

## More than ‘thanks’: Responding to compliments in a second language

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### To cite this article:

Geçkin, V. (2023). More than ‘thanks’: Responding to compliments in a second language. *e-Kafkas Journal of Educational Research*, 10, 184-195. doi:10.30900/kafkasegt.1277344

**Research article**

**Received:** 05.04.2023

**Accepted:** 03.08.2023

### Abstract

This study aims at investigating the macro and micro strategies used to respond to compliments in a second language. For this aim, advanced-level Turkish learners of English as a foreign language were given a written discourse completion task (24 items) and were asked to rate the metapragmatic appropriateness of their responses on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant not appropriate at all and 5 meant highly appropriate. The study specifically addresses the role of gender on (i) the strategies used to respond to compliments in a foreign language and (ii) metapragmatic judgments of the appropriateness of these responses. The utilized response strategies to the compliments were coded in terms of the categories proposed by Boori (1994). Overall, the findings showed that the female participants tended to accept the compliments whereas the males preferred to reject them as macro-level strategies. Both groups of learners relied heavily on micro-level response strategies such as an appreciation token, a comment, and returning the given compliment. The findings revealed similar tendencies for both genders across items; however, females statistically significantly differed from males on two items which elicited responses to the compliments received on possession and looks. What is more, the perceived pragmatic appropriateness on two items eliciting responses to a compliment on a skill and a personality trait was statistically significantly higher for females than for males. The findings suggest that gender may play a slight role in compliment responses and their perceived appropriateness.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic competence, EFL, compliment responses, gender, metapragmatic awareness

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## Introduction

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language forms in a range of environments, hosting relationships between the speakers and the social and cultural circumstances (Gass & Selinker, 2008). It is of the essence for effective communication and conflict resolution. Speech acts constitute a major part of pragmatic competence since they are the means for individuals to achieve pragmatic goals such as making requests and promises and giving and responding to compliments. Within the speech act theory (Austin, 1962), compliments, and compliment responses (CRs) can be defined as ‘phatic speech acts that grease social wheels’ (Wolfson, 1983:89). The recipients of a compliment are often left in a dilemma since regardless of how small compliment phrases are, they could be very complicated to respond to. Within the pragmatic framework, Leech’s (1983; 2014) politeness model suggests that social equilibrium and friendly relations are maintained thanks to the certain sacrifices we make in a conversation. For instance, the recipient of a compliment on cooking skills can return it by being generous and inviting the speaker for dinner. Here *the generosity maxim* is violated by putting the other ahead of yourself. *The modesty maxim* is put in effect when the recipient of the compliment returns it with minimal praise and maximum dispraise as in ‘I am dumb at cooking, I just follow online recipes’. *The agreement maxim* is in place when the recipient of the compliment returns it by maximizing the agreement between the self and the other as in ‘Yes, I think I did a good job with that sauce!’. As a result of these maxims, the strategies utilized in responses to compliments would most of the time be to accept, evade or reject the compliments depending on the favored social values of the culture. These three so-called macro strategies to CRs have been linked to our desire to look modest and humble (Gu, 1990), to avoid self-praise (Pomerantz, 1978), to deny that the recipient of the compliment is superior to the speaker (Winch, 2013) or to doubt about the sincerity and honesty of the compliment (Herbert & Straight, 1989).

In addition to socio-cultural norms, responding to compliments is subject to age, race, gender, and ethnicity (Talbot, 2010). For instance, most English-speaking cultures welcome compliments; yet a number of English speakers feel that a simple ‘thank you’ is not a sufficient compliment response (Cheng, 2003: 26). While Spanish speakers welcome the compliment with a meaningful comment and try to play it down, American speakers regard a simple ‘thank you’ as a pragmatically appropriate response (Mir & Cots, 2017). New Zealanders show a tendency to accept compliments (Holmes, 1990). Indians may directly reject or disagree with compliments whereas Caucasians try to soften the disagreement and avoid the compliment (Chick, 1996: 335). Japanese speakers avoid self-praise (Daikuhara, 1986) or may resort to different sources of justification such as checking for its accuracy, denying, or downplaying the compliment, or saying nothing with a smile (Barnlund & Araki, 1985:14). The recipients of compliments under the age of 30 welcome compliments on their appearance whereas those older than 30 value compliments on their skills (Cordella, Large & Pardo, 1995).

