather than appearance (ibid.). Moreover, Holmes (1988, 458-459) suggested that the near absence of appearance compliments between individuals of opposite genders and different statuses indicates a link between appearance compliments and relationships based on solidarity. This supports the idea that compliments are deemed appropriate when they refer to subjects that serve to strengthen relationships. Additionally, Holmes’ (1988, 459) research showed that men tend to focus on complimenting when

interacting with lower-status men and women of different status. According to Holmes (ibid.), men may perceive these groups as socially distant, and compliments may bridge this perceived social gap. This contributes to the idea that compliments on appearance can be perceived as FTA by men, particularly when the compliment giver is of a different status (Holmes 1988, 459; Bolton 1994, 16).

4 COMPLIMENT RESPONSES

Responding to a compliment is just as complex as giving it. Various linguists even claim that paying a compliment is possibly easier because compliment responses (CRs) are speech acts that inherently follow a compliment. The recipient must deal with several aspects that influence their reaction. Supposedly, responding to a compliment given by a stranger or a person of higher status may cause uneasiness, and the recipient of the compliment may have difficulties responding to the compliment (Holmes 1988; Herbert 1990). Furthermore, the most common variables that affect the choice of compliment response include gender, age, cultural background, and social status (Válková 2008,143)

Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested that compliments can be perceived as FTAs because they involve judgments about others. Moreover, suppose compliments are given in inappropriate circumstances or are ambiguous. In that case, the recipient may interpret them as ironic, potentially putting them in a defensive state or leaving them too surprised to respond appropriately. The receiver is then challenged to respond appropriately and simultaneously fulfil the face wants of the compliment giver. Additionally, there is a challenge of accepting the compliment without self-praise, as per Leech's principle of Modesty and Agreement (Leech and the agreement/modesty dilemma in CRs is discussed in this thesis in section 2.2).

However, Brown and Levinson's account (1987) has been challenged in connection with compliment responses by Rong Chen (1993, 60-61). He states that:

At first sight ... Rejecting, seems to be a bald-on-record strategy of doing a face-threatening act (an FTA), since it typically begins with "No" and is without any redressive action. However, according to Brown and Levinson (pp. 94-101) bald-on record strategies are used in two kinds of cases: where "maximum efficiency is very important" (i.g., [sic] in case of a fire or earthquake) and where "other demands override face concerns" (e.g., demands which are beneficial to the hearer). The compliment-response situation, obviously, fits into neither of them. Furthermore, even if we suppose that rejecting were a bald-on-record strategy, Brown and Levinson would still have a hard time to account for self-denigration. (...) Brown and Levinson seem to be aware of the fact that the recipient of a compliment may denigrate the compliment's object (p. 68). and that self-humbling is a pervasive phenomenon in some cultures (pp. 185-186): even so, their theory is simply unable to account for these facts.

Hence, in his own analysis of CRs by English and Chinese speakers, Chen (1993) used Leech's Politeness Principle and its Agreement and Modesty maxims as an adequate theoretical framework for explaining the differences among the different cultures (1993, 65).

One of the linguists that thoroughly analysed CRs and is often cited by others is Anita Pomerantz (1978). Her theory aligns with Leech's principles since she proposed that when answering a compliment, one is faced with the pressure to agree with the compliment giver but simultaneously avoid or minimize self-praise. Thus, there is a clash between the Agreement and Modesty maxims, as proposed by Leech.

In her CRs analysis, Pomerantz (2021, 68-90) described three constraint systems that influence how people respond to compliments. According to Pomerantz (2021, 67-69), these systems operate alongside a system of preferences (Pomerantz (2021, 67) noted that while accepting a compliment is generally seen as the ideal preferred response, there is a significant number of instances where CRs deviate from the expected acceptance). First, when given a compliment, the recipient can either accept or reject it. This creates two opposing CR strategies: acceptance and rejection (ibid.). Second, in addition to deciding whether to accept or reject the compliment, the recipient also evaluates the compliment itself. They may choose to agree or disagree with it. This constraint aligns with the first, as acceptance often involves agreeing with the compliment, while rejection often involves disagreeing (ibid.). The third constraint is the desire to avoid self-praise. While acceptance of the compliment is preferred, it can conflict with the desire to avoid self-praise. This conflict often leads to responses that involve rejection or disagreement (Pomerantz 2021, 67-68). Pomerantz (2021, 68) argues that individuals develop a range of strategies to reconcile the contradiction between the preference for acceptance and the desire to avoid self-praise. These strategies allow them to navigate the social expectations surrounding compliments while managing concerns about self-praise. I have attempted to provide a summary of CR strategies as proposed by Anita Pomerantz (2021, 69-90):

1. Acceptance strategies
 - a. Containing appreciation tokens (e.g., Thank you.)
 - b. CRs in the form of agreements (e.g., That's a nice coat! – Yes, I know.)
2. Rejection strategies
 - a. CRs in the form of disagreements (e.g., That's a nice coat! – Oh no, it's old and worn out.)
3. Self-praise avoidance strategies
 - a. Scaled-down agreements (e.g., It is just beautiful. – Well, thank you, I think it is quite nice.)

- b. Disagreements (e.g., You have lost so much weight! – Well, not that much.)
- c. Compliment upgrades (e.g., It is a nice day – It’s gorgeous!)
- d. Reference shift.
 - i. Shift credit for praise to other than self-referent (e.g., You are a good driver, honey. – These are easy to drive.)
 - ii. Return compliment (e.g., You look good – So do you.)

Placencia (2016, 4) summarized the strategies of CRs proposed by Anita Pomerantz (1978) in the figure below:

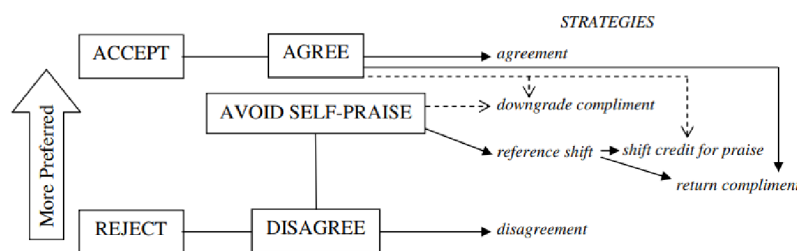


Figure 4. “Summary of Pomerantz’s (1978: 83-106) constraints operating on compliment responses” (Placencia 2016, 4).

It is important to note that Pomerantz’s theory is criticised for its broad definition of compliments (Wierzbicka 2003, 136). In her work, Pomerantz (1978, 107) classifies the following example as a compliment:

(1) B: Well anyway nice talking to you.

A: Nice talkin to you honey.

The main problem of Pomerantz’s taxonomy lies in its lack of definitions. She introduced her theory using illustrations and examples rather than definitions. For example, Wierzbicka (2003, 137) labelled Pomerantz’s taxonomy as “vague.”

The general principle in Pomerantz’s taxonomy concerning the clash between the Agreement and Modesty maxim serves as a basis for another often-cited classification of CRs which was proposed by Robert K. Herbert (1990, 208-209), who distinguished twelve types of CRs and divided them into three categories of CRs:

Acceptance

1. Appreciation token – Accepting a compliment verbally or nonverbally, where the acceptance is not necessarily dependent on the exact meaning of the compliment itself. (e.g., Thanks, Thank you, [nod])

2. Comment acceptance – Recipient accepts the compliment and responds with a relevant comment about the topic being appreciated (e.g., Yeah, it's my favourite too.)
3. Praise upgrade – Recipient accepts the compliment but asserts that it lacks sufficient force or strength (e.g., Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn't it?)

Nonacceptance

4. Comment History – The recipient responds to the compliment by making comments about the object being complimented (which differ from the 2nd type in that they are impersonal and shift the focus away from the recipient (e.g., I bought it for the trip to Arizona.)
5. Reassignment – Recipient agrees with the compliment assertion but transfers the complimentary force to some third person (e.g., My brother gave it to me.)
6. Return – Similar to the 5th strategy, however, the praise is shifted or returned to the first speaker (e.g., So's your.)

Nonagreement

7. Scale down – The recipient disagrees with the level of praise in the compliment, either by pointing out a flaw in the object or suggesting that the praise is exaggerated (e.g., It's really quite old.)
8. Question – The recipient questions the appropriateness or sincerity of the compliment (e.g., Do you really think so?)
9. Disagreement – The recipient asserts that the complimented object doesn't deserve praise. The recipient asserts that the compliment giver's assertion is an error (e.g., I hate it.)
10. Qualification – Weaker than the 9th strategy, the recipient simply qualifies the original assertion, typically using words like though, but, well, etc. (e.g., It's alright, but Len's is nicer)
11. No Acknowledgement – The recipient shows no signs of having heard the compliment. They either respond with irrelevant comments (shift the topic) or do not respond at all.
- + 12. Request interpretation – The recipient interprets the compliment as a request. These differ from typical CRs because the recipient doesn't perceive the previous statement as a compliment (e.g., You wanna borrow this one too?)

Janet Holmes (1988, 460-461) in her CR analysis proposed a new taxonomy and suggested the following categorization of CRs:

1. Accept

- a. Appreciation/agreement token (e.g., *thanks, yes*)
 - b. Agreeing utterance (e.g., *I think it's lovely too.*)
 - c. Downgrading utterance (e.g., *It's not too bad is it.*)
 - d. Return compliment (e.g., *You're looking good too*)
2. Reject
- a. Disagreeing utterance (e.g., *I'm afraid I don't like it much.*)
 - b. Question accuracy (e.g., *Is beautiful the right word?*)
 - c. Challenge sincerity (e.g., *You don't really mean that.*)
3. Deflect/Evade
- a. Shift credit (e.g., *My mother knitted it.*)
 - b. Informative comment (e.g., *I bought it at that Vibrant Knits place.*)
 - c. Ignore (e.g., *It's time we were leaving, isn't it?*)
 - d. Legitimate evasion
 - e. Request reassurance/repetition (e.g., *Do you really think so?*)

Additionally, it is important to note that Holmes (1988) in her analysis of CRs and compliments in New Zealand applied the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) to her data (as discussed in sections 2.3.4, 3.3, and 3.4).

