

An Analysis of Compliment Response Strategies by Jordanian Adolescent Students: The Influence of Gender and Social Power

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Abstract—This study highlights the compliment response strategies of Jordanian adolescent students, and discusses the respective influences of gender and social power on the production of these strategies. The participants were 37 male and 37 female Jordanian adolescent students at private secondary schools in Amman, with ages ranging from 14–16. They responded to eight discourse completion test situations translated into Arabic to ensure the participants' understanding. These eight scenarios resembled academic situations which students might face in their daily life, and were intended to represent interactions with persons of different social standing/power. The resulting data were analysed based on the classification system found in previous research. The results revealed that both male and female participants preferred to accept compliments over using non-acceptance strategies. The most frequent strategies used by both groups were combination strategies and acceptance strategies, while nonacceptance strategies and face relationship-related response strategies were the least common. However, there were differences in the preference and frequency of use of other compliment response strategies such as amendment and no acknowledgment strategies. The participants' gender and the social power of the speakers were also found to influence the choice and perception of politeness. For example, the males tended to use more acceptance strategies compared to the females. They also preferred different rank order of compliment response strategies when the hearer was of lower status. Finally, some pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research were briefly discussed by the researchers.

Index terms—compliment response strategies, gender, Jordanian adolescent students, politeness, speech acts

I. INTRODUCTION

When people communicate in their daily life to deal with different problems and concerns, they often express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings, as well as try to understand the emotions of others. Such communication most likely serves to enhance positive or negative feelings towards others and the relationships with them. Communication occurs in different contexts with persons of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Each culture and language has a set of patterns and social norms which its speakers use to serve various speech functions such as complimenting, refusing, advising, and congratulating.

The speech behaviours and sociolinguistic roles of individuals and societies are governed by social variables such as gender, age, social status, social distance, and the cultural background of the interlocutors. For example, our speech becomes more polite when talking to strangers and people who have social power over us, but we speak more freely and relax when talking to those we are close to or those without relative high status over us (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2015).

Regarding the influence of gender, many researchers have found that females tend to talk more about relationships and experiences than males (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Tannen, 1990), and they also tend to compliment and apologise more than males. Males, however, tend to use less facilitative tag questions than females (Holmes, 1988). Holmes (1992) also highlighted other differences such as females being more attentive to the affective function of conversation and more prone to use linguistic devices that cement relationships. Holmes (1992) concluded that the differences in

language use between females and males centre around the interaction between the linguistic actor and their linguistic context.

Consequently, a problem in the present study appears in the great variety of functions served by the act of compliment. Researchers such as Herbert (1998) and Holmes (1988) agree that the main function is to preserve harmony, build warm social relationships, and enhance positive feelings between people. However, in many situations, speakers may misunderstand each other's intentions mainly because of, according to these researchers, gender-based differences in compliments behaviour. Hence, males and females perceive the speech act of a compliment differently, with males tending to provide and receive fewer compliments than females, who perceive that compliments build rapport and increase solidarity between interlocutors. By contrast, males perceive compliments as face threatening acts (FTAs) (Herbert, 1998; Holmes, 1988). For this reason, communication breakdowns and misinterpretations are most likely to occur when males and females communicate.

When the power relation is concerned, it would be normal for people of the same social status to strengthen their relationship through complimenting. However, it seems more complicated to pay and respond to a compliment between people of different status. With this respect, many researchers (Holmes, 1995; Wolfson, 1983; Adachi, 2011) argue that most of compliments and compliment responses (CRs) are performed between equal status people. For example, Wolfson (1983) claims that the major number of compliments are paid to people of the same status and age as the speaker. Moreover, Holmes (1995) states that compliments normally happen between friends in informal interactions. She adds that when the power relation is unequal between the interlocutors, the direction of compliments is most likely to be from the higher status person to the lower status person. Put differently, it would be less risky for the higher status person to make and respond a compliment to the lower status person than vice versa as this act threatens the face of the higher status person (Adachi, 2011). Regarding compliment response strategies (CRSs), Herbert (1986) indicates that the arguments about the appropriate way of responding to compliment are the simple utterance "Thank you". Yet, people tended to make more than just accepting compliments in the actual strategic of CRs. Pomerantz (1978) believes that responding to compliment by the addressee would raise the interactional problem due to the different perception of politeness principles. Holmes (1995) proposes three main types of CRs: accept, reject and evade. Hence, the present study focuses on the influence of gender and social power, by considering the CRSs of Jordanian male and female adolescent students at private secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Amman, Jordan.