Compliment response strategies have been explored among Turkish speakers. Ruhi (2006) reports that Turkish speakers were likely to welcome the compliment with an appreciation token, a smile, or praise upgrade most of the time. Although the pattern was not much favored, they would reject the compliments by showing disagreement, keeping silent, or downgrading the compliment. Such responses are taken as indicators of impoliteness where the recipient of the compliment overtly confronts and challenges the compliment. Gender-related variations in the compliment responses of Turkish speakers were observed in the sense that females were more likely to accept the compliments whereas males were most likely to reject them (Baş, 2021).

Studies have also investigated inter-language transfer effects on the CRs of Turkish speakers in a second language (L2). Karagöz-Dilek (2020) reports CRs of six undergraduate students in Turkey who took part in a role-play task. The participants tended to show positive pragmatic transfer from first language (L1) Turkish to L2 English by evading the compliment in both languages and resorting to explanation as one of the main CR strategies. İstifçi (2017) implemented a written discourse completion task on Turkish and Chinese L2 learners of English. Both groups of non-native speakers diverged from native speaker norms in that they resorted to cliches, jokes, and expressions used in their native language. Varol (2015) studied CRs by Turkish, English, and Turkish learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Both groups of native speakers differed in their CRs, but the EFL group

was more inclined to evade the compliments abiding by the native speaker norms. Korkmaz (2020) found that Turkish speakers relied on accepting the compliment as the dominant CR strategy and female speakers used fewer CRs than males. Turhan & Tuncer (2022) report that both male and female Turkish EFL pre-service teachers resorted to appreciation while responding to compliments. Yet, males preferred to receive praise upgrades more often than females who preferred to shift the credit to a third party.

Although inter-language pragmatic transfer has been widely studied in the literature (e.g., Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Karimnia & Afghari, 2011), the role of gender is a relatively understudied area in responding to compliments in a second language. The effect of gender on compliment responses in an L2 was studied in the Iranian context (Heidari, Rezazadeh, & Rasekh, 2009). Female Iranian speakers were found to be evading and rejecting compliments in English when compared to males who opted to give explicit CRs. Female Iranian learners of English as an L2 with varying levels of proficiency resorted to implicit remarks such as returns, questions, and offers when compared to males who were more direct in their CRs (Allami & Montezori, 2012). Speakers are cited to be influenced by their culture-specific norms and speakers of a second language could resort to the pragmatic norms of their mother tongue especially when they lack pragmatic knowledge in the L2 (p. 477). Heidari-Shahreza, Dastjerdi, and Marvi (2011) investigated the compliment responses of Persian EFL learners on a written discourse completion task. The female participants evaded compliments on possession whereas the males accepted the compliments regardless of being praised on possession, ability, character, or appearance. Jalilzadeh-Mohammadi and Sarkhosh (2016) offered evidence for the role of exposure and acculturation in the CRs of female and male English teachers when compared to male and female non-English teachers in the Iranian context. EFL learners across genders could meet the culturally appropriate norms in responding to compliments in English and those in Persian (Sharifian, Chalak, & Dehkordi, 2019). Male Persian EFL speakers are found to use more CR strategies when compared to females who were inclined to accept the compliments to build solidarity and rapport with the interlocutor (Tamimi, 2015).