Other classifications for CRs exist; however, for the purposes of this thesis, only the most cited and widely accepted classifications are included in this chapter.

4.1 CRs and Culture

From a cultural perspective, it is interesting to compare the results of analyses of CRs from different cultural backgrounds. In studies of American English, the researchers have observed that the most prevalent CR is a form of acceptance (Herbert 1990, 211; Nelson et al. 1996).

On the other hand, studies of Japanese or Chinese compliment behaviour contradicted the idea of the universality of politeness behaviour, especially in terms of CRs. The data collected from these cultures suggests that the majority of speakers tend to reject compliments (Chen 1993; Daikuhara 1986).

Furthermore, politeness behaviour differs even within the English family of languages. In her study of New Zealand speakers, Janet Holmes (1986, 495) observed that acceptances amount to 61.1% of CRs. Similarly, in the study of South American English, Herbert (1990, 211) observed that acceptances represent as much as 76.3% of CRs collected. In contrast, Lee's (1990) research on compliments and CRs in Hawai'i Creole English showed that the speakers' most preferred strategy is denial, possibly because of the influence of Asian culture (1990, 117). For this reason, Arabski (2004) suggests that "...compliment responses violate politeness maxims but different ones in different cultures. They are culture specific..." (2004, 12).

In the Czech context, the subjects of compliments and CRs were analysed by Válková (2008) and Bielewicz-Kunc (2011). Válková focused on the topics of compliments (as mentioned in section 3.2) and possible variables affecting complimenting behaviour. Bielewicz-Kunc (2011) conducted extensive research and analysed complimenting behaviour in Czech, Polish, and English. In her research, she concluded that in all the analysed languages, "...compliments function more or less in the same way (...) On the whole, American, British, Australian, New Zealand, Czech and Polish compliments positively affect an interaction, and help to maintain good relationships" (Bielewicz-Kunc 2011, 157). Regarding CRs, Bielewicz-Kunc (2011, 153) stated that cultural background plays a crucial role. While she observed certain similarities across nations, such as the utilization of similar CR strategies, the frequencies varied significantly. Additionally, certain CR strategies observed in Czech were not documented in any prior English research available to the author.

4.2 CRs and Gender

This thesis provided several pieces of evidence that gender inevitably affects complimenting behaviour. Thus, it is logical that the way speakers respond to a compliment is affected by the gender stereotypes occurring within a particular culture. This phenomenon was explored by various linguists (Holmes 1988; Herbert 1990; Chen, 1993; Coates 2013).

Herbert (1990) observed that compliments given by men are more likely to be accepted than those given by women, especially when directed towards women. For this reason, he suggests that the gender of the compliment giver is a strong indicator of whether a compliment will be accepted (Herbert 1990, 212).

Moreover, Holmes (1988) observed that men exhibited a greater tendency to evade or ignore compliments (men either avoided verbal responses or shifted focus to some other part of the utterance). The data she collected in New Zealand further confirmed that men experience compliments as FTAs, and for this reason, they opt for evasion strategies. Furthermore, if a woman were to deflect a compliment, she did so by shifting credit or by providing informative comments, which are not as strong as blatantly ignoring a compliment (Holmes 1988, 461).

In conclusion, the thesis highlighted that responding to compliments is a nuanced social phenomenon influenced by various factors such as cultural norms, social status, and gender stereotypes. Scholars like Pomerantz (1978), Holmes (1988), and Herbert (1990) have provided valuable insights into the complexity of CRs, highlighting the tension between accepting compliments and avoiding self-praise. Pomerantz's (2021, 67-69) theory of three constraint systems sheds light on the intricacies of CRs, while Holmes (1988) and Herbert (1990) offer alternative taxonomies to categorize different responses.

What follows is the practical part of this thesis that focuses on the cross-cultural analysis of Czech and English CRs.

II. PRACTICAL PART

5 METHODOLOGY

The analysis carried out by this thesis drew on the research conducted by Rong Chen (1993). Chen's research was concerned with the differences in compliment responses used by English and Chinese speakers. Since this thesis follows a similar goal to Chen's, the questionnaire was designed similarly. In addition, this thesis aims to examine the differences in compliment responses used by Czech and English speakers, emphasizing the differences between men and women. For this reason, the questionnaire in the form of a discourse-completion task (DCT) contained eight situations instead of Chen's four situations. This was done in order to examine the differences in responses paid to men and women. The situations were designed to elicit compliment responses. The respondents were asked to provide responses they deemed appropriate for each situation. Given that there are multiple ways to respond to a compliment, the participants were asked to write down all the responses they found socially appropriate. This is why the number of CR strategies is higher than that of the respondents.

Kasper (2008, 292) described DCT as follows: "...a situational description and a brief dialogue which has one turn as an open slot. The context given in the scenario is designed to constrain the open turn so that it elicits the desired communicative act. (...) In dialogue construction and open response formats, no rejoinder is provided." The questionnaire adopted the open-response format for the purposes and reasons stated above. Furthermore, the responses were allowed to be verbal and non-verbal (Kasper 2008, 293).

This type of data collection is widely used in numerous studies (Chen 1993; Morady and Ansarin 2016; Jalilzadeh-Mohammadi and Sarkhosh 2016; Váľková 2008; Bielewicz-Kunc 2011). However, it is necessary to highlight the inadequacies of DCTs. Rose and Kwai-fun (2001, 155) note that "questionnaires cannot measure social action, they can only collect self-reports of recalled past action or of prospective or hypothetical action." This claim is also supported by Váľková (2008, 141). Indeed, several studies provide evidence for the differences between written DCTs and authentic data comparisons. Golato (2003) carried out one such study focused on CRs in the German language. She reported that while DCT respondents answered using appreciation tokens ("danke" – thank you) in 12.4% of their responses to compliments, they refrained from using this type of strategy entirely during authentic compliment exchanges. Similarly, among 217 DCT responses, only one included an assessment combined with agreement pursuit ("super ne?" – Super, isn't it?), a response

strategy observed in 12% of authentic data. Thus, one can conclude that the various comparative studies support the idea that DCTs and different types of questionnaires elicit “intuitional data rather than data on language use and behaviour” (Kasper 2008, 294). This view is supported by other linguists (Golato 2003; Kasper and Rose 2002; Turnbull 2001). Kasper (2008, 297) concludes that the various techniques employed in compliment research demonstrate that self-reports, whether through DCT or interviews, cannot replace recorded observation when the investigation aims to establish pragmatic practices.

Nonetheless, exploring pragmatic intuition is a valid area of study, particularly in research relating to pragmatic development and language testing. As long as researchers clearly understand the potential and constraints of utilizing DCT data, DCT remains a valuable tool for pragmatic research (Kasper 2008, 294). In addition, Válková (2008, 141) adds that DCT is the only relevant way to measure politeness strategies. Additionally, DCT enables researchers to obtain a larger amount of data from different cultures in a shorter period (Trosborg 2010, 28).

5.1 Limitations

Furthermore, the DCT used for this thesis had the following limitations. First, the situations were concerned with only four topics of compliments. Namely appearance, clothing, achievement, and possession. Indeed, the topics of compliments are not limited to these subjects; nonetheless, previous studies have proved that most compliments in everyday speech are about these topics (Válková 2008, 139-140; Holmes 2013, 130).

Second, the relationship between the respondents and the compliment givers in the eight situations is restricted to friends and acquaintances. It was that factors such as age, social distance, and status influence the choice of a compliment response. However, numerous studies have shown that most compliments occur in interactions between speakers of equal status (Knapp et al. 1984; Wolfson 1986; Holmes 1988). In her study, Holmes (1988, 456) observed that “79% of the compliments occurred between equals”. In connection with this, Wolfson’s (1986, 75) research suggested that the great majority of compliments (“the bulge”) occur in interactions between speakers who are neither intimates nor strangers.

Third, to obtain data from native English speakers, the questionnaire was posted on several websites and Facebook pages dedicated to survey exchange. These included:

Websites

- <https://surveyswap.io/>
- <https://www.surveycircle.com/en/>

Facebook pages

- Global Survey Exchange – Survey Sharing & Survey Taking | Mutual Support
- Survey Sharing - Survey Exchange / Swap - Find More Survey Participants
- SurveyCircle / Survey Panel – Post Survey, Find Participants, Get Responses
- Survey Exchange
- Survey Exchange / Survey Group / Survey Participants - Dissertation, Thesis
- Dissertation Survey Exchange – Share Your Research Study, Find Participants

For this reason, one could challenge the authenticity of the English-speaking respondents as there is no reliable way to prove their truthfulness. However, I have obtained most of the data by completing surveys of other college students, who in exchange completed the DCT for this thesis. All the surveys I completed were from UK or US college students; thus, the data they provided was deemed appropriate for this study.

Finally, most studies of this nature were conducted by multiple researchers so that the data could be analysed without any personal bias. Therefore, it is necessary to state that the data used for this thesis were classified according to Holmes' taxonomy of CRs by only one person. Hence, there is a possibility that personal bias might have influenced the interpretation and classification of some responses.

5.2 Construction of Compliments for the DCT

The English compliments that were part of the DCT were constructed according to previous research conducted by Manes and Wolfson (1981, 120-121). The authors identified nine commonly used compliment syntactic structures. The structures that appeared in the DCT are as follows:

Situation 1	<i>I (really) /like, love/ NP! PRO is /really/ (a) ADJ NP!</i>
Situation 2	<i>NP /is, looks/ (really) ADJ.</i>

Situation 3	<i>What (a) (ADJ) NP! NP /is, looks/ (really) ADJ.</i>
Situation 4	<i>What (a) (ADJ) NP!</i>
Situation 5	<i>PRO is /really/ (a) ADJ NP. You V (a) (really) ADJ NP.</i>
Situation 6	<i>I (really) /like, love/ NP</i>
Situation 7	<i>NP /is, looks/ (really) ADJ.</i>
Situation 8	<i>PRO is /really/ (a) ADJ NP. I (really) /like, love/ NP.</i>

Table 1 DCT - Compliment syntactic structures.

