Responses of Female Non-native Speakers to English Compliments: A Cross-generational Study of Saudi Arabian University Students and Lecturers

By

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ABSTRACT

Employing a cross-generational perspective, this study attempts to deepen our understanding of the politeness strategies Saudi females use when responding to compliments in English from an English speaker. The aim of the study was to investigate how Saudi females from two generations respond to compliments in an educational setting in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and how their choices are affected by Saudi culture in relation to gender, pragmatic transfer and inter-generational interaction. Participants included 62 female undergraduate students and 64 female lecturers from one university in the KSA. Following a mixed methods approach, the study included two primary sources of data: a quantitative Discourse Completion Task questionnaire for eliciting compliment responses (CRs) from the two generations; and qualitative semi-structured interviews with six participants from each group. Quantitative data findings revealed that acceptance was the most favoured strategy used by both the generations when responding to compliments in English. However, the two groups exhibited considerable differences in the types of politeness strategies used and the extent of pragmatic transfer they demonstrated in their CRs. In the use of politeness strategies, for instance, it was shown that compliments made on spoken language ability and character were responded to differently by the teachers and the students. Pragmatic transfer, on the other hand, was evident in the students' responses in two main scenarios but was not found in the lecturers' responses. Qualitative interviews findings revealed that both the groups considered it appropriate to accept the compliments because it was polite, appropriate, and according to the cultural norms of the KSA. The students, however, faced challenges in judging the sincerity of the compliments given. The study has implications for the kind of politeness strategies used by different cultures, and indicates a need for further research in this regard to enable greater intercultural awareness and competence among Saudis women interacting with speakers from non-Arabic cultures.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Each language is characterised by a unique set of patterned and routine expressions that the speakers of that language make use of to perform different types of speech act, such as compliments, apologies, greetings, requests, etc (Ziaei ,2012). Furthermore, since language can be viewed as a verbal expression of culture, speech behaviours and functions are culturally specific. This implies that the sociolinguistic norms and constraints prevalent in each culture largely determine what to say, how to respond, to whom, and under what conditions. However, when speakers from two different cultural backgrounds interact or communicate, they consciously or unconsciously bring their culturally inherited norms and social constraints to the interaction (Salameh, 2001).

The degree of success of a face-to-face interaction relies mainly on the extent of mutual understanding between the interlocutors. Such an interaction is often successful when the interlocutors share similar cultural backgrounds or are aware of the pragmatic norms of each other's culture (Huth, 2006). Such interlocutors are regarded as being pragmatically competent. However, when the interlocutors belong to different cultures and are also unaware of the sociolinguistic norms of each other's culture, a breakdown in communication may occur due to misunderstanding of culture-specific speech acts (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016) and a lack of understanding that the "illocutionary force of a given utterance varies from language to language" (Beal, 1998, p. 13). This leads to pragmatic failure, i.e. the inability to comprehend what is conveyed (Yuan, 2001). For example, in an interesting study carried out years ago, Cohen (1987) analysed diplomatic relations between the USA and Egypt during the thirty years prior to the study. He found that the reason for political conflict between the two countries was partly due to the different styles of communication and the lack of mutual understanding of interaction patterns inherent in the culture of each country.

This predicament of cultural misunderstanding happens even more in situations where foreign language learners try to use their native pragmatic knowledge while communicating with native speakers of a foreign language (Tan & Farashaiyan, 2015). It is a well-known fact that language and culture are inextricably interlinked; cultural norms are therefore bound to affect the language choice of speakers (Willis, 2015). English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face considerable sociolinguistic and intercultural challenges; the inability to respond successfully to these challenges may be defined as pragmatic failure (Tran, 2010). To cite a real life example, a student who had just started studying in New Zealand after recent graduation from Saudi Arabia gave a compliment to a female classmate by saying: "your eyes look as beautiful as an Arabian deer". In the Arabic culture, deer are considered as the most attractive and beautiful creature in the world (Al-Dahery, 2000). Since symbols of beauty vary from culture to culture, what is seen as a compliment in one culture might be considered as offensive in another (Al-Dahery, 2000).The student in the example apparently transferred his own culture's pragmatic norms into the target language of a culture having different pragmatic norms. The resulting situation led to a face threatening situation instead of a compliment because the person felt insulted. This replacement in speech behaviour is an example of pragmatic failure (Tran, 2010).

Considerable research has been carried out on the topic of cross-cultural speech acts and the pragmatic failure of ESL learners. Studies show that this failure occurs despite learners having acquired excellent grammatical and lexical knowledge of the target language (Bouton, 1994; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Robinson, 1992; Salameh, 2001). Due to the lack of pragmatic competence, sociolinguistic rules of the learner's own language often interfere with those of the target language. Pragmatic competence is therefore vital in cross-cultural communication (Swales, 1990). It is in this context that the current study attempts to unravel the pragmatic competence of Saudi females through exploring their responses to compliments given in English and the reasons behind these responses. Before I move to the precise aims of this study, I consider it important to give some background information about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where this study took place.

1.2 Geographical background of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the important countries in the Middle East. The Arab world comprises 22 countries with a combined population of 300 million, all of whom speak the Arabic language that is characterised by a variation of different dialects (Baumann, 2006). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, located in west Asia, is the biggest country in the Arabic Peninsula (Omar, 1975). The Kingdom was founded by King Abdul-Aziz bin Saud in 1932. It is bounded by six countries (Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait to the north, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and the Republic of Yemen) and two bodies of water, the Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba to the west (Omar, 1975). Saudi Arabia is divided into thirteen regions, each region having its own capital. Arabic is the native language of the inhabitants of Saudi Arabia. Several sub-dialects of Arabic are used in the Kingdom depending on the region (urban/rural) and the tribe (Bedouin, Urbain, etc.).

1.3 Cultural background of Saudi Arabia

The cultural milieu of Saudi Arabia is greatly influenced by the religion Islam and Arab civilisation (Bowen, 2014). The society is deeply religious and is also founded on centuries-old collectivist traditions of Arab civilisation. However, global changes, coupled with a strengthening economy because of indigenous oil production, have had an impact on the Saudi culture. During the 1970s, the Kingdom underwent a drastic change from an impoverished nomadic culture to a rich commodity producer (Tripp & North, 2003). The social life is characterised by a collectivist culture; families are close knit and relatives are visited on a regular basis (North & Tripp, 2009). On special occasions, such as weddings or funerals, there are large social gatherings separately for males and females.

Generally confined to strict boundaries, females, to some extent, socialise freely in public in two main domains: workplaces and educational institutions. In places like universities and schools, a dedicated space is provided to females where they can take

off their Abayas (a full-length outer garment that Muslim women wear in public) and Hijab (a head covering that Muslim women wear in public) before entering classrooms. Such a practice ensures that education takes place in a conducive learning environment for them, as they can feel free to dress, sit, behave and talk in a natural manner, something that would not have been possible for them in a mixed gender academic environment is KSA. Moreover, research also suggests that girls' academic achievement in gender- segregated schools is better when compared to that of the mix-gender ones (Rahman &Adhesion, 2013).

According to Ehteshami and Miyagi (2015), gender segregation in the case of Saudi Arabia ensures legal, psychological and social rights to the female gender. Girls are educated in an environment where the system that has developed takes into account their differences and psychological and intellectual requirements in order to improve their academic performance. Such a work atmosphere, according to Ehteshami and Miyagi (2015), offers Saudi females the opportunity to study a diverse variety of subjects to gain professional jobs, especially in the field of academia.

1.4 Educational background of Saudi Arabia

Children in Saudi Arabia used to learn their Arabic writing and memorize the Holy Quran at mosques (AlMunajjed, 1997). In the year 1939, the first school for boys was established in Saudi Arabia (Faruk, 2013). Girls' education came a little later; the year 1950 witnessed the establishment of the first school for girls (AlMunajjed, 1997). A year before that, the education system of Saudi Arabia underwent an ideological shift when English was introduced as a taught language in colleges in Makkah (mecca) (where this study is situated). Faruk (2013) links this change to the American workers who came to work on the oil fields in the oil-rich Saudi Arabia, leading to the establishment of several oil companies, such as the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO).

The field of education received a big boost during the reign of King Abdullah (May his soul rest in peace) (2005-2015). More than 150,000 Saudi men and women students were sent abroad on government-sponsored scholarships (Rahman & Adhesion, 2013). In recent times, a large number of students have graduated at institutions abroad by making use of the King Abdullah Scholarship programme. Such graduates were instrumental in influencing the decision to make English a compulsory part of the curriculum.

English is now taught as a second language from primary school onward. Additionally, educational reforms include applying the latest methods of language teaching and learning to enable students to learn the language as well as to become aware of western culture. This is a significant shift from the earlier use of methodologies that merely focussed on grammar and accuracy. English language is now a requirement for almost every educated Saudi to be able to secure a good job.

Both scholars and laymen in Saudi Arabia are of the opinion that there are significant differences between males and females. They believe that the type of education the two genders should receive must be based on their perceived role in the society (Ehteshami & Miyagi, 2015). Males and females therefore have separate classes right from the start of schooling to the highest degree. The education policy document formulated in the early 1970s forbade mixing of male and female students. The policy decision is followed in letter and in spirit in all educational institutions excepting a few international and private schools (Ehteshami & Miyagi, 2015). This gives some background to the female lecturers and students in this study.

1.5 Aim of the study

This study aims to investigate the compliment response strategies of Saudi females belonging to two different generations (the older generation lecturers and the younger generation students) at one Saudi University in KSA, when they are engaging with an English-speaking outsider. The study focuses on two groups of Saudi females in a

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society dominated by male-specific values. Its main focus is on the speech act of compliment responses. The participants are all Saudi females who are well educated and have possibly travelled abroad for studying English.

The specific research questions that this study attempts to answer are as follows:

1. What are the major compliment response types used by Saudi female lecturers and students when responding to a compliment given in English?

2. Are there any differences in the politeness strategies that the two generations of the Saudi females use to respond to such compliments?

3. Is there any evidence of pragmatic transfer in the compliment response by Saudi female lecturers and students?

1.6   Rationale for the study

The giving and receiving of compliments is common to all speech communities (Wardhaugh, 2009). Although potential similarities may be found in the compliments used by people belonging to different cultures, each culture has its own peculiar preferences, uses and varieties for different situations. For instance, possession compliments about children and spouses are considered acceptable in American culture (Knapp et al., 1984; Wolfson, 1983), but those same possession compliments are less acceptable in New Zealand. This is because it is considered inappropriate to compliment a husband for having a wife as this reflects a view of his wife as a possession (Holmes & Brown, 1987). This is an example of cross-cultural difference in what compliment topics are perceived as suitable. In Chinese and Taiwanese cultures, compliments about a man's wife and children are interpreted as having an aspect of envy and violence to the receiver's face (Ye, 1995; Yu, 2005). In view of these differences, it is important to study the use of compliments in other intra-cultural and cross-cultural settings. The study therefore attempts to gain an idea of the pragmatic competence of a group of female Saudi speakers of English responding to a compliment in English.

This research is unique since, to the best of my knowledge, it is the first of its kind to consider the speech act of compliment responses among Saudi females from an age-variation perspective. Cross-generational comparison studies are quite scarce in the field of pragmatics (Rose & Kasper, 2001). Cross-cultural differences cannot be limited to those between national groups; generation should be viewed as one of the important variable that constitutes culture (Fukushima, 2015). There is therefore a real *need* for cross-generational research.

This study will therefore help to bridge some of the gaps in sociolinguistic studies, especially studies of speech acts in Saudi culture. Furthermore, this study will function as a reference point for other researchers interested in the cross-cultural understanding of compliments and compliment responses. This research will help those from other cultures to understand Saudi interactional customs and norms. Also, since this research focuses on only one gender and on one part of Saudi Arabia (Makkah in the west), scholars interested in the speech act of compliments and compliment responses in Saudi Arabia can use this study for comparison with other parts of Saudi Arabia or the opposite gender.

1.7 Overview of the thesis

This thesis comprises a total of five chapters. Chapter two gives account of the literature pertinent to the topic under study. Chapter three contains an in-depth explanation of the methodology employed, the data collection instruments used, the data analysis techniques employed, and the researcher's role in the study. In Chapter four the findings relating to survey and interviews data are presented and discussed. The thesis concludes with Chapter five where the implications of the study's findings, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are presented.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Compliments and compliment responses across different cultures and languages have received considerable research attention. This chapter carries out a review of relevant literature pertaining to the speech act of compliments and compliment responses. The review starts with a discussion of the concept of culture, its association with language, and the way culture and language intermingle in a speech community. The chapter then focuses on the concept of compliments, relating it to politeness theory and practice. A review of empirical research conducted in different cultural contexts has been carried out to exhibit the range and scope of the studies on compliments and compliment responses. The chapter ends with an identification of the research gap, which serves as the rationale for conducting this study.

2.2 Culture

A seminal and well-known definition of culture came from Goodenough (1957, p.167):

> "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe inorder to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves".

Such knowledge is socially acquired through interaction in a cultural group (Wardhaugh, 2009). This knowledge, or "learnt system of meanings" as described by Ting-Toomey (1999, p. 10), helps foster a strong sense of collective identity among the members of a community. Ting-Toomey adds that cultural knowledge includes customs, values, norms and meanings that the members of a group share collectively. Therefore, in order to understand the culture of a particular group, we need to study the social and communicative patterns of that group.

2.2.1 Language and culture

One way of exploring the association between language and culture is to look at how language has been defined by different scholars. Wardhaugh (2009), for instance, defines language as "a knowledge of rules and principles and of *the ways of saying and doing things* with sounds, words, and sentences rather than just knowledge of specific sounds, words, and sentences" (p. 2, emphasis added). Although the word culture has not been mentioned in the definition, it is clear that Wardhaugh here defines language in relation to the context in which it is used. Thanasoulas (2001) makes this connection abundantly clear; while defining language, he argues that language does not exist apart from the socially inherited beliefs and practices that we call culture. Language, in this sense, is thus "a key to the cultural past of a society" (Salzmann, 1998, p. 41) as well as to its cultural present. People living in a community, argues Wardhaugh (2009), value certain activities and do them in a specific manner; the language that they use is employed in a way so as to reflect what they value and do. Language is thus not merely a tool for information exchange; rather, it creates and shapes what Kramsch and Thorne (2002) call symbolic realities, such as norms and values. Language, therefore, is at the heart of any culture (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

2.2.2 Language, culture and speech communities

Most sociolinguists deem a shared language as the defining criterion for a speech community. Ting-Toomey (1999), for instance, defines a speech community as "a group of individuals who share a common set of norms and rules regarding proper communicative practices" (p. 90). Earlier, Gumperz (1971, p. 114) offered the definition of the speech community as:

> any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage… Not only must members of the speech community share a set of grammatical rules, but there must also be regular relationships between language use and social structure; i.e., there must be norms which may vary by sub-group and social setting.

Gumperz goes on to state that "the speech varieties employed within a speech community form a system because they are related to a shared set of social norms" (p. 116). This definition points to the integral link between language and culture as practiced in a particular speech community.

Another important aspect of a speech community is the sense of ownership and membership of the people who are a part of that community. In order to ensure their membership of the speech community, people must have "local knowledge of the way language choice, variation, and discourse represents generation, occupation, politics, social relationships, identity, etc" (Morgan, 2004, p. 4). Being part of a speech community requires, therefore, not only shared values and beliefs but also a shared knowledge of the community's use of language. The speaker of a particular language may construct a correct grammatical sentence but still face social problems when interacting with others. Mastery of the socially recognized use of language in a given community is therefore necessary to remain or become a member of a particular speech community. This knowledge of the rules of how to say what to whom and under what situational conditions in a speech community (Ting-Toomey , 1999) is covered under the field of pragmatics.

2.3 Pragmatics

The importance of language and its association with the sociocultural norms of a society cannot be overemphasized. Pragmatics, as a specialized field of applied linguistics, attempts to unravel this complex connection between language and culture and the way it is practised in a speech community. Pragmatics is the study of meaning in relation to the context in which a person is speaking or writing (Paltridge, 2006). It focuses on language use and users so as to illuminate the ways in which discourse is internally organised in relation to its context (Bell, 2013). In other words, pragmatics is concerned with identifying and understanding the patterns of how members of a specific sociocultural community use language to operate within social organisations (Hinkel, 2014). More specifically, pragmatics deals with language as a means of communication and stresses the function rather than form of the language

(Horn & Warn, 2006). It also analyses the processes involved in communication and focuses on the context surrounding the language use (Fernandez-Guerra et al., 2003). An awareness of pragmatic rules of communication therefore leads to *pragmatic competence* among individuals.

Austin (1998) defines pragmatic competence as the knowledge underlying abilities to be able to interpret, express, and negotiate social activities and their meanings beyond what is really expressed. The need for becoming pragmatically competent cannot be overemphasised. It can help non-native speakers (NNS) to build relationships with members of the target language community. In cross-cultural settings, where communication between individuals from different cultural groups and languages takes place, misunderstandings are more likely to surface due to the fact that receivers may fail to understand what the non-native interlocutor intends to convey. Such misunderstandings may lead to interlocutors experiencing *pragmatic failure* (Ya& Ling, 2002), i.e. the inability to correctly comprehend what is conveyed.

Exchanging compliments in cross-cultural contexts could also lead to *pragmatic transfer*, i.e. the pragmatic rules and knowledge may be carried over from one culture and language to another (Chang, 2009). This phenomenon has been found in different speech acts in many languages, and has been evident in second language learners' speech performances (Huth, 2006). Existing studies on compliments and their responses indicate that foreign language learners tend to underestimate pragmatic errors and view grammatical errors more seriously (Schauer, 2006). Yet, pragmatic competence is important for non-native speakers (NNS) if they are to build relationships with speakers of the target language and learn more about the target culture (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). Even if students are able to perfectly master all the grammatical rules of the language, unless they acquire pragmatic knowledge, their speech will always seem strange to native speakers. It is, however, important to note that pragmatic transfer can be either positive or negative. If the transfer from L1 into L2 has a similar pattern, the transfer is considered positive as it does not lead to pragmatic failure. However, if the transfer from L1 to L2 does not have a similar

pattern, then the transfer is negative (Rose & Kasper, 2001) and may lead to confusion and a communication gap. Negative pragmatic transfer or a general lack of pragmatic competence may also lead to loss of face – a concept extensively discusses in pragmatics in relation to politeness.

2.4 Face in relation to politeness

Politeness is a major concern in communication between people, as the success of communication depends to a certain extent on the level of politeness adhered to by the interlocutors. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) introduced a theoretical framework built on the concept of 'face', first presented by Erving Goffman (1955). Goffman (2005, p. 5) said that face can be defined "as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [sic] by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". Similarly, Scollon and Scollon (2001) described face as the social image that people hold about themselves and their desire for others to admire it. In this latter view, then, "face is the negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in a communicative event" (Scollon & Scollon, 2001, p. 45).

In their theoretical framework, Brown and Levinson define politeness in theform of 'face'. Face, according to Brown and Levinson (1978), is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (p. 61). They argue that every interaction between humans is guided by the desire to maintain one of two faces during that conversation. 'Positive face' reflects a person's desire for approval. 'Negative face' reflects humans' proclivity towards maintaining a personal territory and their right not to be imposed upon. Brown and Levinson translate these notions of face into 'positive politeness' and 'negative politeness', which may be used to redress face threatening acts.

2.4.1 Politeness theory and face-threatening acts

The concept of a face threatening act (FTA), propounded by Brown and Levinson, is central to understanding politeness and face. FTAs occur in social communications

(e.g. complimenting, complaining, apologizing, requesting, and so on), where there is a threat to the face between the addresser (speaker) and the receiver (hearer). The appearance of an FTA is controlled by several factors, such as the social distance between the interlocutors, the relative power differential between them, and the ranking of imposition in a specific culture. The specific nature of face and politeness therefore differs across cultures and societies; for instance, the idea of personal space and independence may vary in different cultures (Paltridge, 2012). Brown and Levinson claim that FTAs could be redressed through either negative or positive politeness. The scholars suggest that negative politeness takes place when the speaker takes into account the hearer's negative face, and respects the hearer's personal territory.

Brown and Levinson offer three main sociological variables when a person selects a specific type of politeness strategy: the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, the power relation between them, and, in the words of Soheim (2014, p. 9), "the absolute ranking of the threat of an FTA" (Soheim, 2014, p. 9) in a certain culture. Paltridge (2012), elaborating on the above variables, states that the extent of social closeness and power relationship between the speaker and the hearer have a significant bearing on the kind of politeness strategies they choose. He further explains that the significance of the desired item for the interlocutors may also have a bearing on the politeness strategies. More importantly, Paltridge (2012) points out, the extent of emphasis the two interlocutors put on involvement and independence in the situation they are in, largely influenced by their respective cultures, frequently determines the kind of politeness strategies adopted.

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has been used by a number of researchers as a framework for their empirical research. Such research has led to testing several speech acts in different languages, and has offered us significant insights and has provided us with culture-specific traits of politeness (Zhang & Sapp, 2012; Zhu, 2012). However, Meier (1995) argues that "politeness can be said to be universal only

in the sense that every society has some sort of norms for appropriate behaviour"
(p.338). The politeness framework has therefore led to both criticism and controversy.

2.4.2 Criticisms of Brown and Levinson's politeness framework

Brown and Levinson's framework has been criticised as being western-ethnocentric.
It has been pointed out that complications arise when one attempts to apply the
framework to non-western cultures. Some studies based in non-western cultures (see,
e.g., Ide, 1998; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988; Mursy & Wilson, 2001; Tawalbeh &
Al-Oqaily, 2012; Yu, 2011) have come to the conclusion that politeness is governed
by culture and the social expectations of behaviour; it is not ruled by what is called
the 'individualistic' perspective that pays attention to the needs of individuals. These
studies emphasise the 'corporate' feature of many of the non-western cultures as
opposed to the 'individualist' feature found in the western culture, which Brown and
Levinson's politeness framework was mainly based on. For instance, in their research
on complimenting among Arab Egyptians, Mursy and Wilson (2001) claim that the
concept of 'face' can be defined depending on each society's norms and social values;
this allows for building a reflection of the 'face' that can cover and accommodate the
social norms and features of that particular society.

Various cultures have their own specific maxims for particular situations.
Interestingly, because of cultural variation, a maxim that is polite and appropriate in
one culture, may seem awkward or inappropriate in another. Taking these cross-
cultural differences into consideration, Leech (1983) introduced the principle of
politeness (PP) comprising six maxims (or linguistic expressions) of tact, generosity,
approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy. Later, Leech (2007) brought about
certain changes in the maxims, which he now refers to as labels for certain types of
constraints when people are talking. By modesty, Leech (2007) implies the speaker is
placing a low value on the qualities he/she possesses. Such self-deprecation is viewed
as polite; the speaker is upholding the maxim of modesty. While the speaker often
expects that such modesty will be replied to with a denial, a deflecting (neither
agreeing nor disagreeing with) the compliment may be the right strategy (Leech,

2007). Agreement with the compliment, indicates that one is placing a high value on the speaker's opinion. Leech (2007) is of the view that agreement rather than disagreement is the preferred response when responding to others' opinions or judgements. In order to mitigate the extent of agreement or to show partial agreement, the hearer may also use partial or indirect agreement (Leech, 2007). It is worthwhile to mention here that politeness as a concept exists and is discernible in almost every kind of speech act.

2.5 Speech acts

Since this study explores the speech act of compliment responses, it is important to introduce the theory of speech acts. Austin (1962), one of the pioneers of the theory of speech acts, declared that "saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons…" (1962, p. 101). Similarly, Searle (1969), another scholar who extensively explored the notion of speech acts, argued that the "unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word, or sentence, […] but rather the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act" (p. 16). Speech acts are thus sets of written or spoken words in comprehensible order, in day-to-day interactions. The reason behind conceiving language or certain oral or written texts as speech acts is that we often intend to convey more than what we express in words. Austin (1962) believed that any utterance is an act by itself. The *performative* is a term that he used for those utterances. In his *performative hypothesis*, Austen states that when people are creating a statement they are not only making use of the language but performing an action as well, and this action may change the meaning of the statement. For instance, saying "I do" at a marriage ceremony means that the speaker is explicitly performing an act by uttering the expression.