The significance of the study lies in the following aspects. To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine CRSs among private secondary school adolescent students in the study location. Although previous research has been undertaken in the Jordanian context (Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Al-Rousan et al., 2016), these examined university students from the northern regional city of Irbid. Second, previous research data on the compliments and CRSs of Jordanians were collected using an ethnographic (note-taking) method, while the data of the present study were collected using a discourse completion test (DCT). In addition to gender, the present study examines CRSs in the light of social power. Identifying the social power relationship of the interlocutor is very critical and important in order to choose an appropriate way of communicating with others who have different social standing. Hence, the power relationship between interlocutors governs the way compliments are made and also the response to these compliments. Finally, since it is important for students to give and respond to compliments appropriately, investigating this speech act can facilitate appropriate teaching of these compliment strategies in pupils' daily life in order to enhance their communicative competence and avoid misunderstandings.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Speech Act of Complimenting*

In this section, certain definitions of complimenting as a speech act are reviewed. Generally speaking, the act of complimenting involves both compliments and CRSs, which are recognised as adjacency pairs and action chains (Nelson et al., 1996). Holmes (1988) defined a compliment as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (p. 446). Moreover, Brown and Levinson (1987) classified the act of complimenting as a positive politeness strategy which reflects approval of the hearer's appearance, personality, possessions or needs, as well as the hearer's desire to be a member of a group rather than an individual.

B. *Related Studies on Complimenting as a Speech Act*

In this part, the relevant, theoretical and empirical research on the speech act of compliments and CRs in different cultures is reviewed (Holmes, 1988; Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Xiang, 2013; Sa'd, 2015; Al-Rousan et al., 2016; Indah, 2017; Tang, 2020; Alqarni, 2020; Suteerapongsit, 2020). In the present study, there is a focus on how this speech act is influenced by a number of socio-cultural factors. In this regard, studies on complimenting and linguistic politeness across different cultures were considered, including those conducted in the Arab context in general, and the Jordan context in particular. More specifically, in this section, more attention is given to compliments and CRSs research, with reference to gender differences and the influence of social power between the speakers.

Holmes (1988) carried out a study on the speech act of complimenting as performed by male and female New Zealanders, collecting a total of 484 compliments from the participants. In her analysis, the researcher proposed three

categories of CRSs: *accept*, *reject*, and *deflect* or *evade*. Holme's (1988) analysis of her compliment data was based on the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). According to her, the speech act of complimenting is recognised as a positively affective speech act or possibly an FTA. Hence, it is mostly perceived differently by males and females. For example, the results showed that men perceive the speech act of compliments as FTAs, while women experience them as signals of solidarity. In their response to a compliment, the participants showed a preference for acceptance, deflection, and rejection, respectively. When the gender interaction between the complimenter and complimentee was considered, no significant differences in the participants' choice of overall strategy were observed. However, there were within-category differences. In other words, the men ignored or reasonably avoided a compliment more than the women (19.3% vs. 11.2%). Regarding the rejection of compliments, the results revealed no gender differences in the overall responses.

Xiang (2013) examined how 30 male and 30 female Chinese international students at the University of Malaya (UM) performed compliments and CRs. The participants responded to twelve situations, equally divided into six compliment scenarios and six CR scenarios. The responses to the DCT situations resulted in 269 compliments and 360 CRs. The findings demonstrated that the male students made more implicit, non-compliment and no response strategies than the females, and also used less explicit compliments. When responding to compliments, both the male and female students preferred acceptance rather than rejection strategies, but the males tended to use more non-acceptance, amendment, and no response strategies than the females. In contrast, acceptance and combination strategies were used more by the females than males. These differences are reflections of the stereotypical roles of Chinese males and females, the function of compliments, and Chinese culture.

Sa'd (2015) explored the CRs of 13 male and 13 female Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Eight DCT scenarios were used to collect data from the participants. The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively based on Yu's (2004) classification system of CRSs. The results revealed that acceptance, combination, and amendment were the most frequently used strategies compared to face relationship, no acknowledgment, and non-acceptance strategies, which were the least used. Moreover, both groups perceived acceptance of compliments as positive politeness strategies that enhance solidarity and build rapport between speakers. However, the two groups expressed compliments differently. For instance, the females used fewer CRSs than the males.

