

The Use of Compliment Responses in English by University Students of English in Pakistan

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Keywords

- Compliment Responses
- Pakistani English Learners
- Pragmatic Competence
- Discourse Completion Test

Abstract

The development of pragmatic ability in English is necessary for Pakistani learners of English, which can be attained by the learning and teaching of speech acts especially compliment responses in English. This research study is concerned with the use of compliment responses in English by university students of English in Pakistan and the exploration of differences in the frequency of use between male and female respondents. The study investigated the use of compliment responses based on Holmes' (1988, 1993) categories of compliment responses. The results of the study reveal the use of all the macro compliment response strategies in the pattern of Accept, Evade, and Reject by the respondents. The results pointed out Appreciation token as the most preferred micro compliment response strategy by the respondents in all the four situational settings of Appearance, Character, Ability, and Possessions. The findings of the study show no sharp difference in the use of compliment response strategies between male and female respondents. It was observed that out of twelve, only three micro compliment response strategies of Appreciation token, Agreeing utterance, and Return compliment were frequently used by the respondents. The results also indicated that none of the respondents used the micro compliment response strategies of Question Accuracy and Legitimate Evasion. The results of this investigation evoke the necessity of developing pragmatic competence in Pakistani learners of English.

1. Introduction

The status of English as a language of international communication has amplified the global acknowledgement of English language education. English has become an international lingua franca (Kim, Siong, Fei & Ya'acob, 2010). In Pakistan, English has occupied the political and official spheres as a language of progress, like in other developing states. The official language of Pakistan since the time of its independence is also English (Ahmad, Khan, & Munir, 2013). English is not only taught as a language but as a mandatory subject from first grade till bachelors, confined to forty minutes of class sessions in Pakistan. Though English has a privileged position in Pakistan being the language of education, law, government, science and technology, still many Pakistanis are not skillful enough to communicate fluently in English. Khalique (2008) expressed the view that out of approximately 160 million population of Pakistan, the actual part of the present population which is working in verbal and written English is less than two percent. Many researchers have discussed the role of English language in academic institutions in Pakistan and the need of Pakistani learners to learn English appropriately (Mansoor, 2005; Khattak, Jamshed, Ahmad, & Baig, 2011).

Pakistani students of English learn it as a second language. Communication in the second language (L2) is associated with two kinds of competencies, namely linguistic competence and pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence is the ability to communicate effectively and take account of the understanding above the level of grammar (Thomas, 1983). It is vital to have well a developed pragmatic competence in the second language for successful communication in target language (Kasper, 1997). The importance of pragmatic instruction in the teaching of English as a second language has been discussed by many linguists (Krisnawati, 2011; Da Silva, 2003; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). The students of English in Pakistan are not satisfied with the existing teaching methodologies of Pakistani teachers (Kanwal Shahzadi, Manzoor, Shabana, Rehman, & Zahra, 2014).

Pragmatic competence includes the awareness and understanding of speech acts (Nguyen, Pham & Pham, 2012). There are many experiential researches on practical application of speech acts for language teaching (Wolfson, 1989; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Allami & Montazeri, 2012; Shabani & Zeinali, 2015; Boroujeni, Domakani, & Sheykhi, 2016).

Compliments are positive speech acts. Many linguists have debated on the efficacy of teaching speech acts especially compliments and compliment responses for the improvement of learner's pragmatic competence in the target language (Billmyer, 1990; Dunham, 1992; Grossi, 2009; Tajeddin & Ghamari, 2011; Allami & Montazeri, 2012). The present study investigates the use of compliment responses in English by university students of English in public sector universities in Pakistan.

1.1 Research Questions

- i. What Compliment Responses in English are used by university students of English in Pakistan?
- ii. What is the difference in the frequency of use of Compliment Responses in English between male and female university students of English in Pakistan?

