

Iwona Dronia  
Beata Garczyńska<sup>1</sup>  
Wyższa Szkoła Humanitas

## **Teaching pragmatic competence. The contrastive analysis of discourse completion tests findings on the usage of compliments and compliment responses among Polish learners of various proficiency levels and American native speakers**

### **Abstract**

Pragmatic competence is undeniably one of the most fundamental, yet commonly overlooked competence in the second language classroom. The status and the dominance of grammatically and lexically - oriented activities are always taken for granted and their role in developing one's language accuracy is barely questioned. For some reason though, even a relatively advanced non-native speakers of English still find it difficult to produce native-like pragmatically appropriate utterances. Pragmatic competence encompassing such abilities as using the language for different purposes, understanding various intentions and last, but not least, choosing and connecting together appropriate utterances in order to create a discourse (Bialystok, 1993) is rarely placed in the limelight of classroom attention. Thus, such a negligence commonly contributes to students' inability to behave appropriately and conform to different social situations requiring from them both verbal and non-verbal behavior adaptations strategies. The aim of this study is to determine the level of the development of pragmatic competence as manifested in the usage of compliment response strategies produced by Polish speakers of English. These results are further compared with the results of English native speakers and their reactions to compliment responses. In addition, the study attempts to compare the compliments response patterns used by a special group of participants-high School pupils and university students, with those used by English speakers as cited in Herbert study (1989), and to reveal differences between the American and Polish cultures, in terms of responding to compliments.

**Key words:** pragmatic competence, compliment responses, discourse, discourse completion tests

### **1. Pragmatic competence**

While analysing the concept of pragmatic competence one should first start with defining a more general term, namely communicative competence. For Canale and

---

<sup>1</sup> The study was conducted by Garczyńska (2014) during the process of creating her MA diploma paper. As the supervisor of her work, and a genuinely interested and engaged in the research myself, I received a written consent to use the findings she compiled in this article.

Swain (1980) this notion encompasses the knowledge/abilities belonging to four broad categories, i.e. grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic. Hence pragmatic competence can be interpreted as one aspect of communicative competence pertaining to the ability of using so called invisible rules allowing one to remain socially appropriate while producing speech acts. Those invisible rules comprise a speaker's declarative knowledge of the target language (Kasper, 1989 in Grossi, 2009: 53). Thus it can be stated that pragmatic competence falls somewhere in between what Chomsky (1965) called competence (the speaker's or hearer's knowledge of languages) and performance (the actual use of knowledge in concrete situations). For Bachman (1990), pragmatic competence, together with organizational knowledge is just one part of language knowledge that a second language learner must internalize. He characterises the former as the knowledge of how words and utterances can be assigned specific meanings in context and function according to the user's intentions. This, in turn, is an umbrella term encompassing other abilities, such as lexical, functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. Organizational knowledge, on the other hand, subsumes grammatical and textual knowledge and concerns the ability of producing correct sentences and organizing them in texts. Bialystok (1993) provides one more interpretation of pragmatic competence, dividing it into three general aspects:

1. The ability to use language for different purposes
2. The ability to understand the speaker's real intentions
3. The ability to choose and connect together appropriate utterances in order to create a discourse.

All in all it can be concluded that differences in performing speech acts in L2 resulting from pragmatic transfer may significantly contribute to various forms of misunderstanding and offence. Learners unable to use their universal or transferrable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts will not meet the standards of being socially acceptable and appropriate as the language they produce will differ from the one used by native speakers. Pragmatic competence according to Crystal (1997: 301), should be analysed as the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context:

the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effect their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication

Pragmatics covers a wide spectrum of notions, ranging from politeness strategies and giving compliments to practical pedagogic lessons. As Crystal (*ibid.*) pointed out, it basically concerns individual choices concerning the language used in various sociocultural situations and the effect it has on other participants. Yet, the context cannot be separated from communicative act. Situational context, according to Crystal (1985: 71), includes the total non-linguistics background to a text or utterance, including

the immediate situation in which it is used, and the awareness by speaker and hearer of what has been said earlier and of any relevant external beliefs or presuppositions. While defining cultural context, on the other hand, Halliday (1985: 46) states that the context of culture refers to the culture and the ideological background of the society the text is functioned. It can be also assumed that cultural context relates utterances to the cultural awareness of pragmatic community.