Morales (2012) investigated the role of gender in the CRs of Filipino EFL learners of high-schoolers. Both genders were inclined to accept the compliments and very few tended to reject them. Females mostly resorted to an appreciation token and returned the compliments. Both genders used implicit CR strategies. Yet, males were more likely to give a comment history whereas females opted to shift the credit while responding to compliments in L2 English. Yousefvand (2010) explored the role of gender in CRs of Persian-English bilinguals through a discourse completion task. The general tendency was to agree and show modesty when complimented. The male speakers were inclined to reject the compliment whereas the females accepted the compliment sometimes with a surprise. Suteerapongsit (2020) studied the CRs of Thai EFL learners on a role-play task and concluded that micro-level CRs were shaped by gender-based values. In the Moroccan context, Masmoudi and Jarrar (2022) found that university EFL learners of both genders accepted the compliment the most, but the two groups differed with respect to their CRs at the micro level. That is, the females made use of praise upgrade and return strategies whereas the males tended to welcome compliments with an appreciation token in all areas of praise except for those about the character.

One dimension that contributes to pragmatic competence in a second language is metapragmatic awareness which depends on the judgments made on the appropriateness of the given responses. Metapragmatics can be defined as the study of the metalinguistic dimension of language (Silverstein, 1979). Metapragmatic awareness relates to the knowledge of *what* is considered (in)appropriate language use in a given socio-pragmatic context. Studying metapragmatic awareness of second language speakers may help one gain insight into a more complex set of advanced-level abilities of sociolinguistic differences and conflicting pragmatic requirements that are far beyond advanced levels of proficiency (Kinging, & Farrell, 2004). Research thus far focused on the effect of the pedagogical intervention on complimenting and compliment responses. One commonly reported finding is that pragmatic instruction on the speech act of giving and responding to compliments results in increased metapragmatic awareness in the target language (Saadati & Musayeva Vefali, 2021; Rose & Kwai-Fong, 2001). The role of metapragmatic judgments to CRs on the development of pragmatic competence was limited to judgments after the pedagogical intervention. What differentiates this paper

from the previous work in the literature is the exploration of the role of gender in CRs without the effect of pragmatic instruction. Following the line of gender-based research in second language pragmatic competence and metapragmatic awareness, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the type and frequency of responses to compliments by advanced-level Turkish EFL learners. Categories of compliment responses were constructed under the classifications proposed by Boori (1994). These categories range from providing a comment or appreciation token to denying the compliment or providing no response at all. In addition, the recipients of compliments were asked to rate the pragmatic appropriateness of their responses on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant ‘very poor’ and 5 meant ‘very appropriate’.

### Method

This study adopted a descriptive case study design that aimed at describing which compliment response strategies were used by male and female advanced-level Turkish EFL learners in given situations. Convenience sampling was used in participant recruitment. The research questions addressed were the following:

- (i) What are the macro and micro-level compliment response strategies used by advanced-level Turkish EFL learners?
- (ii) To what extent do these learners perceive their compliment response strategies as pragmatically appropriate?
- (iii) Does gender play a role in the compliment response strategies and self-rated assessment of the appropriateness of these strategies?

### Procedure

Approval for this study was obtained from the university board of ethics of a state university in Turkey. The data was collected from first-year college students. The participants were asked to complete a 24-item written discourse completion task (WDCT; Allami & Maontazeri, 2012) and a self-assessment rating task. The items included praises received on personality, skills, possessions, and appearance. Here are some of the representative items from each category:

- (1) You are trying to deal with one of the problems you have encountered as the person in charge of a particular department. While you are working in your office, one of the colleagues comes up to you and says, ‘You have so much patience to work like this. I wish I could be like you.’ (Item 6, character/personality focused)  
Your response:  
Rating:
- (2) After having finished the lunch you had prepared, one of your family members tells you, ‘You’re such a great cook!’ (Item 9, skills/ability focused)  
Your response:  
Rating:
- (3) You have recently purchased a new car. On seeing it, your colleague’s son tells you, ‘What an awesome car!’  
Your response:  
Rating: (Item 13, possession focused)
- (4) You have an important meeting and for that reason, you wear something good to look really professional. On seeing you, your boss tells you, ‘You look chic today!’  
Your response:  
Rating: (Item 16, physical appearance/looks focused)