Indah (2017) analysed the compliment strategies of Indonesian EFL learners, aiming to examine the occurrence of cultural transfer, gender and power relation. The participants were 80 English learners recruited from the Department of English Language at State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Indonesia. Triangulated data were collected using a questionnaire, observation, and semi-structured interviews and were analysed in terms of the complexities of complimenting which also involves CRs. The results revealed that male learners tend to use fewer complimenting strategies compared to females. The results also demonstrated the influence of power relation between the interlocutors on the choice of complimenting expressions. Moreover, the Islamic institution, as the context of the study, resulted in using some complimenting strategies that reflect the power relation with the hearers. For example, the participants found it difficult to pay compliment or comment to their teacher, older people, or to higher status speakers.

Tang (2020) investigated the CRs made by 600 male and female adult informants. The author aimed to explore, from a pragma-linguistics perspective, the role of gender in responding to compliments. Data were collected using DCT situations to elicit CRs under different scenarios on topics such as personality traits, appearance, possessions, and ability. The results demonstrated that the informants' responses to compliments were typically influenced by their own gender roles. Moreover, both groups of the male and female participants' preference of CRs were affected by their social expectations on masculinity and femininity in their speech community.

In the Thai context, Suteerapongsit (2020) examined how Thai EFL learners respond to a compliment in English, highlighting the influence of gender and the topic of the compliment on the participants' responses. The study involved 12 Thai EFL learners (six males and six females), and a role-play task was designed to gather CR data on four different topics. The results demonstrated that both gender and topic influenced the use of CRSs, which reflected the role of gender-based social norms.

In the Arabic context, Alqarni (2020) examined the compliments and CR speech acts of Saudi EFL learners, analysing how the topic of conversation, first language (L1) and gender affected the realisation of compliments. Data were collected using a DCT and analysed by counting the semantic and structural formulas produced. The compliment data were categorised according to Yuan's (2002) classification of compliment strategies, while the CR data were assessed using Herbert's taxonomy (1986). The participants' compliments and CRs were influenced by a number of social and cultural variables. For example, unbound semantic formulas were frequently used and not influenced by the social relationship between the participants. Regarding the topics of conversation, the findings revealed the use of more implicit than explicit compliments with topics considered more socially delicate. The participants' religious orientation made them more polite in their interaction, as clearly seen in their use of implicit compliments. However, gender differences did not affect the usage of compliments and CRs. Finally, the study concluded that the Saudi learners' realisation of compliments was influenced by the cultural background of the English language and western culture.

In the Jordanian context, Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001) examined the speech act of CRs as realised by Jordanian Arabic college students. The study mainly investigated gender differences in the production of CR speech acts and the social norms associated with them, in the light of macro- vs. micro-functions, simple vs. complex responses, and

intrinsically- vs. extrinsically-complex responses. They discussed their data from different perspectives including pragmatic, semantic, and sociolinguistic. A total of 268 compliment responses were collected from the participants using an ethnographic (note-taking) method. The findings revealed that there were similarities and differences between male and female students. Hence, the production and acceptance or rejection of a compliment seems to have been influenced by the participants' gender, as a vital parameter in Jordanian speech community.

Finally, Al-Rousan et al. (2016) studied the speech act of CRs as realised by Jordanian university students. The study identified compliment strategies and examined the influence of gender on the performance of this speech act in 36 male and female students recruited from Yarmouk University. Naturally occurring examples were collected using an ethnographic (note-taking) method, gathering 611 compliment responses which were then analysed following Herbert's (1990) classification of CRSs. Both the males and females preferred to respond to a compliment using agreement strategies rather than non-agreement or other interpretation strategies. However, the males tended to use agreement strategies less frequently than the females, and this was mainly attributed to the males' perceptions of compliments as FTAs. In responding to a compliment made a female, the use of agreement strategies was more frequent among the females than the males.