## 2. Teaching pragmatic competence

**‘The key to understanding language in context is to start not with language, but with context’ (Hymes, 1972 in Kramsch, 1993: 34).**

As has been already mentioned, pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed. The teaching of pragmatics however, aims at facilitating the learners’ sense of being able to find socially appropriate language for the situations that they encounter. Within second language studies and teaching, pragmatics encompasses speech acts, conversational structure, conversational implicature, conversational management, the organization of discourse, and sociolinguistic aspects of language use such as the choice of addressative forms. Leech (1983) lists the following aspects of speech situation:

- (1) Addressers or addressees (addressers are the other term used to refer to speakers or writers, whereas addressees refer to hearers or readers);
- (2) The context of an utterance (context is any background knowledge assumed to be shared by speaker and hearer and which contributes to hearer’s interpretation of what speaker means by a given utterance);
- (3) The goal(s) of an utterance (in Leech’s view, the goal of an utterance is to talk about the intended meaning of the utterance, or speaker’s intention in uttering it. The term goal is more neutral than intention because it does not commit its user to dealing with motivation, but can be used generally of goal-oriented activities);
- (4) The utterance as a form of act or activity: a speech act;
- (5) The utterance as a product of a verbal act;

Thomas (1983 in Grossi, 2009: 56) states that it is the role of the teachers to “equip the student to express her/himself in exactly the ways s/he chooses to do so—rudely, tactfully, or in an elaborately polite manner. What we want to prevent in her/his bring unintentionally rude or subservient”. Pragmatic expressions can be presented in a variety of forms, and for second language learners, appropriateness is often cast aside simply to get the message across. Moreover, unfortunately, many L2 speakers make use of their own L1 sociocultural communicative competence, norms and conventions in performing L2 speech acts. Hence this pragmatic transfer appears as a result of the influence exerted by learners’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information (Kasper, 1992).

Consequently students must be equipped with the necessary knowledge that would enable them to use the language outside the classroom in as real-like as it is possible way. Thus pragmatic instruction in a foreign language classroom should fulfill such functions as exposing learners to appropriate target language input, raising learner's pragmatic awareness and arranging authentic opportunities to practice pragmatic knowledge. All in all, as Krisnawati (2011) points out, second and foreign language curricula ought to provide students with information on the socio-cultural rules of the target language.

While discussing the factors pertaining to the acquisition and development of pragmatic competence, Bardovi-Harling (1998) stresses the importance of few variables that determine these processes, i.e.: input, instruction, level of proficiency and length of stay living in the L2 culture, and the L1 culture. The amount of exposure to specific pragmatic features may have an effect on the hearer's pragmatic awareness. Learner's level of proficiency may also contribute to further development of pragmatic competence - some studies revealed that advanced learners are more likely to perform a speech act that is considered more appropriate in a given context. (Bardovi-Harling, 1998). All in all it can be stated that one of the most essential teachers' roles is to develop students' pragmatic competence. This can be achieved by raising awareness that misunderstandings can be caused by differences in performing speech acts in L2. What is more, learners should be made aware of what they already know and encouraged to use their universal or transferrable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts. They ought to be also informed about the phenomenon of pragmatic transfer and shown that what is considered to be polite differs from culture to culture. Last but not least, the educators should teach appropriate linguistic forms ( as well as pragmatic strategies) that are likely to be used by native speakers of L2 in performing speech acts (Kondo, 2003).

### 3. Compliment responses across cultures

Compliments may be described as "*speech acts that notice and attend to the hearer's interests, wants, needs and goods*" (Brown and Levinson cited in Holmes, 1995: 116). Compliment is one of the ways of the positive politeness strategy recognized and discussed by many researchers. According to Holmes, "*a compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes 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*" (Holmes 1986: 485). Since the concept of politeness exists in every culture, the polite formula is divided into two groups"

#### **Primary polite formulae**

e.g., words of address, greetings and farewells, thanks, and apologies;

#### **Secondary polite formulae**

e.g., compliments, congratulations, good wishes, toasts, and condolences (Jakubowska, 1999: 43). According to Ishihara and Cohen (2010: 57), compliments

in English function as 'social lubricant' and help in social relations to 'go smoothly'. The authors give the following themes of compliments:

- (1) Appearance/possessions (e.g., *You look absolutely beautiful!*)
- (2) Performance/skills/abilities (e.g., *Your presentation was excellent.*)
- (3) Personality traits (e.g., *You are so sweet.*)

A response to a compliment in e.g. Japanese may draw a very different response in English - a compliment, which one would associate with something positive, can actually turn into an FTA in certain cultures. This can happen when a given culture requires „negative politeness” while the other culture follows “positive politeness” as an appropriate form of communication, or vice versa. Negative politeness, according to Bogdanowska-Jakubowska (2010: 216) “is oriented toward redressing H’s negative face [as] the potential face threat is minimized by the assurance that S recognizes and respects H’s negative-face wants and will not impede him in his action”. The latter is directed toward the hearer’s positive face. “The potential face threat is minimized “by the assurance that in general S wants at least some of H’s wants” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 70 in Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, 2010: 216). Marcjanik (2009: 47)<sup>2</sup> believes that compliments play a very significant social role, i.e they serve the purpose of establishing rapport between interlocutors and enable to create “good conversational climate”. By paying compliments we show appreciation of one’s appearance, behavior, or possessions. This, in turn, can turn out to be very promising for the future relationship. As far as Poles’ reactions to compliments are concerned, Marcjanik (2009: 49) holds the opinion that it is quite customary for us to reject the compliment, or even to introduce a kind of counter-arguments, diminishing the importance and value of a complimented item, e.g.:

*Świetnie dziś wyglądasz. – Weż, przestań!* (You look great today!; oh, come on, stop it!), or *Piękny płaszcz. – A wiesz, jaki stary?* (Beautiful coat; – Do you know how old it is?).

Last but not least, the way we compliment others may be determined by the level of closeness and intimacy or professional dependence. It is also highly welcomed to compliment people’s close relatives, such as children or one’s spouse, e.g.:

*Ale pani ma grzeczne i miłe dziecko* (What an obedient and nice child you have)  
*Pozazdrościć takiej żony* (One should envy such a wife)

The professed ideal in American culture is to accept a compliment graciously, but, on the other hand, there is also a strong pressure towards being modest. The opposing pressure is visible in interactional dilemma when a person is paid a compliment. Consequently people will sometimes deflect a compliment as in the example provided by Holmes (1995: 138) - Harry is admiring Ken’s new mountain bike wheels.

Harry: *Neat set of wheels.*

Ken: *I got them at Sam’s. They weren’t expensive.* (Holmes, 1995: 138)

<sup>2</sup> All translations from Polish sources are mine.

Social pressure to act modestly or to minimize self-praise may even lead people to reject compliments, and disagree with the complimenter.

According to Ishihara and Cohen (2010: 59-60), compliment responses can be divided into three broad categories: accept, reject/deflect, and evade. Semantically, common responses to compliments can be categorized into acceptance, mitigation and rejection. Each category has sub-categories

### Accept

**Token of appreciation** (*thanks/thank you.*)

**Acceptance by means of a comment** (*Yeah, it's my favourite, too*)

**Upgrading the compliment by self-praise** (*Yeah, I can play other sports well, too.*)

### Mitigate

**Comment about history** (*I bought it for the trip to Arizona.*)

**Shifting the credit** (*My brother gave it to me/it really knitted itself.*)

**Questioning or requesting reassurance or repetition** (*Do you really like them?*)

**Reciprocating** (*So's yours.*)

**Scaling down or downgrading** (*It's really quite old.*)

### Reject

**Disagreement** (A: *You look good and healthy.* B: *I feel fat.*)

### No response

### Request interpretation

**Addressee interprets the compliment as a request** (*You wanna borrow this one too?*)

Holmes (1995: 117) also adds that compliments may be indirect and they are usually but not always aimed at the person addressed (e.g., it may be an article of clothing), though this may not necessarily comprise a cardinal rule:

Rhonda is visiting an old school-friend, Carol, and comments on one of Carol's children.

Rhonda: *What a polite child!*

Carol: *Thank You. We do our best.*

The English etiquette-book responses to compliments are what Pomerantz calls *Appreciation Tokens* (thank you, thanks, thank you so much, and well thank you). Sometimes responder of a compliment expresses also his agreement with a comment. Pomerantz claims that this type of response is 'very prevalent'

A) *Oh it was just beautiful.*

B) *Well thank You. I thought it was quite nice.*

If people are in good relations, the compliment may even increase the complimentary force of the previous comment, at the same time violating the constrain to avoid self-praise (I). If responder of the compliment does not want to accept it, usually he directly disagrees with the complimenter (II).