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The issue of compliment responses in English by university students of English has not been explored in Pakistan as it is evident from the literature. This issue has been investigated in different languages and countries, and even comparative studies of people complimenting and responding to compliments in two or three different languages have also been conducted. This kind of comparative study is needed as it has not been done yet in Pakistan. The major purpose of this study is to fill in this research gap.

2. Literature Review

After getting a compliment, an addressee is socially bound to pay appropriate response to it for keeping social etiquettes. The development of this aspect of communicative competence is essential for avoiding socio-pragmatic failures. Holmes defines a compliment as, “a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for certain ‘good’ (possession, characteristics, skill, etc.), which is valued by the speaker and the hearer” (Holmes, 1986, p. 485). After the claim of Pomerantz (1978) that the speakers of different languages and language varieties follow different patterns when responding to compliments, many linguists paid close attention to the study of compliment responses.

2.1. Gender differences in the Use of Compliment Responses

Holmes (1988) and Herbert (1990) are very influential studies that put emphasis on gender differences in complimenting. Holmes (1986, 1988) developed three major categories of compliment responses as, Accept, Reject, and Deflect or Evade and found Accept as the most frequent compliment response strategy. Holmes (1986) observed that males ignore or evade a compliment more than females. Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001) investigated the compliment responses of Jordanian students and found that male respondents tended to accept compliments more than female respondents. Wang and Tsai (2003) while exploring the compliment responses in Taiwan Mandarin conversation noticed that males were most likely to reject a compliment by disagreeing to compliment, while females tended to respond with a surprise to a compliment. Cedar (2006) studied Thai and American responses to compliments in English and found a major influence of gender on compliment responses of university students. Heidari, Rezazadeh and Eslami Rasekh (2009) while investigating the compliment responses of Iranian students observed the female respondents were consistent in the use of infrequent Accept strategies, and more Evade and Reject strategies, than the male respondents. Yousefvand (2010) studied the compliment responses of Persian speakers and found that male respondents were most expected to reject compliments and the female respondents inclined to respond with acceptance to compliments. Heidari, Dastjerdi, and Marvi (2011) studied the compliment responses of Iranian Persian speakers and found that both male and female participants mostly favored accept strategies in all situations and female participants reflected evade strategies when getting compliments for Possessions. Morales (2012) while exploring the compliment responses of Philippine students observed that both male and female participants selected

Accept strategies the most, and Reject strategies the least. Razi (2013) explored the compliment responses among Australian English and Iranian Persian students and pointed out that both Iranian and Australian people favored the use of compliment response strategies in the order of Accept, Evade, and Reject. Monjezi (2014) examined the compliment responses of Iranian English students and established Appreciation as the most repeated response strategy by both male and female students.

2.2. Recent Studies on Compliment Responses

A large variety of research studies have been conducted recently on the subject of compliments and compliment responses in different countries and different languages. Sucuoglu and Bahceleri (2015) conducted a study on compliment responses of ELT students and marked a significant difference in the use of compliment response strategies between native and non-native Turkish students. Varol (2015) examined the transfer effects in compliment responses of English as Foreign Language learners and found the most used and similar pattern of preference of accepting and deflecting strategies by all the participants. Shabani and Zeinali (2015) examined the use of compliment responses of native Persian and Canadian English speakers and observed a significant difference in their use of compliment response strategies and viewed Accept as the most used strategy by the partakers. Dehkordi and Chalak (2015) investigated the compliment response strategies by Iranian EFL learners on social networks and noted Acceptance as frequently used macro response strategy and Appreciation token as frequently used micro level strategy. Boroujeni, Domakani and Sheykhi (2016) compared the compliment responses of native Persian and native American English speakers and pointed out Acceptance as the most common compliment response strategy. Manipuspika and Sudarwati (2016) analyzed the gender differences in the use of compliment responses by Indonesian lecturers of English and found that the lecturers mostly accepted compliments and both male and female participants gave similar responses, yet males preferred to ask question preceding or following the responses, while females liked to use comment avoidance.