5.3 Data Sampling

As a second step, an anonymous online questionnaire was created to obtain the needed data. In the first part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to provide their age, gender, and educational background. In addition, the respondents were asked about their attitudes towards compliments. Subsequently, the respondents were provided with a slide containing instructions on how to approach the second section of the questionnaire. The second section of the questionnaire presented the respondents with eight situations in which they were expected to respond and react to the compliments occurring in each situation. Since this study is also focused on Czech speakers, two questionnaires had to be created to obtain data from both language groups. The questionnaire was then translated into Czech.

It must be noted that 128 responses were received for the DCT questionnaire. However, because of the unequal distribution of respondents across demographic categories, only a subset of 40 responses were ultimately utilized for the analysis. This decision was necessitated by the significant disparity in the number of respondents from different demographic groups, with a notable overrepresentation of Czech women compared to other groups. Such unequal distribution may have introduced bias in the findings. Furthermore, a portion of the collected responses was deemed invalid due to various factors. Some respondents failed to read the instructions carefully, resulting in incomplete or irrelevant responses (for example, some respondents provided information about their feelings concerning the compliments in provided situations or were not native English speakers).

Additionally, certain individuals may have chosen not to cooperate (but still chose to take the questionnaire), thereby contributing to the exclusion of their responses from the analysis. The most extreme cases of uncooperative behaviour were exhibited by two individuals, both of whom were Czech. One of these respondents (CZ man) utilized the text boxes in the questionnaire to express the opinion that the philosophy department serves no purpose and that my questionnaire is proof of this assertion. Another participant accused me of bigotry and claimed that I discriminate against people who do not conform to the studied gender stereotypes. Additional instances of uncooperative behaviour were observed in the responses of Czech men, typically manifesting as failure to provide an answer to the compliments and instead providing responses consisting of multiple full stops, other symbols, or simply copying 'Dík.' (Thanks.) into all the text boxes.

Lastly, some respondents exploited the DCT for this study to gain points on the aforementioned survey exchange websites and did not provide any valuable responses (the most common case included individuals coping and pasting “thanks” or “X”). It is worth adding that the estimated time for the completion of the DCT for this study was at least 7 minutes. Those who failed to read the instructions, did not cooperate, or exploited the DCT typically finished in under four minutes. Furthermore, before commencing the data collection, it was determined that a minimum of 10 respondents would be sought from each demographic category, including Czech men, Czech women, English-speaking men, and English-speaking women. This decision was made to ensure adequate representation across gender and cultural backgrounds.

In the final selection process, 40 responses were randomly chosen, ensuring that respondents had filled out the questionnaire somewhat thoughtfully and adhered to the provided instructions. Generally, the initial ten responses meeting these criteria were selected for inclusion. Notably, obtaining responses from English men proved challenging, resulting in a smaller representation from this group (only ten responses in total).

After obtaining the data, the responses were categorized according to Janet Holmes' classification of CRs. After this, the respective theories of Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) were applied to the responses to determine whether they are equally suitable for analysing the Czech and English languages. The thesis aims to focus on the following research questions:

- How do English and Czech speakers differ in their strategies of responding to compliments?
- Are there differences in the frequency and types of compliment response strategies used by men and women in English and Czech cultures?
- Are theoretical frameworks of Leech's politeness principle and Brown and Levinson's face-saving theory suitable for analysing compliment responses in Czech and English cultures?

5.3.1 Participants

As mentioned in section 5.3, after the final selection process, the analysis focused on 40 participants, out of which 20 participants claimed to be native speakers of Czech and 20 participants claimed to be native speakers of English. In each language group, there were 10 women and 10 men. The average age of Czech respondents was 23.45. The average age of English respondents was 25.5. All the respondents claimed to be college students. The nationalities of the English speakers were as follows: USA (10 respondents), UK (6 respondents), and England (4 respondents). The respondents were not asked to provide information regarding the specific part of the country.

5.3.2 Observed Issues with the DCT

The author of this thesis observed several issues with the DCT. First, some recipients were offended by the fact that the questionnaire only targeted men and women. Thus, an apology was later added to the introductory page. Second, some respondents provided their answers in the form of “I would say...” instead of I-perspective. Admittedly, this issue was caused by an error in the questionnaire design as it was not specified to respond from an I-perspective. Nonetheless, this did not obscure the data; thus, they were still deemed valuable.

6 CLASSIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

This section is dedicated to the analysis of the obtained data. As mentioned, the DCT described eight situations dedicated to four compliment topics: appearance, clothing, achievement, and possession. Each compliment topic was used for two situations in order to elicit responses to compliments given by men and women.

Each group of respondents will have a separate table showing the strategies used. The respondents are divided into these groups: (1) English-speaking men, (2) English-speaking women, (3) Czech men, (4) Czech women, (5) Czech respondents, (6) English respondents, and finally (7) men and women in general. The groups will be analysed as follows: (a) English-speaking men and English-speaking women, (b) Czech men and Czech women, (c) English respondents and Czech respondents, and (d) men and women,

First, groups (1) and (2) will be analysed and compared to each other. Next, groups (3) and (4) will be compared to each other and then to groups (1) and (2). What will follow is a comparison of both language groups and the strategies they used, regardless of gender. Lastly, a comparison of strategies used by men and women from both language groups will be presented.

The questionnaires can be found in the APPENDICES section of this thesis. Moreover, two Excel documents with classification of individual compliment responses according to Janet Holmes' taxonomy can be found in the attachments. These two documents are divided by nationality. One additional Excel document is attached. This document contains an overview of all analysed responses (including other information about the participants).

6.1 Situations 1 and 3 – English-speaking Men and Women

Situation 1 – men respond to women		Situation 3 – men respond to men	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p style="text-align: right;">7 1 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p style="text-align: right;">7 2 3</p>
Total	9	Total	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance 	2
Total	0	Total	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p style="text-align: right;">6 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p style="text-align: right;">4 1 1</p>
Total	9	Total	6

Table 2 Situations 1 and 3 – English-speaking men’s responses to a clothing compliment.

Situation 3 – women respond to men		Situation 1 – women respond to women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p style="text-align: right;">10 2 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p style="text-align: right;">10 1 4</p>
Total	15	Total	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0
Total	0	Total	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	5
Total	2	Total	5

Table 3 Situations 3 and 1 – English-speaking women’s responses to a clothing compliment.

The tables above show the number of strategies used by English men and women when responding to a clothing compliment. The most prevalent strategy used by both genders is ACCEPT – *appreciation/agreement token*. This sub-strategy was often accompanied by DEFLECT/EVADE strategies (typically *informative comment* and *request reassurance/repetition*).

In the case of a clothing compliment, men utilized three types of DEFLECT/EVADE strategies. Namely *informative comment*, *request reassurance/repetition*, and *legitimate evasion*. Interestingly, the *request reassurance/repetition* and *legitimate evasion* sub-strategies were not observed in the women’s responses. Hence, women were more likely to accept the compliment directly.

Informative comment was the second most frequently observed strategy. Moreover, informative comments often cooccurred with the *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy (e.g., Thanks! I got it at X.).

Cases of the DEFLECT/EVADE - *request reassurance/repetition* sub-strategy were observed in men’s responses. All of these had a similar form to “Really?” or “For real?”.

The data showed that men employed more DEFLECT/EVADE strategies than women. In connection with this, men were more likely to attempt to avoid self-praise (e.g., “Really? They are not that special. I don't even know where I bought them.”).

Moreover, two cases of REJECT– *disagreeing utterance* were observed. Both cases appeared in M-M interaction (“I've just about worn this thing out.” and “Not really. Just an old t-shirt that I had for ages.”).

One case of DEFLECT/EVADE – *legitimate evasion* (“Don’t mention it. (I look away uncertainly.”) was observed in M-M interaction. It is worth noting that this respondent stated that he does not like receiving compliments and feels indifferent and uncomfortable receiving them.

Another observed strategy was ACCEPT – *return compliment*. In the case of clothing compliments, men were more likely to return a compliment to a man rather than to a woman (M-M 3x, M-F 1x). In general, women were more likely to return a compliment (W-M 3x, W-W 4x).

In summary, English-speaking women were more likely to directly accept a clothing compliment than men. Moreover, women were more likely to return a compliment. Additionally, women were likely to use fewer DEFLECT/EVADE and REJECT strategies than men.

6.2 Situations 2 and 6 – English-speaking Men and Women

Situation 2 – men respond to women		Situation 6 – men respond to men	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Return compliment 	<p>6</p> <p>6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>5</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p>
Total	12	Total	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy 	<p>1</p> <p>3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Challenge sincerity 	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>

	4	○ Question accuracy	3
Total		Total	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	1 3 2
Total	2	Total	6

Table 4 Situations 2 and 6 - English-speaking men's responses to an appearance compliment.

Situation 6 – women respond to men		Situation 2 – women respond to women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Return compliment 	10 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	10 1 3
Total	13	Total	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Challenge sincerity 	2
Total	0	Total	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade 	0
Total	1	Total	0

Table 5 Situations 6 and 2 - English-speaking women's responses to an appearance compliment.

The tables above show the number of strategies used in responses to an appearance compliment. Once again, the most employed sub-strategy was ACCEPT – *appreciation/agreement token*. However, there is a striking difference between English-speaking men and women. English-speaking men were more likely to accept compliments on their appearances from a woman, but at the same time, men were observed to use more REJECT strategies as a response to both men and women.

