# Comparison of Chinese and Turkish EFL learners on the use of compliment responses

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## Abstract

This study aims at investigating compliment responses of Turkish and Chinese EFL learners by collecting data via a Discourse Completion Test. The participants of the study are Lower-Intermediate and Intermediate Level Chinese and Turkish EFL learners and native English speakers. The first purpose of the study is to compare Turkish and Chinese EFL learners' responses and find whether their cultures have an effect on their use of compliment responses. Another purpose of the study is to compare Turkish EFL and Chinese EFL learner data with native English speaker data. The participants were given a discourse completion test that consisted of 10 different compliment situations related to appearance/attire, possession and performance/ability and they were asked to write suitable compliment responses. The data were analyzed according to Chen & Yang's (2010) categorization by calculating the responses, finding their frequencies and coding every category in SPSS. Findings revealed some similarities and statistically significant differences between the responses of Turkish EFL learners and Chinese EFL learners. When Turkish and Chinese EFL learner data were compared with native English speaker data, it was found that in using some strategies Turkish and Chinese learners transferred some formulaic expressions, jokes and cliches they used in their native language. However, in using some other strategies they can be said to approach native English speaker norms.

## 1. Introduction

Politeness is a universal phenomenon that is found in all cultures and languages. People use different acts to express politeness. Being one of the acts, compliments act as social lubricants so people use them a lot in order to maintain harmony in a society. Compliments and compliment responses reflect cultural values and they are governed by linguistic and sociocultural norms. Studying compliments and compliment responses gives great insights on the language and its users. The use of compliments vary among the cultures and EFL learners either tend to use the strategies they use in their first language or develop their own interlanguage formulas. Starting with Pomerantz (1978), there has been a number of relevant studies, especially cross-cultural studies investigating the use of compliments and compliment responses in different speech communities. Cross-cultural studies included the studies that compared

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Spanish and English (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001), German and American English (Golato, 2002), Australian English and Mandarin Chinese (Tang & Zhang, 2009), Chinese and English (An-Kun, 2008; Cheng, 2011), Australian English and Iranian (Mohajernia & Solimani, 2013), Turkish and English (Istifci, 2008a), Turkish, English and Italian (Istifci, 2008b). This study, however, aims to compare Chinese and Turkish EFL learners. The first purpose of the study is to compare Turkish and Chinese EFL learners' responses and find whether their cultures have an effect on their use of compliment responses. Another purpose of the study is to compare Turkish EFL and Chinese EFL learner data with native English speaker data using a Discourse Completion Test to collect data.

## 1.1. Literature review

### 1.1.1. Politeness

According to Hill et.al (1986), "Politeness is one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others' feeling, establish a level of mutual comfort and promote rapport" (p.349). For Brown and Levinson (1987) there are two types politeness: positive and negative. They state that:

> Positive politeness anoints the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects Speaker (S) wants Hearer (H)'s face. Positive politeness strategies emphasize common ground between speaker and hearer, make use of in-group markers, presuppose cooperation, and are less concerned with minimizing imposition on the hearer. Negative politeness, on the other hand, is oriented mainly towards partially satisfying H's negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination, and it reflects a desire to maintain social distance, unhindered freedom of action, and lack of imposition. As a result, negative politeness is more conventionally indirect, with more hedging and avoidance (p.75).

According to Olshtain and Cohen (1989), the Brown and Levinson politeness taxonomy would appear to make a contribution to cross-linguistic studies by helping to characterize different cultures as well as subcultures within societies. For Cohen and Olshtain (1989), "positive politeness cultures may show a tendency toward placing high value on directness, matter-of-factness, friendly back-slapping, and the like, negative politeness cultures, on the other hand, may value the maintenance of social distance and face-saving" (p.45). As Leech (1983) states cultural differences affect the use of politeness; some cultures give 'Agreement Maxim' more weight, some others to 'Modesty Maxim' and some cultures give equal weight to both of them.

Ernawati (1996) stated "In expressing politeness, speakers may use verbal and non-verbal devices to do what is intended in communication. These devices are called 'acts'. In social interaction, we come across situations in which we have to do some acts that intrinsically threaten 'face' (p. 9). Brown and Levinson (1987) call these acts as 'face threatening acts' (FTAs) and they propose "all acts are inherently face threatening to the speaker (S), hearer (H), or to both; they divide them into two kinds: FTAs that threaten negative face, by wanting their own actions to be unimpeded by others, and FTAs that threaten positive face, by wanting to be desirable to at least some others" (p.80).