The awareness of culture-specific nature of compliment responses in oral interactions is also an important aspect of linguistic and pragmatic capabilities. Alotaibi (2016) analyzed the compliment responses of female Kuwaiti EFL learners in English and compared them to those of female British English speakers. The study observed that Kuwaiti EFL learners transferred both first language expressions and strategies while responding to compliments in English in comparison to native speakers of British English which attributed to their lack of culturally consciousness in using verbal communications cross linguistically. Cedar and Setiadi (2016) studied the performance of Indonesian EFL learners and Thai EFL learners on compliment responses in English and observed Indonesians as more prone to reject compliments while Thais were inclined to accept compliments. Chaisri (2018) compared the differences between language strategy and social factors that influence the selection of the compliment responses of Thai Native Speakers and Thai as Second Language Learners. The study revealed that both groups used the acceptance strategy the most and for the sub strategies, Thai Native Speakers used “thank you” expression in responding to the compliment the most while Thai as Second Language Learners used compliment reversion strategy the most and observed no difference between the responses given during the conversations in public and the one to one conversations. Danziger (2018) examined the compliments and compliment responses in Israeli Hebrew of students of Hebrew university

and revealed that Hebrew speakers tended to accept compliments more than any other politeness strategy choice, and their responses to compliments tended to be more differentiated than in other cultures. Mashuri (2018) investigated the compliment response strategies of Indonesian and American native speakers and found that Appreciation token as the most frequently used strategy by Indonesian native speakers, while American native speakers used acceptance as the major strategy when responding to compliments.

2.3. Study of Compliment Responses in Pakistan

Shehzad (2010) considered traditional modesty and moved around the government servants of different grades who complimented for eight different scenarios. With 55% Maxim of Agreement the study questions the belief of the prevalent Modesty in the Pakistani society. Though the opportunities for learning English to the high levels of proficiency required both for higher education and professional tasks are quite limited in Pakistan, yet many public sector universities are promoting the use of English. As the present study investigates the use of compliment responses in English by university students of English in Pakistan so it will be helpful in raising awareness in ESL learners and teachers to improve the current level of English proficiency in Pakistan.

Irshad et al. (2016) has also conducted a similar study on the Pakistani undergraduate learners to observe the utilization of complement strategies. However, the study is of very limited scope as it has observed the occurrence and the categories of the responses. In contrast, the present study is broader in its scope since it examines the use of all the macro compliment response strategies in the pattern of Accept, Evade, and Reject by the respondents.

3. Research Methodology

Although the nature of the collected data was qualitative, but the data analysis was done by a quantitative research design for the present research study. Descriptive statistics including frequencies were utilized using SPSS (IBM 23). So, a mixed-method research design was used for the present study.

3.1. Participants

The target population for the study was all selected students of English in public sector universities of Pakistan. A sample of hundred (100) master's level students, including fifty (50) male and fifty (50) female students, was selected using non-random, purposive and convenience sampling procedures from the four (4) public sector universities in Pakistan namely, (a) Hazara University, Dohial, Mansehra; (b) International Islamic University, Islamabad; (c) National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad; and (d) Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. The participants were enrolled in the first and second year of the Masters of English language and linguistics/literature program at the four above-mentioned public-sector universities in Pakistan.

3.2. Instrumentation

A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was developed in order to collect information from the university students of English about their use of compliment responses in English and to explore the differences in the frequency of use between male and female respondents. The most common instrument for the investigation of speech acts, specifically compliments and compliment responses is DCT (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Yousefvand, 2010; Heidari, Dastjerdi, & Marvi, 2011; Allami & Montazeri, 2012; Jin-pei, 2013; Varol, 2015; Sucuoglu & Bahcelerli, 2015; Shabani, & Zeinali, 2015; Pour, & Zarei, 2016). The first part of the DCT was intended to collect personal information (Appendix A), while the second part was confined to compliment response situations. The DCT consisted of four (4) items.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Permission was taken from focal persons of the departments of English of the selected universities for the self-administration of the DCT. The participants were instructed about the proper way of responding the situational questions in the DCT and were asked to visualize themselves as talking with a real person while writing down their responses in English. Almost twenty (20) minutes’ time was given to the students for completing the DCT. Records of students’ gender were saved separately, for the comparative study of male and female university students of English in Pakistan.