Speech acts, according to Austin (1962), are the things a speaker can do with words, as in complimenting, apologizing, greeting, and so on. For him, any speech act can have three dimensions: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. The locutionary

act is the actual words, the literal meaning and the propositional reference of the utterance. For instance, "I am hungry" means that the speaker is experiencing hunger. The illocutionary act is what the speaker values or wants to draw attention to in the locutionary act. For instance, in the statement "I am hungry" the speaker may be referring to his or her physical state or making a request for some food. What the speaker is intending with the statement is called illocutionary meaning or illocutionary force. The last one, perlocutionary act, is the effect (mostly as an action) of the illocutionary act on the receiver, that is, how the hearer would react (e.g. bringing some food) after hearing the statement "I am hungry". Bell (2013) considers it of importance to know the key difference between locutionary and illocutionary acts. He argues: "Many different forms of wording can be used to express the same illocution. 'I ask you to do x' may be the most overt form of requesting in English, but phrases such as 'would you please' are the more common locutions" (p. 143).

The idea of speech acts was further developed into a speech act theory by John Searle. Searle (1975) was critical of Austen's (1962) taxonomy on the grounds that it was not effective in helping distinguish one type of illocutionary act from another. Searle therefore categorised the use of speech acts into five types: *Assertives* are used to convey information aboutsome state of affairs to the hearer (describe, identify, complain, conclude, etc.); *Directives* are used when the speaker wants the hearer to carry out some action (ask, command, request, beg, entreat, permit, advise, etc.); *Commissives* are used to commit the speaker to carry out some action (promise, pledge, and vow); *Expressives* are used to express the speaker's attitude to a particular state of affairs (thank, congratulate, apologize, condole, etc.); and *Declaratives* are used when the speaker discloses a particular state of affairs bythe mere performance of the speech act (declare, bequeath, appoint, excommunicate).

It is important to point out here that speech act theory has received considerable criticism over the years mainly because it potentially dissociates a sentence from the context in which it is uttered. Wardhaugh (2009), for instance, criticises Searle's view of speech acts since it does not take into account the awareness (or lack thereof)

of social obligations involved in the kind of relationship between the interlocutors. Similarly, Masaki (2004) believes that the Speech Act Theory employs a speaker-centered model where there is reduced focus on "the dialogical nature of communication, listener's meaning, and the multiplicity of interpretations" (p. 27). Another criticism of speech acts originates from the idea that speech acts are limited to verbal forms whereas communicative acts are not; paralanguage also plays a crucial part in making a communication successful (Grundlingh, 2017).

Significant criticism of the speech act theory is based on the fact that it has less relevance in certain cultures. Wong (2016) and Yu (2002), for instance, argue that since the very premise of the speech act theory is western-specific, it is not always applicable in South East Asian cultures. Regardless of the criticism, however, speech acts do remain an integral part of the field of pragmatics, with compliments and their responses receiving considerable research attention, as discussed below.

2.6 Compliment and their responses

Before I delve into the kinds and qualities of the responses that compliments generate, it is important that the construct of compliments is elaborated.

2.6.1 Compliments

Compliments constitute a vital aspect of humans' everyday communication, and are therefore an important social phenomenon in every society and culture. In simple terms, a *compliment* refers to a speech act which either implicitly or explicitly attributes credit to the person addressed for some good, such as possession, characteristic or skill, that is positively viewed by the speaker (Holmes, 1988). Compliments are used to perform the functions of pleasing, prompting, motivating, appreciating, greeting, opening a conversation, and attracting attention (Tammam, 1999). This idea is a positive politeness strategy, which takes into account the receiver's face. According to Herbert (1990), compliments and compliment responses

are a major type of speech act that are worth studying, as they can function differently in different contexts.

In order to maintain social relationships, it is important to understand that compliments are part not only of one's own culture, but, more importantly, of the culture with which one comes into contact (Farghal & Haggan, 2008). Studying the speech acts of giving compliments and responding to them is an interesting field of inquiry for researchers due to the rich grounds available for divergence between different languages (Bentahila & Davies, 1989; Farghal & Borini, 1997). Over the years, many researchers (see, e.g., Bach, 1997; Lee 2009; Morgan, 1977; Sadock, 2004; Thomas, 1983) have critiqued the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1976), the earliest proponents of pragmatics. It has been pointed out that Austin and Searle applied only isolated sentences in their theory of speech acts and did not consider the cultural background in which the speech act is used. Moreover, the tone and understanding of intentions (Mey, 1998) are also an essential part of understanding speech acts (Wierzbicka, 1991). Therefore, it is important to study speech acts, specifically compliments and their responses, in light of the cultural background (value systems, norms and traditions) in which they are used in order to ensure that unintentional, inappropriate or face-threatening scenarios can be avoided in cross-cultural interaction (Wolfson, 1983).

Every community has general norms for the use of and ways in which to respond to compliments; these rules vary according to sociocultural factors and situations (Herbert, 1989). The most obvious function compliments serve, according to Holmes (1986), is "to oil the social wheels, paying attention to positive face wants and thus increasing or consolidating solidarity between people" (p. 91). However, compliments may also be perceived as a threat to negative face, even when the speaker is paying attention to positive face (see Section 2.4 above). Both context and occasion therefore have an effect on how compliments are received and responded to.

The occasion where an exchange of compliments between a speaker and hearer takes place is referred to as a compliment event. Ziaei (2012) divides compliment events into four distinct categories depending on the content of the compliment. Firstly, the speaker may compliment the addressee on his/her new *possession*, such as jewellery, clothes, gadgets, and so on. Secondly, the event may be related to a new *skill* acquired by the addressee or it may be the result of an effort s/he has put into something, e.g. driving, cooking, etc. Thirdly, the compliment event may be related to the *appearance* of the addressee, e.g. his/her hair, weight loss, make-up, etc. Lastly, the compliment event may revolve around the addressee's *personality* in terms of kindness, forbearance, or any other general features that are morally positive.

Similarly, Rees-Miller (2011) also classified compliment topics into four basic categories but with slight changes in nomenclature and purpose. An appearance compliment, according to Rees-Miller, is concerned with the addressee's physical characteristics, hairstyle, apparel, or personal adornment; a performance compliment is given on the addressee's general skill/ability or a specific action; a possession compliment is given on any tangible object (whether in sight or not) that the addressee owns; and a personality compliment praises some intangible personal quality – either general or specific – of the addressee. Rees-Miller also identified another category as "other", which includes compliments that do not fit into the above categories.

The primary function of compliments remains both establishing and maintaining solidarity between interlocutors (Chen, 1993; Herbert, 1990; Manes & Wolfson, 1981). This function of compliments is, however, affected by the sociocultural factors such as age, gender, status, etc. (Lewandowska-Tomszczyk, 1989). The compliments' function of establishing solidarity is also affected by the kind of response that the addressee gives to the compliment.

2.6.1.1 Compliments and sarcasm

Compliments have been explored from different angles by different scholars. One such angle is compliment sarcasm, which is commonly used in daily conversation. Burgers et al. (2011) take sarcasm as a form of oral irony and define it as "an utterance with a literal evaluation that is implicitly contrary to its intended evaluation" (p. 190).Compliment sarcasm implies that the speaker may not want to convey the literal meaning of the speech used; instead, he/she wants the hearer to get the hidden message in the language that was used (Voyer & Vu, 2015). Taavitsainen and Jucker (2008: 199) state in this regard:

> The distinction between a compliment and insult can sometimes be difficult to make [...] because both of them are used to assess the addressee either positively or negatively. Negotiation of meaning is often needed for clarification, and even then it may remain ambiguous. Background assumptions are brought into play in interpreting what certain illocutions mean [which] may vary from sincere and honest to playful, ironic and sarcastic. Compliments are particularly susceptible to additional implicit meanings [...]

Eckert and McConell-Ginet (2003) categorize compliments into three main types: routine, sarcastic and deceptive compliments. Routine compliments are the compliments that are generally made by speakers. A sarcastic compliment, according to Ceckert and McConnell-Ginnet (2003) "does something like mime an apparent compliment in order to mock it" (p. 154). Since sarcastic compliments are similar to routine compliments, it is easier to miss a sarcastic compliment. This sarcastic twist turns a compliment into a deceptive compliment. Several studies have been carried out to look into the issue of sarcasm in compliments, especially in relation to gender. For instance, Gibbs (2000) found that males use sarcastic irony more than females when communicating with friends from the same gender. Similarly, Jorgensen (1996)found that males tend to deliver humour in sarcastic irony more than females, and that females feel more insulted and offended by ironic responses than males.

2.6.2 Compliment responses

Just as compliments are important, compliment responses (CRs) are also "worth studying because, like all speech acts, they can show us the rules of language use in a speech community" (Yuan, 2001, p. 245). Compliment responses refer to the way the receiver of the compliment reacts to the compliment given by the speaker. Holmes (1987, 1995) classifies CR strategies into three main types: accepting, rejecting or evading. The three responses can be given both verbally and nonverbally. A slightly different stance is taken by Pomerantz (1978), who argues that CRs are mainly governed by two general conditions: agreeing with the speaker and avoiding self-praise. The receiver's predicament in such a case, Pomerantz points out, is how to agree with the speakers' compliment without giving the impression of praising oneself. A relatively exhaustive list of 12 CRs comes from Herbert (1990, p. 35). These 12 responses are listed here since the responses of this study's participants will be explored based on this list:

a. *Appreciation token*. The compliment is accepted either verbally or nonverbally (e.g. thanks, or a nod).

b. *Compliment acceptance*. The compliment is accepted and a relevant comment offered on the topic (e.g. I like that too).

c. *Praise upgrade*.   The compliment is accepted and the compliment force is rendered insufficient (e.g. It's really worth trying, isn't it?)

d. *Comment history*. A comment is offered on the complimented object, shifting the force from the addressee to the object (e.g. I bought it in Paris).

e. *Reassignment*. The compliment is agreed to but the force is shifted to a third person or object (e.g. my partner gifted it to me).

f. *Return*. Same as reassignment, but this time the force is shifted to the speaker (e.g. yours looks nice too).

g. *Scale down*. The compliment is disagreed with, indicating some flaw in the object or overstatement in the praise (e.g. It's not that expensive).

h. *Question*. The sincerity or the appropriateness of the compliment is brought into question (e.g. Are you sure?).

i. *Disagreement*. The worthiness of the object of praise is questioned (e.g. I don't like it).

j. *Qualification*. The compliment is qualified, usually with though, but or well (e.g. It's okay but Alan's is nicer).

k. *No acknowledgement*. No indication is given of the compliment having been heard. Either an irrelevant comment is responded with or no response is given.

l. *Request interpretation*. The compliment is interpreted as a request rather than a simple compliment (e.g. Do you want to take it?).

As is visible from the various types of CRs explored by a number of theorists and researchers, both compliments and the responses they receive determine the success of communication between two or more interlocutors; compliments and their responses therefore play a vital role in communication.

A favourable comment in the form of a compliment from an addresser functions as an assurance to the addressee that he/she is admired and praised (Holmes, 1996). The receiver thus feels valued because the compliment enhances his/her self-image. However, it has also been argued that a compliment does not always serve as a positive strategy. Manno (2005), for example, argues that a compliment can in some cases lead to a negative face threat when the receiver of the compliment feels embarrassed or uneasy. Placenciaand Lower (2013) use this example:

A: Your son so is so cute. He doesn't look like you at all. Maybe he looks more like his father.

B: Is that so? (p.17)

A's statement here could be understood as a compliment to the addressee's son on his appearance. However, by stating that B's son looks more like his father and not her, A is insinuating that B is not attractiveat all. Such an implication threatens B's face. Anderson and Asiama-Ossom (2010) believe that a compliment can also imply some degree of envy which threatens the receiver's face. We can therefore conclude that

there are occasions when the compliment might be viewed as sincere, yet it may still carry negative face threatening features.

2.7 Compliments and CRs in intra-cultural and cross-cultural contexts

The subject of compliments and their responses has been explored extensively from both intra-cultural and cross-cultural perspectives. In the section below I review empirical studies on compliments and compliment responses in different cultural contexts.

2.7.1 Compliments and CRs in intra-cultural context

A number of studies have explored the use of compliments and compliment responses in terms of their linguistic format, compliment topic, and the factors that play a role in producing and receiving compliments. Specifically, over the last three decades, a large and growing body of research (Al-Falasi, 2007; Al-Khateeb , 2009; Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Cuesta & Yousefian, 2015; Donaldson, 1992; Feng, 2002; He & Yun, 2012; Migdadi et al., 2010; Othman, 2011; Salameh , 2001) has focused on compliments and compliment responses and their pragmatic significance in intra-cultural settings. Intra-cultural communication refers to communication between two people from the same culture or country although those people may have distinctive backgrounds different from one another in terms of determinants such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc. (DeVoss et al., 2002).

In the studies conducted in non-Arab contexts, Keisanen and Karkkainen (2014) investigated the most frequently used linguistic formats in the production of compliments and compliment responses. They found that most of the compliments used by the participants fall under appearance, personal qualities, or actions. Holmes (1986) examined complimenting behaviours, focussing particularly on how women and men use compliments in order to understand the complimenting norms. The findings showed that women are more likely to be engaged in compliment conversations and compliment responses than men. In another study, Milinkovic

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(2010) focused on compliments on possession in Australian English. Analysis of the data revealed that compliments on belongings in Australian English are generally short and formulaic, and are regularly followed by supporting comments and information.

Compliments and compliment responses have generated a lot of research interest in the Arab world as well. One such empirical study was carried out by Qanbar (2012) in Yemen. Using ethnographic fieldwork as a method of data collection, Qanbar attempted to explore the structural form of Yemeni compliments, the situations in which Yemeni people exchange compliments, the frequency of compliment exchanges, and the conventions that control such an exchange. Twenty university students enrolled in a sociolinguistics course were instructed to collect expressions of compliments that were widely and frequently used in their daily activities. Major variables such as age, gender, educational background and the social relationship between speaker and hearer were taken into consideration while conducting the experiment. A total of 400 compliments were gathered. Based on the analysis of the data, Qanbar concluded that Yemeni compliments are used more by females than males. The study was limited to Yemeni society only and did not take into consideration compliment responses.

Another study in the Arabian context was carried out by Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001), who focused on Jordanian students' responses to compliments to explore the relationship between gender and compliment behaviour, and the values that are associated with it. The data was collected from 268 Yarkmouk University students (aged 18-23) by senior students. The students who were asked to collect the data were divided into three groups. The first group (five females) collected 126 responses from female students, the second group (four females) collected 100 responses from male students, and the third group (two males) collected 42 responses from other male students. The results revealed that Jordanian students tend to prefer simple compliment responses rather than complex ones. The study further found that Jordanian males' responses to male compliments tended to be simpler than their

responses when they were complimented by females. This phenomenon was similar for females as well; they used simple responses when complimented by other females. The main reason for this pattern, according to Farghal and Al-Khatib, is the gender segregation in the Jordanian culture where participants feel more comfortable when complimenting the same gender and there is a reduced chance of embarrassment.

Another important finding of the study was that males tend to give more complex responses when complimented by males and respond only non-verbally when they receive compliments from the opposite sex. The results of this study are, however, arguably limited to a certain age (18-23) and educational and social background. Yarmouk University, where the study was conducted, mostly recruited students from an agriculture-based area located in the north of Jordan, as indicated by the two researchers. The results therefore do not make a definitive assessment of Arabian compliment behaviour.

2.7.2 Compliments and CRs in cross-cultural context

Cross-cultural communication refers to communication between people from different cultures or countries, where "the degree of difference between people is large and important enough to create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about what are regarded as competent behaviors that should be used to create shared meanings" (Lustig& Koester, 1998, p. 51). Cross-cultural studies that compare the use and function of compliments and CRs give an interesting insight into how compliments are used similarly or differently in different cultures.

Chen and Yang (2010) investigated how Chinese speakers respond to compliments and how their responses are different from the compliment responses of English speakers in Australia. The participants were 160 undergraduate students from Xi'an International Studies University. Data was collected using a questionnaire containing four conversational situations; a compliment was used in each situation. The four situations were about appearances, clothing, achievement, and possessions. The

participants were asked to write down all utterances they thought they would use to respond to the compliment in each situation. An important aspect of the questionnaire was that the conversational situations were limited to situations with friends and acquaintances. After collecting the data, utterances were coded into different strategies according to criteria developed by Chen and Yang (2010). New strategies were created for those CRs that did not fit any of Chen's original criteria. These strategies were then grouped into three broad categories of accepting, evading, and rejecting. The study concluded that there is no universal pattern of CRs that is common in Mandarin (Chinese) and English (Australia). Differences in compliment responses of the two different cultures mainly emerged from different sets of expectations prevalent in the two cultures. For instance, the Chinese participants tended to reject the compliments in order to show modesty or to avoid self-praise, whereas the Australian participants tended to accept the compliments as a positive politeness strategy.

Another study comparing cross-cultural CRs was conducted by Lorenzo-Dus (2001). The study explored compliment responses in terms of positive and negative politeness between English and Spanish speakers. Lorenzo-Dus adapted Herbert's (1989) taxonomy of compliment responses, as given in Section 2.2. Discourse completion tasks were used as a research methodology. A questionnaire, containing nine different categories, was administered in English and Spanish respectively to students from two different universities. The findings showed some cross-cultural and cross-gender divergent patterns in the use of CRs. For instance, the British students were found to question the person making the compliment, whereas this was not so evident in the Spanish speakers. The British students also used more humour when complimenting than their Spanish counterparts. A common pattern that was found in both Spanish and British speakers was the tendency to request a repetition of the compliment.

In the context of the Arab world, Nelson, El Bakary, and Al Batal (1993) examined similarities and differences in Egyptian and American compliments. The study was conducted in two stages. The first stage consisted of interviews that elicited authentic

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Egyptian and American compliments. Compliments obtained through these interviews were analysed for compliment form, attributes praised, role relationship, gender, and frequency. The participants were 20 Egyptian university students in Egypt and 20 American students in the United States. All students were between 18 to 25 years of age; half were male and half were female. In the second stage, questionnaire items were developed from the interviews and investigated in terms of the directness and indirectness dimension of communication style. At this stage, the English-speaking participants were 265 American undergraduates (half male and half female) at a large metropolitan university. The Arabic-speaking participants were 243 Egyptian undergraduates (half male and half female) at an Egyptian university. The findings showed that both Egyptians and Americans mostly use similar responses when responding to compliments in English, especially when there is not much social distance between the interlocutors. The study also found that Americans use direct praise and frequently compliment the physical appearance and work skills of their addressees, while Egyptians frequently incorporate proverbs, similes and metaphors, and compliment personality traits more than Americans do. It is pertinent to mention here that the CR behaviour of Egyptians seems quite similar to that of Saudis, as will become clearer in the findings of this study. The American-specific findings are consistent with other studies carried out by Knapp et al. (1984), Manes (1983), Razi (2013) and Wolfson and Manes (1980), whereas the Egyptian-specific findings are consistent with the studies carried out by Shouby (1951) and Wolfson (1981). Although the study partially contributes to the process of investigating different cultural backgrounds and solving cross-cultural miscommunications, it cannot be assumed that these findings apply to the Saudi Arabians since the level of cultural and religious conservativeness varies from one Arab country to another. Therefore, further studies need to be conducted in different Arabic-speaking countries to determine the applicability of the findings of this study.

Another study, carried out by Farghal and Haggan (2008), explored the cross-cultural pragmatic differences regarding English and Arabic compliments and their responses made by Arabic speakers in bilingual Kuwaiti universities. A total of 632 responses in English and Arabic were analysed. Students were chosen from a class of senior

English majors enrolled in a Discourse Analysis course. They were given a project in class and asked to report on eight different situations where they paid a compliment to peers in English. The findings showed that while two-thirds of the responses were completely in English, the rest of the responses contained words from Arabic' giving an indication of pragmatic transfer. Farghan and Haggan (2008) give the following example as evidence:

A: I like your haircut!

B: That's for your ðoog ('taste'). (p:110)

The authors believe that the fact that there is a strong native language influence, i.e. response illocutions could be attributed to Arabic style compliment responses even when uttered in English, which may lead to communication failure. The findings in this study are consistent with the previous findings in this area (Nelson, Al-Batal, & Echols, 1996). Overall, the study showed that culture has an important influenceon how people respond to compliments.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, Salameh (2001) conducted a study comparing the compliments made by American native speakers of English in their mother tongue, Saudi native speakers of Arabic in their mother tongue, and Saudi EFL learners in English. The sample consisted of 150 participants divided into three groups of 50 participants each. The participants were all Aramco employees of a similar age and there were equal numbers of males and females. Discourse completion tasks, interviews, and naturalistic observations were used as data collection instruments. The results showed that Americans accept and reject compliments slightly more than Saudis do, whereas Saudis evade compliments more than Americans do. In regard to gender, Saudis were found to accept more and reject less when they receive compliments from the same gender, whereas Americans behave in the opposite manner. Saudi EFL learners showed considerable pragmatic transfer from their mother tongue (Arabic) to the responses in the target language (English). The study, however, had several limitations.

The age range of the participants of the first two groups was between 35 and 50; however, the third group ranged between 19 and 22 years of age. This lessened the significance of the comparison. Moreover, since *Discourse-Completion Tasks* (DCTs) were used as a tool to collect data, the responses of the participants might not be natural due to the fact that they were exposed to situations where they had time to think and then respond. Additionally, due to religious restrictions and conservativeness, the researcher faced difficulties in reaching female participants for interviews. Also, during the interviews, females were found to be tense, making it hard to generalise a pattern over gender. Lastly, translating Arabic transcripts of interviews to English could have affected the analysis of these responses because of the lack of meaning equivalence of certain words or expressions in English.

In a more recent study carried out on Saudis, Alsalem (2015) examined the influence of gender and culture on the way Saudi Arabian learners studying in the USA respond to compliments. DCTs based on Herbert's (1990) taxonomy were used with 104 American and 71 Saudi students from the same university. The results revealed that regardless of their age or gender the Saudi students tended to shift their achievements to their professors when responding to compliments on their work. The findings also showed that, in general, the two groups were more similar than different in their responses to compliments. This study therefore contradicts Holmes' (1986) early observation that people from the western culture tend to accept compliments more than those from non-western cultures. This could be due to the globalization of the world, especially the increase in international student populations in western countries.

In short, the studies reported in this section, despite having limitations either in methodological design or in relation to participants, offer some insight into the use of compliments and CRs in cross-cultural settings. Their limitations do, however, justify further exploration of compliments and their responses. Studies have also been carried out on similarities and differences in compliments and CRs in relation to age or generation. Since this thesis relates to the study of CRs among women of different

generations, I will discuss different generations' responses to compliments and the way in which women respond to compliments.

2.7 Compliments and CRs in relation to gender and intergenerational relationships

One important aspect of compliments and CRs is the social factor of age and gender and its effect on the way people respond to compliments. Considerable research has been generated to explore this phenomenon of inter-generational and gender differences in the way compliments and CRs are structured (Alsalem, 2015; Feng, 2002; He & Yun, 2012; Holmes, 1986; Knapp et al., 1984; Magdadi,2003). It is therefore necessary that this aspect of compliments and their responses is discussed in greater detail.

2.7.1 Compliments and CRs from intergenerational perspective

Contemporary society comprises members from several generations, thereby making intergenerational relations a common social phenomenon. Ackermann, Anderson and Soder (2001) conceptualise the term generation as referring to people within a particular age range living at the same period, sharing similar social influences and historical events. According to Whiteman, McHale and Soli (2011), intergenerational relationship entails the interaction of individuals belonging to different generations. Important in this interaction are factors such as mobility, conflict and equity that influence the type of relationships in a population (Whiteman et al., 2011). Furthermore, the difference in generations may engineer particular prejudices about the conduct of a particular generation (Whiteman et al., 2011). At this point, generational conflict may invoke difference in the social and cultural aspects. Here, the emergence of differences could occur following a change in values or interests in the individuals.

Studies on population trends indicate that members of a particular generation share common values, beliefs, and expectations. Scholars have attempted to a give a nomenclature to each of the generations living at the moment. Using one such nomenclature, I focus on Generation X and Millennials that are of particular interest in relation to this study.