According to Ernawati (1996) "the central idea of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is that since all acts are intrinsically threatening to the face and face is vulnerable to FTAs, it is politeness that blesses their performance to reduce their sharpness, so that face is made less vulnerable; to reduce the threat, each community develops a set of specific linguistic strategies and utilizes them to govern the relationship among the members of community" (p.11).

In contrast to Brown and Levinson, Leech (1983) (cited in Chen, 1993; Ruhi, 2006) is concerned with normative aspects of politeness and his Politeness Principle has 6 maxims: Tact Maxim (a. Minimize cost to other, b. Maximize benefit to other), Agreement Maxim (a. Minimize disagreement between self and other, b. Maximize agreement between self and other), Approbation Maxim (a. Minimize dispraise of other, b. Maximize praise of other), Modesty Maxim (a. Minimize praise of self, b. Maximize dispraise of

self), Generosity Maxim (a. Minimize benefit to self, b. Maximize cost to self) and Sympathy Maxim (a. Minimize antipathy between self and other, b. Maximize sympathy between self and other).

Having compared Brown and Levinson's and Leech's Politeness Principles, Chen (1993) states: "Leech's Politeness Principle maxims offer an adequate theoretical framework for accounting for differences of compliment responses across the two cultures and Pomerantz's (1978) conditions for compliment responses, 'agree with the speaker' and 'avoid self-praise' which have been widely cited and proven to be largely correct (Wolfson 1983, 1989, Manes 1983, Manes and Wolfson 1981, Holmes 1988a, Herbert 1989) are equivalent to Leech's Agreement Maxim and Modesty Maxim respectively (p.55).

According to Leech (1983) American conventions do not make it favorable to disagree with compliments made by others to oneself. This would indicate that in parts of the English-speaking world, the maxim of agreement takes precedence over the maxim of modesty.

According to Ruhi (2007):

 "two politeness theories mentioned above ground the implication of politeness on the Gricean model of communication. The first approach describes linguistic politeness as verbal behaviour that maintains harmonious relations. It posits a number of politeness maxims under the Politeness Principle (e.g. Modesty, Tact, and Agreement), which are on a par with the Gricean Maxims (Leech 1983). The second holds that politeness is motivated to maintain face, defined as 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself' (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61)" (p.110).

Ruhi (2007) proposes the notion of self-politeness with three aspects: display confidence, display individuality, and display impoliteness. She adds that individualism and displays of self-confidence have been associated with western cultures while eastern cultures, such as Chinese and Japanese, have been described as being oriented toward modesty (e.g. Baba 1996; Yu 2003). For Ruhi (2007) "the emphasis on modesty in self-presentation in Chen (2001) is inadequate in describing linguistic practices in a range of communicative settings and data across languages. I use 'self- politeness' as a cover term to deal with acts where the speaker boosts or protects self's image and sociality rights and those of others pertaining to self, which may mean that the speaker performs acts that can receive interpretations of attacking alter's face and interactional goals" (Ruhi 2006a)" (p.118).

*1.1.2. Compliments and compliment responses*

 "Compliment responses are worthy of study because they are very common, yet frequently problematic speech acts" (Yu, 2003) since the person who is complimented is in a position to accept the compliment but try to avoid praising himself/herself. It has been cited in literature that the use of compliments vary among the cultures and EFL learners either tend to use the strategies they use in their first language or develop their own interlanguage formulas.

For Holmes (1988) "a compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (p.446). Compliments reinforce solidarity when they are used appropriately and their absence can cause misunderstandings. Non-native speakers of English often face difficulty in using compliments when they are interacting with native speakers of English.

Compliments in American English have been found to be formulas like greetings, thanks, and apologies and they represent a social strategy in that the speaker attempts to create or maintain rapport with the adressee by expressing admiration or approval and compliments are typically addressed directly to the person being complimented (Wolfson, 1983, 1986; Manes 1983; Manes & Wolfson 1981). Due to the fact that compliments can be threatening to the addressee's face as they are an act of judgment on another person, people may feel uneasy, defensive, or even cynical with regard to the compliments they

receive, and thus may have trouble responding to such compliments appropriately (Knapp, Hopper & Bell, 1984).

Studies on compliment responses indicate that compliment responses may serve different functions. As Herbert (1989) states compliments and compliment responses fulfill a similar solidarity-negotiating function and they are an interesting object for study since there is relatively strong agreement within the speech community as to what form constitutes a 'correct response' and virtually all speakers of English, when questioned on this matter in general or particular terms, agree that the correct response is 'Thank you'. According to Herbert (1989) "one would expect that competent speakers of English should say thank you when complimented but many speakers still claim to be embarrassed by compliments and to feel discomfort when they respond to compliments; speakers know that the correct response is 'Thank you', but on the other hand, they don't know what to say" (Istifci, 2008b:319).