Generally speaking, since the studies reviewed above are relevant to the present study, their design is, directly or indirectly, similar. That is, the current study shares a similar focus, procedures, and data collection instrument and analysis methods with these studies, therefore facilitating a comparison of its findings with those in the literature. More specifically, previous studies have examined the speech act of complimenting and CRSs from different perspectives using several social and cultural variables, with a focus on gender and social power as the main variables. Accordingly, the present study extends this research by examining the CRSs of Jordanian male and female adolescent students at private secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Amman. Two research questions guided the investigation:

1. Which CRSs were used by these male and female Jordanian adolescent students?
2. How did the participants' gender and the social power of the speakers influence these CRSs?

III. FRAMEWORK OF STUDY

This study aims at exploring the CRSs of Jordanian adolescent students, and examines the respective influences of gender and social power on the production of these strategies. The data analysed involved the participants' responses to DCT scenarios that reflect academic situations which students might face in their everyday life, and were intended to represent interactions with individuals of different social standing/power. Hence, Yu's (2004) model was selected for the present study as it takes into considerations the sufficient details of the participants' responses. This model extends the previous models by Holmes (1986) and Herbert (1986, 1998). Yu's (2004) model involved six main CRSs. These CRSs are defined as follows:

Acceptance: According to Yu (2004), this type of CRS is represented by the utterances that consider the status of a previous comment as a compliment.

Amendment: The speaker's efforts to amend the force of the complimentary of the compliment made.

Nonacceptance: This occurs when the speaker refutes a joke about the compliment's content, or refrains from replying directly to the praise.

Face Relationship Related Response: This happens when the strategies do not seem to resemble the above-mentioned strategies (acceptance, nonacceptance, amendment) on a given compliment. Essentially, this type of response is more concerned with the occurrence of the complement within the interaction rather than the propositional content of the compliment.

Combination: It involves the speaker's combinations of two or more of CRSs.

No Acknowledgment: It involves the speaker's choice of not responding to a compliment paid to him.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The participants were 37 male and 37 female Jordanian adolescent students at private secondary schools in Amman, with ages ranging from 14–16. To achieve homogeneous groups, all the participants spoke Jordanian Arabic from the central region of Jordan. More precisely, they were all from the capital city of Amman. The study adopted convenience sampling technique for the participants. Creswell (2014) explains that using this technique is mainly based on the researcher's choice of participants because they meet some criteria such as their availability, easy accessibility, geographical proximity, or willing to be studied. The researchers do not claim that the participants are representative of the population. Yet, they provide helpful information for answering the researcher questions.

B. Data Collection Instrument

A modified version of a DCT designed by Sa'd (2015) was used to collect data from both groups. The questionnaire had two main parts: 1) demographic information about the participants, such as gender, age, and place of residence; and, 2) eight situations that required CRs. Some modifications were made to the DCT situations in order to fit the school context: the name *professor* was changed in all situations to become *teacher*; the phrase "a school conference" in

situation six became “a school activity”; the word “university” in situation five became “school”; and, the term “proposal” in situation eight was changed to “homework”. All the DCT situations were then translated into Arabic to ensure that the participants fully understood them. The translated version of the DCT was also sent to three professors of translation studies in the Department of English Language and Literature at Al-Balqa Applied University (BAU) to verify the accuracy of the translation. These eight scenarios resembled academic situations which students might face in their daily life, and were intended to represent interactions with persons of different social standing/power. More specifically, situations one, three, five, and seven required the participants to respond to a compliment made by a person of higher social power (i.e., a teacher). By contrast, situations two, four, six, and eight asked the participants to respond to a compliment made by a person of equal social power (i.e., a classmate).

C. Procedures

Adolescents are selected in the present study because it is the first study to examine CRSs by this group in the study location. Moreover, Jordan is classified as a youthful country. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020) reported that around two million out of the 10.5 million population are adolescents ranged in age between 10-19. The study context (i.e., school) is the right place where adolescents spend a lot of time and have the opportunity to interact with school friend or teachers. The researchers have selected the private secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Amman because they live there and they are familiar with the two research assistants who are also working in the study location. This would facilitate the process of data collection in a relatively short period of time.

Accordingly, two research assistants helped to collect the data. Thus, one male and one female Jordanian teacher working in different private secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Amman worked as assistants. The assistants' academic background helped the process of training them, as both had graduated with a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature. The male teacher was asked to collect data from the male adolescent students (i.e., 9th and 10th grades), and the female teacher was asked to collect data from the female adolescent students of the same grades.