These four categories were not distributed evenly across the task. The participants were also asked to self-rate the pragmatic appropriateness of each of their compliment responses on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant ‘not appropriate at all’, 2 meant ‘not appropriate’, 3 meant ‘not sure’, 4 meant ‘appropriate’ and 5 meant ‘highly appropriate’. Both tasks were conducted in English without any adjustments. Such afterthoughts are claimed to raise self-awareness (Cohen, 1996). The aim of integrating a metalinguistic judgment task is to have insight into how the participant evaluates the intention and response given to the compliment by considering the social context. The participants

were given the liberty to go back and forth on the written discourse completion task to modify their responses. Following Allami and Montazeri (2012), the coding scheme was adapted from Boori (1994) based on the categories suggested by Chiang and Pochtrager (1993) and Herbert (1990). The data was entered anonymously into Excel sheets and the types of compliment strategies used were coded under three macro-level and twelve micro-level compliment response strategies. 20% of the data was re-coded by two other coders (a male and a female) to ensure sex-based confounding factors. The average inter-coder reliability was .86. The self-rating scale had high internal reliability (.88). Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages were used to report the data. Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to explore the effect of gender on compliment responses and their perceived self-rating using SPSS (IBM, 2017). The Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric measure of variance that compares the rank order of observations between two groups.

### Participants

A total of 35 advanced-level Turkish EFL learners, pursuing their first-year undergraduate studies at the English Language Teaching Program of a state university in Turkey, took part in the study. Among the 35 participants, 19 of them were males. The females had a mean age of 18.56 (SD=.63, range= 18-20) and the males had a mean age of 18.74 (SD=1.05, range= 18-21). The two groups were not statistically significantly different age-wise,  $t(33) = .58, p = .55$ . The participants were screened to be advanced-level learners of English as a result of the institutionalized test of proficiency given by the school of foreign languages.

### Findings

First, compliment response strategies at the macro and micro levels were presented. Next, differences between genders were investigated based on the responses given to the written discourse completion and self-rating tasks. Figure 1 below gives a summary of the macro strategies used in CRs.

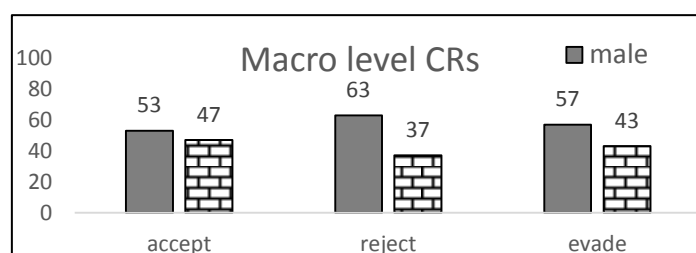


Figure 1. Macro CR strategies across genders

As illustrated in Figure 1, males and females opted for different macro-level CR strategies. Females were more inclined to accept, evade or reject the compliments, whereas the male participants in this study preferred to reject, evade, or accept the compliments in a second language. Table 1 exemplifies the type of compliment response strategies and their frequency of use across genders.

Table 1.

Compliment response categories across genders

Macro level CRs	Micro level CRs	Example	gender	F (%)
Accept	Appreciation token	Thank you very much indeed!	Male	56 (44)
			Female	71 (56)
	Return	You are successful, too!	Male	84 (56)
			Female	66 (44)
	Comment	I myself have chosen it!	Male	73 (56)
			Female	57 (44)
	Comment acceptance	I myself like it too!	Male	78 (64)
			Female	44 (36)
	Praise upgrade	I have always been sympathetic!	Male	46 (48)
			Female	50 (52)
Politeness	Bon appetite!	Male	6 (75)	
		Female	2 (25)	
Offer	You can take it!	Male	25 (42)	
		Female	34 (58)	

Table 1 continuing

Reject	Ignore (denial)	No, not at all!	Male	25 (63)
			Female	15 (38)
	Question	Do you really mean it?	Male	20 (65)
			Female	11 (35)
Evade/Deflect	No response	The addressee either keeps quiet or gives no response	Male	5 (71)
			Female	2 (29)
	Comment history (informative comment)	Oh, they brought it to me from Brazil.	Male	21 (57)
			Female	16 (43)
Reassignment (shift credit)	I took after mum!	Male	19 (54)	
		Female	16 (46)	