I. A) *Isn't he cute?*

B) *Oh, he's adorable*

II. A) *You did a great job cleaning up the house.*

B) *Well, I guess you have not seen the kids' room.*

The Polish responses to compliments can be put into the same categories

A) *Świetnie dzisiaj wyglądasz (You look great today)*

B) *Dziękuję (thank you)*

A) *Ale szalowa torebka (What a smashing handbag)*

B) *(hesitation) dziękuję. Mnie też się bardzo podoba. (thank you. I like it very much, too)*

### 3.1. The coding system of compliments

The study conducted by Herbert (1989) on the usage of compliment responses by speakers of American English has led to the emergence of the revised Pomerantz's taxonomy and the creation of a twelve-type taxonomy of compliment response:

(1) **appreciation token** ("Thanks," "Thank you"), (2) **comment acceptance** ("Yeah, it's my favorite too"), (3) **praise upgrade** ("Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn't it?"), (4) **comment history** ("I bought it for the trip to Arizona"), (5) **reassignment** ("My brother gave it to me," "It really knitted itself"), (6) **return** ("So's yours"), (7) **scale down** ("It's really quite old"), (8) **question** ("Do you really think so?"), (9) **disagreement** ("I hate it"), (10) **qualification** ("It's alright, but Len's is nicer"), (11) **no acknowledgment**, and (12) **request interpretation** ("You wanna borrow this one too?"). They were also further subsumed within three broad categories, such as agreement, nonagreement, and request interpretation.

## 4. The study

The aim of this study is to determine the level of the development of pragmatic competence as manifested in the usage of compliment response strategies produced by Polish speakers of English. These results are further compared with the results of English native speakers and their reactions to compliment responses. In addition, the study attempts to compare the compliments response patterns used by a special group of participants-high School pupils and university students, with those used by English speakers as cited in Herbert study (1989), and to reveal differences between the American and Polish cultures, in terms of responding to compliments. As a result, five related research questions emerged:

- (1) Whether Polish learners of English produce target-like compliments responses
- (2) How are compliment turns designed in English and Polish?
- (3) How is a compliment introduced linguistically into ongoing conversation during a lesson?
- (4) Whether the Polish students of English have a problem with pragmatic transfer, and if it is the case, how it is manifested?
- (5) Is the notion of pragmatic competence present during teaching English?

The materials used in this study was a written Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and observation. Discourse Completion Test is an open-ended questionnaire, which is the most frequent and effective method in pragmatics to elicit respondents' utterances (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). It includes different contextual situations followed by a blank. The participants had to provide the appropriate responses of the compliment responses investigated to fill in the blank, as if they had been talking in an authentic conversational setting. The participants of the study comprised three groups. The first group consisted of thirty undergraduate pupils of high school in Tychy, the next group were thirty students of University of Silesia and the last represented twenty American native speakers. Pupils from the first group were at the third year of high school education. They were recruited from among of students who studied English regularly, for average period of five years, either at a language school or at public school. Most were studying at intermediate level. It is worth mentioning that questions of the DCT in this study involve not only 'a friend/classmate says', but also other types of potential speakers so there is a different factor of power and distance. The scenarios are designed intentionally to show both complimenting among people with equal status and unequal one. The situation with the peer (status equal) are situations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 14 in which the complimenters are friends or classmates of the recipient. The situations in which compliments are given downward are situations 3 and 15 in which the complimenters are teachers and neighbours of the recipients. The situation where there is no familiarity between the complimenter and recipient is situation 10, 11, and 12. The design of the DCT used in this study is based on the discourse completion tasks developed in the area of cross cultural pragmatic studies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The author used individual expressions as to show scenarios to present situations that a specific group was likely to come across. The topics used in DCT are as follows:

Table 1. Topics of compliment responses in DCT questionnaire

	Context/Topic	Object of compliment
1.	cooking	skills/performance
2.	beautiful voice	skills/performance
3.	passing exam	skills/performance
4.	great speech	skills/performance
5.	good organization	skills/performance
6.	appearance	attractiveness
7.	hair	attractiveness
8.	beautiful eyes	attractiveness
9.	appearance	attractiveness
10.	appearance	attractiveness