4. Data Analysis

The responses of the students obtained through DCTs were analyzed individually. The data was coded and saved in Microsoft Office Excel sheets and then analyzed statistically using SPSS (IBM 23), in the light of research questions using descriptive statistics and frequencies.

The frequencies of use and non-use of compliment responses of a hundred (100) respondents, including both males and females were analyzed in the four situational settings of Appearance, Character, Ability, and Possessions. Table 3.1 shows Holmes’ (1988, 1993) classification of compliment response categories and the responses of the DCTs for this study were analyzed according to this taxonomy.

Table 3.1

Compliment Response Categories and Possible Realizations

Strategy Code	Strategy	Possible Realizations
CRA	Accept	That is nice.
CRA1	Appreciation or Agreement token	Thank you!
CRA2	Agreeing utterance	I think it is pretty, too.
CRA3	Downgrading or Qualifying utterance	It is not too bad, is it?

CRA4	Return compliment	You are looking beautiful, too.
CRB	Reject	I think I do not like this.
CRB1	Disagreeing utterance	I'm afraid I don't bother it much.
CRB2	Question accuracy	Is lovely the right word?
CRB3	Challenge complementor's sincerity	You don't truly mean it.
CRC	Deflect or Evade	Let's make some other kit.
CRC1	Shift credit	My father made it.
CRC2	Informative comment	I saw it at that Kitty store.
CRC3	Legitimate evasion	Wow! lovely. What's the price?
CRC4	Ignore	It's time to leave, let's go.
CRC5	Request reassurance or Repetition	Do you really think this?

In order to find the differences in the frequencies of compliment responses, the use and non-use of compliment responses for each situation were analyzed distinctly for both male (50) and female (50) English students.

5. Results and Discussion

The present study has two research questions to find out (a) the use of compliment responses in English by university students of English in Pakistan, and (b) the difference in the frequency of use of compliment responses in English between male and female university students of English in Pakistan. The results of the quantitative analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire (DCT), in order of the research questions will be reported in this section, followed by discussion.

The first research question of the study asked about the use of compliment responses in English by university students of English in Pakistan. In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics was applied and frequencies of use and non-use of the responses of the university students (100) on 4 items of DCT, in the four (4) situational settings of Appearance (I like your hair all curly!), Character (You are a good friend), Ability (This is a brilliant piece of work!), and Possessions (What a lovely garden!), were computed, as shown in Table 4.1. Results in Table 4.1 show that in the situational settings of Appearance, Character, Ability and Possessions majority of the respondents (87, 91, 81, 65) used the macro compliment response strategy of Accept. In Appearance situation, one majority of the respondents (68) used the micro strategy of Appreciation token, and the other majority of respondents (17) used the micro strategy of Return compliment under Accept category. In the same situational setting, the least number of respondents (3) used

the macro response strategy of Reject and just eight (8) respondents were found using the macro response strategy of Evade.

Table 4.1 shows that in Character situation, one majority of the respondents (58) used the micro strategy of Appreciation token, and the other majority of respondents (29) used the micro strategy of Agreeing utterance, under Accept category. In Character situation, the respondents (3 and 3) equally used macro strategies of Reject and Evade.

Table 4.1 demonstrates that in the situational setting of Ability, majority of the respondents (69) used the micro strategy of Appreciation token under Accept category. In the same situational setting, none of the respondents used macro response strategy of Reject and seventeen (17) out of 100 respondents used macro compliment response strategy of Evade.