2.7.1.1 Generation X

Generation X includes individuals born in the period from 1960 to 1980 (Jorgensen, 2003). This population makes a significant contribution to the workforce and communication. These individual have characteristics such as independence and resourcefulness. Consequently, they value responsibility and freedom in their workplace. They are contemptuous of hierarchical authority and structured working hours (Jorgensen, 2003). As Aslanian(2001) explains, since people from this generation grew up alongside technological development they learned to use and adapt to technological equipment. Individuals in this generation value communication, especially that which is structured and direct. They generally have a preference for higher education, have a higher sense of self-confidence, and like to be self-reliant (Rodriguez, Green &Ree, 2003). However, they are often sceptical about their next generation, i.e. the Millennials (Rodriguez et al., 2003).

2.7.1.2 Millennials

Millennials comprise individuals born from the 1990s to 2000 (DeBard, 2004). Characteristically, they present a shift in attitude and perception of people. Millennials have demonstrated greater interest in disciplines such as technology, education, entrepreneurship, and religion (Aslanian, 2001). According to DeBard (2004), Millennials, are generally confident, team-oriented and achievement-centric. These characteristics, according to DeBard, are more visible in academic settings such as colleges and universities. Individuals in this generation value less direct communication such as digital and online interactions (Whiteman et al., 2011).

2.7.1.3 Studies on compliments CRs from age perspective

Research indicates considerable inter-generational differences with regard to the use of compliments and CRs (Alsalem, 2015; Holmes, 1986; Knapp et al., 1984; Magdadi,2003).Magdadi (2003), for example, found that more compliments were exchanged among participants from the same age than among those who were from different generations. She also found that younger women (belonging to Millennials) compliment more on appearance as compared to older women (belonging to Generation X). In a similar study, Knapp et al. (1984) found that Millennials pay and receive compliments more on appearance, whereas those from Generation X tend to focus on performance and personality. It appears that different generations might have their own ways of paying compliments and responding to them, which necessitates more research in this area. Gender differences have also been found to affect the way compliments are paid and responded to.

2.7.2 Compliments and CRs from gender perspective

Since this study focuses only on the female gender, it is important to carry out a review of research on the way females respond to compliments and how different they are from their male counterparts. It is a common observation that female language is generally different from male language (Mironovschi,2009; Wardhaugh, 2009). The conversation patterns of all-female groups vary compared to mixed gender groups and all-male groups (Payne, 2013). Studies have shown that females are generally more cooperative than males in their discourse, and tend to follow inclusive strategies in order to prevent imbalance while communicating. In general, females use positive politeness strategies more than males (Baumann, 2006), which indicates the importance of emotional factors in women's discourse (Coates, 2004; Holmes, 1995). Studies conducted on compliment differences between genders show that females give and receive more compliments than males (Alfonzetti, 2009; Duttlinger, 1999; Herbert & Straight, 1989; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Mironovschi,2009; Werthwein, 2009). Holmes (1988), for example, in a study carried out in New Zealand, found that

51% of compliments occurred from female to female; in contrast, only 9% of the compliments were exchanged from male to male. This shows the tendency among females to use more compliments, mainly to initiate or maintain small talk.

Women are found to interact and communicate more in phatic communication or small talk as compared to men. Coupland (2009) defines phatic communication as a positive interaction that allows participants to interact freely and maintain their solidarity and assist in ''creative, collaborative meaning-making'' (Coupland, 2000, p. 9). In other words, the social function of communication is emphasised in small talk. In a recent study, Rees-Miller (2011) found that women, more than men, tend to utilise compliments as a type of small talk in order to create and solidify social relationships. Such small talk or phatic communication, according to Rees-Miller,can be found in any culture.

One of the differences between the language use of the two genders when responding to compliments is the employment of tag questions and hedges. Females tend to use more hedges, intensifiers and tag questions than males do (Holmes, 1993, 1998; Lakoff, 1975). According to Lakoff (1975), this happens for two reasons: women often prefer to soften their language, and they often exhibit uncertainty. Holmes (1998), however, believes that the reason for choosing such language indicates females' desire for confirmation and building relations; she therefore claims that such a response is always a positive response.

2.7.2.1 Studies on compliments and CRs in relation to gender

A large body of research exists on the way females give and respond to compliments and the manner in which it may be different from males. For instance, a study on compliment responses between female interlocutors in the western context was carried by Payne (2013).The data was collected from 28 Italian native speakers and 24 German native speakers using Discourse Completion Tasks. The findings revealed that Italian females tend to use agreement strategies when responding to compliments,

whereas German females tend to respond to compliments using qualification strategies. The use of an appreciation token (thanking the complimenter directly) was evident in the two corpora. The reason seems to be that thanking the complimenter is considered the "standard response" in western culture (Herbert & Straight, 1989).

In another non-Arab context, Morales (2012) explored the compliment responses of Philippine male and female high school students to determine the type of CRs strategy used by both genders. The results revealed that both males and females tended to accept a compliment more than rejecting it. An interesting finding was that the genders had their own preferences as to which compliment response strategies (appreciation token and return compliment) they employed. The male students, Morales found, opted to employ an implicit compliment response strategy of informative comment e.g. when complimented on a cell phone, a male student responded with "I just borrowed this from my brother" (p: 57). The female students, on the other hand, preferred to use the implicit compliment response strategy of credit shift (e.g. when responding to a compliment on their character, a female student said: "We are friends, so we have to help each other") (p. 52). In a similar study, Rohmah (2015) looked at the way second language learners of English produce the compliment responses (CRs) strategy. Participants of the study comprised Javanese university students in Indonesia. The findings showed that 94.73% of the Javanese students tended to use the agreement type of strategy when responding to compliments (as in "Thank you [nod]")(p. 28). Although the compliment responses of both Javanese genders were found to be similar at the macro level, they used a different micro strategy of agreement. Soekarno (2010), in another study conducted on Javanese people, found similar results.

In another interesting study, Rees-Miller (2011) examined the formulaic and gendered nature of compliments. The corpora for the study was drawn from two class projects for an undergraduate general education course on language, gender, and culture, one in 2008 and the other in 2010. During the projects, the students were assigned to work in teams of three or four, with each team required to collect a minimum of 25–30

compliments. In 2008, the class size was 24 including four male students, whereas in 2010 the class size was 23 including four male students again. In each class, each of the male students was assigned to a different team, ensuring that all the teams had a male student. A total of 397 compliments were collected from both teams. The corpora were then analysed using Holmes' (1988) data analysis procedure. Rees-Miller concludes that men and women revealed gendered values through the type of compliments they gave.

A few studies on compliments and CRs have also been carried out in the Arab world, a context which is relevant to my study. Al-Falasi (2007), for instance, explored the way Arabic female English learners present compliment responses in English and whether there is any pragmatic transfer in the responses. The findings showed that the learners transfer some of their native pragmatic norms when responding to compliments in English. Ebadiand Salman (2015), while commenting on the findings of Al-Falasi's study, attributed this pragmatic transfer to the possibility that the learners might have thought that the pragmatic norm of their own language is universal to all languages. Another study was conducted by Al-Rousan and Awal (2016) to explore the compliment responses of Jordanian university students. The researchers' aim was to investigate the way each gender responds to compliments. The findings revealed that both male and female students used the agreement strategy but with a different percentage. Females were found to accept compliments more than their male counterparts. However, females accepted the compliment given from the same gender more than from males complimenting them. Males also tended to interpret the compliment as a face threatening act. Both the genders rarely used the non-agreement strategy.

In a similar study, Al-Khateeb (2009) examined the speech act of *"thanking"* as a way of responding to compliments used by Palestinian EFL students. The results revealed that Palestinian EFL students applied some of their native conventionalized terms when responding to compliments in English. The study also explored the effect of gender on the variation in the use of politeness strategies. It was found that females

were more sensitive to and involved in compliments, and appreciated compliments about physical appearance, home design, outfit styles, health and diet. Another study looking into the relationship of gender and compliment responses was carried out by Ebadi and Salman (2015) on Iraqi EFL learners. The findings revealed the substantial effect of gender on compliment responses. The English responses given to compliments showed that women tended to use more *appreciation tokens* than their male counterparts. Ebadi and Salman (2015) also found that women tended to question the compliments more than men, which might be because females want reassurance from the giver of the compliment (Han, 1992). Overall, this shows that there are considerable differences between the two genders when responding to compliments, and that there are certain characteristics of females' use of compliments and CRs that do not exist or are partially existent in males' use of compliments and CRs. In relation to Saudi Arabia, I consider it important to highlight the state of generation and gender issues.

2.7.3 Generation and gender issues in Saudi Arabia

With reference to the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, the discovery and production of oil led to a change in the whole societal structure (Frank, 2013). As an economic aspect, oil in the region saw the opening up of the society to development (Al-Khateeb, 1998). The government encouraged female participation in the education and employment sector (Al-Khateeb, 1998). Here, the changes in the cultural practices identify a realisation of the role of women in the growth of family economies. Imperative in this period are the changes that occurred with regard to the involvement of the Millennials and Generation X in bridging gender barriers.

The Saudi-Arabian government has prioritised education through sponsoring students to study elsewhere beginning with the reign of King Abdul-Aziz, 1876-1953 (Al-Khateeb, 1998). In particular, he established the foundation of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 (Lawson, 2011). Through the foundation, it became possible for students to study Arab and Islam in specific Arab countries such as Lebanon and Egypt. According to Taylor and Albasri (2014), subsequent kings expanded the

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coverage of the education foundation to include sponsoring students to study in the US and the UK. As such, master degrees and PhD for the Arab populations were available in the western countries (Albasri, 2014). However, the opportunity was more significant for females of the Generation X who managed to gain an education. Important to the advanced accessibility to education in the regions were also the opportunities availed for the Millennials (Alamri, 2011). An example includes the King Abdullah scholarship program sponsoring students to pursue education in western countries. For example, al-Hayat (2015), reported that there are currently more Saudi-Arabian women enrolled in universities than men, and Saudi women studying abroad are dispersed across 57 countries. That goes to show the increasing awareness among the Saudi population of the need to increase educational and working opportunities for women. It is in such a scenario that the study of compliments and their responses in a female educational setting can give us a better sense of cross-generational and cultural peculiarities inherent in those compliments and CRs. One such peculiar aspect of compliments and CRs in the Middle Eastern context is the concept of the evil eye.

2.8 Concept of the evil eye in Islamic culture and use of compliments and CRs

An aspect of compliments quite unique to Islamic and Arab culture is the concept of the evil eye (Spooner, 1970). It refers to the possibility that someone's eye may "project harm by looking at another's property or person" (Maloney, 1976, p. 7). It is related to the sense of fear of envy that the beholder may carry in this eye (Al-Rousan, Awal, & Salehuddin, 2014). Therefore, in the Islamic-based Saudi culture it is important that compliments or words of praise be accompanied by a deferential reference to God. Without reference to God, statements such as *you have wonderful eyes* or *you are so pretty* are taken as bad omens which bring misfortune (Harell, Abu Talib, & Carroll, 2003). Therefore, the phrase *Mashallah* (May God protect you) is what is generally said alongside the compliments being paid in order to avoid harming the person being complimented (Cuesta & Yousefian, 2015). The expression is sometimes also used as the only word for expressing a compliment.

In this regard, Migdadi et al. (2010) conducted a study focusing on the communicative function of the religious expression *Mashallah*. An analysis of 500 naturally occurring *Mashallah*-related compliments of Jordanian college students revealed that the word has multipurpose functions: it is used as a protective tool or device to protect a person, object, or even a social passion from the evil eye. For example, Migdadi et al. give the example of one woman complimenting the looks of another woman's young daughter by saying "Mashallah bintikamuurah, Allah yixaliihamaasaallah" [Your daughter is cute, may God protect her!'' (p. 17)]. From a speech act perspective, therefore, the word *Mashallah* can be used as a compliment, compliment intensifier, gladness intensifier, and modesty marker. According to Cuesta and Yousefian (2015), *Mashallah* can also serve as a compliment intensifier that may be used for any compliments.

The concept of the evil eye is more complex in the Iranian culture. Iranians believe that the evil eye has power that can bring evil to whatever it looks at. Iranian people describe the eye that has power as *chashmsur*(the salty eye), *chashmzakhm*(the eye that wounds) and *chashm tang* (the narrow eye) (Donaldson, 1992; Sharifian, 2012). Sharifian (2012) pays particular attention to the term *cheshm* (the narrow eye) in the Iranian culture. Its commonly expressed use carries the meanings of emotions, love, envy, and greed. Sharifian's (2012) analysis of Iranian expressions related to the term "eye" shows that unlike the term eye in English, which is always linked with understanding (I see what you mean), it is never the case in the term "cheshm" as used in the Iranian context.

The concept of the evil eye was also explored in another contrastive study carried out by Cuesta and Yousefian (2015) on Arab and Iranian females using formulas against the evil eye. The researchers analysed compliment responses used by ten 19-24 year-old Arabian women and ten 27-40 year-old Iranian women. Although from different generations and cultures, both Arabs and Iranians used religious expressions and phrases that invoked God's protection. Additionally, both generations declared a firm belief in the evil eye. The word *Mashallah* was frequently used by both the Arabic-

speaking and Persian-speaking females when complimenting others on appearance and possessions. It is thus clear from the studies above that regardless of cultural differences, the religion of Islam has considerable influence on the use of compliments and compliment responses among Muslims.

2.9 Summary

In this chapter I carried out a detailed review of the literature pertaining to compliments and compliment responses. The salient aspects of the findings of the studies I have reported in this section are as follows. First, gender seems to have a considerable impact on compliments and compliment responses. Females tend to give and receive more compliments than their male counterparts. This is evident from studies carried out in New Zealand and other western counties as well as the Arabian context. It seems to be a universal phenomenon owing to differences in the intrinsic nature of males and females.

Second, generally regardless of culture, cross-generational differences in giving and receiving compliments do seem to exist. Such differences are accentuated by the characteristics that people from older Generation X and younger Millennials possess. The complexity of the compliment responses between men and women, especially in conservative societies like the Arab world, seems to be due to the segregation of males and females in Arab society and the difference in the roles that are assigned to them. The topic of the compliments can affect the responses of the recipients in different cultural contexts. Cultural differences can lead to pragmatic failure on the part of ESL/EFL learners when giving and responding to compliments. Third, in Muslim cultures, a compliment on appearances or skills can attract the 'evil eye' if the compliment is paid without invoking God's protection. It may be seen as a face-threatening act. Therefore, compliments are always associated with the typical phrase Mashallah (May God protect you).

In the context of Saudi Arabia, however, there appears to be little research into how different generations of females respond to compliments. It is hoped that the present study will help fill this gap.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a review of the literature pertaining to compliments and compliment responses in different cultures was carried out. This chapter outlines the research methodology of the current study. Specifically, it provides information about the research paradigm that underpins this study, the broad methodological design, the study context and participants, the data collection instruments, and the data analysis procedures.

The main aim of this study is to investigate the types of compliment responses produced in a second language (English) by two groups of people – female Saudi lecturers and female Saudi students – and to examine the differences between the two generations with regard to responding to compliments. The specific research questions of this study are:

1. What are the major compliment response types used by Saudi female lecturers and students when responding to a compliment given in English?

2. Are there any differences in the politeness strategies that the two generations of the Saudi females use to respond to such compliments?

3. Is there any evidence of pragmatic transfer in the compliment responses of Saudi female lecturers and students?

A mixed methods design was employed to achieve the research goals set out for this study. A combination of quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) modes of enquiry was used to provide data on the responses to compliments in different situations by two different generations of Saudi females.

3.2 Research paradigm & strategy

In order to ensure that the research design is appropriate for them, "researchers must choose a research paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of

reality" (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 2). It is necessary that the research paradigm that underpins a study is carefully explained to ensure that the readers understand the research (Denzin &Lincoln, 2003; Creswell, 2012). This study is underpinned by a constructivist-interpretive research paradigm (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Cresswell (2013) describes this approach:

> "In this worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meaning of their experiences … These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views … Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individual's lives." (pp. 20-21)

This approach is therefore based on the idea that people co-construct knowledge as well as reality through how they interact with other people in a given society and through their lived experiences (Lincoln et al., 2011).

During the conduct of this study, I have viewed social reality as complex and relative rather than simple and fixed. During the interviews, I attempted to learn how the participants develop their understanding of compliment responses in English. The interviews took place in an academic environment in Saudi Arabia where Saudi women mix freely. Similarly, although I had a general set of questions, these questions were not absolute; some of the questions were generated from the discussion with the participants. I therefore aimed to get an insight into how the participants *construct* an understanding of and *interpret* their experiences with regard to compliment responses.

In regards to the research strategy, this study follows a mixed methods approach which involves collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data to gather a more complete understanding of a particular research problem (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research mainly relies on descriptive data (Nunan, 1992), is exploratory and holistic in nature (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005), and does not generally involve statistical procedures (Mackay & Gass, 2005). Quantitative research, on the other hand, is chiefly driven by numerical data (Nunan, 1992), which is objectively analysed using statistical techniques (Creswell, 2013) to prove or disprove a hypothesis and make generalisations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). Despite the two modes of inquiry lying at opposite ends of a continuum and representing conflicting worldviews, recent trends in research point towards a growing use of mixed methods designs. Dornyei (2007) strongly recommends a mixed methods approach on the grounds that the strengths of one mode of inquiry (e.g. qualitative) can overcome the shortcomings of the other (e.g. quantitative) and vice versa, thereby increasing the overall reliability of the findings.

The constructivist-interpretive paradigm enabled me to gather information about the participants' choices and also get a better understanding of the participants' reasons for making those choices (Berg, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Green, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 2009; Myers, 2009). The design led to generation of insightful data from two different generations of Saudi females in the Saudi academic context.

3.3 Data collection instruments

This study employed a mixed methods design, using two data collection instruments: an online survey and semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1 The survey

Survey research focuses on naturally occurring phenomena to measure the attitudes or behaviours of a population (Dornyei, 2007).   Known as a traditional method of

conducting a study (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 2007), an effective survey ensures that the objectives are clear, the questionnaire items are appropriate and the analysis is systematic (Dillman, 2000). Surveys are considered to be valuable in non-experimental descriptive designs (Moser & Kalton, 2017) such as the one this study employs.

The rapid increase in the use of technology among individuals, especially young people, has given rise to research that increasingly utilises web-based sources. Online surveys are therefore a common phenomenon nowadays. An online survey is a questionnaire that targets participants through the internet (Fowler, 2013). I chose to use online surveys because they carry considerable advantages. The main advantage of administering a survey online is that it incurs very low costs (Wright, 2005). Additionally, participants can access the survey at any time from any location. Another advantage of online surveys is that they are very easy to design through software programs (Creswell, 2013). Last, but not least, in contrast to an interview scenario, the participants are more likely to provide the information in an online survey (Fowler, 2013).

Online surveys also have their disadvantages. The sample size is limited only to the participants who can access the Internet. Enough respondents therefore might not be available or they may choose not to cooperate (Couper, 2000). This disadvantage was not encountered in this study since all the participants had access to the Internet. Additionally, since it is not an interview scenario, the participants cannot be probed in order to glean more information from them (Wright, 2005). However, the advantages of online survey outweigh their disadvantages (Lefever, Dal, & Matthiasdottir, 2007), which was the reason I chose to use one. In addition, the use of the interviews helped mitigate this last disadvantage.

3.3.1.1 Discourse completion tasks

Compliments and compliment responses have been studied using a variety of methodological frameworks, including questionnaires, recall protocols, role play, field observations, discourse completion tasks, etc. (Golato, 2005). However, the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) is the most common data collection instrument used across a variety of studies . For instance, in an analysis of 20 studies conducted on compliment responses, Kia and Salehi (2013) found that 18 of them had used DCTs. DCTs comprise a one-sided role-play using a situational prompt, where participants are asked to read or listen to a situational description in order to elicit their responses (Golato, 2003). The use of DCTs offers several advantages; it enables the researcher to control for certain variables, facilitates quick collection of large amount of data, and mitigates transcription concerns (Golato, 2005). Their biggest disadvantage, however, is that they do not reflect real-time interactional patterns (Gelato, 2005). Having said that, DCTs are believed to be quite well-suited to situations where the researcher's objective is to investigate people's beliefs and values concerning their culture and where interviews are also used as an additional data collection tool to build on the DCTs responses (Gelato, 2005; Kasper, 2000). In the context of this study, therefore, the choice of DCTs was considered to be consistent with the study's objectives.

Parvaresh and Tavakoli (2009) distinguish six types of DCTs, which can tap into the pragmatic knowledge of the participants. These six types are:

- The Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT), which requires participants to read a written description of certain situation and then note what they would say in that situation.
- The Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Task (MDCT), where the participants read a written description of a situation and are required to choose from a number of choices to decide the best thing to say in that situation.

- The Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT), which requires participants to listen to a description of a situation and then describe what they would say in that situation.

- The Discourse Role-Play Task (DRPT), which provides a description of a situation and then asks participants to play a particular role with other participants in that situation.

- The Discourse Self-Assessment Task (DSAT), which provides a written description of a situation and asks the participants to rate their own ability to perform the necessary speech act in that situation.

- The Role-Play Self-Assessment (RPSA), which combines the DRPT with the DSAT by requiring participants to rate their own pragmatics performance in a previously recorded role-play (Brown, 2001).

In the current study, MDCTs were used to collect the data. MDCTs enabled me to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short amount of time. Because of their minimum ethical complications and maximum ease of administration (Soler & Pitarch, 2010), I was able to administer the MDCTs to a relatively large number of participants in a specified timeframe. Additionally, MDCTs allowed me complete control over different contextual variables, which I explain later in this chapter.

3.4.1.2 The survey items

Two separate MDCT-based surveys were designed for the older generation lecturers and the younger generation students (see Appendices F and G). Scenarios were then provided in which the respondents were asked to respond to compliments on different aspects, such as possession, appearance, language ability, etc. Both the imagined interlocutors used in the two surveys were females. The social distance feature of the two groups was addressed as follows:

In the survey for the lecturers, the giver of the compliment is an English native speaker who has an equal status with the receiver of the compliment (lecturer-lecturer).

In the survey for the students, the giver of the compliment is an English native speaker, who has an equal status with the receiver of the compliment (student –student).

For each of the scenarios, several types of compliment responses were provided. The types of responses were the same in the lecturers' and the students' version of MDCTs; in both the surveys the participants were requested to choose the response they were most likely to give in the given situation. The compliment response types chosen for this study were based on the ones recommended by Pomerantz (1978), along with a relatively exhaustive list of 12 compliment responses propounded by Herbert (1989, 1990), as discussed in the previous chapter. The collected responses were categorized into the following patterns: *Appreciation token*, *Compliment acceptance, Praise upgrade, Comment history, Reassignment, Return, Scale down, Question, Disagreement, Qualification*, *No acknowledgement*, *Request and interpretation*. The following are examples of the types of compliment response in the six scenarios for both groups, along with the categories assigned to them:

Thank you! (*Agreement, Appreciation token*)

Thank you, I like it too. (*Agreement, Comment acceptance*)

Thank you, I did spend a lot of time on it. (*Agreement, Comment history*)

Thanks, my mum bought it for me. (*Agreement, Transfer/reassignment*)

It's not bad. It was reasonably priced too. (*Scale down*)

Your phone looks nice too. (*Return*)

Do you really think so? (*Question*)

It's really worth trying, isn't it? (*Praise upgrade*)

I don't like it. (*Disagreement)*

It's okay, but yours is nicer! (*Qualification)*

No response is given (*No acknowledgement*)

Do you want to take it? (*Request interpretation)*

Other answers

Some of the responses were combined together for some of the scenarios, which I discuss later in Section 3.5.1. The MDCTs for both groups were administered in English; no Arabic translation was provided. The survey respondents were required to respond to the scenarios in the MDCTs choosing from answers provided as appropriate responses for each situation. The participants also had the option of giving 'no response' or a 'smile' in addition to another answer. A set time was allocated to the participants for answering the questions, which was aimed at minimising the thinking time and forcing the participants to answer more naturally without much thinking. The participants were assured that they would remain anonymous.

Response from the lecturers was overwhelming. More than 120 responses were received; however, only the first 64 responses that fulfilled the set criteria were retained and used. Student responses were slow, but eventually 62 survey responses were received. My main aim was to collect the required number of responses from the students and the lecturers within one month of the data collection period that I had obtained approval for from the University. I also had to conduct interviews with the participants from both the cohorts during the same timeframe.