It is worth mentioning that the respondents who employed REJECT strategies often used some kind of solidarity-enhancing strategy, such as *appreciation/agreement token*, or *return compliment*. There was only one case in M-W interaction, in which the respondent employed only the REJECT strategy (“Are you sure I look that great? I don't know about that *then I would laugh it off*”). Arguably, this respondent used two types of rejection – *question accuracy* and *disagreeing utterance*; however, only one of these (*question accuracy*) was chosen as the dominant strategy.

Additionally, one of the respondents employed the strategy DEFLECT/EVADE – *shift credit* (“The barbers was good.”) in M-M interaction and one DEFLECT/EVADE –

legitimate evasion in M-W interaction (“Oh I don't know about that, how have you been though!”).

In contrast to men, English-speaking women were more likely to simply accept the compliment. Moreover, in six cases, women accompanied the *appreciation token* with a *return compliment* strategy (e.g., “Thank you so much, that is so sweet! You are glowing yourself!”)

6.3 Situations 4 and 8 – English-speaking Men and Women

Situation 4 – men respond to women		Situation 8 – men respond to men	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance 	5 1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance 	6 2
Total	7	Total	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Question accuracy 	1
Total	0	Total	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	9 1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment 	1 7
Total	11	Total	8

Table 6 Situations 4 and 8 – English-speaking men’s responses to a possession compliment.

Situation 8 – women respond to men		Situation 4 – women respond to women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance 	8 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	7 2 1
Total	9	Total	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Question accuracy 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0
Total	1	Total	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	10
Total	4	Total	10

Table 7 Situations 8 and 4 – English-speaking women’s responses to a possession compliment.

The tables above show strategies used in responses to a possession compliment. The trend of English-speaking women being more likely to accept compliments is applicable even in these responses. In situation 4, in almost all cases, the ACCEPT strategy was accompanied by the *informative comment* sub-strategy. This comment was often concerned with the place of purchase of the praised item (a watch).

One of the responses was only “Probably take the watch off.” hence it was difficult to classify this answer. Nonetheless, I have interpreted this type of utterance as an *informative comment*, since taking the watch off might be done to show the watch off to the compliment giver. After considering all the possible categories, an *informative comment* seemed the most plausible, even if the response was not verbal. Admittedly, it is difficult to interpret this type of answer as the real intention of the respondent remains unknown.

In the context of situation 8, English-speaking women employed (1 token) REJECT (*question accuracy* – “To be honest it’s just a normal iPhone 13 haha”) and (4 tokens) DEFLECT/EVADE strategies. Most of these strategies aimed to lower the compliment power of the compliment (e.g., “I’m constantly afraid of dropping it!” “I can no longer afford food” “To be honest it’s just a normal iPhone 13 haha”). Additionally, one of the respondents stated that she would feel uncomfortable if someone called the praised object “fancy” but employed only the ACCEPT – *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy.

One of the more prominent differences between English-speaking men and women was the utilization of DEFLECT/EVADE strategies in situation 8. Men used twice as many of these strategies as women. One man employed the *legitimate evasion* sub-strategy (“Ask if she'd like to try it on”). Since this comment does serve as a proper reaction to the contents of the received compliment, it was interpreted as mentioned.

To summarize, the only apparent difference was observed in the usage of DEFLECT/EVADE strategies, with men using more of these strategies. The English-speaking respondents were likely to employ some form of ACCEPT strategies accompanied by the DEFLECT/EVADE strategy.

6.4 Situations 5 and 7 – English-speaking Men and Women

Situation 5 – men respond to women		Situation 7 – men respond to men	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	7 2 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance 	6 2
Total	12	Total	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance 	1
Total	2	Total	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	5
Total	4	Total	5

Table 8 Situations 5 and 7 – English-speaking men’s responses to an achievement compliment.

Situation 7 – women respond to men		Situation 5 – women respond to women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token 	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	10 1 2
Total	10	Total	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0
Total	3	Total	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	2
Total	2	Total	2

Table 9 Situations 7 and 5 – English-speaking women’s responses to an achievement compliment.

The tables above show English-speaking respondents' strategies when reacting to an achievement compliment. As in the previous situations, women were more likely to directly accept an achievement compliment using the *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy than men.

Interestingly, English-speaking women were likely to employ the *disagreeing utterance* sub-strategy when speaking to men but not to women. Two women rejected the compliment by attributing their success to luck rather than their intellect (“Say more like a lucky one! But thank you!” and “Ha! If I were smart, I would have prepared for the class. But thanks!”). One English-speaking woman directly responded: “I am not smart.”

Furthermore, respondents who employed the *informative comment* sub-strategy often stated that they felt nervous while expressing appreciation for the compliment. This sub-strategy may suggest a similar meaning as the employment of REJECT strategies; however,

6.5 Situations 1 and 3 – Czech Men and Women

Situation 1 – men responding to women		Situation 3 – men responding to men	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token 	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	10 1 1
Total	10	Total	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Challenge sincerity 	1
Total	0	Total	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	1
Total	2	Total	1

Table 11 Situations 1 and 3 - Czech men's responses to a clothing compliment.

Situation 3 – women respond to men		Situation 1 – women respond to women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	10 1 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	10 3 3
Total	13	Total	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0
Total	0	Total	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	6
Total	3	Total	6

Table 12 Situations 3 and 1 - Czech women's responses to a clothing compliment.

Tables 11 and 12 show the Czech's strategies when responding to a clothing compliment. The ACCEPT appreciation/agreement token (40 tokens) was the most prevalent sub-strategy. Czech men used the sub-strategy *request reassurance/repetition* only once in M-W interaction. There was only one case of the REJECT – *challenge sincerity* sub-strategy in Czech men's responses (“To je ironie?” – Is that supposed to be irony?).

In contrast to men, Czech women employed the *return compliment* sub-strategy five times, while there was only one case of this strategy in M-M interaction (“Diky. Jo, mám ho z HMka. Tvoje je taky super.” – Thanks, it's from H&M. Yours is great too.). Furthermore, women were more likely to return a compliment to a woman (3 tokens) than to a man (2 tokens). In W-W interactions, Czech women were more likely to employ the

DEFLECT/EVADE – *informative comment* sub-strategy than in W-M interactions. Indeed, Czech women were more likely to use this strategy than Czech men (9 tokens vs. 3 tokens).

6.6 Situations 2 and 6 – Czech Men and Women

Situation 2 – men respond to women		Situation 6 – men respond to men	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>8 1 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance 	<p>10 1</p>
Total	15	Total	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance 	<p>2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	<p>0</p>
Total	2	Total	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>1 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect evade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>1 2 2</p>
Total	2	Total	5

Table 13 Situations 2 and 6 - Czech men's responses to an appearance compliment.

Situation 6 – women respond to men		Situation 2 – women respond to women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>10 2 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Return compliment 	<p>6 6</p>
Total	13	Total	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	<p>0</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	<p>4 1 1</p>
Total	0	Total	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>3 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legitimate evasion 	<p>1</p>
Total	4	Total	1

Table 14 Situations 6 and 2 - Czech women's responses to an appearance compliment.

Tables 13 and 14 show Czech responses to an appearance compliment. In general, the most preferred sub-strategy was *appreciation/agreement token*. One Czech man used a strategy labelled ACCEPT – *downgrading utterance* in M-W interaction (“Když myslíš.” – If you think so.).

In M-W interaction, Czech men employed the *disagreeing utterance* sub-strategy twice (1. “Ale houby, to tobě” – Nah, you are the one who looks great. 2. “To teda nevím, ale díky moc. Taky ti to sluší” – I don't know about that but thanks. You look great too.).

Interestingly, both cases of rejections were accompanied by a *return compliment* strategy. Additionally, there was one Czech man who provided an *informative comment* accompanied by an *appreciation/agreement token* (“Díky, za posledních pár let jsem shodil dost kilo.”- Thanks, I've lost quite a few kilos over the past few years.).

In contrast to men, Czech women were considerably more likely to employ the *return compliment* sub-strategy (6 tokens). However, Czech women repaid a compliment only once in the W-M interaction. Surprisingly, Czech women demonstrated a strong tendency to employ one of the rejection strategies (6 tokens). The women’s rejections appeared in the W-W interaction (e.g., “Nee prosímte, jen jsi musela zapomenout, jak vypadám” – Oh no, you must have forgotten how I look.). It is worth noting that rejection strategies were often accompanied by a compliment return (4 tokens in W-W interaction and 2 tokens in M-W interaction).

6.7 Situations 4 and 8 – Czech Men and Women

Situation 4 – men respond to women		Situation 8 – men respond to men	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance 	<p>4 4 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance 	<p>2 3 1</p>
Total	9	Total	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0
Total	0	Total	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	5
Total	7	Total	5

Table 15 Situations 4 and 8 - Czech men’s responses to a possession compliment.

Situation 8 – women respond to men		Situation 4 – women respond to women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance 	<p>4 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance 	<p>8 2 1</p>
Total	9	Total	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject 	0
Total	0	Total	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>7 3</p>
Total	7	Total	10

Table 16 Situations 8 and 4 - Czech women’s responses to a possession compliment.

Tables 15 and 16 show strategies used by Czech respondents. In both situations, women were twice as likely to employ the *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy than men. It is worth noting that in situation 8, four men expressed some form of discomfort regarding the price of the object (in this case, an expensive phone):

- “Nebylo by mi to celkem příjemné, nerad dostávám kompliment ohledně takových věcí. Nevím, jak na to reagovat, cítil bych se, že jen machruju, že na to mám peníze.” - I wouldn't be comfortable with that, I don't like to be complimented on things like that. I don't know how to respond to such compliments, I'd feel like I'm just bragging about having the money to buy it.
- “Tady bych se snažil reagovat, co nejméně a snažil bych se změnit alespoň lehce téma, aby to nevypadlo, že se třeba vychloubám nebo něco takového.” - Here I would try to respond as little as possible and try to change the subject at least slightly so that it doesn't look like I'm bragging or something similar.
- “Asi budu muset vyhlásit bankrot ale. Nevím, co mě to napadlo.” - But I may have to declare bankruptcy. I don't know what I was thinking.