The research assistants asked for permission from their school board to collect data from the participants. They were informed that the researchers are going to use the data obtained for research purposes only. So, the school board agreed to give permission for the research assistants. The participants also give their permission to be part of the study. Finally, the research assistants explained the instructions to the participants, asked them to read the situations carefully, imagine themselves in these situations, and react as if they were experiencing them. Within two weeks, the male teacher collected 37 questionnaires, and so 37 of 58 female students were randomly selected to match the sex ratio of the male students.

D. Data Analysis

Once the data were collected, a preliminary analysis was undertaken to ensure the reliability of coding the data obtained from the participants. Two well-trained researchers majoring in English linguistics helped in this classification of the data. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in analysing the data. To classify the CRSs made by the participants, and after consulting with the two raters, a decision was made to employ Yu's (2004) classification system as it fit the data appropriately and could be adopted as the primary coding scheme. Compared to other coding schemas such as those of Holmes (1986) and Herbert (1986, 1998), Yu's (2004) taxonomy contains comprehensible and sufficient detail as it involves six main types of CRs, each of which is divided into subcategories. Thus, a qualitative analysis following Yu's (2004) classification system was used to identify the type of CRSs made by the participants. For example, in the situation where the participants had to make a CR to a teacher offering praise on student accomplishments, a CR like (e.g., “هذا كله بفضل جهودك يا استاذ عن جد؟ شكرا لك.”, “Really? Thank you. This is because of your efforts, sir.”), was analysed as containing of three units, each of which is categorised under a corresponding CRS (as shown in the square brackets):

- (“عن جد؟”; “Really?”) [question].
- (“شكرا لك”; “Thank you”) [appreciation token].
- (“هذا كله بفضل جهودك يا استاذ”; “This is because of your efforts, sir”) [transfer].

Quantitatively, a descriptive statistical analysis was run as illustrated below.

V. RESULTS

Table 1 below illustrates the CRSs performed by both groups, as the main concern of the first research question. The frequency (F) and percentage (P) of these strategies were calculated, and a comparative view of the males and females regarding their CRs and their distribution across gender (research question two) are presented. Totally, both groups of students produced 592 written CRSs, with the male students producing 284 and the females 308. Thus, the frequency was calculated by counting out how many times each type of CRS was made by the participants across all situations. The percentage, on the other hand, was calculated by dividing the frequency of each type of CRS across all situations by the total number of all CRSs, and then multiplying it by 100. For instance, acceptance was made 168 times across all situations for both groups. The responses involving acceptance strategy ranked the percentage of 28.38%. Consequently, 28.38% of all responses made by both groups of participants across all situations included the CRS of acceptance.

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF COMPLIMENT RESPONSE STRATEGIES

No	Strategy	Males		Females		Total	
		F	P	F	P	F	P
1	<i>Combination</i>	83	14.02	98	16.55	181	30.57
2	<i>Acceptance</i>	87	14.70	81	13.68	168	28.38
3	<i>No acknowledgment</i>	41	6.93	53	8.95	94	15.88
4	<i>Amendment</i>	46	7.77	37	6.25	83	14.02
5	<i>Non-acceptance</i>	21	3.55	36	6.08	57	9.63
6	<i>Face relationship-related response</i>	6	1.01	3	0.51	9	1.52
	<i>Total</i>	284	47.98	308	52.02	592	100.00

As shown in Table 1, combination strategies (30.57%), acceptance strategies (28.38%), and no acknowledgment strategies (15.88%) were the first three most frequent strategies found. Amendment strategies (14.02%), nonacceptance strategies (9.63%), and face relationship-related response strategies (1.52%) were the least frequent strategies found.

The role of social power between individuals, the focus of the second research question, was also considered and the two power statuses of individuals (i.e., -P and =P) were compared and identified across gender in Tables 2 and 3.