3.3.2 Semi -structured interviews

Interviews are classified into three different types based on the manner and conduct of questioning: structured, semi-structured and unstructured or open interviews (Merriam, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were selected for this study as I wanted to ensure that while there was a certain structure to the questions I asked, I had the freedom to modify or amplify the questions (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviews thus allowed me to obtain significant and pertinent information about the participants' views and experiences with regard to compliment responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). One of the biggest disadvantages of interviews, however, is that it takes time, effort as well as resources to conduct them (Walliman, 2011). I narrate the interview related details below.

3.3.2.1 Setting up the interviews

At the end of the survey participants were asked if they were willing to be interviewed about their responses. Those who were prepared to do so were directed to a separate website where they left their contact details (see Appendix H). Emails were then sent to the participants who had volunteered to be interviewed. Six students and six lecturers agreed to be interviewed. At the start of each interview, I introduced myself and the purpose of doing this study, and went through the information sheet. I sought their verbal as well as written consent, and assured them of the confidentiality of their personal information. Building a rapport with the interviewee before the interview starts is of considerable importance, especially in semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Doody & Noonan, 2013). This enables a researcher to know the type of person he/she is interviewing, thereby making it easier to extract data from them while interviewing them (Mackay & Gass, 2005). Moreover, development of rapport between the interviewer and interviewee allows the interviewee to feel more relaxed and comfortable during the interview (Whiting, 2008). Therefore, in the meeting before the interviews with each of the participants, I had some general conversation with them, which was quite helpful in establishing rapport. It ensured that we were comfortable with each other when we met the second time round for conducting the interviews. All the interviews were conducted in English.

The location of the interview was important as I wanted to ensure that both the participants and I were comfortable and that the location was convenient to both the parties. I conducted the students' interviews in places at the department that were familiar and comfortable to them. As for the lecturers, I interviewed them in their offices. The timing and duration of interviews is important, and it is recommended that the time at which the interview takes places and the duration for which it lasts must be communicated to the participants well in advance (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Patten, 2002). Accordingly, I communicated with the participants to set a time of their convenience. The average interview lasted about 30 minutes.

Since the interviews were semi-structured, there was no detailed list of set questions; as a general guideline, however, my questions pertained mainly to the reasons behind their answers in the survey. All the interviews were recorded using two digital devices (a digital audio recorder and a smartphone). I did not take notes during the interviews, which allowed me to concentrate on interviewees and their nonverbal cues, and to ask follow-up questions where necessary. I did, however, write up field notes about the interviews soon after they had finished.

3.4 Context and participants

As mentioned previously, this study seeks to explore Saudi female EFL students' and their female lecturers' response to English compliments in an academic setting where the medium of instruction is English. The setting of the study was a large public sector university located in Saudi Arabia. Saudi cultural norms do not encourage a co-education system in universities. As such, while some departments of the university did have a co-education facility because of a lack of resources, the English Language Centre where the data was collected is a single sex female department. Female teachers, students and staff therefore have greater freedom for moving around, and can take off their head coverings and traditional hijab once inside the boundaries of their department. In fact, female-only universities are the only formal and public setting where Saudi females can give and receive compliments on their appearance, as they are free to dress how they want and are not confined to their traditional religious attire.

3.4.1 Criteria for selecting participants

For quantitative data collection, a total of 126 participants were recruited for this study, of whom 64 were Saudi female lecturers and the remaining 62were Saudi female students. All 126 participants belonged to the same University. One of the criteria for selecting the participants for the surveys was that they must be female Saudi citizens who speak Arabic as their first language. All the participants were either English language lecturers or students of English. The only variable controlled for was age. Thus, the participant-lecturers were aged 40 years and over, and the

participant-students were aged 20 years and under. Also, all the participants taught or studied English as a foreign language at the university.

The interview participants comprised six lecturers and six students who volunteered out of the 126 participants. All of the interviewed lecturers had travelled to either the UK or the USA for study purposes, and had thus communicated with native speakers of English. Also, all of the interviewed students had travelled abroad for vacations or with their parents, and had communicated with English native speakers. The interviewed students were English learners who were either at their foundation level or in the first and second year of their bachelor degrees.

3.4.2 Identifying and contacting the participants

Once the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) granted approval for the study (see Appendix A), I emailed the relevant Heads of Department (HoD) at the University. The email (see Appendix B) contained a short explanation of the study and the online link for the survey. I requested the HoDs to pass the online links to the lecturers and asked them to encourage their students to participate in this research.

After the HoDs had provided me with a list of lecturers who work during the summer course, I emailed them (see Appendix C), requesting them to pass on the student survey link to their students. The lecturers who indicated interest were sent a hard copy of the Information Sheet in both English and Arabic for interview scenarios (see Appendix D). On the 11th of July, 2016, I approached the University initiating the interview process. The study was explained again to the HoDs of the departments and a hard copy of the survey provided to them. Contact was then made with the lecturers and students who had consented to the interviews and who fulfilled the criteria that I explained earlier. The participants were provided with a copy of the Information Sheet and the Consent Form in both Arabic and English (see Appendices D & E respectively). All the participants from both groups were informed that their

participation in this study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time without citing any reason.

3.5 Data analysis

Since this study employs a mixed methods mode of inquiry, data analysis was carried out differently for the quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data, which comprised MDCT-based survey, was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). As for the qualitative data comprising interviews, thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) was carried out to determine the dominant categories and themes emerging from the data. Further details about the data analysis of the two sets of data are given below.

3.5.1 Quantitative data analysis

For quantitative data analysis, I utilised SPSS version 17, which is a modular package for handling quantitative data. The software is one of the most popular statistical packages that can perform highly complex data manipulation and analysis with simple instructions (Coakes & Steed, 2009). It assisted me a great deal in data processing and formatting. The analysis involved calculating descriptive statistics to elicit the major differences between the older generation lecturers and the younger generation students in each situation. Detailed descriptive statistics of the findings in percentages were generated. Using the software, I generated tables and graphs related to each item on the survey (I present and discuss these in the next chapter). The charts and graphs afforded me a good idea about any significant variation in the participants' responses in relation to both the older generation and younger generation Saudis' way of responding to compliments.

To examine the first research question (What are the major compliment response types among Saudi female's lecturers and students?), the data was displayed in Contingency tables (also known as a cross tabulation or crosstab). A Contingency table is a type of table in a matrix format that displays the (multivariate) frequency

distribution of the variables. In this research, we have two categorical (or nominal) variables: Generation (older/younger, or lecturers /students) and Type of Response (Compliment Acceptance, Appreciation Token, Return, Scale Down, and Question). Contingency tables were created to display the numbers of individuals who are lecturers or students and chose to respond to a compliment using a five different response set mentioned above. Frequencies and percentages were reported for each group. The tables allow us to see at a glance that the proportion of lecturers and students responding to a compliment using a different response set are about the same for two groups but not identical.

To examine the second research question (Are there any differences in the politeness strategies that the two generations of the Saudi females used to respond to compliments?), several Chi Square goodness of fit were conducted to assess whether the observed frequencies differ from the expected frequencies. The Chi Square goodness of fit is an appropriate statistical analysis when data is categorical and the purpose of research is to assess if observed frequencies differ from expected frequencies. The null hypothesis is that the proportion of one category is independent of the second category, or the proportion of one variable is the same for the others, meaning there is no difference among the proportions in each cell. The alternative hypothesis assumes that there is an association among the categories. The observed frequencies are used to calculate the expected theoretical frequencies. Nominal data are presented in row and column form. Degrees of freedom are equal to the number of rows -1 multiplied by the number of columns -1. $[df = (r - 1)(c - 1)]$. To evaluate significance of the results, the calculated Chi-Square coefficient ($\chi2$) and the critical value coefficient were compared. When the calculated value is larger than the critical value, with alpha of.050, the null hypothesis will be rejected (suggesting a significant relationship). There are a number of important considerations when using the Chi-Square statistic to evaluate a cross tabulation. For example, Chi-Square is sensitive to the distribution within the cells, and SPSS gives a warning message if cells have fewer than five cases. This can be addressed by always using categorical variables with a limited number of categories (e.g., by combining categories to produce a smaller table). In this study, conducting Chi Square analyses revealed that more than

20 percent of cells in all contingency tables have expected frequencies less than five. To solve this problem two measures have been taken. First, since 'Compliment Acceptance' and 'Appreciation Token' are theoretically and practically similar (Herbert, 1989), the number of categories were combined by summing the number of lecturers/students who had chosen these responses. Therefore, type of response set reported in all tables reported in Chapter Four were collapsed into a smaller number of categories, say four instead of five. Second, the result of Fisher's Exact Test has been added to Chi Square tables. Fisher's Exact Test is a statistical significance test used in the analysis of contingency tables and is more accurate than the Chi-Squared test when the expected numbers are small (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012).

3.5.2 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative interview data was analysed using thematic analysis. In that, I followed guidelines suggested by Riessman (2008) and Creswell (2013) for the analysis. As a first step, I transcribed the data. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) recommend that the researcher does the transcription him/herself since listening and re-listening to the data while transcribing affords him/her a greater insight into the salient categories and themes. When transcribing, I allocated a specific code to each participant (e.g. L1 - stands for Lecturer 1 and S3 stands for Student 3), and followed it with the date and time of the interview (e.g. Interview with L1 9 July 2016 10.30 am).

After transcription was complete, I read and re-read the transcripts to get a sense of the main themes emerging from each scenario. Walliman (2011) is of the view that coding is the first stage of conceptualising the data in terms of the meanings and significance it carries. I looked for the common phrases or sentences in the participants' responses. I then created a list of these phrases and categorised them into different response codes. I decided to compare each scenario separately as it was easier to see the correlation between the different codes. I then created a table for each scenario, which had all the response codes, and the comments the participants used. Different colours were used for different participants' responses. The tables were then analysed to find the results.

As a next step, I coded the data according to the various aspects of compliments that the participants referred to in their interviews (see Appendix I). I used the Herbert (1989, 1990) compliment response categorization in this regard. The procedure helped me to establish relationships between the salient themes and to match the research questions that this study attempted to answer (See Appendices J & K).

3.6 Role of the researcher

A researcher's role is of paramount importance in any kind of research. The particular positioning a researcher takes and the reflection on his/her role while reporting research considerably influence the study. The more the researcher clarifies his/her positioning and data interpretation, the more he/she provides a better understanding of the possible influence on the findings to the reader (Merriam, 2009). It should be noted that although researchers rely on methods or instruments that are designed by others, they themselves are considered to be the key instrument of their own research as they design their own questions and interpret the data in a largely subjective manner (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). The researcher's role is therefore crucial in studies, such as this one, which are conceptualised under a constructivist-interpretive paradigm.

Reviewing and reporting the role of researcher in the research process enriches the qualitative aspect of any study (King & Horrocks, 2010). Since I come from the same culture as that of the participants, I can be viewed as having an emic perspective. I knew beforehand that conducting research in Saudi Arabia requires sensitivity to and consideration of the Saudi culture, religion, and behavioural and environmental factors. This is more so in the case of the female participants. I therefore ensured that I remained sensitive to these issues. Since parents and husbands play a key role in Saudi females' lives, I was very empathic towards both lecturers and students and ensured that they had sought consent from their husbands/parents before participating in the research.

Although, I acknowledge that I have my own ideas and opinions about the Saudi Arabain culture I attempted to remain as objective as possible. I ensured that, despite having an emic perspective, I did not impose my views on the interviewees. Instead, I considered them as co-researchers and co-constructors of the meanings/implications of the CRs they employed. In other words, my emphasis remained on collaboration (King & Horrocks, 2010). I also employed member checking to ensure that the interview transcripts reflected accurately what the interviewees wanted to say. I also took several other steps to ensure the quality of the research, which I discuss next.

3.7   Measures of trustworthiness

Any kind of research cannot be deemed credible unless it follows and fulfils set criteria for judging its true worth. The criteria set for quantitative research generally comprise reliability and validity measures (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Reliability of data can be ensured through triangulating data sources, whereas validity can be ensured through determining that the research measures that which it was set out to measure (Brown, 2009; Marshal &Rossman, 1999). Ample steps were taken to ensure both reliability and validity of the current research. Different data sources (surveys and interviews) were used to ensure triangulation. Efforts were made to keep the scenarios as similar for students and lecturers as possible to the Saudi female academic environment.

Criteria for qualitative research include certain measures of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Bowen, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As for the interview data *credibility*, I shared the interview transcripts with the participants (Carcary, 2009; Morrow, 2005) to ensure respondent validation. To ensure *Transferability* (Morrow, 2005; Rolfe 2004) of the data, the research was described in detail to the participants and an attempt was made to take into account different perspectives of the participants.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, I laid out the methodological design for this study. I started the chapter with information about the research paradigm and strategy underpinning this study. I also discussed the mixed methods design adopted for the study. This was followed by an account of the study context and the participants. I then discussed the data collection instruments and data analysis techniques employed in the study. My role as a researcher and the triangulation of data sources for ensuring reliability were also discussed in detail. I ended the chapter with the challenges I faced, which led to certain limitations in this research. In the next chapter, I present and discuss the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results generated from the current study. The quantitative data included compliment responses of 64 Saudi female lecturers and 62 Saudi female students. Statistics in the shape of tables and graphs are presented to illustrate differences, and in some case similarities, between the compliment responses of the older generation lecturers and younger generation students. The results are ordered in a way that scenarios where significant differences were found are presented first. The qualitative data findings are also concurrently discussed along the quantitative data to provide the reasons for the CR choices that the respondents made. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

4.2 CRs on language ability

The scenario on language ability was found to be the most interesting one because significant differences were found between the two generations when responding to compliments on spoken and written language ability.

4.2.1 CRs on written language ability

In scenarios on written language ability, the lecturers were complimented on a well-written paper published in an English-medium journal, and the students were complimented on a well-written assignment in English. Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 below show the frequency of each response type for both Saudi female lecturers and Saudi female students when responding to a compliment on their written language ability.

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Table 4.1: Lecturers' vs. students' responses to a compliment on their written language ability

Compliment on written language ability * Sample Crosstabulation				
Frequency (percentage)				
		Sample		Total
		Lecturer	Student	
Compliment on written language ability	Compliment Acceptance	(67.2%)	(38.7%)	(53.2%)
	Return	(21.9%)	(41.9%)	(31.7%)
	Scale down	(1.6%)	(1.6%)	(1.6%)
	Question	(9.4%)	(17.7%)	(13.5%)
Total		100%	100%	100%
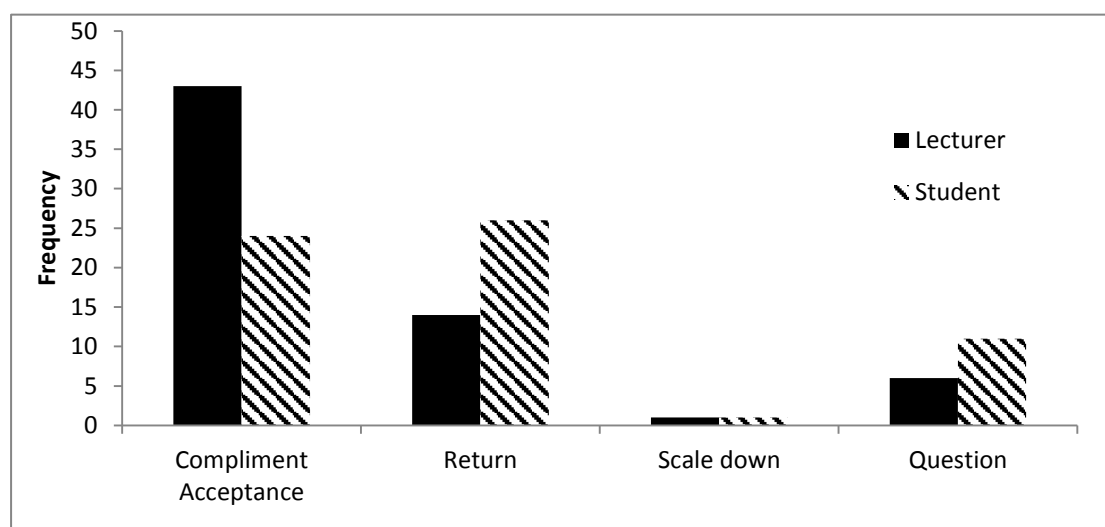
Figure 4.1: Lecturers' vs students' responses to a compliment on their written language ability

Table 4.2 below shows that the Fisher's Exact Test statistic is 10.60 with a p-value of 0.008. This finding shows that differences in the politeness strategies used by the two

generations of Saudi females when responding to written language ability are significant.

Table 4.2: Chi-square test 1

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.430[a]	3	.015	.010
Fisher's Exact Test	10.605	_	_	.008
N of Valid Cases	126	_	_	_

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5.

The data shows that for the lecturers, the major response to the compliment on written language ability was "Compliment Acceptance" with a percentage of 67%. The second most frequent response was "Return" with 22%, followed by Question with less than 10 percent. The least frequent compliment response was "Scale Down". Less than 2% of the lecturers responded to a compliment on their written ability with sentences like "I should have added more references". Students, on the other hand, preferred to use "Return" and "Compliment Acceptance" as the major compliment response with almost similar percentages (42% and 39% respectively). Less than one fifth of the student sample used "Question" when responding to a compliment on their written language ability. "Scale down" was found to be the least frequent response (less than 2%) among the students as well. Overall, these findings show that lecturers tend to use "Compliment Acceptance" more than students. In turn, students tend to use "Question" and "Return" more than the lecturers do. These differences are statistically significant.

A majority of the lecturers accepted and acknowledged the compliments on their writing ability. It is important to note that the only subject the lecturers taught was English; their confidence about their English is therefore not surprising. In addition, it is highly likely that many of them are aware of the importance of publishing in English-medium journals and attending international conferences where papers are presented in English. The students, on the other hand, accepted compliments less frequently and returned them more frequently (41.9%). One reason for this could be because they were less self-assured than the older generation lecturers and thus hesitated to agree with the compliment received.

4.2.2 CRs on spoken language ability

Table 4.3 shows the frequencies, Figure 4.2 shows the bar chart, and Table 4.4 shows the Chi-square test of each response type for both Saudi female lecturers and students when responding to compliments on their spoken language ability.

Table 4.3: Lecturers' vs. students' responses to a compliment on their spoken language ability

Compliment on spoken language ability * Sample Crosstabulation				
		Sample		Total
		Lecturer	Student	
Compliment on spoken language ability	Compliment Acceptance	(42.2%)	(32.3%)	(37.3%)
	Return	(21.9%)	(51.6%)	(36.5%)
	Scale down	(7.8%)	(1.6%)	(4.8%)
	Question	(28.1%)	(14.5%)	(21.4%)
Total		100%	100%	100%

The major compliment response types for compliments about their speech varied widely between both the lecturers and students. The lecturers most frequently responded with an Acceptance (42%) while the students responded with a Return (almost 52%). 7.8% of the lecturers used Scale Down compared to 2% of the students. More lecturers used Question response types (28%) than students, where only about 15% of the students in the sample used this type of compliment response.
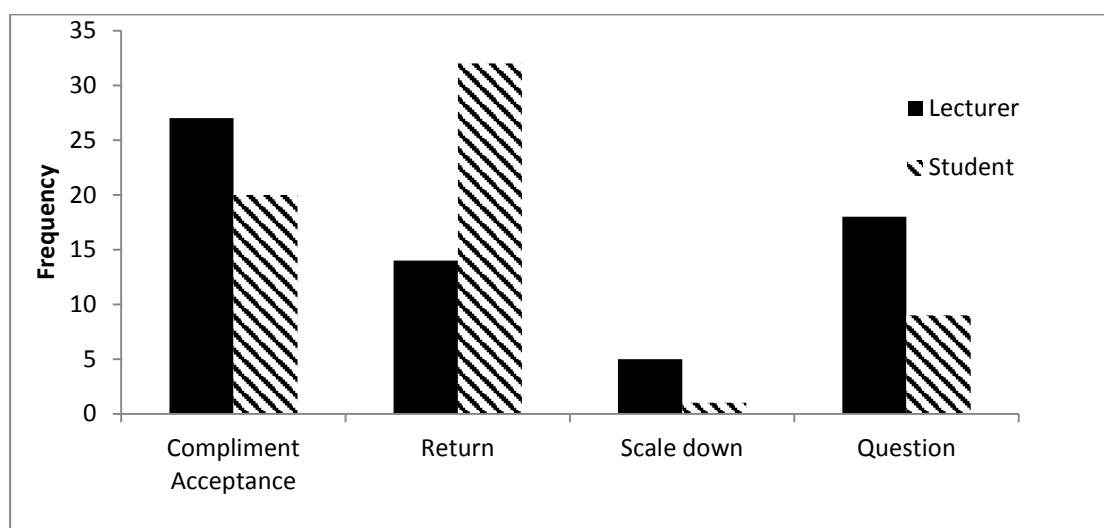
Figure 4.2: Lecturers' vs students' responses to a compliment on their spoken language ability

Table 4.4 below shows that the Fisher's Exact Test statistic is 13.54 with a p-value of 0.002. The p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance and hence the Fisher's Exact Test statistic is significant. This means significant differences were found in the politeness strategies used by the two generations of the Saudi females when responding to a compliment on their spoken language ability.

Table 4.4: Chi-Square Test 2

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.724[a]	3	.003	.002
Fisher's Exact Test	13.536	_	_	.002

Significant differences were found between the two generations when responding to compliments on their spoken language ability. Almost one-third of the lecturers questioned the compliment as opposed to one-seventh of the students. This might imply that the older generation is more reserved in accepting a compliment that is based on an ability they feel they might lack. The younger generation, on the other hand, seem more prone to accepting compliments on their potential qualities. More than half of the students therefore chose return as the compliment response strategy. A sizeable number of both the lecturers and students thus *questioned* some compliments targeting their spoken language ability (unlike their written). This lack of confidence in speaking skills on the part of two generations might be due to the fact that speaking is not like writing. In their written English lecturers had enough time to check and edit their work, but they could not do so in spoken English. It is important to note here that English is essentially a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. There is very little exposure to English on the state-controlled TV channels and negligible opportunities for these participants to mix with native speakers of English in Saudi Arabia, which might explain their lack of confidence in their spoken English.

4.2.3 Summary of differences in CRs on language ability

This sub-section summarises the CR types used by the two groups when responding to compliments on their language ability. Significant differences existed between the older generation lecturers and younger generation students in this regard.

As shown in Table 4.5 and Figure 4.3 below on data concerning written language ability, the lecturers were more likely to accept a compliment on their written language ability than the students. Additionally, variations in responses to a compliment in the students' data were more obvious than in those of the lecturers.

Table 4.5: Lecturers' and students' responses on language ability (written)

Language ability (written)	Lecturers	Students
Compliment Acceptance	43	24
Return	14	26
Scale down	1	1
Question	6	11
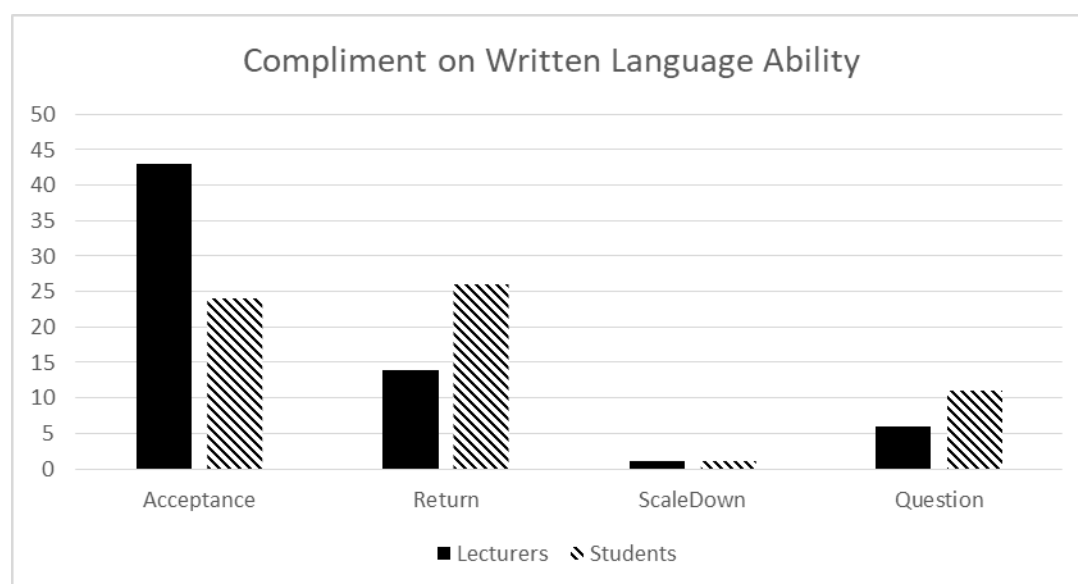
Figure 4.3: Compliment on written language ability

Table 4.6 and Figure 4.4 below depict the two groups' CRs on their spoken language ability. It is evident that the lecturers rather than the students were more likely to use "Acceptance" and "Question" in responding to a compliment on their spoken language ability, whereas for "Return" the opposite pattern can be seen. Both groups seemed to use a variety of responses to react to a compliment on their English speaking ability.