As given in the table above, three macro-level strategies yielded twelve categories of micro-level strategies (see Table 1 for examples). The most frequently used compliment responses were appreciation tokens, returning the compliment, making a comment, and accepting the compliment. Praise upgrade was the other most often used response type to the compliments. The females used three strategies more frequently than males when responding to compliments. They appreciated the compliment more, sought further remarks of praise, and offered something in return when complimented. Yet, the use of compliment response strategies was not statistically meaningful across genders ( $U=57, p=.39$ ). When the overall responses were examined, the effect of gender was observed on an item that required a response to a compliment on a possession ( $U=73, p=.008$ ) and on one other item that addressed a compliment to be given on good looks ( $U=351, p=.032$ ). Table 2 presents an item-by-item breakdown and self-perceived pragmatic appropriateness of CRs with respect to gender differences.

Table 2.

The category example and distribution of compliment responses across genders

Items	Gender	Situational setting	Frequent response	N (%)	Appropriacy Median (SD)	Range
Item 1	male		Return	8 (42)	4(.71)	3-5
	female	Skills/ability focused	Appreciation token	6 (38)	4(.96)	2-5
Item 2	male	Character/personality focused	Return	14 (74)	4(1.18)	1-5
	female		Return	13 (81)	4(.81)	3-5
Item 3	male		Comment acceptance	5 (26)	4(1.06)	1-5
	female	Skills/ability focused	Appreciation token	7 (44)	4(.82)	3-5
Item 4	male	Character/personality focused	Appreciation token	4 (26)	4(.93)	
			Comment history	4 (26)		
	female		Praise upgrade	4 (26)	2-5	
			Comment acceptance	4 (25)	4(.89)	2-5
Item 5	male	Skills/ability focused	Praise upgrade	4 (21)	4(1.01)	1-5
	female		Comment acceptance	6 (38)	4(1.03)	2-5
*Item 6	male	Character/personality focused	Comment	5 (26)	3(1.08)	1-5
	female		Comment	7 (44)	4(1.38)	1-5
Item 7	male	Skills/ability focused	Appreciation token	4 (21)	4(1.12)	1-5
	female		Comment	4 (25)		
Item 8	male	Skills/ability focused	Praise upgrade	4 (21)	3(1.41)	1-5
	female		Denial	4 (25)	4(1.36)	1-5
*Item 9	male	Skills/ability focused	Politeness	6 (32)	4(1.25)	1-5
	female		Return	4 (25)	5(1.03)	2-5
Item 10	male	Character/personality focused	Comment	5 (23)	4(1.16)	1-5
	female		Offer	5 (31)	5(1.01)	2-5

Table 2 continuing

	male		Praise upgrade	5 (26)	4(.95)	2-5
Item 11	female	Skills/ability focused	Return	5 (31)	4(.97)	2-5
	male		Return	12 (63)	4(.99)	1-5
Item 12	female	Character/personality focused	Return	4 (25)		
			Comment	4 (25)	4(1.38)	1-5
	male		Offer	6 (32)	5(1.29)	1-5
Item 13	female	Possession focused	Offer	6 (38)	4(.75)	3-5
	male	Physical	Praise upgrade	7 (37)	4(1.10)	1-5
Item 14	female	appearance/looks focused	Praise upgrade	4 (25)	4(.83)	2-5
	male		Comment	7 (37)	4(1.22)	1-5
Item 15	female	Possession focused	Appreciation token	6 (38)	3(1.03)	2-5
	male	Physical	Return	5 (26)	4(.93)	2-5
Item 16	female	appearance/looks focused	Appreciation token	4 (25)		
			Return	4 (25)	4(.96)	2-5
	male		Comment	4 (21)		
Item 17		Possession focused	Comment history	4 (21)		
			Comment	4 (21)	3(.91)	2-5
	female		acceptance			
			Return	6 (38)	3(1.38)	1-5
	male	Physical	Comment	8 (42)	4(.89)	2-5
Item 18	female	appearance/looks focused	acceptance			
			Appreciation token	5 (31)	4(.77)	2-5
	male	Physical	Comment	6 (32)	4(.87)	2-5
Item 19	female	appearance/looks focused	Comment	6 (38)	5(.95)	2-5
			acceptance			
	male	Physical	Comment	7 (37)	4(1.30)	1-5
Item 20	female	appearance/looks focused	acceptance			
			Appreciation token	4 (25)	4(1.03)	2-5
	male		Offer	8 (44)	4(1.38)	1-5
Item 21	female	Possession focused	Offer	13 (81)	5(.89)	2-5
	male	Physical	Appreciation token	7 (37)	4(1.21)	1-5
Item 22	female	appearance/looks focused	Praise upgrade	4 (25)	5(1.18)	2-5
	male		Appreciation token	4 (21)		
Item 23		Possession focused	Comment	4 (21)	4(1.26)	1-5
			acceptance			
	female		Offer	5 (31)	4(.86)	3-5
	male	Physical	Comment	7 (37)	5(1.30)	1-5
Item 24	female	appearance/looks focused	Appreciation token	4 (25)		
			Return	4 (25)	5(.73)	3-5