In four cases, men only provided an *informative comment* about the price of the object as a CR (e.g., 1. “Taky mě stál celkem dost.” - It cost me quite a bit, too., 2. “Snad za to bude stat” – I hope it's worth it.). Similarly, even though women used more ACCEPT strategies in both situations, they tended to accompany this strategy by DEFLECT/EVADE – *informative comment* (e.g. “Děkuju moc, mám z něj moc radost. Pak bych nejspíše mluvila o tom, co se mi na něm zatím nejvíc líbilo či nelíbilo.” - Thank you very much, I'm very happy with it. Then I would probably talk about what I liked or disliked most about it so far.). In addition, Czech women employed the DEFLECT/EVADE – *request reassurance/repetition* sub-strategy in W-W interaction (3 tokens) (e.g., 1. “Fakt? Líbí se ti? A usmála bych se.” – Really? You like it? And I would smile., 2. “Jak sis vůbec všimla? Moc děkuju! Tak to si je běž určitě taky sehnat, jsou z [obchodu]” - How did you even notice? Thank you so much! Then go get them too, they're from [store].). This sub-strategy does not appear in men's responses.

6.8 Situations 5 and 7 – Czech Men and Women

Situation 5 – men respond to women		Situation 7 – men respond to men	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token 	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance 	5 1
Total	9	Total	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy 	4 1
Total	2	Total	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	5 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment 	5
Total	8	Total	5

Table 17 Situations 5 and 7 - Czech men's responses to an achievement compliment.

Situation 7 – women respond to men		Situation 5 – women respond to women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Return compliment 	6 5 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Return compliment 	9 2
Total	12	Total	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy 	4 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question sincerity 	1 1
Total	5	Total	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	4 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative comment ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	5 3
Total	5	Total	8

Table 18 Situations 7 and 5 - Czech women's responses to an achievement compliment.

Tables 17 and 18 show Czech respondents' strategies when reacting to an achievement compliment. Similar to previous situations, the most employed strategies belong to the ACCEPT category.

Surprisingly, Czech men were more likely to reject a compliment from a man (5 tokens in M-M interaction vs. 2 tokens in M-W interaction). Some Czech men's rejections were concerned with an expression of modesty, stating that they were only lucky to be successful:

- (M-M interaction) “Nee, to byla jen náhoda” - Nah, it was just a coincidence.

- (M-M interaction) “Měl jsem jen štěstí, popravdě jsem vůbec nic nevěděl.” - I was just lucky, I didn't really know anything.

Some examples of rejections in M-W interaction:

- “Děkuju. Ale myslím, že to mohlo být lepší.” – Thank you. But I think it could have been better.
- “No nevím, mně to přišlo hrozné.” - I am not sure about that, I thought it was awful.

Additionally, Czech men employed the DEFLECT/EVADE – *request reassurance/repetition* sub-strategy in M-W interaction (3 tokens) (e.g., 1. “Fakt? Děkuju, to jsem rád.” – Really? I am glad., 2. “Vážně? To rád slyším.” – Really? I am happy to hear that.) and not at all in M-M interaction. Another sub-strategy of this category used by men was *informative comment* (5 tokens in M-W interaction and 5 tokens in M-M interaction).

In contrast, Czech women tended to accompany the *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy with an *informative comment* (5 tokens in situation 5 and 4 tokens in situation 7) or reject the compliment.

Surprisingly, Czech women and men demonstrated a similar pattern in using rejection strategies (7 tokens and 7 tokens). The only difference was caused by one woman who employed the *question sincerity* sub-strategy in W-W interaction (“Jelikož mám s prezentováním problémy, tak by tato situace nenastala, a pokud přece jen, myslela bych si, že to myslí ironicky.” - Since I have trouble presenting, this situation wouldn't arise, and if it did, I would think she meant it ironically.). This respondent did not formulate a proper response; however, she indicated her reaction. For this reason, her response was categorized as a REJECT – *challenge sincerity*. Some examples of women's rejections:

- (W-M interaction) “To ne, taky jsem byla překvapená, že ze mě něco vylezlo.” – That's not true. I was surprised that I managed to say something.
- (W-W interaction) “Děkuji, vůbec mi to nepřišlo tak skvělé, ale teď se cítím líp jak jsi mě pochválila.” - Thank you, I didn't think it was that great at all, but now I feel better the way you complimented me.

Indeed, an achievement compliment elicited the highest number of rejections from Czech men and women (14 tokens in total), with both genders being more likely to reject a compliment from a man (5 tokens and 5 tokens).

6.8.1 Czech Respondents: Summary

Czech men		Czech women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	58 10 3 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	63 13 1 15
Total	78	Total	92
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	8 1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	9 2 2
Total	9	Total	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	1 27 0 0 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	0 35 0 1 8
Total	35	Total	44

Table 19 All strategies used by Czech speakers.

Table 19 shows that Czech women were generally more likely to employ ACCEPT strategies in their CRs. Additionally, Czech women preferred to return a compliment considerably more than Czech men. On the surface, it might seem contradictory that women used more ACCEPT and REJECT strategies than men. However, women often accompanied their REJECT strategy with an *appreciation/agreement token* or *return compliment*, even if they ended up rejecting the compliment (8 tokens).

Additionally, Czech women were more likely to implement a DEFLECT/EVADE strategy in their CRs. On top of that, Czech women hardly ever used a sole DEFLECT/EVADE strategy (only 4 tokens) and often accompanied it by one of the ACCEPT strategies. Based on the results, Czech women often employed DEFLECT/EVADE or REJECT strategies in combination with ACCEPT strategies more than men. It is worth noting that women's responses were relatively longer than men's.

6.9 Comparison of Strategies Used by Czech and English Respondents

The following sections of this thesis will provide a comparison of Czech and English women, Czech and English men, respondents regardless of language, and finally, a comparison of all the strategies used by all Czech and English respondents.

6.9.1 Czech and English Women

English women		Czech women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	75 8 0 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	63 13 1 15
Total	99	Total	92
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	3 1 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	9 2 2
Total	6	Total	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	0 25 0 0 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	0 35 0 1 8
Total	26	Total	44

Table 20 Comparison of strategies used by English and Czech women.

Table 20 compares all the strategies used by Czech and English women. It includes responses to all the compliment topics, as well as responses to compliments paid by both men and women. The number of ACCEPT strategies is relatively even, with a high preference for the *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy in both language groups. One response by a Czech woman employed a *downgrading utterance*, which did not occur in the English data on women's responses.

A more notable difference is in the number of REJECT strategies. Czech women used more than twice as many REJECT strategies than English women (6 tokens vs. 13 tokens). Hence, English women were more likely to directly agree with the compliment than

Czech women. Both language groups tended to use REJECT strategies in combination with one of the ACCEPT strategies (CZ women – 8 tokens, EN women – 5 tokens).

A similar difference is in the number of uses of DEFLECT/EVADE strategies. As with REJECT strategies, Czech women were more notably more likely to use DEFLECT/EVADE strategies than English women (44 tokens vs 26 tokens).

In summary, English women were more likely to directly accept a compliment and less likely to reject or avoid a compliment.

6.9.2 Czech and English Men

English men			Czech men		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>49</p> <p>12</p> <p>1</p> <p>14</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>58</p> <p>10</p> <p>3</p> <p>7</p>	
Total	76		Total	78	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	<p>7</p> <p>5</p> <p>1</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	<p>8</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>	
Total	13		Total	10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>2</p> <p>38</p> <p>0</p> <p>3</p> <p>8</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>1</p> <p>27</p> <p>0</p> <p>0</p> <p>7</p>	
Total	50		Total	35	

Table 21 Comparison of strategies used by English and Czech men.

Table 21 compares all the strategies used by Czech and English men. As with women, the most preferred strategies are those in the ACCEPT category. Based on the data, English men were twice as likely to return a compliment than Czech men.

English men demonstrated a higher tendency to reject a compliment than Czech men. The most preferred way of rejection for both language groups was to employ the *disagreeing*

utterance sub-strategy; however, in addition to *disagreeing utterance*, English men seemed to favour the *question accuracy* sub-strategy.

Interestingly, even if English men were more likely to reject a compliment, they often accompanied it by either DEFLECT/EVADE (6 tokens) or ACCEPT (3 tokens) strategy. There were only 4 cases where English men used just a sole REJECT strategy. On the other hand, while Czech men were less likely to reject a compliment, they proved to be more likely to use a sole REJECT strategy (5 tokens) or a combination of REJECT and ACCEPT strategy (5 tokens).

Similarly, English men proved to be more likely to implement a DEFLECT/EVADE strategy in their CRs (50 tokens vs 35 tokens). Moreover, English men used the DEFLECT/EVADE - *legitimate evasion* sub-strategy (3 tokens). This sub-strategy did not occur in the Czech men's CRs.

What is surprising is that the distribution of the strategies used by English men is somewhat similar to the ones used by Czech women (with English men using significantly less ACCEPT strategies).

6.9.3 Men and Women

Men		Women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>107</p> <p>22</p> <p>4</p> <p>21</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>138</p> <p>21</p> <p>1</p> <p>31</p>
Total	154	Total	191
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	<p>15</p> <p>6</p> <p>2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	<p>12</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p>
Total	23	Total	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>3</p> <p>65</p> <p>0</p> <p>3</p> <p>15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>0</p> <p>60</p> <p>0</p> <p>1</p> <p>9</p>

Total	86	Total	70
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Table 22 Comparison of strategies used by men and women from both language groups.