Table 4.6: Lecturers' and students' responses on language ability (spoken)

Language ability (Spoken)	Lecturers	Students
Compliment Acceptance	27	20
Return	14	32
Scale down	5	1
Question	18	9
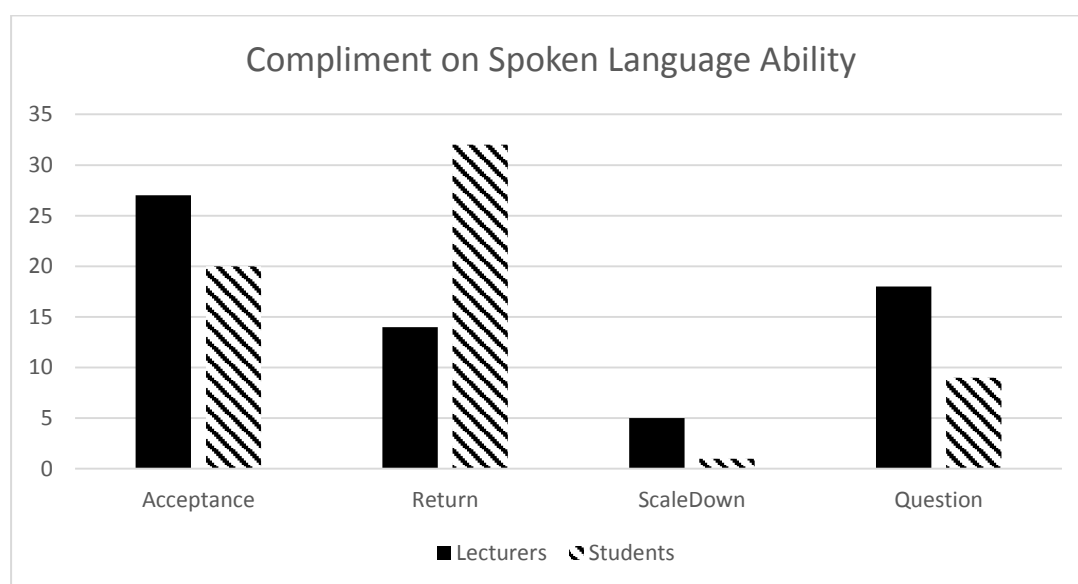
Figure 4.4: Compliment on spoken ability

4.2.4 Reasons for differences in CRs on language ability

Analysis of the interview data revealed that the lecturers and the students came up with different reasons for the way they had responded to compliments on their language ability. I discuss reasons for both the groups separately.

4.2.4.1 Lecturers' responses to compliments on written language ability

One essential social factor that influences the way people accept compliments is age. People tend to accept and pay compliments to those who are from the same age group (Magdadi, 2003). In the scenarios in this study, the person paying the compliment was presented as being the same age as the participants. In this study, however, Saudi female lecturers were found to accept compliments not only for this reason but for several other reasons as well.

Two of the reasons the lecturers reported for accepting the compliments were firstly, the acknowledgment that as a native speaker of English the complimentor knew what she was talking about, and secondly, they were confident of their writing prowess. The lecturers were therefore happy to accept the compliment.

> *"Yeah because I see I am confident in English, yeah (laugh)" L2*
>
> *" yeah I think I said this because it's a very confident response" L1*

> *"I need to thank her first, and this is really a fact, because when I write a paper it takes time to write a good one."L2.*

The second reason behind the lecturers' acceptance of compliments was the sense of being polite. Complimenting females in Saudi society could be seen as challenging

especially when the person giving the compliments is from a different culture and is not familiar with the Arab norms and traditions. However, the results from the interviews reveal that a large number of lecturers accepted the compliments because to them it is a polite thing to do. For example, one lecturer stated:

> *"I think this is the only polite answer for this situation in English and Arabic"*
> *L5*

Another lecturer, when asked about her reason for accepting and appreciating a compliment, commented:

> *"My response to the visiting lecturer showed respect." L1*

Another lecturer explained her acceptance of a compliment by saying that 'thank you' is polite:

> *"Nice and easy, simple answer, (laugh) that's it. And it's again a polite*
> *answer. There is no room to like say more."L3*

It is thus clear that one of the main reasons for the lecturers accepting the compliments was their sense that in doing so they were being polite.

In conclusion, a number of lecturers accepted the compliments on their written language ability because they thought that as an English speaker, the person giving the compliment was in a position to judge their ability. They also accepted the compliments because they thought it is a polite way to respond to a compliment, and because of their understanding of English culture and language, which was based on their exposure to the western culture.

However, not all the lecturers accepted the compliments. In some instances, the lecturers questioned the sincerity of the compliments given on their written language ability. Although the lecturers as compared to the students were more comfortable with compliments on their written language ability, responses like the following were recorded.

> *"Really?"L4*

"Thanks, I'm sure you can write much better than me." L1

The compliment on a written paper by an English native speaker made some lecturers feel that the compliment might not be sincere. One lecturer explained that since the compliment came from a much more experienced person with better mastery of English than her, she was not sure about its sincerity:

"Umm yeah, I think I said this because the compliment came from someone who I think was much more experienced than me and was more knowledgeable. Like native speakers." L1

She added:

"I had to say that because I am sure she can write much better than me"L2

According to the lecturers, the reason for such responses was the surprise they felt on being complimented on their written language ability by a native English speaker. This surprise was partly because they were not so sure if the addresser meant the compliment:

"Sometimes I feel shocked when someone tells me that, because I'm not native English speaker, so even if I have confidence in my English, I have to make sure if they really mean it, and also to give myself more confidence in my English." L4

4.2.4.2 Lecturers 'responses to compliments on spoken language ability

The lecturers felt less comfortable when complimented on their spoken language ability as compared to compliments on their written language ability. They therefore questioned the compliments paid to them on spoken English more than those paid about their written English. This is probably because the lectures felt less confident about their spoken ability since the compliment came from a native English speaker. One of the lecturers, while commenting on her response (*"Thank you, but do you*

really think so?L5) to a compliment on spoken language ability, made it quite clear why she doubted the sincerity of the compliment:

> *"Again I thanked her, but although I did pay the compliment to her back, I felt that her compliment is not quit right, as she is an English native speaker." L5*

A common reaction was one of surprise. As one of them said:

> *"(Laughs) I said this because I would be quite surprised to hear from a native English speaker that she thought my English was good. I knew my English was better than most Arabic speakers but not that good to receive a compliment from an English native speaker. So I was a bit surprised and wanted her to confirm her compliment one more time." L6*

To sum up, not all the lecturers questioned the compliment. A number of them felt simply accepting the compliment was the most appropriate response. The lecturers provided several reasons for accepting the compliments as well as for doubting the sincerity of some of the compliments and yet accepting them. I discuss this in greater depth in Chapter Five.

4.2.4.3 Students' response to compliments on written language ability

Just as in the case of the lecturers, interviews were also conducted with some of the students to investigate the reasons behind their particular responses to compliments. Analysis of the relevant qualitative data revealed that the Saudi female students were found to accept compliments on their written langrage ability for various reasons. Firstly, the students accepted the compliments because these were paid by an English native speaker. A student accepted the compliment but downgraded her achievements by responding to the compliment on her written language ability by saying:

> *"Thank you, but you write better assignments than me" S1*.

When she was asked to give a reason for her answer, she stated:

> *I should thank her for her compliment, I am sure she writes better than me lucky her!! She is a native speaker, and because I am still not confident of my English level. I am still a student"S1*

As one student said:

> *"Because she is native speaker just like my teacher although she's young, so I always want to say that I am a hard working student, so my answer is that I did spend a lot of time on it. Because I am a hard working student and I want to show that to people." S1*

It is thus clear that the students accepted the compliments partly because these came from a native English speakers

Just as in the case of the lecturers, the students too quoted politeness as one of the biggest reasons for accepting compliments on their written language ability. For instance, one of the students said:

> *"I would definitely find something to pay back her compliment in a polite way" S3*

4.2.4.4 Students' reservations on accepting compliments on written language ability

Students' doubts about the sincerity of the compliment seemed to vary from one student to another depending on the circumstances. In the scenarios on written language ability, it became challenging for some of the students to judge the *sincerity* of the compliment. The sincerity of the compliments was challenged mainly because of two reasons.

Firstly, potential misunderstanding of the compliments was found linked to the students' limited linguistic repertoire. For instance, one student doubted the sincerity of the compliment on her written work because she was aware of her level of English:

"I would say like, her compliment could not be real but it means, I am not that good, I know that, I could make so many mistakes so yeah. And I am not like a native speaker. So I make mistakes so yeah." S6

Interestingly, some responses to compliments were motivated by the interviewees' attempt to initiate a conversation based on their understanding that the latter would ensue following their answers.

"Because I will try to start a conversation, I think that's the only way to start it." S2

4.2.4.5 Students' responses to compliments on their spoken language ability

The students accepted the compliments on their spoken language ability ostensibly because they were given by an English native speaker. While responding to a compliment in the scenario on their spoken language ability, one of the students appreciated the acknowledgement that her spoken English was really good but was quick to downgrade the compliment. This is also informed by her recognition of the fact that she is prone to making several mistakes while speaking and native speakers of English have a better mastery of the language. Though she accepted the compliment and acknowledged the possibility that her English is really good, she was also aware of her shortcomings.

"Because I think also the girl speaks well not like me, she is native, I make mistakes, so I had to thank her because she knows more" S1

The second reason for students accepting the compliments was because they thought it is a polite way to respond to compliments. They felt that accepting compliments was a part of the students' culture and way of life.

"I am trying to be polite" S4

Some students felt that a few compliments on their spoken language were sarcastic and not well intentioned, thus prompting the responses they provided. An interviewee

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felt she was being mocked when she was complimented for speaking really good English, and doubted if the compliment was really sincere.

> *"Yes, because the one that complimented me was an English native speaker right? I thought she is not serious about the compliment right? I mean she does not really mean it. Yes, maybe mocking me, because I know I am not that good in English and I am still learning English". S2*

Another reason for doubting the sincerity of the compliments on their spoken language ability was based the students' lack of exposure to western culture. Unlike the lecturers, not all the students had been exposed to a western culture or had had a chance to interact with a native speaker. One student, for instance, stated that she acquired her English from movies:

> *"Yeah, I would say "thank you", it's because I watch a lot of movies, you know and try to pick up the language from the movies, yeah I don't know if she really mean it."S6*

Language ability was not the only topic that the two groups responded differently to. Scenarios that included compliments involving personality also indicated significant differences among the lecturers and the students.

4.3 CRs on personality

A remarkable difference was found in the lecturers and students when responding to a compliment on their personality or character. Table 4.7 and Figure 4.5 below show that for the lecturers, the major compliment response type was *Scale Down,* with a frequency of 68.8% (as against 31.2% for *Appreciation Token*), whereas for the students it was *Appreciation Token,* with 50.0% frequency (as against *Scale Down* with 48.4%. Only 1.6% of the students indicated that they would not acknowledge a compliment about their character.

Table 4.7: Lecturers' vs. students' responses to a compliment on their character

Compliment on the character. * Sample Crosstabulation				
		Sample		Total
		Lecturer	Student	
Compliment on the character.	Appreciation Token	(31.3%)	(50.0%)	(40.5%)
	Scale down	(68.8%)	(48.4%)	(58.7%)
	No acknowledgement	(0.0%)	(1.6%)	(0.8%)
Total		100%	100%	100%
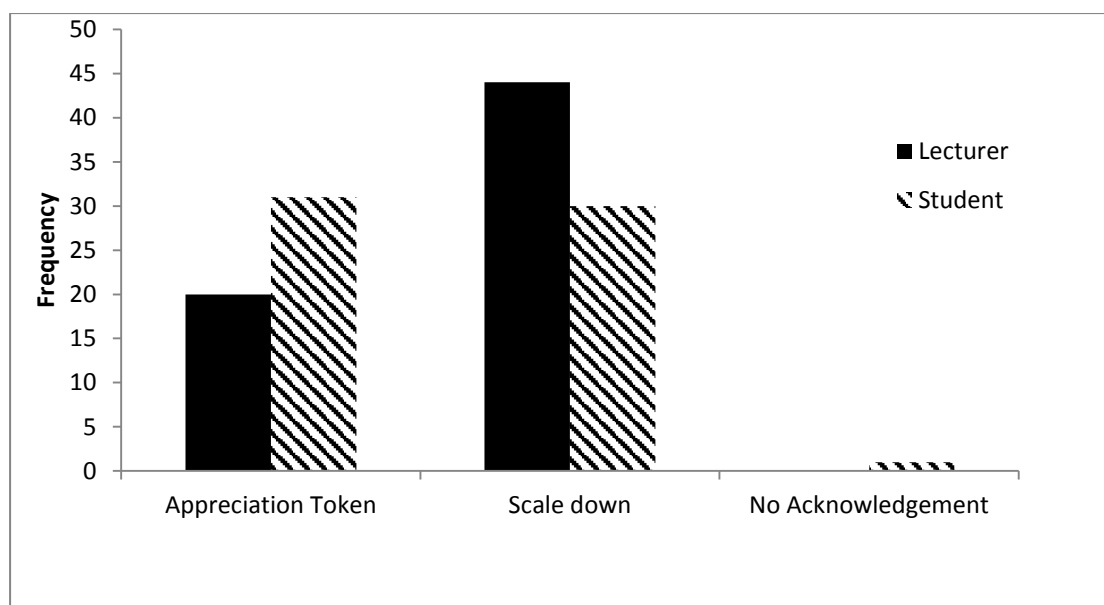
Figure 4.5: Lecturers vs Students Responses to a compliment on their character

Table 8.4 below represents the Chi-square statistics in this regard. The Chi-square statistic is 5.991, with a p-value of 0.030. The p-value is less than 0.05 and hence, the Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level. The Fisher's Exact Test statistic is 5.9 with

a p-value of 0.03. Hence, there is a significant difference in the politeness strategies adopted by the two generations of Saudi females.

Table 4.8: Chi-square tests

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.991^a	2	.050	.030
Fisher's Exact Test	5.889	_	_	.030
N of Valid Cases	126	_	_	_
a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.				

4.3.1 Summary of differences in CRs on personality

Table 4.9 and Figure 4.6 below summarise the compliment responses given on compliments about character or personality.

Table 4.9: Summary of Lecturers' and students' responses on character

Character	Lecturers	Students
Compliment Acceptance	20	31
Scale down	44	30
No Acknowledgment	0	1
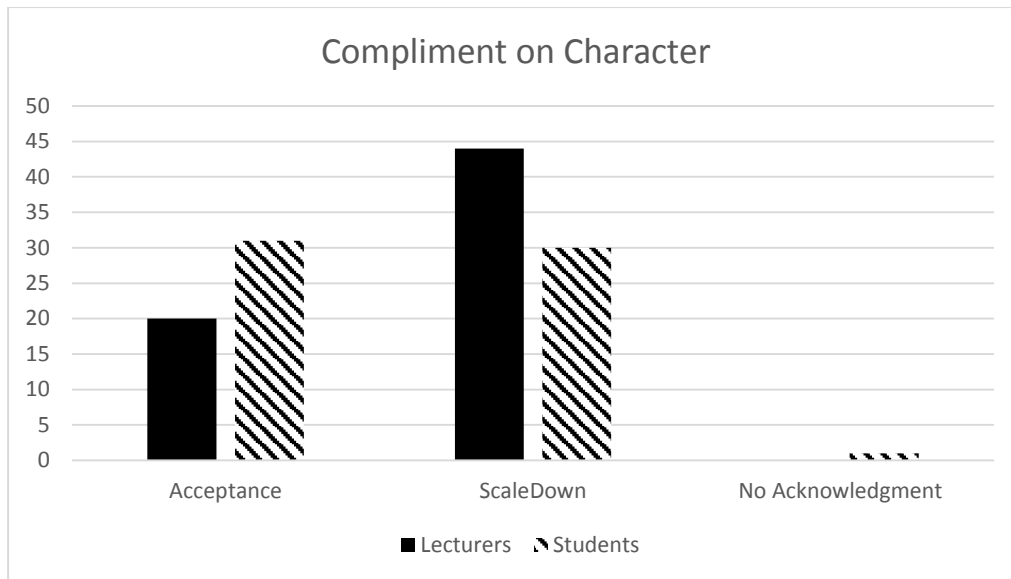
Figure 4.6: Summary of lecturers' and students' responses on character

The data shows that there was a significant difference between lecturers and students in the type of compliment response chosen. The older generation predominantly selected *Scale Down* whereas the younger generation went with *Appreciation Token* as the primary choice. One possible explanation for this could be that the lecturers are trying to weaken the complimentary forces and to avoid self-praise as they believe this is what they should do. The students, on the other hand, representing a typical younger generation, seemed to choose a simple and easy response and what they generally knew. Also, since they might have struggled to find the appropriate language for scaling down their CRs, acceptance was their obvious choice because it is less demanding linguistically.

4.3.2 Reasons for accepting compliments on their character

The reasons that the lecturers and students cited for accepting compliments on their personality were the same. While participants from both groups believed that they accepted but downgraded the compliments, the lecturers downgraded more, because that is what they are expected to do, i.e. it is a polite way of responding to compliments. Some of them were also of the view that they wanted to give a good and

positive representation of the Saudi culture to a new visitor. For instance, a lecturer said:

> *"We try and make others feel as welcome as possible. So I would respond in this way, it's part of my nature to go out of my way to pick up the person's purse and give it to her. As I would expect others to the same to me if in that situation." L1*

Similarly, the students also felt that accepting compliments was a part of their culture and way of life. In compliments on their personality, all six students interviewed responded with the simple linguistic response "thank you, no worries; it's my pleasure". One of the students stated the reason for this as:

> *"Yeah, I would just like to help out. It's how we were raised, if I were to lose my purse I would like someone to do the same for me so it would be my pleasure obviously, and no worries." S5*

4.4 CRs on Appearance

Compliment responses to compliments on appearance were explored from two angles: those on hairstyle and those on dress. No evident differences were found between the two groups in either of the scenarios. I discuss these in detail below.

4.4.1 CRs on hairstyle

Table 4.10 below shows the frequency of each response type for both the lecturers and the students to a compliment on their hairstyle. The vast majority of lecturers and students accepted the compliment (85.7% lecturers and 82.0% students). Another salient compliment response was *Question,* as 7.9% the lecturers and 9.8% of the students responded with a question to a compliment on their hairstyle. Only a few in both groups chose *Question* or *Return;* almost 8% of the lecturers questioned the compliment and a little above 6% returned it. In the case of the students, almost 10% questioned the compliment on their hairstyle and only 8 chose to return it.

Table 4.10: Lecturers' vs. students' responses to a compliment on their appearance (hairstyle)

Compliment on appearance (Hair style) * Sample Crosstabulation				
		Sample		Total
		Lecturer	Student	
Compliment on appearance (Hair style)	Acceptance	(85.7%)	(82.0%)	(83.9%)
	Return	(6.3%)	(8.2%)	(7.3%)
	Question	(7.9%)	(9.8%)	(8.9%)
Total		100%	100%	100%

The bar chart in Figure 4.7 below shows the compliment response of Saudi female lecturers and 6 female students when complimented on their hairstyle. The most frequent compliment response was *Acceptance* for both the students and the lecturers, as visible from the chart. This is understandable as the study took place in a single sex environment where Saudi females can dress up well with their Hijab (head covering) removed. Therefore, someone who sees their hair for the first time would probably compliment them on their hairstyle and it would be accepted.
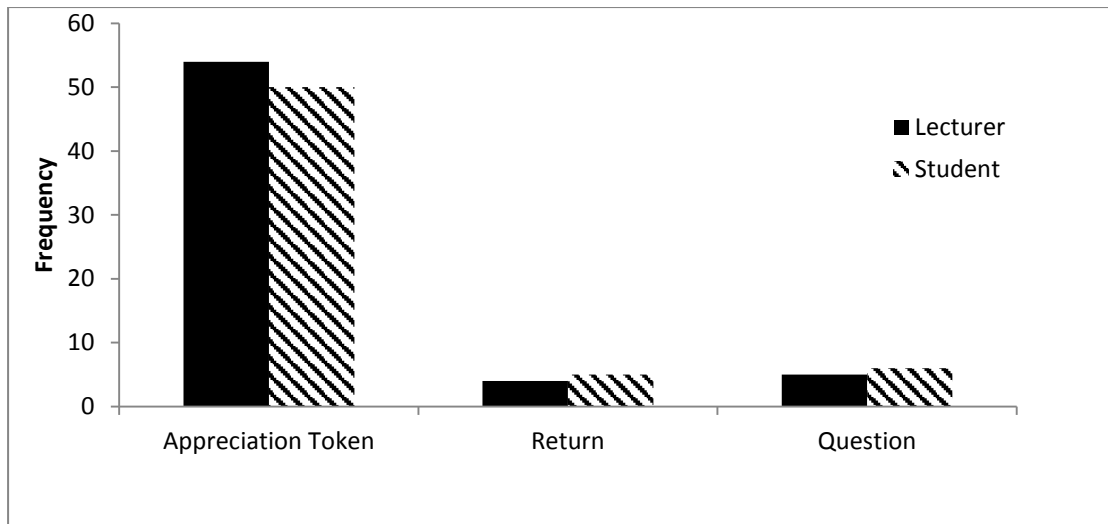
Figure 4.7: Lecturers vs students' responses to a compliment on their appearances (hairstyle)

The Chi-square statistic, shown below in Table 4.11, is .324 with a p-value of 0.818, which is more than 0.05. Thus, there are no significant differences in the politeness strategies between the two generations of the Saudi females when responding to compliments on their hairstyle.

Table 4.11: Chi-square test

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.324[a]	2	.851	.818
Fisher's Exact Test	.406	_	_	.818
a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.43.				

4.4.2 CRs on dress

Table 4.12 below shows the data concerning CRs based on a compliment on their dress. The most frequent response was *Compliment Acceptance* (54.8% for the

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lecturers and 42.6 % for the students). Both lecturers and students also regularly responded with a *Scale Down* (45.2% for the lecturers and 47.5% for the students). *Return* was the least favoured response, with only 9.8% students and none of the lecturers choosing it when responding to compliments on dress.

Table 4.12: Lecturers' vs. students' responses to a compliment on their appearance (dress)

Compliment on appearance (Dress) * Sample Crosstabulation				
		Sample		Total
		Lecturer	Student	
Compliment on appearance (Dress)	Acceptance	(54.8%)	(42.6%)	(48.8%)
	Return	(0.0%)	(9.8%)	(4.9%)
	Scale down	(45.2%)	(47.5%)	(46.3%)
Total		100%	100%	100%

Figure 4.8 below depicts the same responses graphically. As can be seen, for both lecturers and students, *Compliment Acceptance* is most frequent, followed by *Scale Down*, and *Return.* Again, both the lecturers and students seem to either accept with appreciation or accept and return the compliments on appearance as they seemed confident about the choices they made related to managing their appearance.