\* $p < .05$ 

The responses to the self-assessment rating task, in other words, the metapragmatic judgments are reported with respect to median appropriacy, standard deviations, and range. As shown in Table 2, in general, both groups of students rated their CRs as pragmatically appropriate. None of the participants held the opinion that their responses were inappropriate. The items with unsure responses included responses given to compliments on character, ability, and possession. However, neither of the groups was sure about the CRs they gave to a compliment on a possession. A Mann-Whitney U test indicated that the perceived pragmatic appropriateness was higher for females than males on Item 6 ( $U=190$ ,  $p=.03$ ) and Item 9 ( $U=199$ ,  $p=.02$ ). These two items asked for a response to a compliment on a skill and a personality character, both of which were inherent to the individual. This may suggest that females view it pragmatically more appropriate than males to respond to compliments related to traits and skills rather than those on possessions. With the remaining items, there was no determining effect of gender on perceived pragmatic appropriateness.

### Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

This study explored the type of macro and micro strategies used in CRs and the role of gender in these response strategies along with their self-perceived pragmatic appropriateness. One main finding is that both groups differed in the macro strategies they used to respond to compliments. That is, females tended to accept compliments more often when compared to males who tended to reject them<sup>1</sup>. This finding supports previous work in the L2 literature (e.g., Cheng, 2011; Yousefvand, 2010; Tamimi, 2015). This implies that females could probably be submitting to *the agreement maxim* whereas males might be sacrificing *the modesty maxim*. Cheng (2011) suggests that Chinese ESL and Chinese EFL groups tended to reject or evade the compliments when compared to the American speakers who tended to accept the compliment and agree with it. This was linked to the activation of the Chinese cultural schema of modesty rather than the Western cultural schema of agreement in which the widespread tendency is to avoid disagreement by expressing regret, pretending to agree, displacing disagreement, telling white lies, or hedging opinions (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 117–122). That is, while acceptance of a compliment is mostly adopted by native English speakers (e.g., Chen, 1993; Herbert, 1986), downgrading and rejection were the common tendencies among non-native speakers of English (e.g., Shahsavaria, Alimohammadib, & Rasekh, 2014; Yu, 2004). Like the Iranian EFL speakers, native Turkish speakers would reject or downplay the compliment by adhering to *the modesty maxim* (Ruhi & Doğan, 2001; İstifçi, 1998). Even though this study did not have a control group of native Turkish or native English speakers, it would be safe to conclude that the female L2 speakers were more likely to activate the Western cultural schema of agreement when compared to the male speakers who were limited to the Turkish cultural schema of modesty.

The second main finding relates to the use of micro-level strategies to compliment responses across genders. When the compliment was welcome, female speakers used an appreciation token, an offer, and a praise upgrade more often than the males who returned the compliment and justified it with a comment. Males tended to reject the compliments through denying and questioning more often than females did. This is in line with some of the other studies conducted in the Arabic (Almallah, 2017) and Persian contexts (Khaneshan & Bonyadi, 2016). Moreover, the male participants were most likely to return the compliment as an acceptance strategy and to question it as a rejection strategy. This finding contradicts the findings of Allami and Montazeri (2012) which reported a similar tendency with the female speakers in the Persian context.