11.	pretty dress	attractiveness
12.	nice beg	attractiveness
13.	trousers	attractiveness
14.	bike	attractiveness
15.	shoes	attractiveness

Data analysis of the DCT was done quantitatively, therefore each compliment response strategy used by each participants was identified and coded according to one of the Herbert's (1989) classification that includes 12 categories. After analyzing the data of each DCT, these strategies were counted in terms of the frequency they occur in order to decide which strategy had been used mostly by each group of participants. Thirty Polish high school pupils, thirty Polish university students and twenty native speakers of English (Americans) participated in this survey.

Each participant responded to fifteen situations of compliment responses:

- Five situations on five situations on appearance/skills (questions from 1 to 5)
- Five situations on attractiveness (questions from 6-10)
- Five situations on attractiveness of one's possession (questions from 11-15)

According to prepared DCT, the frequency of responses for each type of compliment in each group would be the following:

#### **450 compliment responses for a group of High School pupils**

5 situations of compliment responses on performance/skills x 30 pupils = 150  
 5 situations of compliment responses on attractiveness x 30 pupils = 150  
 5 situations of compliment responses on attractiveness of one's possession  
 x 30 pupils = 150

#### **450 compliment responses for a group of University Students**

5 situations of compliment responses on performance/skills x 30 students = 150  
 5 situations of compliment responses on attractiveness x 30 students = 150  
 5 situations of compliment responses on attractiveness of one's possession  
 x 30 students = 150

#### **300 compliment responses for a group of native speakers of English**

5 situations of compliment responses on performance/skills x 20 natives = 100  
 5 situations of compliment responses on attractiveness x 20 natives = 100  
 5 situations of compliment responses on attractiveness of one's possession  
 x 20 natives = 100

#### 4.1. The choice of compliment responses given by Polish High School pupils

There are a total of 450 compliment responses that may be seen from the DCT (See Appendix 1). They will be discussed mainly according to Herbert's (1986) categorizations which include **Agreement**, **Nonagreement** and **Other Interpretations**. The author categorized the responses into: Agreement and Nonagreement. Each category has a few subcategories. There are some examples given by High School pupils.

Table 2 Examples of compliment responses given by secondary school students

RESPONSE TYPE	EXAMPLE
<b>AGREEMENT</b>	
APPRECIATION TOKEN	<i>Thanks</i>
COMMENT ACCEPTANCE	<i>I think so, it's my favourite, too</i>
PRAISE UPGRADE	<i>I always look good</i>
COMMENT HISTORY	<i>I bought it in Katowice</i>
REASSIGNMENT	<i>That was my mother's choice</i>
RETURN	<i>Your hair is also very beautiful</i>
<b>NONAGREEMENT</b>	
<b>SCALE DOWN</b>	
QUESTION	<i>Really?</i>
DISAGREEMENT	<i>I don't think so</i>
NO ACKNOWLEDGMENT	<i>Silence</i>
<b>REQUEST</b>	

Concerning the frequency of different response types given by pupils, it can be argued that *Agreement* comes at the top of compliment responses with *Appreciation Token* with the highest frequency. It is clear that saying *Thank you* is the most used response used by high school pupils, 152 responses in all. The reason for simple response may indicate equality and decisiveness on the part of the complimentee, because simple responses can be taken to be straightforward expressions. Hence it can be concluded that the general tendency of the Polish speakers' responses to compliment is *Agreement*.

Table 3. The frequency of compliment responses type among Polish High School pupils

