Complimenting Behaviour in Native Speakers of English and Iraqi Arabic: A Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Study

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Introduction

Despite the growing interest in studying speech acts (SAs) in various languages and its varieties, the current study is innovative in comparing the performance of native speakers of English (NSE) and Iraqi Arabic native speakers (NSA) as far as complimenting behaviour is concerned in English.

A compliment is a speech act which attributes credit to someone, for some good (possession, appearance, skill, etc.). It is positively valued by both parties of interaction to establish and maintain rapport and solidarity between them and keep the social wheels running (Holmes, 1986).

Cultural values are reflected in the strategies used by different people performing such a speech act (cf. Ting-Toomy, 2005; Wierzbicka, 2003).

The current study aims to provide a baseline for pinpointing the potential convergence/divergence in the performance of these two groups of informants.

Research Questions:

1. How do Native speakers of English (NSE) and Iraqi Arabic native speakers (NSA) produce the speech behaviour of complimenting?
2. Do they employ similar or different linguistic patterns in producing the speech act under investigation?
3. Do contextual variables of social distance, social status, and gender influence the two groups’ pragmatic performance in different ways?
4. Do cultural values and assumptions influence the two groups’ pragmatic performance?

Methodology

Triangulation

Data Collection

- Quantitative: Discourse Completion Task (DCT)
  - Native Speakers of English: NSE (n=50)
  - Native Speakers of Iraqi Arabic: NSA (n=50)

- Qualitative: Retrospective Interviews (n=25 Iraqi EFL Learners)
  - Content Analysis (Conversation Textbook)

Findings to date:

Figure (1) shows that Speech Acts in the textbook under inquiry are not evenly distributed. Figure (2) indicates that complimenting expressions in relation to other types of expressive speech acts are inadequately represented in the textbook.

References


Acknowledgements: (Scholarship- Wasit University – Iraq)