TABLE 2
THE USE OF CRSS ACROSS GENDER AND FOR UNEQUAL STATUS (SPEAKER<HEARER; -POWER)

No	Strategy	Status: (Speaker<Hearer; -Power)					
		Males		Females		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	<i>Combination</i>	40	6.76	52	8.78	92	15.54
2	<i>Acceptance</i>	45	7.60	43	7.26	88	14.86
3	<i>No acknowledgment</i>	29	4.90	45	7.60	74	12.50
4	<i>Amendment</i>	19	3.21	15	2.53	34	5.74
5	<i>Non-acceptance</i>	7	1.18	11	1.86	18	3.04
6	<i>Face relationship-related response</i>	4	0.68	2	0.34	6	1.02
	<i>Total</i>	144	24.33	168	28.37	312	52.70

Table 2 represents the findings of CRSs used by the participants in which the hearer was of lower status (-p). Table 3 shows the CRSs used by the participants (complimenter and complimentee) when they were of equal status (=p). The participants tended to use combination strategies (15.54%), acceptance strategies (14.86%), and no acknowledgment strategies (12.50%), which were the three most frequently used strategies when the hearer was of lower status (-p). However, combination strategies (15.03%), acceptance strategies (13.52%), and amendment strategies (8.28%) were used when the hearer and speaker were of equal status (=p).

TABLE 3
THE USE OF CRSS ACROSS GENDER AND FOR EQUAL STATUS: (SPEAKER=HEARER; =POWER)

No	Strategy	Status: (Speaker=Hearer; =Power)					
		Males		Females		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	<i>Combination</i>	43	7.26	46	7.77	89	15.03
2	<i>Acceptance</i>	42	7.10	38	6.42	80	13.52
3	<i>No acknowledgment</i>	12	2.03	8	1.35	20	3.38
4	<i>Amendment</i>	27	4.56	22	3.72	49	8.28
5	<i>Non-acceptance</i>	14	2.36	25	4.22	39	6.58
6	<i>Face relationship-related response</i>	2	0.34	1	0.17	3	0.51
	<i>Total</i>	140	23.65	140	23.65	280	47.29

In the following section, the CRSs of both groups are presented, followed by a discussion of the influence of gender and social power on the production of these CRSs.

VI. DISCUSSION

The first research question aimed to identify the CRSs made by male and female Jordanian adolescent students at private secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Amman. The males showed a preference for acceptance (14.70%), combination (14.02%), and amendment (7.77%) strategies, with no acknowledgment (6.93%), nonacceptance (3.55%), and face relationship-related response strategies (1.01%) being the least commonly produced. Unlike the males, the females preferred to respond to a compliment with combination (16.55%), acceptance (13.68%), and no acknowledgment strategies (8.95%). Their least used strategies were amendment (6.25%), nonacceptance (6.08%), and face relationship-related response strategies (0.51%). What both groups shared in producing these CRSs was that combination (30.57%) and acceptance strategies (28.38%) were the most frequently used. In the same manner, nonacceptance strategies (9.63%) and face relationship-related response strategies (1.52%) were the least frequent CRSs for both groups.

Generally speaking, these findings are similar to those of previous research in that both male and female participants preferred to accept compliments over using non-acceptance strategies (Sa'd, 2015; Xiang, 2013; Alqarni, 2020; Suteerapongsit, 2020; Al-Rousan et al., 2016; Indah, 2017; Tang, 2020). For example, Sa'd (2015) found that both male and female Iranian EFL learners used more acceptance CRSs (54.8%) than non-acceptance strategies (1.4%). Similarly, Alqarni (2020) found that agreement strategies comprised 88.66% of all responses made by male and female Saudi students. Finally, Al-Rousan et al. (2016) also found that both male and female students tended to agree with compliments (86%) compared to non-agreement (12%) and other interpretation strategies (2%). Consequently, this reflects a deeply rooted cultural value of accepting compliments instead of rejecting them. Hence, to respond to a compliment in Jordanian culture is recognised as appropriate because of its reflection of rapport-building, concern, and solidarity. This is in accordance with Jordanian Arabic compliment studies such as those of Al-Rousan et al. (2016) and Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001), who found that rejecting a compliment in Jordan culture is considered a shameful act because it could be due to the addressee's non-acceptance of the solidarity expressed in the compliment. In Table 4 below, some examples of each CRS and sub-strategy made by the participants of the present study are shown.