	APPRECIATION TOKEN	COMMENT AC- CEPTANCE	DE PRAISE UPGRA- DE	COMMENT HI- STORY	REASSIGNMENT	RETURN	SCALE DOWN	QUESTION	DISAGREEMENT	NO ACKNOW- LEDGMENT	REQUEST
1	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	3	0	0
2	4	5	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	7	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
4	6	3	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
5	4	2	3	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	0
6	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
7	5	3	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
8	4	7	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0
9	4	3	1	1	0	1	0	2	3	0	0
10	4	5	1	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	0
11	5	4	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0
12	6	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0
13	4	4	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	0
14	7	3	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
15	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
16	7	3	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
17	6	6	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
18	4	8	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
19	3	7	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
20	2	4	0	2	1	2	0	2	1	1	0
21	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
22	5	7	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
23	1	1	0	4	2	1	0	3	1	2	0
24	8	4	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
25	2	8	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
26	9	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
27	5	6	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
28	8	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	3	9	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
30	4	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
<b>SUM</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>MEAN</b>	5,0667	4,4	0,5667	1,0667	0,5	0,9333	0	0,9333	1,2	0,3333	0
<b>SD</b>	2,1162	2,4011	0,8976	0,9803	0,6297	0,8277	0	1,1427	1,4239	0,9942	0
<b>MEDIAN</b>	4,5	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
<b>DOMI- NANT</b>	4	4 and 7	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	0

*Comment Acceptance* and *Disagreement* are the second and third most frequently used strategies by this group of participants. The implementation of this type may indicate that Polish culture is not so open to compliments, as their acceptance can equal to being too proud or arrogant. According to *Comment, Acceptance* the most encountered answer was *Thanks, it's my favourite too*. Moreover, the most common answer belonging to *Disagreement* was *I don't think so*. The rest mentioned categories were at the similar level. The strategies that were not brought up were *Request* and *Scale Down*.

According to Sobczyk (2014), the correlation between standard deviation and mean equals less than 30% what indicates that the group is heterogeneous. The results are as follows: Praise Upgrade, Reassignment, question, Disagreement, and No Acknowledgment. When the correlation between standard deviation and mean equals more than 30%, it indicates that the group is not homogenous. Respondents' opinion are presented as follows: Appreciation token, Comment acceptance, Comment history, and Return.

## 4.2. The choice of compliment responses given by Polish University Students

The chart below demonstrates exemplary answers of compliment responses provided by Polish University students:

Table 4. The examples of compliment responses given by University students

RESPONSE TYPE	EXAMPLE
<b>AGREEMENT</b>	
APPRECIATION TOKEN	<i>Thank You, Thanks</i>
COMMENT ACCEPTANCE	<i>I prefer it the most, thanks</i>
PRAISE UPGRADE	<i>Yes, it's very delicious</i>
COMMENT HISTORY	<i>It's my birthday party</i>
REASSIGNMENT	<i>My mother gave it to me</i>
RETURN	<i>Your eyes are more beautiful</i>
<b>NONAGREEMENT</b>	
SCALE DOWN	<i>It's really quite old</i>
QUESTION	<i>Do you think so?</i>
DISAGREEMENT	<i>I don't like this colour</i>
NO ACKNOWLEDGMENT	<i>Silence</i>
REQUEST	<i>Would you like to borrow it?</i>

The findings from the table display that the most frequent response type was *Appreciation Token*. It was used 129 times of all possible responses. However, *Common Acceptance* was used in a similar number (122 times).

Table 5. The frequency of Compliment response Type among Polish University Students

	APPRECIATION TOKEN	COMMENT ACCEPTANCE	PRAISE UPGRADE	COMMENT HISTORY	REASSIGNMENT	RETURN	SCALE DOWN	QUESTION	DISAGREEMENT	NO ACKNOWLEDGMENT	REQUEST
1	5	4	1	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
2	2	4	0	5	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
3	2	5	2	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0
4	3	8	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
5	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
6	6	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	3	1
7	3	5	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
8	4	7	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0
9	4	6	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0
10	3	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
11	3	8	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0
12	1	4	0	0	0	4	0	4	2	0	0
13	2	5	0	2	0	3	1	0	1	1	0
14	1	4	3	0	0	4	1	1	0	1	0
15	0	2	3	0	0	5	0	2	1	1	1
16	2	7	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
17	6	1	2	1	0	3	0	1	1	0	0
18	2	5	2	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	2
19	10	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
20	7	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	2	0	0
21	9	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
22	7	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	1
23	6	2	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	0
24	5	4	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	0

25	4	4	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	0	1
26	5	5	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
27	3	6	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0
28	7	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0
29	6	2	1	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	0
30	5	4	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
<b>SUM</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>
MEAN	43	40667	09333	07667	03333	14333	05	13	07	03667	03
SD	2409	22118	09444	104	06609	13309	06297	09523	08367	07184	0596
ME- DIAN	4	4	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
DOMI- NANT	23 and6	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1and2	1	1