As shown in Table 4.1, in the situational setting of Possession, the majority of respondents (48) used the micro strategy of Appreciation token, under Accept category. In the same situational setting, only six (6) out of 100 respondents used the macro strategy of Reject and twenty-three (23) out of 100 respondents used the macro strategy of Evade.

Table 4.1

Frequencies of the use and non-use of Compliment Response Categories in English in the four Situational Settings by university students of English in Pakistan

Strategy Code	Appearance		Character		Ability		Possessions	
	Use	Non-use	Use	Non-use	Use	Non-use	Use	Non-use
CRA	87	13	91	9	81	19	65	35
CRA1	68	32	58	42	69	31	48	52
CRA2	2	98	29	71	4	96	8	92
CRA3	0	100	1	99	0	100	1	99
CRA4	17	83	3	97	8	92	8	92
CRB	3	97	3	97	0	100	6	94
CRB1	2	98	3	97	0	100	5	95
CRB2	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100
CRB3	1	99	0	100	0	100	1	99
CRC	8	92	3	97	17	83	23	77
CRC1	1	99	0	100	7	93	0	100
CRC2	0	100	1	99	10	90	20	80
CRC3	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100
CRC4	0	100	2	98	0	100	1	99

CRC5	7	93	0	100	0	100	2	98
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Table 4.1 shows that none of the respondents used the micro strategies of Question Accuracy and Legitimate Evasion, in the four situations. Table 4.1 also indicates that a majority of respondents did not use the micro strategies of Downgrading (100, 99, 100, 99), Challenge sincerity (99, 100, 100, 99), and Ignore (100, 98, 100, 99) in the four situations.

The results indicate that all the three macro categories of compliment responses were used by the university students of English in Pakistan. Excitingly, the preference of these categories by the respondents was in the order of Accept (87, 91, 81, 65), Evade (8, 3, 17, 23) and, Reject (3, 3, 0, 6) in all the four situations, and this finding is consistent with the findings of Morales (2012) and Razi (2013). It appears that Pakistani students of English are polite in responding to compliments as they readily accept compliments and they use evade strategies in conditions where they find themselves inconvenient to accept compliments, and they seldom reject compliments. The finding of more use of Accept category in all the situations is consistent with the findings of many studies (Heidari et al., 2011; Allami & Montazeri, 2012; Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015; Shabani & Zeinali, 2015; Boroujeni, Domakani, & Sheykhi, 2016; Manipuspika & Sudarwati, 2016). The results also indicate that in Ability situation, none of the respondents used Reject strategy, which shows that Pakistani university students of English are not easy to respond with rejection to compliments in such scenarios.

The results show that a majority of respondents (68, 58, 69, 48) favored to use Appreciation token strategy in all situations, and this finding is consistent with other studies (Holmes, 1988; Allami & Montazeri, 2012; Monjezi, 2014; Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015). The second and the third most chosen micro strategies by the respondents in all the scenarios were of Agreeing utterance (2, 29, 4, 8) and Return compliment (17, 3, 8, 8). This shows that Pakistani students of English simply agree to addressee's compliments via Agreeing utterance strategy and politely pay back the compliments via Return compliment strategy.

The results show that none of the respondents used the two micro strategies of Question Accuracy and Legitimate Evasion, in the given situations, and used Downgrading, Challenge sincerity and Ignore with no measurable values. It seems that the respondents do not have proper understanding of interpreting different types of micro compliment response situations in English, which can be the result of their lack of pragmatic ability in English. So, there is a need of developing L2 English pragmatic competence, which can be accomplished through pragmatic instruction in the English language classrooms in Pakistan.

The second research question of the study attempted to see if there was any difference in the frequency of use of compliment responses in English between male and female university students of English in Pakistan. Descriptive statistics was utilized and frequencies of the use and non-use of the responses of both male (50) and female (50) university students on 4 items of DCT, in the four (4) situational settings, were computed as shown in Table 4.2. Results in Table 4.2 show that in the situational settings of Appearance, Character, Ability and Possessions, majority of both males (45, 43, 39, 34)

and females (42, 48, 42, 31) used Accept strategy. In Appearance situation, majority of both male and female respondents (34 and 34) equally used Appreciation token strategy, under Accept category. In Appearance scenario, only two (2) male respondents and one (1) female respondent used Reject strategy. In the same situation, the females (6) responded more than males (2) using Evade strategy.