A number of studies about compliments and compliment responses (Wolfson, 1983a; Manes, 1983; Manes and Wolfson, 1981; Holmes and Brown, 1987; Knapp, Hopper and Bell, 1984; Ylanne-McEwen, 1993; Chen, 1993; Holmes, 1988; Ernawati, 1996; Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols, 1996; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Golato, 2002; Yu, 2003; Chen, 2001; Chen & Yang, 2010; Tang & Zang, 2009; Cai, 2012; Ruhi 2006; Ruhi, 2007; Istifci, 2008a; 2008b) have been carried out. Some of the studies have investigated compliments and compliment responses cross-culturally, and some studies have placed emphasis on a single culture. Cross-cultural studies included the studies that compared Spanish and English (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001), German and American English (Golato, 2002), Australian English and Mandarin Chinese (Tang & Zhang, 2009), Chinese and English (An-Kun, 2008; Cheng, 2011), Australian English and Iranian (Mohajernia & Solimani, 2013), Turkish and English (Istifci, 2008a), Turkish, English and Italian (Istifci, 2008b). Some of the studies that placed emphasis on a single culture included the studies that investigated Turkish compliment responses (Ruhi, 2006 and 2007), Chinese compliment responses (Cai, 2012), Chen & Yang (2010), Chen (2001), Yu (2003), Iranian compliment responses (Allami & Montazeri, 2012) and Jordanian compliment responses (Farghal & Khatib, 2001). Cross-cultural studies have revealed that for compliment responses, the practice in American culture, which places special emphasis on agreement in discoursal activities, appears to be for the speaker to respond to compliments with acceptance forms. By contrast, the practice in Turkish and Chinese societies seemed to be different or for some situations their responses resembled native English speakers.

There have been many studies concerning compliment responses in Chinese (Cai, 2012; Chen & Yang, 2010); Chen, 2001; Yu, 2003). In some studies Chinese people are found to employ more rejection type of responses so it is thought that Chinese society gives precedence to the maxim of modesty, rather than agreement. Chen's (1993) comparative study of compliment responses between Chinese learners of English and American English native speakers finds:

"Chinese non-native speakers tend to reject compliments, while Americans tend to accept and appreciate them. With respect to specific compliments on appearance, ability and possession, Americans are more inclined to accept compliments on appearance than on ability and possessions, as they regard the former as self-image and prefer to keep it up. On the other hand, Chinese tend to decline compliments on appearance, regarding appearance as intimate and private; modesty enhances their face and self-image. Along the same line of modesty, the Chinese use more 'self-praise avoidance' strategies such as shift credit to the complimenter" (p.59).

As Yu (2003) states Chinese people project humility by not accepting the compliment given since behaving modestly is important for Chinese. Thus, lowering themselves helps to maintain or even enhance their image. Yu (ibid) also suggests that Chinese norm is to display modesty, a culturally held value about what constitutes a good face and being polite.

As Chen & Yang (2010) state there are remarkable variability among the different groups of Chinese in their compliment responding behavior. Chen & Yang (2010) claim "compliment responding behavior of Chinese differs drastically from study to study. Chinese CRs display a larger percentage of rejection than many other languages. English have been repeatedly shown to have a clear preference for compliment acceptance over rejection" (p.1954). Similar trend is found in German, Thai and Arabic. Chinese, Korean and Japanese seem similar in using Rejecting type of behaviors. English have been found to favor compliment acceptance. The variation in findings about Chinese CRs is a reflection of reality – that Chinese do differ from one population to another in their way of responding compliments since different populations of Chinese differ from each other at a particular point of time. Chen (1993) claimed that Leech's Agreement Maxim explains the American data and his Modesty Maxim explains the Chinese data (Chen & Yang, 2010). However, a study by Cai (2012) revealed that acceptance strategy is adopted more frequently than other strategies. She claims that Chinese people used to be reluctant to accept a compliment directly under traditional Chinese customs but people now are more likely to accept a compliment instead of the traditional rejection responses because of the influence of western culture. Although the Maxim of Modesty is true in China, she states that people in her study are reluctant to exaggerate their achievement or show off, i.e. avoid self-praise.