TABLE 4
EXAMPLES OF CRSS MADE BY THE PARTICIPANTS

Strategies and sub-strategies	Semantic Formulas		Situation
	Arabic Expression	English Translation	
Acceptance Strategies			
<i>Appreciation token</i>	شكرا لك مس	Thank you, Miss	3
<i>Agreement</i>	معك حق. اتوقع اني قدمت كويس	You are right. I think it went well	2
<i>Pleasure</i>	انا سعيد لانه عجبك	I'm happy you liked it	5
<i>Association</i>	شكرا، انا مبسوط بالشي	Thanks, I'm glad about that	1
Amendment			
<i>Return</i>	انا كمان استمتعت في تقديمك	I also enjoyed your presentation	8
<i>Downgrade</i>	اتوقع ما كان سؤال كويس كثير	I think it wasn't that much good question	4
<i>Upgrade</i>	انا دائما بعمل كويس بواجباتي	I always do a great job with my homework	1
<i>Question</i>	عن جد؟	Really?	4
<i>Comment</i>	اخذتني حوالي اسبوع علشان اكمله	It takes about one week to complete it	5
<i>Transfer</i>	هذا كله بفضل جهودك يا استاذ	This is because of your efforts, sir.	1
<i>Association</i>	-	-	-
Non-acceptance			
<i>Disagreement</i>	مش صحيح	Not true	8
<i>Question</i>	-	-	-
<i>Diverge</i>	لا تمزح معي	Do not make fun of me	2
<i>Association</i>	-	-	-
<i>Face relationship-related response</i>	اخرجتني	You embarrassed me	8
<i>Combination</i>	شكرا. عنجد عجبك؟	Thank you. Do you really like it?	2
<i>No acknowledgment</i>	بس بيتسم له	I just smile for him	7

The second research question was set to examine the influence of the participants' gender and social power on their CRSs. Although both groups tended to accept the compliments instead of rejecting them, they differed in terms of the frequency of the total CRSs they made and their use of other CRSs. For example, the males tended to use more acceptance strategies (14.70%) compared to the females, who used this strategy 13.68% of the time. By contrast, the females preferred to use more combination strategies (16.55%) compared to the males, who used this strategy 14.02% of the time. These findings could be explained in terms of the participants' tendency to use more polite compliment strategies and markers than perceiving compliments as FTAs. These particular findings seem similar to those of previous research (Sa'd, 2015).

Gender is seen as a primary factor accounting for speech variation and has become a main concern of sociolinguists to examine the relationship between language and gender to provide a reasonable explanation for the gender differences of speech acts between males and females (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Tannen, 1990; Holmes, 1992). These studies provide different viewpoints on these differences. One of the most influential viewpoints is that, within any speech community, males are recognised as the dominant group and this is the reason for the gender differences in language behaviour. Moreover, the different CRSs made by the male and female students could also be attributed to the different psychological traits males and females have in terms of their perceptions, emotions, interests, personalities, characters, abilities, and attitudes towards people with different social standing/power. Consequently, these differences are more likely to reflect the verbal communication style and have a decisive impact on the language use of males and females (Xiang, 2013).

The overall function of complimenting for females is to affirm solidarity and maintain social relationships with others. However, the data reported in the present study indicates that the females tended to produce fewer acceptance CRSs than the males. This could be justified by the fact that the females' production of more CRSs results in the use of other CRSs, such as combination strategies and no acknowledgment strategies. Unlike previous studies such as those of Sa'd (2015), Xiang (2013), and Suteerapongsit (2020), the participants of the present study noticeably tended to use no acknowledgment strategies. While the female adolescent students tended to use no acknowledgment strategies (8.95%) as the third most frequent strategy, this strategy was the fourth most frequent for the males (6.93%). This may be due to

the participants' age and ability to respond to compliments appropriately, as instead they prefer to opt out by keeping silent, smiling, or nodding. They may also feel shy about responding to compliments directed at them. In this respect, Wang et al. (2020) argued that shyness is typical and a normal part of adolescent development, and the level of shyness among females is significantly higher than for males.

Again, the female students' use of more CRSs could also be explained by their perceptions of politeness. The unique features of feminine language are reflected by gentleness, politeness, tact, modesty and emotion. For example, Holmes (1988) stated that the speech act of complimenting is recognised as a positively affective speech act or possibly an FTA. Hence, it is mostly perceived differently by males and females. For example, the results of Holmes' study showed that men perceived the speech act of complimenting as FTAs, while women experienced it as a solidarity signal. Accordingly, males and females are most likely to follow the gender stereotype in their CRSs, reflecting a great difference between the genders. This requires females to provide more compliments to illustrate their politeness. By contrast, males are not required to make compliments frequently or even think about being more polite. Moreover, while males have the right and more flexibility in choosing how to speak and react consistent with their own opinions, females need to express their own opinions according to other people as much as possible and avoid rejecting others' explicit compliments (Xiang, 2013). This is again in accordance with the findings of the present study where female students preferred to produce more CRSs (52.02%) than the males (47.98%).