Table 4.2 shows that in Character situation, majority of male respondents (31) used Appreciation token strategy and majority of female respondents (19) used Agreeing utterance strategy, under Accept category. In Character situation, two (2) males and one (1) female used Reject strategy, and three (3) males and no female respondent used Evade strategy.

In Ability situation, as shown in Table 4.2, the female respondents (38) responded more than the male respondents (31) using Appreciation token strategy, under Accept category. For the same scenario, none of the male or the female respondents used Reject strategy, and only eleven (11) male and six (6) female participants used Evade strategy.

Table 4.2 shows that Possessions scenario, twenty-seven (27) female respondents and twenty-one (21) male respondents used Appreciation token strategy, under Accept category. In the same scenario, the male students (5) responded more than the female students (1), using Reject strategy and, the female respondents (13) responded more than the male respondents (10) using Evade strategy.

Table 4.2:

Frequencies of the use and non-use of Compliment Response Categories in English in four Situations by Pakistani male and female university students of English

Strategy	Appearance		Character		Ability		Possessions									
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female								
Code	Use	Non-Use	Use	Non-Use	Use	Non-Use	Use	Non-Use								
CRA	45	5	42	8	43	7	48	2	39	11	42	8	34	16	31	19
CRA1	34	16	34	16	31	19	27	23	31	19	38	12	21	29	27	23
CRA2	1	49	1	49	10	40	19	31	4	46	0	50	7	43	1	49
CRA3	0	50	0	50	0	50	1	49	0	50	0	50	1	49	0	50
CRA4	10	40	7	43	2	48	1	49	4	46	4	46	5	45	3	47
CRB	2	48	1	49	2	48	1	49	0	50	0	50	5	45	1	49
CRB1	2	48	0	50	2	48	1	49	0	50	0	50	5	45	0	50
CRB2	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50
CRB3	0	50	1	49	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	1	49
CRC	2	48	6	44	3	47	0	50	11	39	6	44	10	40	13	37
CRC1	1	49	0	50	0	50	0	50	4	46	3	47	0	50	0	50
CRC2	0	50	0	50	1	49	0	50	7	43	3	47	10	40	10	40
CRC3	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50
CRC4	0	50	0	50	2	48	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	1	49
CRC5	1	49	6	44	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	50	2	48

Table 4.2 shows that none of the respondents among males or females used Question Accuracy and Legitimate Evasion strategies, in all the four situational settings. Table 4.2 also demonstrates that a majority of respondents among the males (50, 50, 50, 49) and the females (50, 49, 50, 50) did not use the micro compliment response strategy of Downgrading. It is obvious from Table 4.2 that both males (50, 50, 50, 50) and females (49, 50, 50, 49) did not use Challenge sincerity strategy and similarly, compliment response strategy of Ignore was also not used by both male (50, 48, 50, 50) and female respondents (50, 50, 50, 49).

The results focus on no sharp difference in the frequency of use of compliment responses in English between male and female university students of English in Pakistan. It was observed that all the macro strategies of Accept, Reject, and Evade were used by both male and female university students of English in Pakistan. As reported earlier, the macro compliment response strategy pattern of Accept, Evade and Reject was followed by both male and female respondents in all the four situations. The finding of the greater use of macro response strategy of Accept in all the given situations by both male (45, 43, 39, 34) and female respondents (42, 48, 42, 31), is in line with the findings of Heidari et al. (2011) and Allami and Montazeri (2012). The finding of Evade strategy as the second most used strategy by both male (2, 3, 11, 10) and female (6, 0, 6, 13) respondents and Reject strategy as the least used strategy by both male (2, 2, 0, 5) and female (1, 1, 0, 1) respondents, in all the four scenarios is consistent with the finding of Morales (2012). It seems that there is no prominent effect of gender on the use of compliment responses as both male and female Pakistani English students willingly accepted and rarely rejected the compliments of the addressee.