Having carried out a study on women's use of compliments in Turkish by collecting 100 naturally occurring data, Durmuşoğlu (1990) states that in terms of the content, of 100 compliments, 55 of them were about appearance such as hairdo, haircolour, make-up and clothing, 25 of them were about possession, 10 of them were about ability, 8 of them were about human possessions such as children and 2 of them were related to academic or work success. In terms of compliment responses, it was found that Turkish women not only accepted compliments, but also downgraded or deflected them such as:

– Bu elbise sana çok yakışmış! *(Your dress fits you very well!)*

- Sağol, ama ucuzluktan aldım. *(Thank you, but I bought it in sale.)*

– Ne kadar zayıflamışsın, aferin. *(You've lost lots of weight)*

Yok canım, o kadar da değil, bir, iki kilo. *(No, it is not that much, just one    or two kilos)* (Durmuşoğlu, 1990: 171).

Carrying out a study with Turkish undergraduate students and examining 830 compliment exchanges, Ruhi (2006) states that accepting type of responses are by and large the preferred response type (60,85%), deflection/evasion category constitutes the smallest group of compliment responses (16,02%) and rejection type of responses occur more than deflection category (22,77%). She (ibid.) explains compliment responses in the acceptance category through the Tact and Sympathy Maxims because the Tact Maxim has greater explanatory power; deflection and rejection categories through the Tact/Generosity Maxims since they minimize benefit to self through non-acceptance of the transfer of value.

Conducting a study with 50 native Turkish speakers and 25 native English speakers, Istifci (2008) states that Turkish subjects are likely to accept compliments but they do not employ 'Thanking' strategy as much as native English speakers do. Instead they employ 'Explaining' strategy a lot or shift credit to another person. Turkish speakers have been found to use joking, formulaic expressions, deflecting and rejecting strategies such as offering, questioning, joking, explaining, disagreeing, denigrating more than native English speakers. It can be said that Turkish culture has a big influence on their use of compliment responses.

After reviewing the previous studies, it is found that:

1. Although a few studies have been conducted on compliment responses in English-speaking countries, there are few studies on compliment responses in a Turkish-speaking country and no study comparing Turkish and Chinese learners of English.

2. Compliment responses are useful for learners to know about and they serve as important social strategies in creating or affirming social relationships. They provide an invaluable but under-utilised insight into speakers' reactions to external appraisals of their personal and social identity (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). As Soenarso (1988; cited in Ernawati, 1996:3) states, compliment behaviour is a reflection of culture. Therefore, it is likely that Turkish and Chinese students have different ways of complimenting and responding to compliments compared to English students.

## 1.2. Research questions

On the basis of the above findings, this study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there any differences and similarities between Turkish Low-Int level EFL learners and Intermediate Level EFL learners in the use of compliment responses?

2. Are there any differences and similarities between Chinese Low-Int Level EFL learners and Intermediate Level EFL learners?

3. Are there any similarities and differences between Turkish EFL learners and Chinese EFL learners?

4. Are there any similarities and differences among Native English speakers, Turkish EFL learners and Chinese EFL learners in responding to compliments?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Participants of this study were 70 Intermediate level Turkish EFL learners (32 female, 38 male) and 68 Low-Intermediate level Turkish EFL learners (40 female, 28 male) from Anadolu University, School of Foreign Languages). Their ages ranged from 17-25. Chinese data consisted of 70 Intermediate level Chinese EFL learners (36 female, 34 male) and 68 Low-Intermediate level Chinese EFL learners (35 female, 33 male) from Changzou University, Textile and Garment Institute. Their ages ranged from 18-28. Native English speaker data were collected from 25 Native English speakers in Leeds and Oxford Universities, England and their age range was 17 - 25.

### 2.2. Instrument

Data of the study were collected via a Discourse Completion Test that consisted of 10 different compliment situations related to appearance/attire, possession and performance/ability. Situation 1, 3, 5 and 8 were about performance, 2, 6 and 10 were about possession and situations 4, 7 and 9 were about appearance.

### 2.3. Data collection and analysis

The students were given the Discourse Completion Test in their usual class hour by their teachers and they were asked to write suitable compliment responses for 10 different compliment situations. A total of 3010 compliment responses were collected; of these 1380 accounted for Turkish data, 1380 accounted for Chinese data and 250 accounted for native English data. All the responses were grouped into 16 strategies according to Chen's (1993) and Chen and Yang's (2010) strategies that were grouped into the three broad categories as Accepting, Deflecting/ Evading and Rejecting.

## 3. Results and Discussion

A total of 301 questionnaires and 3010 Compliment Responses (CRs) were collected and they were grouped into 3 super strategies as Accepting, Evading/Deflecting and Rejecting, and they had 13 substrategies. Some of the CRs contained two or more strategies.