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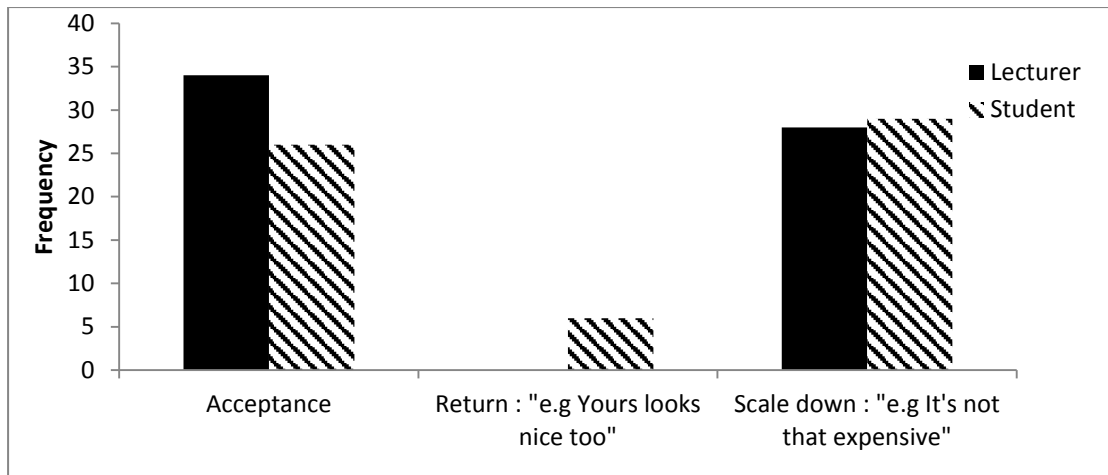
Figure 4.8: Lecturers vs students' responses to a compliment on their appearance (dress)

Table 4.13 below shows that for compliments on Saudi female dress, the p-value is also less than 0.05 %level of significance and hence the Chi-square statistic is significant at 0.05. The Fisher's Exact Test statistic is 7.1 with a p-value of 0.024. Hence, there are significant differences in the politeness strategies of the two generations of the Saudi females in this regard.

Table 4.13: Chi-square test

Chi-Square Tests				
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.077[a]	2	.029	.026
Fisher's Exact Test	7.149	_	_	.024
a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.98.				

4.4.3 Lecturers' reasons for accepting compliments on appearance

Some lecturers interpreted the compliments as a type of phatic communication. Phatic communication refers to small talk or social conversation where the social function of communication is emphasized (Coupland, 2000). Phatic communication is observed more among females during topics about their appearance (Rees-Miller, 2011). This implies that small talk serves as a means for establishing solidarity between the interlocutors (Rees-Miller, 2011). Some lecturers believed that the visitor merely wanted to engage in small talk or needed some information on a certain topic. One example of how a compliment was viewed as a type of phatic communication was provided by one of the lecturers as:

> *"Just to keep following her conversation. Because I think she is bored and wants to talk, so just a kind of socializing"   L6*

While interpreting her response to a compliment on hairstyle, a lecturer again referred to what we can call phatic communication:

> *"We receive like those compliments, and what we all do is we pay the compliment back. Because you should find something to compliment her on, then we start a conversation where did you get it done? How much was it? And like that." L5*

Another interpretation of a compliment on dress was also connected to phatic communication as it was seen as a request for additional information. The example below also shows that the lecturers intended to enhance solidarity with their interlocutor and to emphasise shared values.

> *"It's a kind of help yeah so I want to help her if she is really looking for shopping places. So she gets it from the same shop if she really likes it. So it's a kind of help and I want her to know about our culture"L4*

Similarly, the lecturers' motivation behind the CR, as visible from the example below, was to give a positive image of KSA and its education system through phatic communication.

> *"Because I want to give her an idea about the education here and that we teach English from primary school as a second language. So just to give her a positive impact about my country and our education". L3*

The lecturers' acceptance of compliments was also shaped by their understanding of English culture and language, which was based on their exposure to the western culture. All six lecturer interviewees had studied in a western environment for their master's or PhD degrees. This exposure to a different culture seemed to enhance their socio-cultural competence. For instance, one lecturer explained her reason for accepting the compliment on her appearances as:

> *"I used to always receive compliments like this when I was studying in the UK. Everyone used to think all my clothes and shoes were designer as they couldn't get those back in the UK. And they only used to see me in the public and when I used to wear it in a single sex environment they would always be surprised as they thought we always covered and wore the same outfits."L1*

Another reason could be the characteristics of a single-sex education environment. Since women in Saudi Arabia find very few opportunities to interact freely outside their homes, they prefer a single-sex environment where they can remove their Hijabs and Abayas and wear what they like. In such an environment, women are bound to value compliments on their appearance and thus be prone to accepting them.

4.4.4 Students' reasons for accepting compliments on appearance

The students accepted the compliments about their appearance because they were confident about the choices they made relating to managing their hairstyle and dress. One of the students demonstrated her confidence saying:

> *"I thanked her because I know it's fancy and I am confident about that. Yeah." S6*

One of the students accepted and appreciated a compliment given on her hairstyle; she acknowledged that she needed to express appreciation for a compliment while also

providing a reason to demonstrate what made it possible for her hair look like that and the effort she had put into her looks:

> *"Well, to show her that I did put a lot of effort and time to get my hair done."S3*

While commenting on her response to a compliment on appearance, another student said that being polite means not only respecting the feelings of other people but also paying the compliment back. She stated:

> *"Yeah I would say thank you your hair looks really nice as well. Yeah so that's a way of like complimenting them back. It's more polite." S4*

Most students paid the compliment as a polite response. It is also a way to mitigate self-praise:

> *"I would definitely find something to pay her the compliment back in a polite way" S3*

> *"Actually yes this is what I usually do when people compliment or say something nice about stuff, okay. I feel I need to say yours is nice too even if it's not (laugh) or if I don't see it like in this scenario because I sometimes feel so shy from their words and I don't know what to say other than paying the compliment back. I think this is what all girls say." S2*

Some responses to compliments were motivated by the interviewees' attempt to attract the person into a conversation:

> *"Because I will try to start a conversation, I think that's the only way to start it."S2*

Another student was simply happy that her taste in clothing was appreciated:

"Yeah, I responded thank you, because it would be really exciting when someone compliments something new you just got it, yeah I would be more like thaaank you woohoo (shouting), that's really good and nice. You know. (laugh) Because it's actually nice. And I am happy about it." S5

Some respondents felt that they were under obligation to reciprocate with a compliment, even if it was not deserved, whenever somebody complimented them. Some of the reciprocal comments may therefore be insincere but given as a routine response to someone complimenting them so as to minimise self-praise.

4.5 CRs on possession

Another scenario that showed no significant differences among the two groups was complimenting about a possession. The lecturers responded to compliments on their bags and the students on their phones. Table 4.14 and Figure 4.9 show the frequency of each response type for both the lecturers and students after they were complimented on their possessions. What is interesting about the figures in the table is that three selected responses (i.e. "Compliment Acceptance", "Return" and "Scale Down") have the same frequency among both the lecturers and students. In both groups the most frequent compliment response was "Compliment Acceptance" with a frequency of 56 responses, which constitutes almost 92 % of the total responses, followed by "Return" and "Scale Down" with less than five percent of all responses in each group (4.9 % and 3.3% respectively).

Table 4.14: Lecturers' vs. students' responses to a compliment on their possession

Compliment on a possession * Sample Crosstabulation				
		Sample		Total
		Lecturer	Student	
Compliment on a possession	Compliment Acceptance	(91.8%)	(91.8%)	(91.8%)
	Return	(4.9%)	(4.9%)	(4.9%)
	Scale down	(3.3%)	(3.3%)	(3.3%)
Total		100%	100%	100%

The results, as shown in Figure 4.9, indicate that no significant difference was found in the politeness strategies between the two generations when responding to a compliment on one of their possessions.

Figure 4:9 Lecturers vs students' responses to a compliment on possession

Table 4.15 below shows the results of the first Chi-square to determine any differences between Saudi female lecturers and students in terms of their responses to compliments on a possession.

Table 4.15: Chi-square test

Chi-Square Test				
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.000[a]	2	1.000	1.000
Fisher's Exact Test	.207	_	_	1.000
N of Valid Cases	122	_	_	_
a. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.00.				

The results, as shown in Table 4.15, indicate that the Chi-square statistic is zero, with a p-value of one. No significant difference was found in the politeness strategies between the two generations when responding to a compliment on their possessions. From the table, it can be seen that more than 20% of cells in the contingency table have expected frequencies of less than five. Since the assumption of the Chi-square test is that the expected value in each cell is greater than five, this result may not be valid. To overcome this limitation, the result of Fisher's Exact Test has been added to Table 4.4. Fisher's Exact Test is a statistical significance test used in the analysis of contingency tables and is more accurate than the Chi-squared test when the expected numbers are small (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012). The result for Fisher's Exact Test confirms that there is no significant difference between the two groups.

4.5.1 Lecturers and students' reasons for accepting compliments on possession

In this study, Saudi female lecturers and students were found to accept compliments on their possessions for two reasons. In the first scenario, the lecturers received compliments on their bags or phones from a new staff member who spoke no Arabic. All six lecturers accepted the compliments given to them. The response from one of the lecturers below is a reflection of the confidence she has in her purchase.

> *"Yeah I think I said this because it's a very confident response. What I mean is that I already know that my bag is nice and I bought it because I like it.(laugh) So when you are complimented, I could confidently say thank you and yes I like it too. Right? If I wasn't confident with my purchase, then I would have said 'It's not too bad' or "Really?" L1.*

> *"I know my bag is nice." L4*

One lecturer, echoing previous explanations for accepting compliments, said:

> *"Thank you is a polite answer."L3*

The students too accepted the compliments about their possessions as they were confident about their choices

> *"I thanked her because I know it's fancy and I am confident about that. Yeah." S6*

Thus, according to the lecturers and students, they accepted the compliments on their possessions as they were confident about the choices and because they thought it is a polite way to respond to a compliment.

4.6 The transfer of L1 knowledge into the students' CRs

Use of the native language (Arabic) in the second language (English) was observed in some students' responses. In other words, evidence that culture and pragmatic knowledge of the first language influence responses in a second language was seen

among some students' responses but not in those of the lecturers. Interviews with the students revealed that there were two main reasons for this phenomenon.

Firstly, the students imported some L1 rules because they appeared to be anxious about accepting compliments without the mention of God's name in the compliment. Religious beliefs and perceptions thus seemed to influence the manner in which some students responded to a compliment. As such, the response is used as a means of averting potential consequences that may be brought about by a particular compliment. Regardless of the addresser's background (which was not the same as that of the students'), a few students indicated that they would like the speaker to make use of some religious phrases such as "Mashallah", which is always attached to compliments on performances and appearance by Arabs and Muslims. For instance, some of the students responded:

> *"Thank you but say Mash'allah (May God protect you)." S6*

> *"Don't envy me." S2*

Notably, this is also related to the concept of the evil eye that apparently causes one to lose their talent or beauty when they receive a compliment relating to the same. This was also seen as one of the challenges hindering the acceptance of a compliment made in good faith:

> *"Yeah because I am really so afraid of people's eyes (laugh).You know people sometime envy you, that is why in Arabic we say some phrase to prevent this evil eye." S6*

When a student was asked why she would respond in such a way to someone who is new to the Saudi culture, she cited the example of her friend to justify her stance:

> *"Yeah, because the topic is the same and the compliment is on my appearance. I am afraid again that I might lose my beauty or something bad might happen to me. Because I know a girl who went to a wedding and was very dressed up and she had really long hair, after the wedding her hair kept on falling out." S5*

The sense of envy in the Saudi culture is referred to as an evil eye (Yousefian, 2015). Notably, when further prompted, the students reiterated that they would still use the above phrases if the compliment was from a native English speaker with no understanding of Arabic or the concept of the evil eye.

> *"I will say it, because I believe some people do, because many people believe in it and they are so afraid of losing their talent or beauty. But I use those phrase with my friends if they don't mention God's name when complimenting." S5.*

In conclusion, the students imported some of the knowledge of their native language when responding to compliments in English depending on linguistic difficulties, religious inclinations, or cultural influences.

4.7 Summary

The quantitative data findings presented in this chapter reveal that both the lecturers and the students exhibited considerable difference in the types of compliment response choices from the point of view of politeness strategies and pragmatic transfer. In the use of politeness strategies, for instance, it was shown that compliments made on spoken language ability and character were responded to differently by the lecturers and the students. Pragmatic transfer, on the other hand, was evident in the students' responses in two main scenarios but was not found in the lecturers' responses. The qualitative interview data presented insights from 12 participants on their responses to the six scenarios. The results showed that both groups tended to accept the compliments; however, the students faced more challenges in judging the compliment sincerity than the lecturers. Also, the students tended to transfer their Arabic pragmatic knowledge into English, something which the lecturers did not do. In the following chapter, the results of the study will be discussed and interpreted in light of the available literature on the topic.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study carried out a cross-generational comparison of Saudi female lecturers and students of English through recording the types of compliment responses they used within the English academic environment at a university for women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study used two types of instruments: The Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Task (DCTs) and interviews based on the MDCTs. The findings of the data were presented in Chapter 4. In this chapter, a discussion of both the quantitative and qualitative results will be carried out. Overall conclusions will then be drawn based on the findings generated from the research and literature. The chapter will conclude with the implications of the research.

5.2 Acceptance of compliments

Both generations preferred to accept compliments rather than reject them, although the strategies they applied when responding were different (e.g. agreement, agreement with appreciation token, agreement with return). The findings of this study clearly indicate that Saudi females from different age groups tend to accept and acknowledge the compliments by saying "*Thank you*" as a first response. Even though they questioned the compliments in some instances, the responses were still accompanied by acceptance expressions, e.g. *"Oh really? Thanks"* (I will discuss this later in the chapter).

5.3 Reasons for accepting compliments

Although the two generations appeared to accept the compliments given on different topics, the findings revealed some variations that influenced the manner in which each of them responded to a compliment. Additionally, superior levels of language proficiency permit an individual to provide more appropriate responses to

compliments, particularly those from an individual of foreign origin. It is therefore possible that the lecturers accepted compliments because this was what they thought was appropriate as opposed to the students who might simply agree because they did not have the linguistic resources to question or downgrade the compliment (Al Falasi, 2007). Previous studies also demonstrate the various options at the disposal of respondents who have a better mastery of English, thereby promoting their confidence in how they react to compliments (Chen & Yang, 2010; Ishihara, 2010; Maíz-Arévalo, 2012).

Different contextual, cultural, socio-political, linguistic, gender and other such factors determine the compliment and compliment response choices of people in a given community. Age is one such social factor that has been found to affect the structures of compliments and their responses used among people of different generations (Alsalem, 2015; Feng, 2002; He & Yun, 2012; Holmes, 1986; Knapp et al., 1984; Magdadi, 2003). Based on the findings, the reasons for accepting compliments on the part of the two generations were varied. Lecturers, for instance, accepted the compliments on their language ability because they were convinced of their mastery of English (at least in their writing skills) due to their extensive exposure to English and the associated culture. Students, on the other hand, accepted the compliments because they were given by an English native speaker who was seen as having more mastery of English than they had. Both the groups also accepted the compliments on appearance and possessions, the former for showing politeness and the latter for their confidence in their choices. They also accepted compliments on their personality because they wanted to give a good image of their culture or because, in the case of the students, they simply used the language that they knew. There were other reasons too that were responsible for the acceptance of compliments on the part of both the lecturers and students.

5.3.1 Compliments as positive politeness strategy

Numerous studies show that females tend to use politeness strategies more than their male counterparts (Alfonzetti, 2009; Coates, 1989; Duttlinger, 1999; Herbert & Straight, 1989; Holmes, 1988, 1995; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Mironovschi, 2009). One of the reasons the participants cited for accepting compliments from a native English speaker was the attempt on their part to appear polite and agreeable. An analysis of the DCTs data also reveals that in the six scenarios provided, *Appreciation token, Return and Comment acceptances,* and *Agreement with question* were the types of responses that accounted for about 80% of the data from the two generations.

As indicated earlier, the general trend among both the lecturers and the students was *Acceptance* when replying to a compliment given by an English native speaker. Acceptance may also have been used as a way of finding shared values with strangers (Rees-Miller, 2011). Maintaining face and remaining polite during an interaction is one of the main aims of social interaction (as discussed earlier in Chapter 2), and, as in other cultures, giving, receiving and responding to compliments is a routine practice in the Arab world (Al Falasi, 2007). Some of the obvious reasons why people in general (including Arabs) employ compliments as a politeness strategy include avoiding hurting other people's feelings (Boyle, 2005). In the case of this study, although the lecturers accepted the compliment, they seemed to avoid self-praise more than the students regardless of the topic or the situation. The students, on the other hand, accepted compliments and returned them more frequently. This is in keeping with studies which found that undergraduate Arab students are more likely to accept and return compliments (Al Falasi, 2007; Mostafa, 2015). The fact that the students would have been required to respond in English also played a role. A student in this study expressed her views thus: "*I don't know what to say other than paying the compliment back."S2.* This goes to show that the students, unlike the lecturers, might not have had the requisite vocabulary to question the compliments. There was also an indication that the women tried to present the Saudi culture in a positive light, possibly because of the negative publicity that the treatment of Saudi females attracts in the western world. It was also concluded that age and experience have a significant effect on the responses provided by the two generations.

5.3.2 Cultural influence

In this study, the Saudi women accepted compliments but also displayed modesty. Politeness strategies have to deal with conflicting maxims of acceptance and modesty; i.e. how to accept the compliment yet remain modest. Therefore, in this study, the Saudi females' compliment responses to native English speakers, regardless of their age, were characterized by compliment acceptance and demonstrated Leech's (2007) agreement and modesty maxims. This aspect of the findings is salient since previous studies on gender in the Middle Eastern context show that females tend to reject more than accept a compliment. For instance, Persian speakers were found to reject a compliment with the modesty maximum because of what is referred to in the Persian culture as the schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* (modesty) (Sharifiyan, 2005). A reason for the contradictory finding of this study could be that the interaction was entirely among females in the feminist environment of the female section of a university. As Rees-Miller points out an aspect to keep in mind is the "centrality of context and setting for an understanding of a discursive event" (Rees-Miller, 2011, p. 2679).

To summarise then, politeness surely is a universal concept (Bacha, Bahous, &Diab, 2012) which is influenced by sociolinguistic factors. Culture then was one of the important factors that shaped the responses of the participants in this study. A few of the students also gave responses using different phrases that carried cultural significance (e.g. *"Your eyes are the beautiful ones" S3*).

The students' acceptance of compliments may also be linked to their lack of exposure to native English speakers' culture, which is a challenge that many students from different cultures face (Salameh, 2001). During interviews, when one of the students was asked to explain the reason behind her acceptance of a compliment on her spoken language ability, she said: *"I watch lots of American movies".* That is to say, although a few students had travelled to the west, most had not had the chance to do so. An understanding of the relevant socio-cultural norms of English was therefore mainly acquired from media and social networks. Interestingly, Salameh's (2001) study

found that some students did not possess a great deal of socio-cultural competence even though they had travelled to or lived in the west. Salameh argues that Saudi foreign students mostly miss the chance to interact with English speakers because they either live separately or interact with fellow Saudi and Arab students only, i.e. they do not integrate well with the westerners and learn their cultural norms. However, it must be noted that the study was conducted sixteen years ago.

5.3.3 Confidence in routine choices

Another salient theme emerging from the study is how the compliments' acceptance was influenced by the participants' confidence in their choices related to appearance and belongings. This study indicates that complimenting appears to be a common practice among Saudi females, especially on appearance and belongings. Research suggests that females tend to compliment each other more often than males (Alfonzetti, 2009; Holmes, 1995; Khaneshan & Bonyadi, 2016; Mironovschi, 2009; Payne, 2013; Werthwein, 2009). These findings suggest that Saudi females respond to compliments on possessions and appearances in the same way regardless of their age. For instance, no significant relationship was found between compliment response patterns of the two groups and their age with regard to the topic of appearance (hair style).

Both the lecturers and students accepted the compliments about their appearance and possessions ostensibly because they were confident about their appearance as well as the items they possessed and were therefore happy to receive praise for them (Milinkovic, 2010). Although women in general, regardless of their culture, do compliment each other on their belongings and appearance (Razi, 2013; Yusof, Anniqah, & Tan, 2014), the compliment acceptance from an overwhelming majority of the participants indicates that Saudi women are particularly confident in this regard. Most of them responded directly and provided information regarding their responses. e.g. a lecturer said that *"I already know that my bag is nice and I bought it because I like it" L1*.). Similarly, a student, while referring to her new phone, commented: "*Because I know it's fancy*. Various other studies also affirm that

compliments perceived by respondents as sincere were most likely to attract positive responses (Bu, 2010; Sadeghi & Zarei, 2013). However, it must be noted that giving the history of the item being complimented, as was done in this and a few other responses, is a way of minimising self-praise (Rees-Miller, 2011

A related motivation behind the respondents' acceptance of a compliment originated from their perceived self-approval of either their possession or performance. It is pertinent to mention here the distinction that Rees-Miller (2011) draws between compliments on possession and those on performance. Whereas a possession compliment is aimed at the tangible objects that the addressee owns, a performance compliment targets the addressee's general skills or ability. Possessions complimented in this study were mainly bags and phones, whereas performance-based compliments were aimed mainly at the participants' English language ability. Both the lecturers and the students were happy and pleased to receive compliments on their appearance and belongings. Some of the lecturers, however, reported downgrading the compliments to create a perception that their possessions were perhaps overrated. Similarly, some of the participants downgraded or questioned the compliments on performance because they did not believe their language ability was strong.

In summary, findings from this study indicate that both the older generation lecturers and the younger generation students accepted the compliments rather than rejecting them. However there were occasions when the sincerity of the compliment was doubted.

5.4 Compliments as phatic communication

Some of the lecturers and students believed that some of the compliments were given for the purpose of small talk or to establish a relationship and solidarity; i.e., it was a type of phatic communication. This interpretation was not viewed as a face threat or offensive to the interlocutor; instead it was seen as an opportunity to provide more

information to the person giving the compliment or an opportunity to start up a conversation. This aspect of the findings aligns with the research of Rees-Miller (2011) who found that compliments between females serve as kind of small talk or a way of creating social relationships and enhancing solidarity, i.e. phatic communication. Rees-Miller believes that this type of small talk is not restricted to a single culture and that phatic communication among females is therefore used to emphasise the common values of femininity and serves as a tool to maintain their status (Coupland, 2000; Rees-Miller, 2011). This study appears to support this conclusion.

5.5 Questioning compliments

In scenarios relating to language ability (spoken and written), differences were observed between the older and younger Saudi females with regard to their responses. In the case of spoken language ability, there were four significant differences. The older generation lecturers frequently responded with *Agreement with question.* Whereas the younger generation students frequently responded with *Acceptance with returning comment*. A sizeable number of both the lecturers and students thus *Questioned* some compliments targeting their language ability, as also found in some other studies (Alsalem, 2015; Chen & Yang, 2010; Qanbar, 2012; Woodfield & Ren, 2012). This implies that both the generations, regardless of their age, exhibit reservations when accepting a compliment that is based on a proficiency they might be uncertain about.

Even though both the lecturers and students debated the sincerity of the compliments on language ability, they did accept these compliments, generally starting their response with "Thank you". The association of such a response to the prevalent Saudi culture, based on Islamic values of courtesy and modesty, cannot be ruled out (Al-Khateeb, 2009. These studies also show that in situations where the respondents fail to ascertain a correlation with their experiences, they tend to be wary of the compliment.

5.6 Compliments as sarcasm

A feeling of unease was reported by some of the students and a few lecturers when accepting some of the compliments. For instance, a student observed that some compliments were unjustified: "*Yes, maybe mocking me, because I know I am not that good in English and I am still learning English.*" S2. It is clear that the student's own assessment of her linguistic competence influenced her responses. Yousefvand (2012) also found that the rejection of compliments is informed by a real or perceived feeling of mockery by the respondents. This is particularly the case in scenarios where the respondents do not hold a view similar to that of the person complimenting them (Karimnia&Afghari, 2010; Yousefvand, 2012). The students were more likely to view the compliment as sarcasm in scenarios on language ability. For instance, when asked to explain the reason behind her acceptance of the compliment, one of the students said: "*I am not sure if she really means it, because I am not really good in English, and my friends always laugh at my accent. So I don't think that she really means that compliment.*"S2. The point to be noted, however, is that even when the students felt they were being mocked, they still accepted the compliments given to them. In other words, although they did not take the compliments seriously, they did not reject them. As indicated earlier, this shows the application of agreement maxim on the part of the respondents. It also supports the findings of other studies (Gibbs, 2000; Jorgensen, 1996; Woodland &Voyer, 2011) that showed that women tend to use less humour and sarcastic irony because they perceive rejecting a compliment or showing disapproval to be impolite.