Regarding the power relation between the participants, their frequent use of combination and acceptance strategies for both power statuses reflects their acceptance of compliments rather than their rejection of them. This is similar to the findings in previous research (Xiang, 2013; Sa'd, 2015; Suteerapongsit, 2020), which found that acceptance and combination strategies were the two most frequently used CRSs. However, the findings of the present study are inconsistent with those found in previous studies (Sa'd, 2015; Suteerapongsit, 2020) in terms of the use of no acknowledgment strategies. This is again could be attributed to the participants' age and ability to offer appropriate CRSs, as instead they tended to opt out by smiling, keeping silent, or nodding. They may also feel shy about providing a CR directed at them.

The findings of the present study demonstrated that no acknowledgment strategies were mainly used when the speaker and hearer were unequal in status (-P). This could be justified on the basis that the participants felt relaxed responding to a compliment when talking to their peers but tended to leave compliments unanswered when from a higher status person (school teacher), preferring to keep silent, smile or nod, which justifies their perception of the speech act of compliments as FTAs. More specifically, both groups of participants preferred different rank order of CRSs when the hearer was of lower status (-p). Hence, female students use combination, followed by no acknowledgment, then acceptance strategies compared to males who tended to use acceptance, combination, and no acknowledgment strategies respectively. Yet, both males and females used similar rank order of CRSs regarding amendment, nonacceptance, and face relation strategies.

This could refer to the students' relationships with their teachers. Lahelma (2000) claims that male teachers are considered more relaxed and having a better sense of humour than females who are recognised of being more careful, accurate, and thorough. This would lead male students to feel more relaxed accepting the compliments made by their male teachers at school.

When the hearer was of equal status (=p), both groups of participants rank the same order of CRSs. They seemed more comfortable to offer a compliment to their peers of equal status. This is in accordance with those reported by many researchers such as (Holmes, 1995; Wolfson, 1983) who claim that compliments and CRs are mostly made between people of equal status. For example, Wolfson (1983) indicates that the majority of compliments are offered to people of the same status and age as the speaker. Finally, Holmes (1995) states that compliments typically occur between friends in informal interactions.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the CRSs of male and female Jordanian adolescent students at private secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Amman. It also highlighted the influence of gender and social power on the participants' responses to this speech act. Both groups tended to prefer combination (30.57%) and acceptance strategies (28.38%) as these were the most frequently used by either. They also used non-acceptance strategies (9.63%) and face relationship-related response strategies (1.52%) as the least frequently produced CRSs for both groups. However, there were differences in the participants' preference and frequency use in the patterns of other CRSs, as the females produced more CRSs compared to the males, and the males tended to use more acceptance CRSs than the females. These findings have been discussed from the stance of gender differences, power relations, and politeness. In other words, the study has considered how the social power and cultural and psychological traits of the males and females led them to prefer different CRSs. It has also highlighted how the participants' viewpoints on politeness influenced their preference and frequency of use of CRs.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of the present study reflect that the social norms of both the male and female Jordanian students in this study were associated with the speech act of complimenting. As a result, it is recommended that these differences in the realisation of this speech act by the two groups be included in the Jordanian language learning/teaching curriculum, to increase sensitivity and awareness of the varying realisations of compliments.

Also, decisionmakers and curriculum designers in Jordan need to pay more attention to pragmatic competence in speech acts in general and the speech act of complimenting in particular, rather than linguistic competence in the learning and teaching process. Regarding the instrument of data collection, only one instrument, namely a DCT, was used to collect CRs data from both groups of participants. Hence, future researchers interested in complimenting as a speech act are encouraged to integrate different data collection methods, including naturally occurring data, interviews or role plays, to examine whether the same or different findings are produced. Finally, it is highly recommended that the speech act of complimenting is examined from different perspectives. For instance, one may investigate the intercultural differences of Jordanian and native speakers of English in the production of CRs or examine the occurrence of pragmatic transfer by Jordanian EFL learners' production of compliments in English.

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