In order to answer the first research question, Turkish Lower Intermediate and Turkish Intermediate level students' all scores were calculated, their frequencies and percentages were found and compared (see Table 3 and 4) but there were no statistically significant differences between them (p=.05). The second research question was about comparing Chinese Lower Intermediate and Chinese Intermediate level students and there were no statistically significant differences between them (p=.05) (see Table 1 and 2) . In order to answer the third research question, Chinese and Turkish EFL learners' responses were compared using paired sample t-test and no statistically significant differences between Turkish Lower Intermediate and Chinese Lower Intermediate level students (p=.05) and no statistically significant differences between Turkish Intermediate and Chinese Intermediate level students (p=.05) were found (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Paired sample t-test scores of Chinese and Turkish EFL learners

|  | Turkish LI-NE | Turkish I-NE | Chinese LI-NE | Chinese I-NE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Sig.(2-tailed) | Sig.(2-tailed) | Sig.(2-tailed) | Sig.(2-tailed) |
| **Situation 1** | ,095 | ,111 | ,076 | ,061 |
| **Situation 2** | ,077 | ,033 | ,025 | ,068 |
| **Situation 3** | 0.021 | ,073 | ,040 | ,033 |
| **Situation 4** | ,122 | ,065 | ,026 | ,044 |
| **Situation 5** | ,035 | ,044 | ,044 | ,044 |
| **Situation 6** | ,073 | ,022 | ,108 | ,047 |
| **Situation 7** | ,013 | ,011 | ,005 | ,047 |
| **Situation 8** | ,036 | ,021 | ,040 | ,066 |
| **Situation 9** | ,064 | ,035 | ,199 | ,176 |
| **Situation 10** | ,034 | ,008 | ,016 | ,043 |

Turkish Lower Intermediate level EFL learners employed Accepting, Rejecting and Deflecting categories subsequently while Intermediate level EFL learners preferred Accepting, Deflecting and Rejecting categories. Although former studies revealed that Turkish EFL learners used Deflecting and Rejecting type of responses more than Accepting (Istifci, 2008), this study showed the opposite. The same trend is also true for Chinese EFL learners. Chinese EFL learners in this study also used Accepting strategies more than the others contrary to Chen (1993) who compared Chinese with English speaking communities and claimed that Chinese speakers tend to be reluctant to accept compliments in a direct manner. Contrary to above mentioned studies, the subjects in this study showed a tendency to use Accepting type of responses more than Deflecting/Evading and Rejecting (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Overall Comparison of Turkish and Chinese EFL learners and native English speakers

|  | Accepting % | Deflecting/Evading % | Rejecting % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Turkish Low-Intermediate (N=68) (2% compliment + formula) | 77 | 14 | 7 |
| Turkish Intermediate (N=70) (4% compliment + formula) | 81 | 8 | 7 |
| Chinese Low-Intermediate (N=68) | 84 | 6 | 10 |
| Chinese Intermediate (N=70) | 64 | 14 | 22 |
| Native English Speakers (N=25) | 87 | 6 | 7 |

In terms of Accepting super strategy that was the mostly used strategy, sub-strategies included Thanking, Agreeing, Expressing Gladness, Returning, Encouraging and Explaining. 'Thanking' is the overriding strategy for Chinese, Turkish EFL learners and native English subjects although former studies proved the opposite.  It can be said that EFL learners approached native English speaker norms in terms of 'Thanking' strategy since the use of this strategy increased when the proficiency level of the students are high (Chinese low Intermediate N= 72, , Chinese Intermediate N=156, Turkish Low Intermediate N=139, Turkish Intermediate N=142). This finding supports the idea of Wolfson who found that advanced learners of English avoid direct translation or transfer of the corresponding responses from their own first languages. There are some differences between the groups in terms of 'Returning' sub-strategy. Turkish and Chinese EFL subjects employed 'Returning' strategy more than native English speakers since it stems from the indebting nature of compliment. It helps the responder to get out of the debt by returning the verbal gift to the complimenter and it is motivated by the Approbation Maxim 'maximize praise of other' (Chen, 1993:58) since praising the other person and being modest are important features of Turkish and Chinese culture.

In Accepting category, there were also combinations such as:

Thanking+Returning

Thanking+Explaining

Thanking+encouraging

Thanking+Expressing gladness

Thanking+offering

Thanking+explaining+expressing gladness

Both Turkish and Chinese EFL learners used combination of strategies (Chinese Low Int students 23%, Chinese Intermediate students 37%, Turkish Low Int students 41% and Turkish Intermediate students 39%). Native English speakers did not use any combination of strategies.