Lastly, the distinctive feature of the present study in comparison to previous research in the same field is that it reports the self-assessed pragmatic appropriateness of the CRs through the metapragmatic judgements of the compliment recipients. Asking the participants to self-assess the pragmatic appropriateness of their CRs would allow learners to evaluate how effectively cultural differences are incorporated into their performance (Cohen, 2020). Even though the inappropriateness of judgements is easy to recognize, constructing items on a metapragmatic scale, and deciding on their pragmatic appropriateness can be quite challenging even for native speakers (Ellis & Roever, 2021). The females in this study found their responses pragmatically more appropriate than the males on two items which included praise on skills and looks. The reason for this meaningful difference could be linked to the mismatch between the English and Turkish cultural norms. More specifically, females can express their CRs to skills and looks as pragmatically highly appropriate since female responses are more tolerated and perceived to be sincere. Males, on the other hand, perceived returning the compliment with a comment not as appropriate as females did. The prevalent tendency to respond to the compliment with an offer among the male participants could be attributed to the patriarchal nature of the Turkish society. In addition, the participants in both groups were unsure about the pragmatic appropriateness of their CRs to a possession. Just like the Hebrew speakers (Danziger, 2018), Turkish-

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out one of the limitations of this study. It needs to be noted that the finding ‘females tended to accept the compliments more often when compared to males who tended to reject them’ needs to be treated with caution since the number of participants in this study is not equally distributed across genders. For future work, balancing the number of participants across genders could yield statistically more reliable results.



English speakers in this study may welcome internal compliments such as those given on personality more positively than external compliments such as those given on a possession.

The study has a number of implications for second language teaching and learning environments. First, explicit instruction in the second language is helpful for the development of metapragmatic awareness (Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh, & Fatahi, 2004; Gokgoz-Kurt, 2023). Speech acts such as complimenting and responding to compliments could be improved thanks to metalinguistic awareness, which refers to the ability to understand and reflect upon ways to accomplish social and communicative goals in interaction. Taguchi and Roever (2017), for instance, report that Japanese learners who received explicit instruction on speech acts and metalinguistic awareness in foreign language classrooms showed greater improvement in the ability to recognize and produce appropriate linguistic forms for making requests than those who did not receive explicit instruction. Bardovi-Harling (2001) suggested that native speakers differ from non-native speakers in their choice, content, and form of speech acts and semantic formulas. Thus, learners should be provided with the necessary pragmatic encounters such as acting out scripted and spontaneous roles and introducing socially appropriate constructions in response to compliments such as ‘That is very kind of you, thank you’ in a second language classroom setting (Kasper, 2001). Second, coursebook writers and curriculum designers need to emphasize pragmatic-oriented activities that lend to the use of authentic, communicative skills-based tasks in classrooms and teacher training curricula which would assist learners to attend to both the relevant linguistic forms of utterances and social and contextual features with which these utterances are associated (Schmidt, 2001).

For further work, a larger sample with varying levels of proficiency could be used by integrating different data collection methods including questionnaires, oral interviews, recall protocols, recordings, observations, role plays, and natural speech corpora in addition to the written discourse completion tasks (see Derakhshan, Eslami, & Chalak, 2021, for an overview of methodology). While studying CRs, it should also be kept in mind that not all data collection tools may always speak to the addressed research questions (Golato, 2003). Moreover, the interaction of gender with differences in age, status, power, and social distance between the giver and the recipient of compliment could be explored with native speaker control groups.

### **Acknowledgment**

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Izmir Democracy University Board of Ethics

**Date:** 02/02/2023

**ID:** 2023/01-03

**Funding:** This research received no funding.

**Data Availability Statement:** Data generated or analyzed during this study is available on request.

**Conflict of Interest:** There is no conflict of interest.

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