5.7 Pragmatic transfer in compliments and CRs

A compliment is also likely to be influenced by one's cultural expectations, beliefs and perceptions, and intercultural competence. While the lecturers possessed considerable intercultural competence because they had lived or travelled abroad, the students had limited exposure to other cultures. The students therefore firmly held up onto their own cultural values and were prone to giving responses that were culturally acceptable to them.

Exchanging compliments in cross-cultural contexts could thus lead to *pragmatic transfer*, i.e. the pragmatic rules and knowledge may be carried over from one culture and language to another (Chang, 2009). This phenomenon has been found in different languages, and as indicated in the literature review, evident in second language learners' speech performances (Huth, 2006). The findings indicate that some of the students imported some Arabic expressions and religious phrases when responding in English. The students seemed to use the responses they thought were most appropriate according to their own understanding, which seemed influenced by their own culture (Salameh, 2001). Also, as clear from examples in Chapter 4, due to strong religious affiliation they showed anxiety over accepting a compliment without the mention of God's name in the compliment. Therefore, they either responded with conventional Arabic responses or with responses that requested some protection from God (*Mashallah,* meaning "may God protect you"). The lecturers, on the other hand, did not use any culture-specific compliment responses. It can therefore be concluded that even though the two groups are reasonably proficient in the linguistic structure of the target language (English), their pragmatic knowledge varies depending on their age. The findings are thus consonance with findings of several other studies, especially those conducted in Middle Eastern context (Cuesta &Yousefian, 2015; Donaldson, 1992; Migdadi et al., 2010; Migdadi, Badarneh, & Momani, 2010; Salameh, 2001; Sharifian, 2012). Yousefian (2015), for example, carried out a comparative study of Arab and Iranian females using religious formulaic expressions against the evil eye. He found that Arab females tend to use the phrase *Mashallah* frequently with compliments on appearance and possessions. In the current study too, such formulaic expressions were frequently used by the younger generation with compliments on language ability, appearance and character. Significantly, saying "*Mashallah*" conveys a kind of protection from any evil that may befall the addressee and is connected with the concept of the evil eye.

Notable during this study was the reference to the evil eye, where a respondent feared losing their ability or talent if they accepted a compliment because God's protection was not invoked by the person giving the compliment. As indicated earlier, the concept of the evil eye and the fear that it may cause harm is prevalent in the Arab world, specifically in Saudi culture. I discussed earlier (see section 2.9) that

compliments and praise are usually accompanied by religious formulaic expressions such as *Mashallah* to prevent any harm or loss caused by the evil eye of people (Cuesta & Yousefian, 2015). The students therefore responded to such compliments with phrases like *"Thanks, don't envy me"* or used some religious phrase (by mentioning God's name to feel protected). Interestingly, the lecturers in this study did not use any of the religious phrases when responding to the compliments. This does not necessarily imply that they are any less religious than the students. However, they were probably aware that the complimentor did not know of these concerns. The lecturers' responses are probably due to their greater familiarity with western cultures and an understanding that in such cultures, God's protection is not usually invoked. The students, however, saw such compliments without God's protection invoked as dangerous. This sense of caution is a very common feature of Arab culture (Cuesta &Yousefian, 2015; Donaldson, 1992; Migdadi et al., 2010; Migdadi, Badarneh, & Momani, 2010). The requirement to invoke God's protection probably resulted from pragmatic transfer on the part of the respondents.

Examples such as *"Your eyes are the beautiful ones"* also indicate that the students in this study seemed to translate into English the Arabic expressions used in compliments and compliment responses. This phenomenon varied among the student respondents, depending on their familiarity and their religious affiliation with the compliment, together with the cultural repertoire they possessed. Lecturers, by virtue of their long experience and greater exposure to English speaking environments, appeared to be more conversant with the norms associated with English speakers. For example, one lecturer, while commenting on a compliment given on a paper she published, said: *"I need to thank her first, and this is really a fact, because when I write a paper it takes time to write a good one".* In another example, the lecturer complimented on her familiarity with and mastery of English said: *"Thank you, yeah because this is a normal response to this compliment".*

5.8 Non-verbal and non-linguistic responses

A large number of the student participants used emoji (e.g. heart, smiling face, etc.) to respond to the compliments (see Figures 5.1 to 5.3 below). Emoji refers to a small digital image or icon that is used to express an idea or emotion while interacting electronically (Khalifah, 2015). The participants also shared their perceptions regarding the use of such non-verbal responses. Because of the prevalence of smart phones among the Saudi population in general and university-going students in particular, it is likely that the participants responded to the survey using their cell phones.

#	Other
1	Thank you =^_^=
2	Thanks =^_^=
3	Thanks (??)

Figure 5.1: Students' non-linguistic response to scenarios on appearances (dress)

2	Thanks :)
3	thanks! ☺ ☐I watch a lot of movies!!

Figure 5.2: Students' non-linguistic response to scenarios on language ability

#	Other
1	Thanks ^_*
2	Thank you ^^
3	Thanks a lot ^_*
4	thank you! I like your hair too!! ??❤☐

Figure 5.3: Students' non-linguistic response to scenarios on appearances (hair style)

Computer-mediated communication regularly features in our day-to-day communication (Yusof & Annigah, 2014). But although both Generation X and Millennials use social media for interaction, the use of emoji was limited to the students. In the examples given above, the younger generation students used emoji (love hearts, shy faces, smiles, etc.) as part of the responses to compliments. Other

studies suggest that such responses are used to express positive feelings and are more commonly found in females' responses than in males' ones (Khalifah, 2015). These emoji carry associated meanings; for instance, love hearts were used by the students to express appreciation for the compliment. Smile emoji, on the other hand, can carry different meanings; for example, ^^ or ^_* express positive agreement with appreciation (Kim, 2003). Khalifah's (2015) study showed that females tend to use emoji mostly during compliments related to possession rather than personality traits. The findings of this current study, however, reveal that the female students used emoji for compliments related to appearances and language ability. The difference could be because Khalifah (2015), as well as Masoumzadeh and Ghanadi (2015), and Yusof and Anniqah (2014) conducted research mainly on computer-mediated communication and applications such as *Instagram,* Facebook, etc, where people mostly post about their possessions. These responses based on emoji could be viewed as falling under the agreement strategy. Since the students seemed to choose simple and short responses, the choice of emoji seemed the obvious one for them.

As highlighted earlier, the use of emoji as positive agreement symbols was done by the younger generation students but not the older generation lecturers. This appears logical considering the propensity of the younger generation towards the maximum exploitation of communication technology. Recent studies have found that the use of media in younger generations, i.e. people from the Millennial generation onward, is much higher than that in the older generation (Moran et al., 2012), i.e. Generation X. Another reason for the variation in the use of emoji could be that the lecturers mostly use technology for academic purposes whereas the students use it more for socialising (Sobaih, Moustafa, Ghandforoush, & Khan, 2016).

5.9 Recommendations for future research

Three decades ago, Holmes (1986) made a claim that cultural differences play a significant part in the use of compliments and their responses. In this 21st century, cultures are also influenced by technology, social media, education and international travel. With the rapid changes brought about by globalisation, a kind of world English

culture has emerged, especially with regard to the use of English speech acts in diverse cultural communities (Wardhaugh, 2009). It appears that there is more homogeneity than diversity today in the use of English compliments and compliment responses by EFL learners from various cultural backgrounds, as found in this study. There is no denying the fact that applications such as Facebook and Instagram offer rich and insightful data concerning linguistic and pragmatic features of discourse (Salameh, 2001). More research could therefore be conducted on the influence of social media on speech acts. There is also a need for more research on the use of speech acts among Arab females in general and Saudi females in particular. Such research could give the world an indication of how discourses are established and maintained by females in a religiously conservative society. Having said that, this study also encountered certain challenges which limited its scope in some ways, which I discuss next.

5.10 Limitations

Several challenges were confronted in this study, which led to certain limitations. A major limitation of the study is that its scope was limited to only one university in Saudi Arabia. It is therefore not possible to generalise the study's findings to all the universities across Saudi Arabia. Also, the study is hard to generalise to the entire Saudi women population as female interaction was limited to academic settings only.

Another limitation is that data collected using MDCTs does not always correspond to what actually happens in social interactions (Golato, 2003). As Golato points out participants in such studies are not required to interact in a social environment but simply to articulate what they believe would be appropriate.

Another challenge that I encountered was in relation to recruiting student participants. My expectation was that I would find more than the required number (60) of students as participants and experience difficulties recruiting lecturers. However, it turned out to be the other way round. Although it took more time than expected, I did overcome this challenge and ensured that the required students' response rate is achieved.

Yet another hurdle was related to understanding the different Arabic varieties that some of the participants spoke. The study was conducted in Mecca, a multi-cultural city where the inhabitants use a variety of dialects of Arabic. A few of the responses from the students seemed to be directly translated into English from their respective Arabic variety. For instance, one of the students used the expression "your eye has a stick". After days of effort to find the meaning behind those expressions, I was told by one of the older members of my family that it was a borrowed expression from Egyptian variety of Arabic and means "The eye of the one who envies has a stick in it".

Dealing with two different generations, none of which belonged to my own age group, was also not without its challenges. I had to get to the students' level and at the same time deal with the lecturers differently. I, however, coped with the situation through building sufficient rapport with them before the actual interview started.

5.11 Conclusion

This study explored the notion of politeness from the point of view of compliment response strategies applied by Saudi females in an academic environment. Data included 126 compliment responses in imaginary situations from 64 older lecturers and 62 younger students, and 12 interviews with 6 of the respondents from each generation. Herbert's (1990) taxonomy was followed to determine the compliment response types. The data was analysed using SPSS and thematic analysis.

The findings reveal *Acceptance* as the most favoured response from the respondents to compliments in English, regardless of the generation they belonged to. This implies the influence of globalisation and the proliferation of social networking sites (Alsalem , 2015) even regarding the Saudi female population. Considerable evidence from other studies also suggests that there are negligible differences in the English compliment types used by English language learners despite having different socio-cultural backgrounds (Berqgvist, 2009; Enssaif, 2005; Othman, 2011). Again, in

contrast to Holmes' (1986) conclusions, more similarities than differences were found in the compliment responses used by the older and younger generation Saudi female respondents in this study.

In regard to politeness strategies employed, the students were found to return the compliment more than the lecturers, who accepted the compliment but avoided self-praise. Interestingly, the students who had studied abroad responded in a manner mostly similar to that of the lecturers. This may be because of the greater intercultural competence or awareness of such students. The politeness strategies employed by the respondents seemed in accordance with the agreement and modesty maxims of Leach (1983), and notions of equality put forward by Rees-Miller (2011). Additionally, the strategies adopted by the students were also governed by their linguistic competence and pragmatic transfer from their indigenous culture.

Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the 'what' and 'why' of the compliment response strategies employed by Saudi females in an academic context. Specifically, it offers insights into the pragmatic transfer in Saudi females' compliment responses owing to the religious beliefs they hold and cultural affiliations they have. To this end, this research is the first of its kind in the Saudi Arabian context. More research on cross-generational dynamics of speech acts, especially in the under-researched Middle Eastern context, will surely go a long way in understanding the changes in the pragmatic patterns of different generations. The study may be taken as a reference point for further research on cross-generational and cross-cultural dynamics of compliments and compliment responses, specifically in the Saudi Arabian context.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

AUTEC Secretariat

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E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

10 June 2016

Pat Strauss
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Pat

Ethics Application: 16/233 Responses of female non-native English speakers to English compliments: A cross generational study of Saudi Arabian university students and teachers.

Thank you for submitting your application for ethical review. I am pleased to advise that a subcommittee of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) approved your ethics application subject to the following conditions:

1. Provision of the survey instruments in the form that participants will see it (a pdf print out of the Survey Monkey) which are to include:
   a. The AUT logo;
   b. A brief introduction containing all the pertinent information about the survey in lieu of a separate Information Sheet;
2. The committee recommends that persons who wish to also have an interview be directed to a separate survey site at the completion of the first survey so that they can fill in their contact details, but preserve the anonymity of their responses. Those persons who indicate interest may then be sent a hard copy of the Information Sheet (for interviews)

Please provide me with a response to the points raised in these conditions, indicating either how you have satisfied these points or proposing an alternative approach. AUTEC also requires copies of any altered documents, such as Information Sheets, surveys etc. You are not required to resubmit the application form again. Any changes to responses in the form required by the committee in their conditions may be included in a supporting memorandum.

Please note that the Committee is always willing to discuss with applicants the points that have been made. There may be information that has not been made available to the Committee, or aspects of the research may not have been fully understood.

Once your response is received and confirmed as satisfying the Committee's points, you will be notified of the full approval of your ethics application. Full approval is not effective until all the conditions have been met. Data collection may not commence until full approval has been confirmed. If these conditions are not met within six months, your application may be closed and a new application will be required if you wish to continue with this research.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Banda Alharbi

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Appendix B

Date: 2/6/2016

Dear HOD

My name is Randa Saleh M Alharbi, a Masters student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand. Currently I am conducting a survey aiming to collect information for my research project entitled "*Responses of female non-native speakers to English compliments: a cross generational study of Saudi Arabian university students and teachers.*" This research study forms the basis of a master's thesis.

I am interested in learning more about how Saudi females respond to compliments paid to them in English. This study compares two generations, younger Saudi (YS) and older Saudi (OS) females. With many Saudi Arabian females travelling to Western countries, often to pursue university studies, a better understanding of how they interact in an English speaking environment could be very useful. The two groups consist of female lecturers aged 40 and above and female students aged from 18-20.

I would be grateful if you would pass the attached email onto your lecturers. The email includes a link to my survey. The lecturers can agree to do the survey by going to the link and completing the survey. The email also provides another link for those lecturers who are interested in being interviewed by me. They need to click on the link and leave me their contact details and their convenient contact time. Hopefully some of them will complete the survey.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?sm=WPRZ_2FaHQNXQ_2BhHjLvZCszVXTR2wx PV5qBTBXYaa7b7NcP_2FOAoRbVwmZUOjLvn0WC

I would also be grateful if the lecturers could pass the link on to their students to another survey specially designed for students, so that we can learn more about how the younger generation respond to compliments in English.

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https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?sm=DHX1XHAFr9BOLV0tHaFVU2rQI7dAsKAcj
M4JaFp_2BgY6RRYveIQRYkJwh6a8rIbwe

Thank you for your help.

Randa

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

عزيزتي رئيسه قسم اللغة الانجليزيه

انا الباحثة رندا صالح منيع الحربي, احضر الماجستير في جامعه اوكلاند لتكنلوجيا في نيوزلندا . حاليا انوي عمل استبيان من اجل جمع البيانات المتعلقه في موضوع بحثي الذي يحمل عنوان : ردود المجاملات للاناث السعوديات غير الناطقات باللغه الانجليزيه :دراسة عبر الاجيال للمحاضرات والطالبات في الجامعات السعودية . تهدف هذه الدراسة للكشف عن انواع الردود المستخدمه من قبل الاناث والتعرف على طرق التهذيب لديهن من منظور جيلي. هذه الدراسة مهمه حيث انها تفيد في التعرف على طرق الرد واساليب التهذيب واعطاء فكره عامه عن الثقافه السعوديه للجيل الحديث والقديم في بيئه انجليزيه اكاديميه.

هذا الاستبيان يستغرق اقل من 15 دقيقه لاتمامه. المشاركه فيه تطوعيه والا يترتب عليه اي تبيعات . تم قبول هذا الاستبان من قسم اللغات والمجتمع اخلاقيا

اذا تفضلتي على بالقليل من وقتك سوف اكون جدا ممتنه . وايضا يسعدني تمرير هذا الايميل للمحاضرات الى تنطبق عليهن الشروط المذكوره اعلاه. واذا رغبتي في المشاركه في المقابله الشخصيه هناك رابط لتعبئة البيانات لمن ترغب في اجراء المقابلة ارجوا الضغط على الرابط ادناه

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?sm=WPRZ_2FaHQNXQ_2BhHjLvZCszVXTR2wx
PV5qBTBXYaa7b7NcP_2FOAoRbVwmZUOjLvn0WC

ارجو تمرير هذا الرابط للطالبات اللاتي تنطبق عليهن الشروط وجوزيت خيرا

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?sm=DHX1XHAFr9BOLV0tHaFVU2rQI7dAsKAcj
M4JaFp_2BgY6RRYveIQRYkJwh6a8rIbwe

شكرا جزيلا
رندا

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Appendix C

Date: 13/6/2016

Dear Lecturer

My name is Randa Saleh M Alharbi, a Masters student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand. Currently I am conducting a survey aiming to collect information for my research project entitled *Responses of female non-native speakers to English compliments: a cross generational study of Saudi Arabian university students and teachers*. This research study forms the basis of a master's thesis.

I am interested in learning more about how Saudi females respond to compliments paid to them in English. This study compares two generations, younger Saudi (YS) and older Saudi (OS) females. With many Saudi Arabian females travelling to Western countries, often to pursue university studies, a better understanding of how they interact in an English speaking environment could be very useful. The two groups consist of female lecturers aged 40 and above and female students aged from 18-20.

I would be grateful if you would complete the survey yourself if you are 40 years old or older. I would also appreciate it if you would encourage your students to participate in this research by passing the link below on to them.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?sm=DHX1XHAFr9BOLV0tHaFVU2rQI7dAsKAcj M4JaFp_2BgY6RRYveIQRYkJwh6a8rIbwe

All responses to the survey questions are anonymous.

As another part of my research, I also would like to invite you to an interview session so that we can discuss this topic further. Participating in this interview is completely voluntarily. If you are willing to contribute to my study by taking part to an interview, here is a second link to an online form. Please click on the link and leave me your contact details and state the time that you prefer to be contacted by me. I will contact you at your convenience and give you more information about the interview.

Thank you for considering my request and helping me find participants for my study.

Randa

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

عزيزتي رئيسه قسم اللغة الانجليزيه

انا الباحثة رندا صالح منيع الحربي, احضر الماجستير في جامعه اوكلاند لتكنلوجيا في نيوزلندا . حاليا انوي عمل استبيان من
اجل جمع البيانات المتعلقه في موضوع بحثي الذي يحمل عنوان : ردود المجاملات للاناث السعوديات غير الناطقات باللغه
الانجليزيه :دراسه عبر الاجيال للمحاضرات والطالبات في الجامعات السعوديه . تهدف هذه الدراسة للكشف عن انواع الردود
المستخدمه من قبل الاناث والتعرف على طرق التهذيب لديهن من منظور جيلي. هذه الدراسة مهمه حيث انها تفيد في التعرف
على طرق الرد واساليب التهذيب واعطاء فكره عامه عن الثقافه السعوديه للجيل الحديث والقديم في بيئه انجليزيه اكاديميه.

هذا الاستبيان يستغرق اقل من 15 دقيقه لاتمامه. المشاركه فيه تطوعية والا يترتب عليه اي تبيعات . تم قبول هذا الاستبان من
قسم اللغات والمجتمع اخلاقيا

هناك رابط لتعبئة البيانات لمن ترغب في اجراء المقابلة ارجوا الضغط على الرابط ادناه
(سوف يضاف رابط)

اذا تفضلتي علي بالقليل من وقتك سوف اكون جدا ممتنه . وايضا يسعدني تمرير هذا الايميل لطالباتك الى تنطبق عليهن
الشروط المذكوره اعلاه. واذا رغبتي في المشاركه في المقابله الشخصيه ارجو الاتصال بي عن طريق هذا الايميل
randasalharbi@gmail.com
او الاتصال بي على هذا الرقم 0555575699

شكرا جزيلا
رندا

Appendix D

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title

Responses of female non-native English speakers to English compliments: a cross generational study of Saudi Arabian university students and lectures

An Invitation

My name is Randa Saleh M Alharbi, and I am a Saudi student completing my Masters of Arts (Applied Language Studies) at Auckland University of Technology. I am interested in learning more about how Saudi females respond to compliments paid to them in English. You have already completed a survey about compliment responses and I would like to invite you to further your participation in the research study by taking part in an interview where we will discuss your responses to the compliments.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of this study is to investigate the use of English compliment responses by Saudi females to compliments made in English from a cross-generational perspective. This investigation will be beneficial because it will deepen the understanding of the politeness strategies Saudi females use when responding to compliments from English speakers (L1). This study compares two generations, younger Saudi (YS) and older Saudi (OS) females, to compliments made in English in an English-speaking academic environment. With many Saudi Arabian females travelling to Western countries, often to pursue university studies, a better understanding of how they interact in an English speaking environment could be very useful.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You contacted the researcher volunteering to be interviewed after you had competed the questionnaire which was the first stage of this research project.

What will happen in this research?

I will contact you to set a time for your interview if you agree to participate in the study. You can tell me where you would like to be interviewed or I will make arrangements for a suitable venue. The interviews will be recorded using a digital device, and I will also take notes to help me remember what happened. In the interview I will ask you to explain the choices you made in the questionnaire. The interviews will be conducted in Arabic and/or English depending on your choice. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time up to the completion of the data collection process. A transcript of the interview will be returned to you to be checked. You can make any changes you like or you can decide that you wish to withdraw the transcript. It is not necessary to give any reasons for your decision.

What are the discomforts and risks?

None

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

None

What are the benefits?

You may benefit from thinking and talking about your experiences of interaction with native speakers which involves giving and receiving compliments. Your contribution may function as a reference point for other researchers interested in the cross-cultural understanding of compliments and compliment responses. It will also allow those of other cultures to understand Saudi interactional customs and norms. This research could help to give some idea of the pragmatic competence of Saudi speakers of English as second language and may determine the need for making pragmatics a part of courses on English as foreign language (EFL)

How will my privacy be protected?

I will assign a code name for you and only I will know your real identity.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There will be no direct cost to you during the research. It will take up to 45 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have a week to consider whether you wish to be interview.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

I will invite you to sign the consent form before your interview begins.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes, I will write a summary of my findings and send it to you.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisors,

Assoc Prof Pat Strauss, pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz, 64 9 921 9999 ext 6847

Dr Lynn Grant, lynn.grant@aut.ac.nz +64 9 921 9999 ext 6826

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Randa Saleh M Alharbi, randasalharbi@gmail.com

Researcher Contact Details:

Randa Saleh M Alharbi, randasalharbi@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Assoc Prof Pat Strauss, pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz, 64 9 921 9999 ext 6847

Dr Lynn Grant, lynn.grant@aut.ac.nz +64 9 921 9999 ext 6826

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEC Reference number *type the reference number*.

تاريخ نموذج معلومات البحث للمشاركات:

٢٠١٦/٥/١٠

عنوان المشروع :

ردود الاناث الغير الناطقات باللغة الانجليزيه للاطراء: دراسة عبر الاجيال لطالبات الجامعات في المملكه العربية السعودية والمحاضرات.

الدعوة:

اسمي رندا صالح منيع الحربي ، طالبة سعودية ادرس الماجستير في تخصص (اللغويات التطبيقية) في جامعه اوكلاند للتكنولوجيا. انا مهتمة في معرفة يسرني تطوعكن في هذا البحث. عند اجراء المقابلة لن تكون. المزيد عن اساليب الرد على الاطراء من قبل السعوديات غير الناطقات باللغة الانجليزية الاسئلة على اجاباتك الشخصية في الاستبيان ولكن عن الاسباب وراء ردود المشتركات في الاستبيان. سوف يتم اجراء المقابلة باللغة العربية او الانجليزية وفقا لقرارك الشخصي. اثناء المقابلة سوف اقوم بتدوين الملاحظات والتسجيل السمعي فقط. لن تحتاجين على الاجابة على الاسئلة الشخصية او المحرجة لك. مشاركتك تطوعية لذا يمكنك الانسحاب في اي وقت حتى شهرا من تسجيل المقابلة. لن يكون لانسحابك اي عقوبات او تبيعات . هدفي الاساسي هو تعلم المزيد من اساليب الرد على الاطراء من قبل السعوديات لكي يساعد بحثي على سد ثغرات في الدراسات اللغوية الاجتماعية، خصوصا دراسات افعال الكلام في المجتمع السعودي.

الغرض من البحث؟

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو الكشف عن اساليب استخدام الردود على الاطراء من قبل السعوديات في المملكة العربية السعودية عبر الاجيال. هذا الكشف سوف يكون مفيدا جدا في فهم الاستراتجيات المهنية المستخدمة من قبل السعوديات غير الناطقات باللغة الانجليزية. تقارن هذه الدراسة جيلين من الاناث جيل الطالبات وجيل المحاضرات، في بيئة انجليزية اكاديمية.