Polish students tend to use self-praise avoidance strategy, *Praise Upgrade* accounted 28 times of this category. There is *Return* category on the fourth place accounting for 43 of all responses. *Comment History* and *Disagreement* are on the similar place and account respectively 23 and 21. *No Acknowledgment*, *Reassignment*, and *Request* responses constituted 30 of the total responses. The respondents used two more categories than pupils and Americans, namely *Scale Down* and *Request*. If one compares sub-categories they might find out that Polish speakers' participants in their responses to compliments, use *Comment Acceptance* and *Comment History* in order to avoid self-praise. In many cases, firstly, as an acceptance, they thank the compliment giver, and then following it with a comment like 'It was very kind of you to say so'. From a statistical point of view there are seven groups that are heterogeneous: *Praise upgrade*, *Comment history*, *Return*, *Scale down*, *Disagreement*, *No acknowledgment*, and *Request*. Only three of all groups are not heterogeneous, and these are *Appreciation token*, *Comment acceptance*, and *Question*.

#### 4.3. The choice of compliment responses given by Native speakers of English

Americans try to accept compliments although reflecting or rejecting compliments negates the implication that the addressee is superior in any way. In American English, the preference of response strategies other than acceptance may be related to the notion of democracy and equality of all human beings.

Table 6. The examples of compliment responses given by native speakers of English

RESPONSE TYPE	EXAMPLE
<b>AGREEMENT</b>	
APPRECIATION TOKEN	<i>Thanks</i>
COMMENT ACCEPTANCE	<i>Yeah, it's my favorite too</i>
PRAISE UPGRADE	<i>It is very nice of You, everybody says that</i>
COMMENT HISTORY	<i>I bought it from the trip to...</i>
REASSIGNMENT	<i>My brother/sister gave it to me</i>
RETURN	<i>So's yours</i>
<b>NONAGREEMENT</b>	
<b>SCALE DOWN</b>	
QUESTION	<i>You think so?</i>
DISAGREEMENT	<i>I hate it</i>
NO ACKNOWLEDGMENT	<i>Silence</i>
<b>REQUEST</b>	

There are two categories that are absent in American responses to compliments and those are *Scale Down* and *Request*.

Table 7. The frequency of compliment responses type among native speakers of English

	APPRECIATION TOKEN	COMMENT ACCEPTANCE	PRAISE UPGRADE	COMMENT HISTORY	REASSIGNMENT	RETURN	SCALE DOWN	QUESTION	DISAGREEMENT	NO ACKNOWLEDGMENT	REQUEST
1	4	0	5	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
2	3	0	5	3	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
3	3	4	2	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	0
4	11	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	10	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
6	1	5	3	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
7	7	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	2	0
8	8	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0

9	7	3	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
10	4	2	3	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	4	5	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
12	14	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	1	7	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
14	0	1	6	4	0	3	0	1	0	0	0
15	3	5	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
16	4	4	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
17	2	5	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	1	6	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
19	4	5	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	2	2	3	3	0	2	0	3	0	0	0
<b>SUM</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>MEAN</b>	4,45	3	3,25	1,8	0,1	1,35	0	0,65	0,15	0,25	0
<b>SD</b>	3,8726	2,1026	1,8028	1,3992	0,4472	1,1367	0	0,8751	0,3663	0,5501	0
<b>ME- DIAN</b>	3,5	2,5	3	2	0	1,5	0	0	0	0	0
<b>DOMI- NANT</b>	4	2	3	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	0

As can be seen in the chart, *Appreciation Token* was used as the most frequent response (repeated 89 times) from all 450 records. *Common Acceptance* and *Praise Upgrade* were at the similar second position. 36 of all compliment responses fell into *Comment History*. *Reassignment*, *Question*, *Disagreement*, and *No acknowledgment* comprised less dominant groups.

The findings also show that the main function of compliments in American English is to create and maintain solidarity and finally to affirm common ground between interlocutors. This may be the reason why the majority of compliment responses by Americans took the form of *Appreciation Token*.

In comparison to two previous groups of respondents, there are five non heterogeneous groups (*Appreciation token*, *Comment acceptance*, *Praise upgrade*, *Comment history*, and *Return*). In the group of American native speakers, responses such as *Reassignment*, *Question*, *Disagreement*, and *No acknowledgment* tend to be heterogeneous.