In terms of Deflecting super strategy that was the mostly used strategy, sub-strategies included offering, joking, questioning and explaining. Offering sub-strategy is a clear indication that the responder

interprets the compliment as an expression of envy or want, therefore she offers the complimenter the object of the compliment. When the object of the compliment cannot be offered to the complimenter, the responder offers to help the complimenter to obtain it or offers encouragement to satisfy the complimenter's envy. When they were complimented about a new jacket, some of the students offered to give their jackets by saying: 'You can wear it if you like', 'I can give it to you '.

Native Turkish speakers' and EFL learners' overuse of super strategy 'Deflecting' proves that the complimentees try to avoid accepting compliments by explaining or by questioning. These results are consistent with the results of Durmuşoğlu (1990) who found out that Turkish people mostly shift credit to someone else or give explanation. For situation 2, for example, most Turkish speakers' response was 'Evet, bu sunuş için çok çalıştım' whereas for native speakers of English 'Thank you' was an enough response. It was seen that EFL learners' L1, Turkish and Chinese affected their responses and most responses for situation 2 can be given as examples such as 'I studied hard for it'. Turkish and Chinese people appear to be humble in responding to compliments by disagreeing: 'It is too small', 'It is an old flat'.

Another major difference is that Turkish and Chinese speakers employed 'Deflecting' strategy more frequently than English speakers. For Turkish people it is important to be seen as modest and humble, therefore in the case of a compliment they prefer shifting the credit to someone else or explaining. Chen (1993) claims that the Chinese prefer Evade strategies when receiving compliments for character and possession because collectivism plays a significant role: that is, helping others out is something one should do and they are expected to be modest in showing their wealth: possession (for instance, of a mobile phone) is not usually something the Chinese would show outward pride in.

In terms of Rejecting super strategy that was the mostly used strategy, sub-strategies included disagreement and denigrating. Turkish EFL subjects' use of 'Rejecting' strategy type has some similarities with native Turkish subjects' use. Native English subjects did not use sub-strategies disagreement and denigrating as often as native Turkish subjects did and EFL learners employed the same strategies they use in their first language. These findings are in harmony with the findings of Chen (1993) who found out striking statistical differences between American English speakers and Chinese speakers' use of Rejecting strategy. His study revealed that Chinese speakers used Rejecting strategy more than American English speakers. He pointed out that 'Rejecting' is a clear case of a Modesty Maxim application, the responder gives no weight to the Agreement Maxim. *For example, Chinese students respond to compliments by using 'Where where' when they want to say 'no no'.* The same is true for sub-strategies disagreement and denigrating. Turkish people try to lower themselves or the object being complimented and reject the compliments. For example; in response to a compliment about a flat (situation 10) 19 subjects chose strategy 11 (denigrating) by either mentioning how expensive the flat is or by mentioning how noisy, small or uncomfortable it is. For native speakers of English it is unnecessary to talk about the qualities of the flat and in the case of  responses like the ones mentioned above, they may be shocked.

A striking difference between native English speakers and Turkish EFL Learners in the use of responses is that Turkish EFL Learners used some formulas they use in Turkish. As mentioned before, Turkish people use formulas and routines that serve to fulfill certain functions during the course of interactions, especially routines that involve the word 'God'. After analyzing the EFL data, it was seen that some EFL learners responded the compliments by translating some routines from Turkish such as 'I hope God will give you one in future, God will help you buy a flat like my flat in future'. Use of formulas and routines which involve the word 'God' 'I hope to God (Allah) will give you one in the future', 'God will help you buy a flat like my flat in the future'.

Use of formulas like 'Afiyet Olsun (Good Appetite) for situation 3.

Use of jokes more than Chinese and Native English speakers: "Am I Kasparov or what?"

As Doğançay (1990) states, the Turkish language is rich in the range of formulaic expressions and routines. There are many standardized communication situations that trigger automatic responses such as 'Güle güle giy' (wear it laughingly), 'Estağfurullah' (I ask pardon of God or Don't mention it), 'İnşallah' (if God permits). The responses used by native Turkish speakers in 'Encouraging' strategy are formulaic, prefabricated expressions in Turkish which serve to fulfill certain functions during the course of interactions and the routines which involve the word 'Allah (God)' appeal to the good will of God by expressing his power or by asking for his aid. For situation 4 Turkish subjects used one formula in their responses, that is "Afiyet Olsun" which is an automatic specific formula and it fulfills a particular social function.