Table 22 presents the distribution of strategies utilized by both genders, regardless of their native language. The preferred strategy among both genders is ACCEPT, with women exhibiting an even greater propensity for employing this strategy. Despite a relatively similar frequency of rejections across genders, rejections were more prevalent in men's responses. Men tended to employ DEFLECT/EVADE strategies more frequently than women, with the *shift credit* sub-strategy being exclusive to men's responses.

6.10 Czech and English Respondents: Comparison

English respondents		Czech respondents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>124</p> <p>20</p> <p>1</p> <p>30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation/agreement token ○ Agreeing utterance ○ Downgrading utterance ○ Return compliment 	<p>121</p> <p>23</p> <p>4</p> <p>22</p>
Total	175	Total	170
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	<p>10</p> <p>6</p> <p>3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disagreeing utterance ○ Question accuracy ○ Challenge sincerity 	<p>17</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p>
Total	19	Total	26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evoke <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>2</p> <p>63</p> <p>0</p> <p>3</p> <p>9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deflect/evoke <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shift credit ○ Informative comment ○ Ignore ○ Legitimate evasion ○ Request reassurance/repetition 	<p>1</p> <p>62</p> <p>0</p> <p>1</p> <p>15</p>
Total	77	Total	79

Table 23 Comparison of strategies used by all English and Czech respondents.

Table 23 shows the distribution of all strategies used by Czech and English respondents. Surprisingly, even if the distribution of strategies differed between men and women, the total number of strategies used among Czech and English speakers was balanced. The most notable difference is in the use of REJECT strategies, with Czech respondents being more likely to reject a compliment than English respondents. It is

important, however, to consider all the factors influencing CRs, such as the topic of a compliment, gender, age, power, and distance between interlocutors.

6.10.1 Comparison of CRs to Different Compliment Topics

In situations involving a **clothing compliment** (situations 1 and 3), individuals from both language groups, regardless of gender, were more inclined to accept the compliment. Nonetheless, two instances of rejection were observed in English M-M interactions, and one instance was noted in the Czech data, also within M-M interaction. No instances of rejection were observed in responses from women. Additionally, it was observed that English men displayed the highest frequency of utilizing the DEFLECT/EVADE strategy (15 tokens), surpassing the frequencies observed among English-speaking women, Czech men, and Czech women.

There were some notable variations in responses to an **appearance compliment** (situations 2 and 6). In contrast, English women's responses contained only two instances of rejection and one DEFLECT/EVADE strategy. In comparison, English men utilized the REJECT strategy seven times and the DEFLECT/EVADE strategy eight times. This suggests that English-speaking men, in response to an appearance compliment, tend to uphold modesty and avoid self-praise more than women, who prioritized agreement with the compliment giver despite possibly damaging their own negative face. Notably, in their responses to an appearance compliment, English men employed the highest number of REJECT strategies.

In contrast, Czech men exhibited fewer rejections, with only two instances observed in M-W interaction. However, DEFLECT/EVADE strategies were relatively common among Czech men's responses (7 tokens). This frequency aligns closely with that of their English counterparts, who employed DEFLECT/EVADE strategies eight times.

Interestingly, Czech women displayed a higher tendency to reject appearance compliments in W-W interaction (6 tokens) but not at all in the W-M interaction. Czech women tended to accompany their rejections with an *appreciation/agreement token*, possibly to minimise self-praise and attend to the compliment giver's positive face. Czech women employed the DEFLECT/EVADE strategy five times (1 token in W-W interaction, 4 tokens in W-M interaction). Overall, these findings suggest that while Czech men were more likely to simply accept compliments, Czech women were more inclined to reject

compliments from women while simultaneously attending to the positive face of the compliment giver.

In responses to a **possession compliment** (situations 4 and 8), respondents across both language groups preferred to employ an ACCEPT strategy, often accompanied by an *informative comment* sub-strategy. This indicates a tendency among respondents to downplay self-praise while still acknowledging the compliment giver's positive face. While most respondents aimed to minimize self-praise and maintain a positive face in response to possession compliments, Czech men were the least likely to implement an ACCEPT strategy.

Finally, in responses to an **achievement compliment** (situations 5 and 7), it was notable that English-speaking men and women were more likely to employ an ACCEPT strategy, indicating a tendency to acknowledge and agree with the compliment directly. However, some interesting differences were observed between genders and language groups.

Interestingly, this type of compliment elicited a high number of rejections from women from both language groups. English-speaking women were more inclined to utilize the *disagreeing utterance* sub-strategy when responding to men (3 tokens), expressing modesty or attributing their success to luck rather than intelligence. This contrasts with their responses to women, where they were more likely to simply accept the compliment (0 rejections in English-speaking W-W interaction).

Among Czech respondents, men were surprisingly more likely to reject an achievement compliment (7 tokens CZ men vs. 3 tokens EN men), often expressing modesty or attributing their success to luck. In comparison, English men were more likely to reject an appearance compliment (7 tokens EN men vs. 2 tokens CZ men). This trend was particularly noticeable in interactions with other Czech men. Moreover, Czech men also employed more DEFLECT/EVADE strategies (13 tokens CZ men vs 9 tokens EN men), such as the *request reassurance/repetition* sub-strategy, indicating a desire to seek confirmation or validation from the compliment giver.

Czech women demonstrated a similar pattern of acceptance and rejection to Czech men but with higher overall usage of ACCEPT strategies. Nonetheless, they still employed a considerable number of REJECT strategies, often accompanied by the *appreciation/agreement token* or *informative comment* sub-strategy. This suggests a nuanced approach to managing compliments, balancing the acknowledgment of the compliment

giver's positive face with modesty. Additionally, while Czech women employed the same number of REJECT strategies as Czech men (7 tokens and 7 tokens), they demonstrated a higher overall usage of ACCEPT strategies (24 tokens CZ women vs. 15 tokens CZ men), indicating a cultural tendency toward modesty in response to praise. In contrast to Czech women, English women were the least likely to employ DEFLECT/EVADE strategies (4 tokens EN women vs. 12 tokens CZ women).

6.10.2 Interpretation of Strategies Used – Brown and Levinson's Account

The ACCEPT strategy (especially its *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy) was the most preferred strategy for both language groups, regardless of gender. In Brown and Levinson's taxonomy, these CRs can be considered an on-record strategy because the compliment addressee directly expresses their intention of agreeing with the complimenter. As mentioned in section 2.4.3, Brown and Levinson's taxonomy categorizes on-record strategies into two main types a) without redressive action and b) with redressive action – positive or negative politeness. To determine which category the acceptance response belongs to, it is necessary to identify whether there is any redress in the CR. If so, it is necessary to determine whether it is positive or negative politeness. When someone responds to a compliment with rejection, they threaten the complimenter's positive face (their desire for approval). To avoid causing such damage, the compliment addressee may feel compelled to accept the compliment despite the potential damage to their own face. In doing so, they are acknowledging and attending to the complimenter's desire for approval, even at the expense of their own face (the compliment addressee is prioritizing the complimenter's desire for approval over their own, by accepting the compliment even if it may go against their own feelings or preferences.). Hence, acceptance responses to compliments can be considered positive politeness strategies because they acknowledge the complimenter's desire for approval and show appreciation for their wants.

A special case of response was the *downgrading utterance* sub-strategy. Even though this type of strategy belongs to the ACCEPT category according to Holmes' taxonomy, Brown and Levinson (1978, 178) view this type of response as realizing deference. They claim that in realizing deference "S humbles and abases himself" and by doing so conveys that the hearer is of higher social status. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1978, 131) state that deference is a type of negative politeness strategy. In other words, downplaying one's own achievement or qualities in response to a compliment can be seen as a form of deference,

where the speaker humbles themselves to convey the addressee's higher social status. Self-humbling responses are considered a form of negative politeness strategy aimed at minimizing potential face threats by indicating recognition of the hearer's rights.

Additionally, it is interesting to consider the ideas of self-image. In English-speaking societies, self-humiliation typically damages the speaker's own positive face (Brown and Levinson 1987, 68). This is why they rarely humble themselves (Pomerantz 2010, 98-99).

The REJECT strategy was the least utilized strategy by both language groups, regardless of gender. When employing this type of strategy, the compliment addressee expresses a clear disagreement with the compliment. By doing so, they damage the positive face of the compliment giver. In other words, the compliment addressee performs an FTA without a redressive action. Additionally, according to Yu (2003, 1690), the compliment addressee may react this way since they want to perform the FTA to avoid self-praise, despite not satisfying the complimenter's face needs.

The data showed that ACCEPT and REJECT strategies often cooccur with DEFLECT/EVADE strategies. Moreover, some CRs contained a combination of two sub-strategies. As already discussed, accepting or rejecting a compliment results in either damaging one's own positive face or the compliment giver's positive face. Yu (2003, 1691) suggests that combination strategies can be viewed as off-record strategies "in that, as mentioned earlier on, there is more than one clear communicative intention that could be attributed to the act of responding to compliments ... the illocutionary force of these strategies is to some extent implicit and ambiguous so that the speaker cannot be held to have committed him/herself to only one particular intention." He (Yu 2003, 1691) claims that these strategies are performed indirectly and theoretically violate Grice's (1975) CP. As a result, the compliment giver is invited to draw a conversational implicature. The meaning of this implicature depends on the context of occurrence (Yu 2003, 1691).

In some responses, a combination of sub-strategies containing the *return compliment* sub-strategy occurred. The *return compliment* sub-strategy may imply that the compliment addressee agrees with the compliment giver and accepts it. Furthermore, by redirecting the compliment back to the complimenter, the initial compliment addressee implies a sense of equality or capability on the part of the compliment giver. This action serves to downplay the impact of the original praise. Additionally, Yu (2003, 1691) suggests that such a response

may indicate a feeling of indebtedness on the part of the compliment addressee who feels obligated to reciprocate the compliment.