## 5. Final remarks

The results displayed in chart 3,5 and 7 demonstrate some visible differences between the three groups of respondents. Two groups of Polish informants used similar strategies when receiving compliments although Polish secondary school learners did not use two subcategories such as *Request* and *Scale Down*. It should be also added that American native speakers' responses also differed from those presented by Polish teenagers. The group that used almost all categories (11) was the one comprised of Polish students of English Philology.

The results indicate that there are some differences in the aspect of linguistic patterns between compliment responses given by two groups. Polish learners accept the compliment in modest way in comparison to American group, who accepts when responding on behalf of praise upgrade. In terms of compliment acceptances and agreements with compliments one may observe that the most frequent strategy for all three groups was *Appreciation Token* even though American used half of what non native speakers did. Polish learners give an assessment of the compliment, something that was not reported for Americans. Americans just agree with the compliment saying *Thanks*, on the other hand, Poles would say *Thank You, it's nice*. As can be concluded, Polish students display similar responses types to American. However, it must be mentioned that in American corpus there are fewer rejections *Disagreement* responses than in Polish. On the other hand, the Poles when responding in Polish use disagreement responses very often, for instance, responding to compliment given by a friend about possession the answer could be *I don't think so, it's very old!*.

Since the group of Polish university students were students of English Philology as a second language at the University of Silesia, their proficiency might have been above the national average. It may be assumed that having a higher level of pragmatic competence, pragmatic transfer most probably has occurred. It should be also mentioned that there were considerable individual differences amongst learners of second language concerning pragmatics as well as grammar and lexis. Polish University students showed language proficiency as well as pragmatic competence in the language intended to be learnt, while high school pupils showed definitely less of those. Using too many acceptances could be caused by lack of knowledge or willingness to put oneself in a safe situation.

## References:

- Bachman, L. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: OUP.
- Bardovi-Harling, K. (1998). Narrative structure and lexical aspect: Conspiring factors in second language acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 20*
- Bialystok, E. (1993). Metalinguistic awareness: the development of children's representations of language. In C. Pratt & A. Garton (Eds.), *Systems of representation in children: Development and use* (pp.211–233). London: Wiley & Sons.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., and Kasper, G. (Eds.). (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: requests and apologies*. Norwood, N.J. : Ablex.
- Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, E. (1999). *Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Politeness in the Case of Polish and English*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.
- Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, E. (2010). *FACE. An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.
- Canale, M. and M. Swain, 1980. "Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing" in *Applied Linguistics (1): 1–47*.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *Cambridge encyclopedia of language*. Second edition, CUP.
- Crystal, D. (1985). *Linguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Garczyńska, B. (2014). *Teaching pragmatic competence. Compliment responses in the ESL classroom* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Silesia in Katowice: Sosnowiec.
- Grossi, (2009). Teaching pragmatic competence: Compliments and compliment responses in the ESL classroom. *Prospect: An Australian Journal of TESOL, 24(2)*
- Halliday, M. (1985). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Herbert, K. (1986). Say "thank you" or something. *American Speech, 61(1)*,76-88.
- Holmes, J. (1986). Compliments and Compliment Responses in new Zealand English. *Anthropological Linguistics 28.4*
- Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, men and Politeness*. London and new York: Longman.
- Ishihara, N. and Cohen, A.D. (2010). *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics; Where language and Culture meet*. London: Longman
- Kasper, G. (1992). Pragmatic Transfer. *Second Language Research, 8:3*, 203-231.
- Kondo, S. (2003). Instructional effects on pragmatic development: Refusal by Japanese EFL learners. *Publications of Akenohoshi Women's Junior College, 19*, 33-51.
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: OUP.
- Krisnawati, E. (2011). *Paragmatic Competence in a Spoken English Classroom*. Vo. 1, No 1. <http://ejournal.upi/index.php/IJAL/article/view/102>
- Leech (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Marcjanik, M. (2009). *Mówimy uprzejmie*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Rose, K. & Kasper, G. (n.d.). *Pragmatics in language teaching*. [http://assets.cambridge.org/97805218/03793/excerpt/9780521803793\\_excerpt.pdf](http://assets.cambridge.org/97805218/03793/excerpt/9780521803793_excerpt.pdf)
- Sobczyk, M. (2014). *Statystyka*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.