Another major difference is Turkish people's frequent use of formulaic expressions and routines that supply something to say "at a time like this". The same expression is used by everyone in that culture for the same situation. Happy events are always occasions for formulas that acknowledge good fortune, although there is also awareness that luck may change, so there are formulas to protect the good from evil forces. The concept of evil eye is very powerful in Turkey, thus mention of a good event or state almost never passes without the use of some accompanying formula (e.g. Allah nazardan saklasın, *May God protect from the evil eye,* güle güle kullan, *use laughingly,* eline sağlık, afiyet olsun, *health to your hand, bon appetit*) (Tannen and Öztek, 1981).

Turkish EFL subjects seemed to translate some jokes and expressions they use in their first language. They translated the jokes they use in Turkish into English such as 'Who chose it?' (for situation 3), 'Whose student did it?' (for situation 11), 'Whose sister/brother is she/he?' (for situation 15), 'What am I? Am I a Kasparov?' (for situation 7) which were commonly used jokes among Turkish people and may surprise native speakers of English and may even cause misunderstandings.

It is known that compliments are highly routinized occurrences in English. As Manes and Wolfson (1981) claim English compliments lack originality and it is also true for compliment responses. But Turkish language is rich in the range of formulaic expressions that reveal themselves in the body of proverbs, idiomatic expressions, situational formulae and they like to decorate both the spoken and the written channels. In Turkish there are many standardized communication situations that trigger automatic responses.

## 4. Conclusions

Contrary to previous studies carried out with Turkish and Chinese EFL learners (Istifci, 2008; Chen, 2003), this study revealed that both groups used Accepting type of behaviors more than the others. However, the responses they gave were more original than English compliment responses; they contained formulaic expressions, metaphors and the responses conveyed a good sense of humour in most of the situations. It was also found that Turkish and Chinese EFL speakers used almost all strategies but native English speakers used some of them. The originality of compliment responses was also observed in the responses of EFL learners. Turkish EFL learners used most of the strategies and their responses resembled the responses of native Turkish speakers. In some situations, the strategies they chose to respond to compliments were more like the responses given by native English speakers and in some situations they used neither Turkish nor English norms. They used 'Thanking' strategy in most of the situations so it can be said that they approached native English speaker norms in using this strategy. However, in some situations EFL learners translated some jokes and cliche expressions they used in Turkish into English which may astonish native English speakers and cause misunderstandings (e.g. Who

chose it?, Your words made me so happy). As Ernawati (1996) points out translations from the L1 indicate negative transfer as lack of facility in the expressions in the target language. Although Turkish and Chinese EFL students seem to approach Native English speaker norms, they seem to apply the norms from their native culture and language when they use English by using Disagreement and Denigrating type of strategies.

The results of EFL learners are consistent with the results of native Turkish speakers' responses in a study carried out by Istifci (2008). The study revealed that EFL learners' L1, i.e. Turkish, has an influence on their production of responses in English since 'Deflecting' is a strategy which is used frequently by Turkish people. As Durmuşoğlu (1990) states, 'Explaining' is an overriding strategy of compliment responses in Turkish. Turkish people tend to downplay the object of the compliment or seem to ignore it. The EFL data confirms these findings and it is the strategy that is used mostly by EFL learners. Thus, there is transfer from Turkish on the usage and frequency of this type.

In earlier studies, Turkish students were found to use Deflecting type of behaviors (21%), Rejecting (24%) and Accepting (55%) (İstifçi, 2008). This study shows that there is a tendency to use Accepting type of behaviors (74%) more than the others (Deflecting 11%, Rejecting 12%). It may be because of the close contact with Western countries and widespread use of English. EFL learners today make use of different tools to learn English, they watch videos, films, they chat with native English people, they use social media tools more than before. Contrary to previous findings, there is a tendency to use more Accepting type of compliment responses by the Chinese EFL learners because of the societal changes that have been occurring in China (Chen & Yang, 2010). This study further demonstrates that Chinese subjects may have given up much of their modesty for the sake of agreeing with others.

This study was limited since the students answered questions in DCT and nonverbal acts could not be observed. More nonverbal data would have been collected had naturally occurring conversations have been recorded. As Cheng (2011) states most often compliments related to personality were ignored or treated nonverbally (i.e., giggling) by Chinese people.

As this study reveals, there are changes in the use of compliment responses of Turkish and Chinese EFL learners over time. Previous studies revealed that Turkish and Chinese EFL learners used 'Deflecting' and 'Rejecting' type of responses mostly (Istifci, 2008; Chen, 2003) but this study and the studies by Cheng (2011) and Chen & Yang (2010) found out that Turkish and Chinese EFL learners also use 'Accepting' type of strategies mostly.

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**Appendix A.**

**Accepting Strategies**

Strategy 1. Thanking refers to utterances that express gratitude for the compliment using 'Thanks', 'Thank you very much', and 'Thank you for your support'.