One sub-strategy that occurred the most in combination with both ACCEPT and REJECT strategies was the *informative comment* sub-strategy. This type of response elaborates on the praised object by providing more information about it. This indicates that the compliment addressee possibly agrees with the praise but simultaneously tries to avoid self-praise by shifting the focus of the compliment from them. It is worth noting that the DEFLECT/EVADE – *informative comment* strategy provides an efficient solution to the conflict between agreement with the speaker and self-praise avoidance (Holmes 1988). This claim is strengthened by the fact that informative comments often co-occurred with the *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy (e.g., “Thanks! I got it at X.”). In combination with one of the REJECT strategies, the *informative comment* (or any other DEFLECT/EVADE strategy or *return compliment* sub-strategy) sub-strategy may serve as a means to attend to the positive face need of the compliment giver while at the same time preserving one’s own face.

Another sub-strategy that sometimes accompanied either ACCEPT or REJECT strategies was the *request repetition/reassurance* sub-strategy. There might be several explanations for employing this sub-strategy. First, the compliment addressee might desire to show agreement with the compliment but simultaneously want to avoid self-praise. Hence, the addressee scales the compliment power down with a question, suggesting that they were surprised by the fact that the compliment giver found the object praiseworthy. Second, the compliment addressee might want to accept the compliment, but in order to show modesty, they might pretend to disagree with the compliment giver. Alternatively, Yu (2003, 1662) suggests that the compliment addressee might want to avoid accepting the compliment directly while attempting to avoid self-praise. The compliment will be accepted only when the compliment giver reasserts the praise.

It is worth mentioning that the combination strategies, such as ACCEPT/REJECT, ACCEPT/EVADE, and REJECT/EVADE prompt the compliment giver to infer the underlying reasons behind the compliment addressee’s response. Take the CR “To byla čirá zoufalost, ale díky. Haha.” (That was sheer desperation but thank you. Haha) – a CR from a Czech woman in response to an achievement compliment. This response may suggest that initially, the compliment addressee tries to minimize the compliment force by employing a

rejection strategy. In other words, she employed a negative politeness strategy of self-denigration, attributing her success to luck rather than skill. This can be seen as an attempt to maintain modesty and avoid appearing arrogant. However, the respondent added a positive politeness strategy (“...ale díky” - ... but thanks). This combination of strategies may suggest an attempt to minimize self-praise while at the same time attending to the positive face need of the compliment giver.

Three cases of the *legitimate evasion* sub-strategy occurred in English-speaking men’s data. One of these cases was: “Don’t mention it. (I look away uncertainly.)” (an English-speaking man’s response to a clothing compliment in M-M interaction). According to Brown and Levinson's framework, this type of response can be classified as a form of negative politeness strategy. By saying, “Don't mention it.” the speaker is essentially downplaying the significance of the compliment and minimizing the obligation or debt felt by the compliment giver. This can potentially undermine the positive face of the compliment giver by suggesting that the compliment was unnecessary or unwarranted, thus diminishing the impact of their expression of approval and recognition. A similar interpretation applies to the other cases of *legitimate evasion* sub-strategy.

6.10.3 Interpretation of Strategies Used – Leech’s Account

The data suggests a clear general preference for Agreement over Modesty. However, this inference remains valid only if acceptance is interpreted as agreement and modesty is confined to rejection strategies. The data suggests that the respondents did not confine modesty solely to rejection strategies. In fact, REJECT strategies were the least occurring ones.

Culpeper and Pat (2020, 685) suggest that particular acceptance strategies may also express modesty. Some of the sub-strategies from the ACCEPT category may serve to express appreciation and gratitude (e.g., thanking). In the participant’s responses, thanking outweighed any other possible CR. Furthermore, the expression of thanks was often accompanied by other strategies that intensified gratitude, nervousness, or humility.

Culpeper and Pat (2020, 686) further propose that a polite compliment pressures the compliment addressee to “...reciprocate with polite attitude, and the use of intensification ensures an appropriate balance of payment...” In addition, Culpeper and Pat (2020) state that even though gratitude may imply acceptance of the compliment, modesty may be a part of the overall expression (“except some other acceptance strategies (e.g., agreeing and praise

upgrade).” All of this would suggest that in CRs, multiple maxims are at play while one is being prioritized. Culpeper and Pat (2020, 686) claim that the Obligation maxim tends to be prioritized in connection with expressing thanks. This seems to apply to the available Czech and English data. Nonetheless, even the authors (Culpeper and Pat 2020, 686-687) highlight the lack of studies concerned with the notion of obligation. For this reason, it is difficult to make any conclusions about whether other cultures place equal importance on the Obligation maxim.

Leech’s view of self-deprecation may explain the low number of downgrading utterances. Leech (1983, 133) stresses that his maxims are not absolute rules but rather guidelines that should be followed up to a certain extent. He warns that excessive self-denigration can make a person seem insincere and tedious. Thus, the maxim of Quality restrains us from being overly modest (Leech 1983, 133). It is important to note that Leech (2014, 190) revised this and noted that some cultures, such as Chinese and Japanese, value the Modesty maxim. He notes that in these cultures, self-deprecation “(if sincere, even if exaggerated) is often felt to be polite” (Leech 2014, 95).

6.10.4 Brown and Levinson, Leech, Holmes’ Taxonomy – Review of Methods Used

The previous two sections prove that both politeness theories appear capable of explaining the choice of CR strategies in the Czech context.

It is worth noting that Leech’s introduction of the Obligation maxim successfully explains the act of thanking, which proved to be the most common CR. Without the maxim of Obligation, Leech’s original framework would be insufficient in explaining the common occurrence of thanking. It seems that Leech’s criticism of CRs taxonomies combining thanking and agreement is valid, as these two are not necessarily related upon closer consideration. The fact that thanking was often accompanied by other sub-strategies serves as an example of people using this phrase out of obligation rather than consideration for modesty or agreement. Admittedly, multiple maxims might have been at play in these types of CRs. Whether Leech’s other maxims apply to the Czech context is a possible domain of interest for others; however, the maxims of Obligation, Modesty, and Agreement seemed to be efficient in explaining Czech CRs. Furthermore, the significance of the maxim of Obligation is underscored by the observation that despite certain respondents expressing reservations about receiving compliments, their approach remained largely consistent with those who stated that they do enjoy getting compliments. In other words, despite different

attitudes towards compliments, recipients may have felt obligated to express their gratitude, for example, by expressing thanks.

The finding that both Leech's and Brown and Levinson's strategies seem to be applicable in the Czech context is intriguing. One potential explanation is the increasing influence of American and British culture, particularly among college students, who were the primary subjects of this study. Given that English is the dominant language in international communication, it's plausible that some cultural values associated with English-speaking countries are transmitted through this medium. Compliments strengthen solidarity and may play a role in interactions among international college students, facilitating the exchange of cultural information and influencing their behaviour accordingly. However, the scope of this study was limited, and further research is needed to confirm the applicability of the aforementioned theories within the Czech context.

Moreover, even though both theories seem to explain the choice of CR strategies of both language groups, it is necessary to consider the individual motivations of the recipients. Knapp et al. (1984, 23) observed in their research that "The nature of a reply to a compliment is often related to one's self-esteem. According to cognitive consistency theory ... which argues that we have a need for congruent evaluations, compliments are more likely to be accepted if they fit our own self-evaluation." In connection with this, a different taxonomy may have captured the nature of the CRs better than the one developed by Holmes, who combined appreciation/agreement tokens into one sub-strategy. For example, Knapp et al. (1984, 23) use the term "ritualist acceptance," which they describe as follows: "The recipient makes some acknowledgment, usually in the form of "thank you" or a smile, without any further elaboration."

CONCLUSION

The significance of cross-cultural studies lies in their potential to aid language learning and understanding since they offer an insight into the nature of languages. In other words, cross-cultural studies contribute to a better understanding of language differences and similarities. Because of the lack of contrastive studies of English and Czech complimenting behaviour, I have attempted to provide a contrastive analysis of the speech act of compliment response in Czech and English. This thesis aims to investigate and compare the use of compliment responses in present-day English and Czech.

In summary, it is evident that politeness, at its core, is a socio-cultural phenomenon shaped by the collective societal values within a specific community. Various researchers stated that in American culture, the norm is to accept a compliment (Chen 1993; Pomerantz 1978; Holmes 1988). This conclusion is supported by the speakers of English, in socialization advice to children (“Say ‘thank you.’”), and in textbook dialogues targeted at foreign learners of English (Herbert 1990, 207). In this sense, Czech culture is similar since we are taught to express gratitude from an early age.

It is important to note that even though speakers demonstrated an overall preference for acceptance strategies, they often accompanied them with one of the evasion strategies. This can be explained by Pomerantz (2021, 68), who suggested that individuals develop a range of strategies to reconcile the contradiction between the preference for acceptance and the desire to avoid self-praise. Indeed, Herbert (1990, 207) pointed out that “American speakers exhibit great ingenuity in avoiding simple acceptance of compliments.” Based on the collected data, this seems to hold for the English respondents who contributed to this study. The same seems to agree with the data collected from Czech speakers. Nonetheless, the distribution of evasion strategies differs quite considerably among men and women.

The data proved that both English and Czech speakers predominantly utilize the ACCEPT strategy, particularly the *appreciation/agreement token* sub-strategy, regardless of gender. This may be because, in English-speaking societies, a speaker will try to agree with the listener. Even if they disagree with the statement, they will try to conceal their disagreement (Chen 1993, 67). It was stated that accepting a compliment appeals to the compliment giver’s positive face. Hence, both cultures were more likely to, in some way, attend to the compliment giver’s positive face needs since sole rejections were observed to be quite rare.

It is necessary to note that some cases of rejections were observed. English-speaking men employed the most REJECT strategies among all respondents (14 tokens). On the other hand, English-speaking women utilized REJECT strategies the least (6 tokens). In contrast, among Czech speakers, women employed more REJECT strategies (13 tokens) than men (9 tokens).