الية تحديد المشتركات وكيفية المشاركة؟

انتي مدعوه للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة اذا كنتي طالبة سعودية من سن ١٨ _٢٠ او محاضره سعودية من سن ٤٠ فاكثر، مواطنة سعودية، تتحدثين اللغة العربية والانجليزية بطلاقة، سبق لك التواصل مع ناطقين باللغة الانجليزية الذي ينطوي على ذلك مديح او رد على مجاملة.

ماذا سيحدث في هذا البحث؟

عملية جمع البيانات في هذا البحث تنطوى على مقابلتك انتي ، وست مشتركات من الفئتين العمرية المذكوره اعلاه، سوف تقومون بشرح اسباب اجابات المشاركات على الاستبيان. اذا رغبتي في المشاركة سوف نقوم بالاتصال بك. سوف تسجل المقابلة تسجيل سمعي، وايضا سوف تقوم الباحثة باخذ الملاحظات ، واذا رغبتي بنسخة من نتائج البحث سوف تقوم الباحثة بارسالها لك.

ماهي المخاطر المتوقعة للمشاركة؟

لاتوجد

127

كيف سيتم تخفيف المخاطر او المضايقات؟

لايوجد اي مخاطر

مافي الفوائد ؟

قد تحصل الفائده من التفكير والتحدث عن تجريتك مع اشخاص ناطقين باللغة الانجليزية عن طريق مدحهم او الرد على مديحهم لكِ. مساهمتك في هذا البحث قد تكون بمثابة مرجع للعديد من الباحثين والمهتمين في اختلاف الردود على الاطراء في بعض الثقافات، وسوف تسمح للاخرين بالتعرف على الثقافه والعرف السعودي. هذا البحث قد يعطي فكرة عن للمتخصصين في المعرفه البراغماتيه للسعوديين المتعلمين للغة الانجليزية ومحاولة تدريس علم البراغماتيات مع تدريس اللغة الانجليزية.

كيفية ضمان حماية خصوصيتي في المشاركة؟

سوف اقوم باختيار اسم مكود فقط انا ومشرفاتي يمكننا التعرف على هويتك.

مافي التكلفة في المشاركة في هذا البحث؟

لا تكون هناك اي تكلفة باستثناء ٤٥ دقيقة من وقتك.

كيفية اعادة النظر في مشاركتي؟

لديك اسبوعين في النظر فيما اذا كنتي ترغبين في المشاركه في المقابلة، سوف اقوم بالاتصال بك بعد هذه المدة ، واتاكد اذا ماكنتي ترغبين في المشاركة.

كيف اوفق في المشاركة في هذا البحث؟

الاتصال بالباحثة، رندا صالح الحربي، اذا كنتي ترغبين في المشاركة، تفاصيل الاتصال بي موجود في اسفل النموذج، سوف ادعوك لتوقيع ورقة الموافقه على المقابلة قبل البدء فيها.

هل احصل على مخلص من نتائج هذا البحث؟

نعم سوف اكتب ملخص من نتائج الدراسة واقوم بارسالها لكِ.

ماذا افعل في حال كانت لدى استفسارات عن هذا البحث؟

اي استفسارات حول طبيعة البحث يمكنكم التواصل بالمشرفات

البرفيسور بات شتراوس

pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz, 64 9 921 9999 ext 6847

او الدكتور لين قراند

lynn.grant@aut.ac.nz +64 9 921 9999 ext 6826

او التواصل باللجنة الابحاث الامنية

Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Appendix E

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: Compliment responses of female non-native speakers: a cross generational study

of Saudi Arabian university students and teachers

Project Supervisor: Assoc Prof Pat Strauss and Dr Lynn Grant

Researcher: Randa Alharbi.

O   I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 10/5/2015

O   I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

O   I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

O   I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

O   If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

O   I agree to take part in this research.

O   I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes O   No O

Participant's signature: ....-...

Participant's name: ....-...

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

....--..

....--..

....--..

....--..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEC Reference number type the AUTEC reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this for

<u>نموذج الموافقه على المشاركة في المقابلة</u>

<u>اسم المشروع</u>: ردود الاناث الغير الناطقات باللغة الانجليزيه لانطراء: دراسة عبر الاجيال لطالبات الجامعات في المملكه العربية السعودية والمحاضرات

<u>المشرفات على المشروع</u>: البرفسور بات شتراوس والدكتور لين قراند

<u>الباحثة</u> : رندا صالح منيع الحربي

١- لقد قرأت وفهمت المعلومات المقدمة حول المشروع البحثي في ورقه المعلومات بتاريخ ١٠/٥/٢٠١٦

٢- لقد منحت لي الفرصة في طرح الاسئلة والاجابة عليها

٣- اعي بان الباحثة سوف تقوم باخذ ملاحظات خلال المقابلة وان المقابلة سوف تكون مسجلة تسجيل سمعي فقط

٤- أعي انه بمقدوري الانسحاب او سحب البيانات التي سجلتها بدون اي تبيعات

٥- في حال انسحابي اعلم انه سوف يتم التخلص من جميع البيانات المسجله

٦- اوافق على المشاركة في هذا البحث

٧- ارغب في الحصول على ملخص من نتائج البحث.   _نعم.   _ لا

توقيع المشاركة:

اسم المشاركة:

معلومات اتصال المشاركة (اذا امكن) :

التاريخ :

وافقت عليه لجنة جامعة اوكلاند التقنية للاخلاقيات على تاريخ الموافقه النهائي بتاريخ ومرجع

ملاحظة : يمكن للمشاركه ان تحتفظ بنسخه من هذا النموذج

Appendix F

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Compliment responses

My name is Randa Saleh M Alharbi, and I am a Saudi student completing my Masters of Arts (Applied Language Studies) at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. The title for my thesis which I am completing for this qualification is Responses of female non-native English speakers to English compliments: a cross generational study of Saudi Arabian university students and teachers.

I am interested in learning more about how Saudi females respond to compliments paid to them in English. This study compares two generations, younger Saudi (YS) and older Saudi (OS) females, to compliments made in English. With many Saudi Arabian females travelling to Western countries, often to pursue university studies, a better understanding of how they interact in an English speaking environment could be very useful.

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey which should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. This survey consists of six sets of compliment scenarios. All six scenarios involve different topics and are set in an academic environment, a university.

The questionnaire features closed-ended questions, which you will answer by choosing one of the options given or adding your own answer. Only the last question is open-ended, and you can respond in the language of your choice, either English or Arabic.

Completing this survey indicates your consent to participate in the research. Please note that participating in this research project is optional. Because this is an online survey you will remain anonymous.

Thank you for participating.

اختي الكريمة: انتي مدعوه للمشاركة في استبيان على شبكة الإنترنت حول "ردود الإناث من غير الناطقين باللغه للاطراء : دراسة عبر الأجيال لطالبات الجامعات في المملكة العربية السعودية والمحاضرات. ويجري هذا المشروع البحثي من قبل رندا صالح الحربي، طالبة الماجستير في جامعة أوكلاند للتكنولوجيا

<div dir="rtl">
يسترق الاستبيان من ١٥-١٠ دقيقة لاكمالة
</div>

<div dir="rtl">
يتكون هذا الاستبيان من ست سيناروهات في الاطراء، تشمل الموضوعات التالية (الشخصية، القدرات، الممتلكات ، والمظهر الشخصي) جميع السيناروهات مستوحات من بيئة اكاديميه انجليزية.
</div>

<div dir="rtl">
الاستبيان عباره عن اختيار من متعدد، وهناك ايضا خيار لك لاضافة اجابه غير الوارده وايضا خانه لذكر سبب الاختيار. لك حرية الاجابة باللغه العربية او الانجليزية . في خانة التعليق يمكنك وضع ماتشائين لتوضيح اجابتك.
</div>

<div dir="rtl">
شكرا لمشاركتك.. فلنبدا بالاسئلة العامه
</div>

Please complete the survey if you are 40 years of age or older.

1. How old are you?

[   ]

132

2. I am confident speaking English

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

3. **Possessions**

Scenario one:

You are sitting in the staff lounge at the university having your lunch. You have put your brand new bag on a chair. A new staff member who has just arrived from Australia, and speaks no Arabic, walks into the lounge looking for a place to sit. She notices an empty seat next to you and comes over and sits down. While eating her lunch she sees your new bag. She comments, 'Wow, that's a really nice bag you have there.'

How would you respond?

○ Thank you, I like it too.

○ Thanks, your bag is nice too.

○ It's not bad. It was reasonably priced too.

○ Really?

Other answers

[   ]

133

4. <u>Language ability</u>

Scenario two:

You have written an article in your discipline area that has been published in an English medium journal. One of your colleagues at the university is a visiting academic from the UK who does not speak Arabic. She tells you that she has read your article and found it very interesting and well written.

How would you respond?

- ○ Thank you, I did spend a lot of time on it.
- ○ Thanks, I'm sure you can write much better than me.
- ○ I should have added more references
- ○ Really?
- ○ Other answers.

[ ]

5. Language ability

Scenario three:

There is a display of student work in the foyer of the university. You are looking at a poster when you are joined by a staff member you have not met before. The poster is mainly in English but there are a few sections in Arabic. She asks you in English if you could translate one of these sections for her as she does not speak Arabic. You do so and then add a little more context to help her understanding. She compliments you saying "You speak excellent English!"

How would you respond?

○ Thank you, I did spend a lot of time in the UK.

○ Thanks, but there is a lot of room for improvement. I'd like to sound like you

○ I should have spent some more time overseas.

○ Do you really think so?

○ Other answers.

[   ]

6. Appearance

Scenario four:

You are attending an end of year graduation ceremony for the university. The ceremony includes all local and international students and all staff members who have been teaching at the university. One of the staff from the UK was presenting on her experience at the university. After she finished her presentation she came and sat next to you. You have spoken to her in English previously in staff meetings. She notices that you have gone to the hairdresser to get your hair done for the graduation. She comments, 'Your hair style really suits you, it looks so good on you.'

How do you respond?

○ Thank you.

○ Do you really think so?

○ You just smile.

○ You don't acknowledge the comment at all.

○ Other.

7. Appearance

Scenario five:

You are attending a conference where there many female speakers from overseas. You are put in a group with lecturers who have just arrived from overseas and will be teaching at the university. A lecturer who has just arrived from the United States is talking to you about places to go shopping. You tell her your favourite shopping outlets and show her a new pair of shoes that you have just bought. She compliments you, 'Those are beautiful, I'm sure they are designer shoes'

How do you respond?

○   Thank you. They are.

○   Smile and say, 'You can get these shoes in every shop here, everyone wears them.'

○   You just smile and let the comment slide.

○   You don't acknowledge the comment at all.

○   Other answers

8. Character

Scenario six:

The lecture has finished and you decide to go to the carpark to wait for your driver along with other staff. As you are waiting you see a bus pull over to take the international visitors back to their hotel. You notice one of them running to catch the bus has dropped her purse on the ground. You quickly pick it up and run after her, calling to get her attention. She stops and sees you running towards her. She then notices her purse in your hand and runs towards you. She says, 'OMG thank you so much, you are a life saver!'

How would you respond?

○ 'No worries, it was my pleasure.'

○ 'Thanks.'

○ Nod and smile.

○ Ignore the compliment and say 'You are lucky someone didn't steal it.'

○ Other answers.

[   ]

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. I would be very grateful if you would consider discussing these scenarios with me in a short interview. If you would be willing to do so please click on the following link and leave me your contact details and your convenient contact time.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?
sm=WWONiM7G1uMLujd77mG7ZNgR5sd_2FKY6JArXJAQLpLCvtYFoHM9qXjydncjrTP4at

Appendix G

AUT
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Compliment responses

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I am interested in learning more about how Saudi females respond to compliments paid to them in English. This study compares two generations, younger Saudi (YS) and older Saudi (OS) females, to compliments made in English. With many Saudi Arabian females travelling to Western countries, often to pursue university studies, a better understanding of how they interact in an English speaking environment could be very useful.

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The questionnaire features closed-ended questions, which you will answer by choosing one of the options given or adding your own answer. Only the last question is open-ended, and you can respond in the language of your choice, either English or Arabic.

Completing this survey indicates your consent to participate in the research. Please note that participating in this research project is optional. Because this is an online survey you will remain anonymous.

Thank you for participating.

اختي الكريمة: انتي مدعوه للمشاركة في استبيان على شبكة الإنترنت حول "ردود الإناث من غير الناطقين باللغه للاطراء : دراسة عبر الأجيال لطالبات الجامعات في المملكة العربية السعودية والمحاظرات. ويجري هذا المشروع البحثي من قبل رندا صالح الحربي، طالبة الماجستير في جامعة أوكلاند للتكنولوجيا

يسترق الاستبيان من ١٠-١٥ دقيقة لاكمالة

يتكون هذا الاستبيان من ست سيناروهات في الاطراء، تشمل الموضوعات التالية (الشخصية، القدرات، الممتلكات، والمظهر الشخصي) جميع السيناروهات مستوحات من بيئة اكاديميه انجليزية.

الاستبيان عباره عن اختيار من متعدد، وهناك ايضا خيار لك لاضافة اجابه غير الوارده وايضا خانه لذكر سبب الاختيار. لك حرية الاجابة باللغه العربية او الانجليزية . في خانة التعليق بمكنك وضع ماتشائين لتوضيح اجابتك.

شكرا لمشاركتك.. فلنبدا بالاسئلة العامه.

140

1. How old are you?

[   ]

2. I am confident speaking English

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

3. Possessions

Scenarios one:

You are sitting in the cafeteria having your lunch. You have put your brand new mobile on the table. A new international student who has just arrived from Australia and speaks very little Arabic walks into the cafeteria looking for a place to sit. She notices an empty seat next to you and comes over and sits down. While eating her lunch she glances over at your new phone. She comments in English, 'Wow, that's a really fancy phone you have there.'

How would you respond?

○ Thank you, I like it too.

○ Thanks, your phone is nice too.

○ It's not bad. It was reasonably priced too.

○ Really?

○ Other answers

[   ]

4. Language ability

Scenarios two:

You have written an assignment for your English lecturer. She gives it to an international student who is visiting your university to read. This student from the UK does not speak Arabic. She finds you in the cafeteria and tells you that she has read your assignment and found it very interesting and well written.

How would you respond?

○ Thank you, I did spend a lot of time on it.

○ Thanks, that means a lot because you can write so much better than me

○ I should have added more references

○ Do you really think so?

○ Other answers

5. Language Ability

Scenario three:

You are asked to give a presentation in class about your travels overseas. After your ten-minute presentation you go back to sit at your desk. The girl sitting next to you says in English, 'Your English is really good! I studied in England for years and I don't think I speak as well as you do!".

How would you respond?

○ Thank you, I did spend a lot of time in the UK.

○ Thanks, but my English is nearly as good as yours!

○ I should have spent more time in the UK.

○ Do you really think so?

○ Other answers

[ ]

6. **Appearance**

Scenarios four:

You are attending an end of year graduation ceremony at your university. The ceremony includes all local and international students who have been studying at the university. One of the students from the UK was presenting on her experience at the university. After she finished her presentation she came and sat next to you. You have spoken to her in English previously in your classes. She notices that you have gone to the hairdresser to get your hair done for the graduation. She comments, 'That hair style you really suits you, it looks so good on you.'

How do you respond?

○ Thank you.'

○ Do you really think so ?

○ You just smile and let the comment slide.

○ You don't acknowledge the comment at all.

○ Other

7. **Appearance**

Scenarios five:

You are sitting in your first lecture of the day. You notice a girl with blonde hair walk into the classroom, she comes and sits next to you. Speaking English she introduces herself and says that her name is Emma and she is visiting from Canada for 3 months. She notices your dress and comments, 'Your dress is beautiful, we never get dresses like that back in Canada.'

How do you respond?

○ Thank you.

○ Smile and say, 'You can get this dress in every shop here, everyone wears it.'

○ You just smile and let the comment slide.

○ You don't acknowledge the comment at all.

○ Other

8. Character

Scenarios six:

The lecture has finished and you decide to go to the carpark to wait for your driver along with other students. As you are waiting you see a bus pull over to take the international students back to their hostel. The students have come from New Zealand and are staying at the hostel for 3 months. You notice one of the students running to catch the bus, her purse falls out of her bag onto the ground. You quickly picked it up and ran after her, calling to get her attention. She stops and sees you running towards her. She then notices her purse in your hand and runs towards you. She says, 'OMG, thank you so much, you are a life saver!'

How would you respond?

○ 'No worries, it was my pleasure.'

○ 'Thanks' I'm glad to help

○ Nod and smile.

○ Ignore the compliment and say, 'You are lucky someone didn't steal it.'

○ Other answers

[   ]

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. I would be very grateful if you would consider discussing these scenarios with me in a short interview. If you would be willing to do so please click on the following link and leave me your contact details and your convenient contact time.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?
sm=WWONiM7G1uMLujd77mG7ZNgR5sd_2FKY6JArXJAQLpLCvtYFoHM9qXjydncjrTP4at

Appendix H

Survey for interview

Your Name:

First Name   Last Name
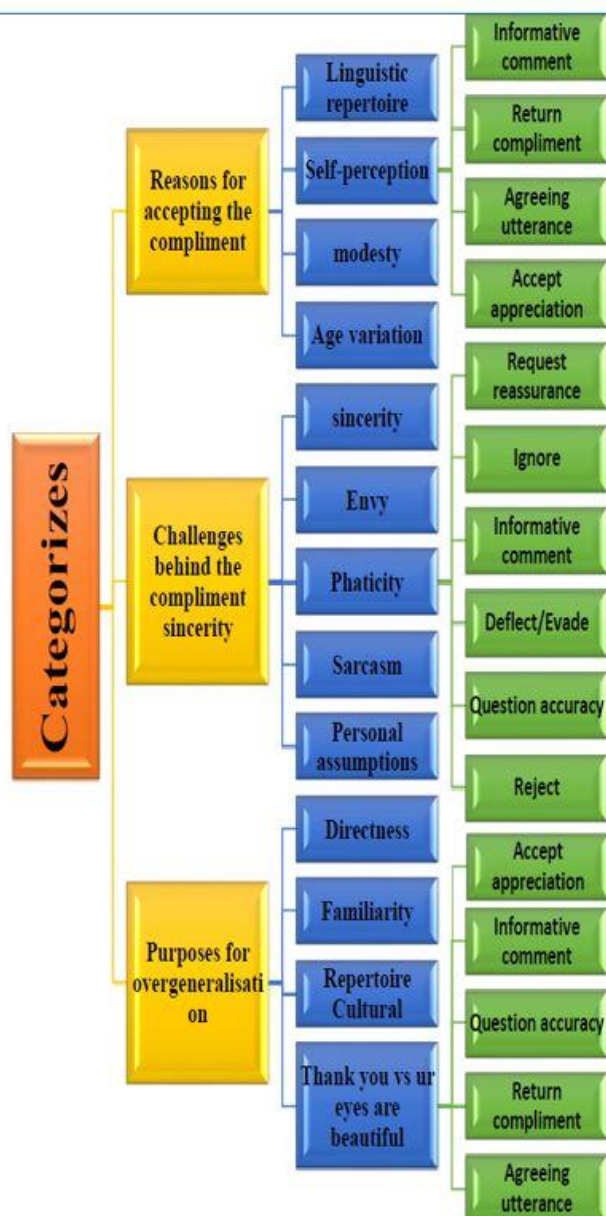
Your occupation:

Your Email Address
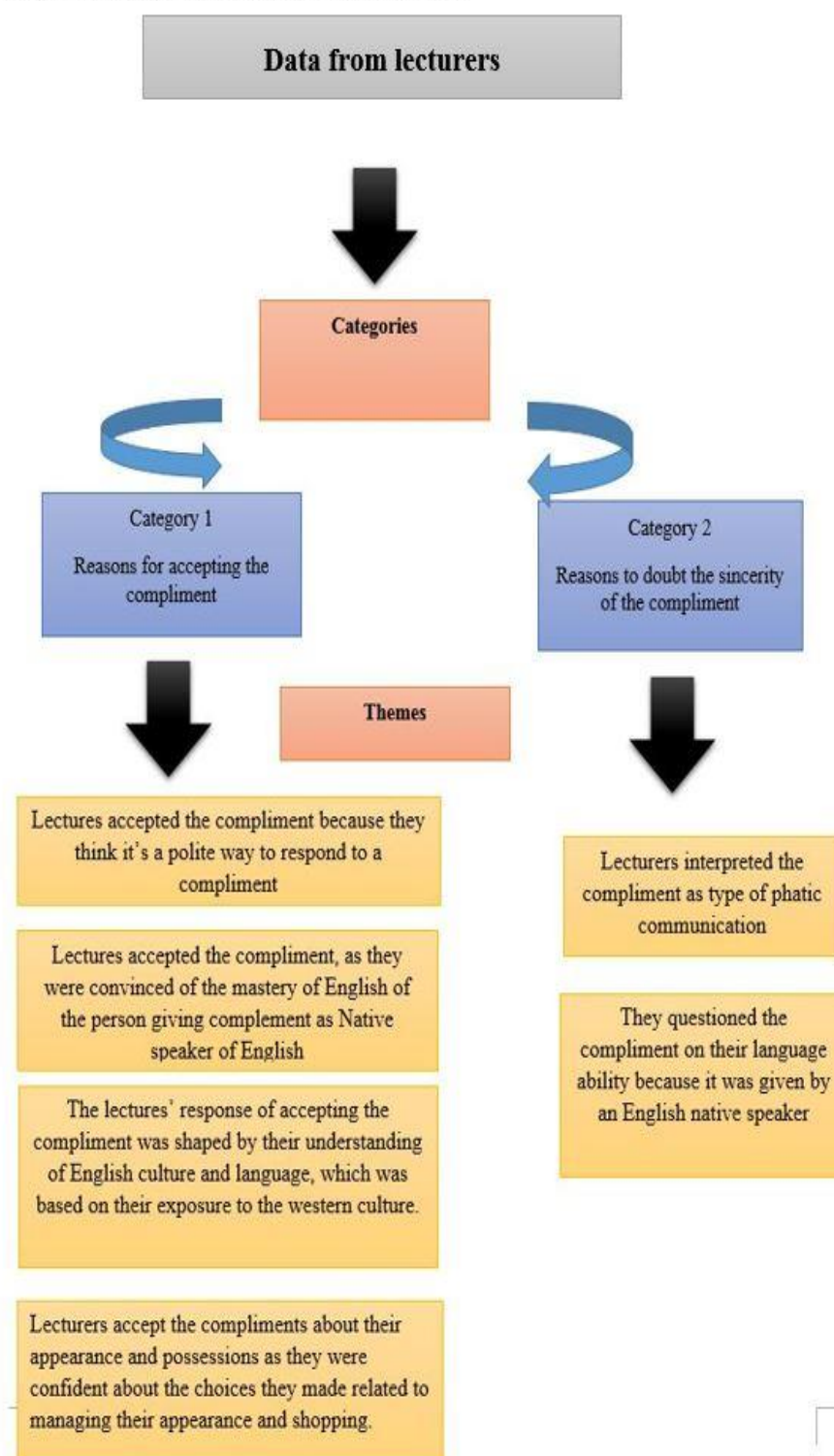
Phone Number

Preferred Contact?

- Email
- Phone

Appendix I

Categories, codes and sub-codes for interviews

Appendix J

Categories, and themes for lecturer's interviews

Appendix K

Categories, and themes for student's interviews

Data from students

Categorizes

Category 1

Reasons for accepting the compliments

Category 2

Reasons to doubt the sincerity of the compliment

Category 3

Purposes for importing L1 rules to the use of L2

Themes

Themes

Students accept the compliment because the compliments were given by an English native speaker

Undermining the geniuses of the compliment is linked to the student's limited linguistic competence (*insults sarcastic compliment*)

Student's anxiety over taking compliments without the mention of God's name in the compliment due to their religious affiliation

Students accept the compliments because they think it is a polite way to respond to compliments

Compliments are misinterpreted due to the student's limited repertoire of the western culture (*envy*)

Students used the responses they thought most appropriate rather than most appealing (e.g. your eyes are the beautiful)

Students accept the compliments about their appearance and possessions as they were confident about the choices they made related to managing their appearance and shopping.