Strategy 2. Agreeing refers to CRs in which the complimentee agrees with the complimenter using expressions such as 'Sure, I like it too', and ' I think so'.

Strategy 3. Expressing gladness by indicating that the complimenter's appreciation of the thing being complimented is important to the complimentee, 'I am happy you liked it'.

Strategy 4. Returning refers to the returning of a compliment or paying back a favor. For example: 'Your jacket is nice', 'You also look fit'.

Strategy 5. Encouraging includes encouraging the complimenter to achieve the same goal, e.g. 'You will have one someday'; 'Your presentation will be good, too'.

Strategy 6. A(ccepting)-Explaining, offers information about the object of the compliment and assumes the acceptance of the compliment: 'I worked hard preparing for it, It is the color that makes it look good.

In this Accepting category, there are also combinations:

Thanking+Returning: 'Thanks. Yours look good, too'.

Thanking+Explaining: 'Thank you. I just studied hard'.

Thanking+encouraging: 'Thanks, if you buy the same jacket, it will look good on you'.

Thanking+Expressing gladness: 'Thanks, I am glad you liked it'.

Thanking+offering: 'Thank you, you can wear it if you want'.

Thanking+explaining+expressing gladness: 'thanks, I saved hard for it. I am happy you liked it'.

**Deflecting / Evading Strategies**

Strategy 7. Offering means that the complimentee offers the complimenter either the thing being complimented or help to obtain the thing being complimented, e.g. 'You can have it if you like'

Strategy 8. Using humor or joking by making jokes, e.g. 'I can sell it to you 10% off', I always look good'.

Strategy 9. Seeking confirmation or questioning is used when the complimentee seems to be ambigious between accepting and rejecting a compliment like 'Have I changed much?' 'Really?'.

Strategy 10. D(eflecting/Evading)-Explaining provides information about the thing being complimented, e.g. 'It is not new, it is an old dress, 'It is a gift from my father'.

Combination of strategies include:

Questioning+ Explaining: 'Really, I could not have time to do sports these days'.

**Rejecting Strategies**

Strategy 11. Disagreeing includes CRs such as 'No. No! It is not true'.

Strategy 12. Denigrating includes downplaying the praiseworthiness of the thing being complimented using phrases such as 'Where where' (Chinese), 'You over-praise it, It is just an old apartment'.

Strategy 13. R(ejecting)-Explaining refers to CRs that offer information about the thing being complimented for the purpose of rejecting the compliment, e.g. 'It is fake, I got in debt because of this stupid watch' (Chen & Yang, 2010).

# İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Çinli ve Türk öğrencilerin iltifat yanıtlarının karşılaştırılması

**Öz**

Bu çalışma söylem tamamlama testi yoluyla veri toplayarak İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Çinli ve Türk öğrencilerin iltifatlara verdikleri yanıtları incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışmanın katılımcıları Orta-Altı ve Orta seviyede İngilizce öğrenen Çinli ve Türk öğrenciler ve anadili İngilizce olan öğrencilerdir. Çalışmanın ilk amacı Çinli ve Türk öğrencilerin iltifat yanıtlarını karşılaştırmak ve iltifat yanıtları üzerine kendi kültürlerinin etkisi olup olmadığını bulmaktır. Çalışmanın diğer bir amacı da Çinli ve Türk öğrencilerin yanıtlarını anadili İngilizce olan kişilerin yanıtları ile karşılaştırmaktır. Katılımcılara dış görünüş/kıyafet, sahiplik ve performans/yetenek ile ilgili 10 farklı iltifat durumu içeren bir söylem tamamlama testi verilmiş ve uygun iltifat yanıtları yazmaları istenmiştir. Chen & Yang'ın (2010) kategorileri kullanılarak veriler incelenmiş, sıklıkları bulunmuş ve SPSS sisteminde her bir kategori kodlanmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Çinli ve Türk öğrencilerin iltifatlara verdikleri yanıtlar arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklılıklar göstermiştir. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Çinli ve Türk öğrencilerin verileri İngilizceyi anadili olarak konuşan kişilerin verileri ile karşılaştırıldığında, Çinli ve Türk öğrencilerin bazı strateji kullanımlarında kendi anadillerinde kullandıkları

basmakalıp ifadeler, şakalar ve klişeleri kullandıkları görülmüştür. Ancak, bazı strateji kullanımlarında İngilizceyi anadili olarak konuşan kişilerin kullandıkları normlara yaklaştıkları da söylenebilir.

*Anahtar sözcükler*: Kibarlık; söz eylemler; iltifat yanıtları; kültürlerarası çalışmalar.

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