Similarly, English-speaking men were the most likely to deflect a compliment (50 tokens), and English-speaking women were the least likely to employ a deflect strategy (26 tokens). To compare, Czech women were more likely to deflect a compliment (44 tokens) than men (35 tokens).

Despite the distribution differences, the overall number of strategies observed was balanced. Czech respondents employed slightly more REJECT strategies (26 tokens) than their English-speaking counterparts (19 tokens). The most preferred REJECT strategy was a disagreeing utterance (10 tokens EN vs. 17 tokens CS). The number of DEFLECT strategies was relatively equal, with Czech speakers employing a few more of these strategies (77 tokens EN vs. 79 tokens CS). The most preferred DEFLECT/EVADE sub-strategy was *informative comment*, with 63 tokens observed in English data and 62 tokens in Czech data.

Different compliment topics elicited varying response strategies. For example, compliments on clothing were often met with acceptance, while compliments on achievement resulted in more rejections, particularly among Czech speakers. In contrast, English-speaking men demonstrated the highest number of rejections in their reactions to an appearance compliment.

The findings support the applicability of Brown and Levinson's and Leech's respective theories on Czech and English CRs. While Brown and Levinson's framework highlights the role of positive and negative politeness strategies, Leech's framework stresses the role of the Obligation maxim in expressing gratitude and modesty. Leech's introduction of the Obligation maxim seems to effectively explain the prevalent act of thanking, highlighting its distinction from a mere agreement. The observation that thanking tends to co-occur with other sub-strategies suggests an underlying sense of obligation rather than purely modesty or agreement. Consequently, it seems that the Obligation, Modesty, and Agreement maxims can somewhat successfully explain Czech speakers' CR strategies. Moreover, the applicability of Leech's and Brown and Levinson's relative strategies hints at

the cultural influence, possibly stemming from the increasing prevalence of especially American and British cultures, particularly among college students. However, this study's scope was limited, and further research to validate its findings in the Czech context is necessary since several linguists raised concerns over the applicability of these theories to non-English languages (Wierzbicka 2003, 68; Mizutani 1987, 45-46; Yu 2003, 1698). It is important to consider that understanding how individuals respond to compliments involves their personal preferences and motivations. Research by Knapp et al. (1984) suggested that the nature of these responses often reflects one's self-esteem and that individuals prefer to receive compliments that match their own self-image. Additionally, alternative taxonomies, such as the one proposed by Knapp et al. (1984, 23-24), may better capture the nuances of compliment responses as they differentiate between appreciation and agreement.

It is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of DCTs. The data obtained in this way were troublesome to categorise because of the missing extralinguistic information, such as prosody and body language. Admittedly, some classifications of the compliment responses might have been subjected to a personal bias and incorrectly interpreted.

In the future, I would choose a different approach to the development of the DCT and data sampling. It would be better to specify that respondents are required to provide their responses from a first-person perspective (I-perspective). This approach would render the results more manageable and easier to interpret during the subsequent stages of analysis.

To confirm the findings, a comprehensive analysis on a larger scale is necessary to establish more reliable results. Moreover, data collection methods such as personal interviews or natural observations would significantly enhance the quality and depth of future research efforts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CP Cooperative Principle

PP Politeness Principle

CR compliment response

FTA face-threatening act

M man/men

W woman/women

M-M man to man

W-W woman to woman

M-W man to woman

W-M woman to man

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APPENDICES

Appendix P I: Questionnaire

Appendix P II: Dotazník

APPENDIX P I: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Make up a nickname for yourself.
2. What is your gender identity?
 - a. Man
 - b. Woman
3. How old are you?
4. Where are you from? (country)
5. What is your field of study?
6. In what programme are you?
 - a. Bachelor's degree program (undergraduate)
 - b. Master's degree program (graduate)
 - c. Doctoral degree program (postgraduate)
 - d. Other
7. Do you enjoy getting compliments? (-2 = definitely not, -1 = more likely not, 0 = I don't mind them, 1 = more likely yes, 2 = I love getting compliments!)
8. Compliments make me feel:
 - a. embarrassed
 - b. grateful
 - c. proud
 - d. indifferent
 - e. uncomfortable
 - f. Other (please, specify)
9. Part 2 – SITUATIONS: The following part of the questionnaire contains eight situations in which you will react to compliments.

INSTRUCTIONS: PLEASE READ THESE

- a. Imagine that the people giving you compliments in the following situations are your FRIENDS or ACQUAINTANCES (the gender of the compliment

giver will be indicated in individual situations, typically by a pronoun or/and by a name).

- b. For each situation, you might find more than one response socially appropriate. In that case, please write them down and number them (to a maximum of 4 answers per situation).
 - c. The response/reaction does not have to be verbal.
 - d. Please try to put yourself in the situation and respond as naturally as possible
→ I want to know what you would say and what your gestures would be in the following situations → I am NOT asking about how it would make you feel → I am asking how you would respond/react.
10. Situation 1: You are wearing your favourite pants. One of your friends, Olivia, sees you. She says: “I love those pants! They are gorgeous on you!” How would you react? What would you say in real life? (I am NOT asking about how you would feel)
11. Situation 2: You meet an acquaintance you haven’t seen for some time. You exchange greetings. She adds: “You look fantastic! Even better than the last time we met!” How would you react? What would you say in real life? (I am NOT asking about how you would feel)
12. Situation 3: You are wearing your favourite shirt to one of your classes. One of your friends, David, sees you there. He says: “What a nice shirt! You look great in it.” How would you react? What would you say in real life? (I am NOT asking about how you would feel)
13. Situation 4: You are wearing a new watch. A friend of yours, Amelia, sees it. She says: “What a watch! I wish I had one like that.” How would you react? What would you say in real life? (I am NOT asking about how you would feel)
14. Situation 5: You have given a presentation in your class. After the presentation one of your classmates, Daisy, comes to you. She says: “That was a great presentation. You did a good job.” How would you react? What would you say in real life? (I am NOT asking about how you would feel)
15. Situation 6: You bump into an old friend Robert at a café. You exchange greetings. Then he says: “I love your hair, it suits you!” How would you react? What would you say in real life? (I am NOT asking about how you would feel)

16. Situation 7: A teacher asks you a question. You were caught off guard, but you managed to provide a satisfactory answer. Later you meet with your classmate John. He says: "You handled that situation well. You are a smart one." How would you react? What would you say in real life? (I am NOT asking about how you would feel)
17. Situation 8: You have a new expensive phone. You show it to your friend James. He says: "That's a really fancy phone you have. I love it." How would you react? What would you say in real life? (I am NOT asking about how you would feel)

APPENDIX P II: DOTAZNÍK

1. Vyberte jazyk, ve kterém si přejete vyplnit tento dotazník. (Pokud jste mluvčí češtiny, vyberte si prosím češtinu)
2. Vymyslete si přezdívku.
3. Jste:
 - a. Muž
 - b. Žena
4. Kolik je vám let?
5. Jaký je/byl váš studijní obor?
6. Jaký je/byl váš typ studia?
 - a. Bakalářský
 - b. Magisterský
 - c. Doktorský
 - d. Jiný (prosím, napište)
7. Dostáváte komplimenty rádi? (-2 rozhodně ne, -1 spíše ne, 0 jsou mi jedno, 1 spíše ano, 2 miluji je!)
8. Když mě někdo pochválí, cítím se: a.) trapně b.) vděčně c.) hrdě d.) lhostejně e.) nepříjemně f.) jinak (prosím napište)

DRUHÁ ČÁST – SITUACE: Následující část dotazníku obsahuje osm situací, ve kterých budete reagovat na komplimenty.

INSTRUKCE:

- a. Představte si, že ten, kdo vám dává komplimenty v následujících situacích je váš KAMARÁD/KA nebo ZNÁMÝ/MÁ.
- b. Je možné, že vás napadne více vhodných reakcí/odpovědí. V tom případě je vypište a odpovědi očísľujte. To znamená, že můžete napsat více odpovědí/reakcí (maximálně 4).
- c. Odpověď/reakce nemusí být verbální.
- d. Prosím, snažte se do situací vžít a odpovědět co nejpřirozeněji.

9. Situace 1: Máte na sobě nové oblíbené kalhoty. Uvidí vás v nich vaše kamarádka Hanka a řekne: "Ty kalhoty jsou boží! Moc se mi na tobě líbí." Jak byste reagovali?
10. Situace 2: Potkáte známou, se kterou jste se už dlouho neviděli. Po pozdravu vám známá řekne: "Vypadáš skvěle! Sluší ti to čím dál víc." Jak byste reagovali?
11. Situace 3: Jdete na hodinu a máte na sobě své oblíbené tričko. Ve třídě vás zastaví spolužák Radim a řekne: "To je ale parádní triko! Moc ti sluší." Jak byste reagovali?
12. Situace 4: Máte na sobě nové hodinky. Vaše kamarádka Sára si jich všimne a řekne: "Ty jsou! Taky bych takové chtěla." Jak byste reagovali?
13. Situace 5: Ve své třídě jste přednesli prezentaci. Po prezentaci za vámi přijde vaše spolužačka Jana a řekne: "To byla skvělá prezentace. Moc se ti povedla." Jak byste reagovali?
14. Situace 6: V kavárně náhodou narazíte na dlouholetého kamaráda Martina. Pozdravíte se a on dodá: "Máš super vlasy! Ten střih ti sluší." Jak byste reagovali?
15. Situace 7: Učitel vám během hodiny nečekaně položil otázku. Zaskočilo vás to, ale zvládli jste odpovědět. Po hodině se u vás zastaví váš kamarád Jirka a řekne: "Tu otázku jsi zvládl/a skvěle. Pálí ti to." Jak byste reagovali?
16. Situace 8: Právě jste si pořídili ten nejnovější iPhone. Ukážete ho kamarádovi Petrovi a on řekne: "Ten je luxusní. Vypadá parádně." Jak byste reagovali?