The finding of the preference of majority of both male (34, 31, 31, 21) and female (34, 27, 38, 27) respondents for Appreciation token strategy is in line with the findings of other studies (Holmes, 1988; Allami & Montazeri, 2012; Monjezi, 2014). It shows that both male and female university students of English in Pakistan are equally apt to appreciate compliments in English, if they receive any in ESL context. Agreeing utterance was observed as the second most used micro strategy by both male (1, 10, 4, 7) and female (1, 19, 0, 1) respondents, and Return compliment as the third most used micro strategy by both male (10, 2, 4, 5) and female (7, 1, 4, 3) respondents. It suggests that there is no influential effect of gender on Pakistani learners of English, as both male and female students frequently used the same three micro compliment response strategies. It also suggests that both male and female Pakistani learners of English politely agree to addressee's compliments by using Agreeing utterance and they humbly pay back compliments of the addressee by using Return compliment.

Furthermore, none of the respondent among males or females used the micro compliment response strategies of Question Accuracy and Legitimate Evasion in all the four situations, and Downgrading, Challenge sincerity and Ignore were observed with no measurable values of use by the two groups of respondents. It can be deduced from the results that the students could not interpret the compliment response situations in a proper way, or they might not have the understanding of these strategies in English. This can be because of the less proficiency in English and lack of pragmatic ability in Pakistani university students of English. It recommends the development of pragmatic awareness in Pakistani students of English, so that they can realize pragmatic meanings in different situations when they encounter them outside their classrooms especially while using speech acts in English.

6. Conclusion

This research study found that all the three macro compliment response strategies of Accept, Reject, and Evade were used by the respondents. The findings reveal that the respondents were found using the macro compliment response strategy pattern of Accept,

Evade and Reject in all the four situational settings of Appearance, Character, Ability, and Possessions. As far as the differences in use of compliment responses between male and female students are concerned, no sharp differences were found in the use of the compliment response strategies. One of the main causes for this might be the linguistic homogeneity of the respondents of this study. Out of twelve micro compliment response strategies, the respondents were observed frequently using only three micro compliment response strategies of Appreciation token, Agreeing utterance, and Return compliment. Furthermore, none of the respondent among males or females used the micro compliment response strategies of Question Accuracy and Legitimate Evasion. This exhibits that the respondents lack the absolute knowledge and understanding of the different types of micro compliment response strategies in English. It also suggests that the respondents have low proficiency in English. This evokes a need of developing L2 pragmatic ability in English of university students of English in Pakistan.

6.1. Research Implications

The study provides a broader implication that suggests a useful contribution to the field of pragmatics. As pragmatic ability is necessary for effective communication in a second or foreign language and it can be checked by observing the understanding of the use of speech acts, so this research study yields evidence that ESL learners in Pakistan have limited L2 pragmatic knowledge. The findings of the study also confirm the fact that university students of English in Pakistan do not have the required understanding for the use of majority of the compliment response strategies in English. The inadequate functional proficiency in Pakistani university students can be the result of the lack of appropriate pragmatic instruction in the ESL classroom and the devotion of attention of Pakistani English teachers to the perfection of grammar rather than the improvement of pragmatic ability of their students. This implies that L2 pragmatic knowledge especially related to compliment response strategies should be taught in English language classroom with the help of proper syllabus in order to develop the functional proficiency and communicative competence in English of the Pakistani learners in Pakistan.

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Citation of this paper

Irshad, A. & Kiani, Z. H. (2023). The use of compliment responses in English by university students of English in Pakistan. *Erevna: Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 7(1). 75-91