Compliments and Compliment Responses

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要　旨

　1970年代以降、第2言語習得はHymesの提唱した伝達能力の習得にあるとする説が広く支持されている。つまり、言語習得には文法能力だけでなく、社会言語的能力の習得が不可欠であるという考えである。言語使用や第2言語習得に関する異文化間比較研究においても、効果的なコミュニケーションには文法能力だけでなく、社会言語的能力が必要であると度々指摘されている。また、言語能力が非常に高いレベルの学習者でさえ、伝達能力の一側面である語用論的な能力の運用に困難をきたしている場合が多くみられる。語用論的転移がその一例である。語用論的転移とは、学習者の母語の語用の知識が第2言語の言語行動の理解、産出に与える影響である。語用論的転移は、学習者の不適切、不十分な発話となって表れ、さらに母語話者による誤解あるいは否定的な反応につながる可能性があり、言語学習上、非常に重要な問題である。

　発話行為における異文化間の相違については、異文化間・中間言語語用論の視点から数多くの研究がなされてきた。本稿では、発話行為のひとつである賛辞に焦点を当て、初めにアメリカ英語を中心に、賛辞の機能、意味論的・統語論的特徴、トピック、話者の社会的地位と賛辞との関係、賛辞への返答の特徴、賛辞とその返答における男女間の相違、といった点について詳細に考察する。次に、日本語とアメリカ英語における賛辞と返答についての相違点に焦点を当て、コミュニケーションにおける誤解を避けるために語用論的な能力がいかに重要であるかを論じる。最後に、言語教育において語用論的な能力を教える上での問題点について触れ、実証的研究を紹介しながら、言語教育での語用論導入の有効性と必要性について考察する。第2言語習得と言語教育における語用論的な能力の重要性を理解・認識し、異文化間での更なる研究が行われ、言語教育に反映されることを期待する。

INTRODUCTION

　　Some researchers describe second language acquisition as the acquisition of what Hymes (1979) has called communicative competence (e.g. Wolfson, 1989a). That is, language learners' effective communication with native speakers in the target language is not only a product of lexical and grammatical proficiency, but also of sociolinguistic competence. Cross-cultural studies on language usage and research on second language acquisition repeatedly show that not only grammatical and lexical competence, but also sociolinguistic competence, is necessary for effective communication. It is often argued that foreign/second language learners, even at the advanced level of linguistic proficiency, have considerable difficulty acquiring the rules for communicating appropriately. For instance, they very frequently tend to transfer sociolinguistic rules

from their native language to the target language. When this occurs, inappropriate or inadequate responses may well result in negative assessments and negative reactions on the part of native speakers. One such speech act is the giving of a compliment and the response to that compliment by the person being complimented.

There are many studies relating to the sociolinguistic competence of foreign/second language learners including a number of studies on face-threatening acts which may cause cross-cultural miscommunications: requests (Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1983; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986), refusals (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), apologies (Borkin & Reinhart, 1978; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Trosborg, 1987), expression of gratitude (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986), disagreement (LoCastro, 1986), chastisement and disagreement (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989), expression of disapproval (D'Amico-Reisner, 1983), and complaints (Boxer, 1992).

According to Searle (1976), speech acts can be categorized into a small number of basic types: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Compliment is a subcategory of the expressive speech act in which the speaker expresses feelings and attitudes about states of affairs.

Each speech act is highly complex and variable, with important cultural information embedded in it (Wolfson, 1989a). At the most superficial level, sociolinguistic data collected systematically and analyzed objectively, can yield a great deal of information as to what specific formulas and routines are in use in a particular speech community, as well as their patterns of frequency and their rules of appropriateness in different speech situations.

Compliments and Compliment Responses

This author looks at one of the speech acts, specifically, compliment and compliment responses. A number of studies have been done on compliment and compliment responses in English: American English (Creese, 1991; Herbert, 1986, 1989, 1990; Herbert & Straight, 1989; Knapp, Hopper, & Bell, 1984; Manes, 1983; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Pomerantz, 1978; Sims, 1989; Turner & Edgley, 1974; Wolfson, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1989a; Wolfson & Manes, 1980), British English (Creese, 1991; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989), New Zealand English (Holmes, 1986, 1988; Holmes & Brown, 1987), and South African English (Herbert, 1986, 1989; Herbert & Straight, 1989). There are also studies done on compliments in written English, specifically peer-review text (Johnson, 1992; Johnson & Roen, 1992).

Several perspectives will be considered in compliment and compliment responses:
   1. function
   2. structural features
   3. topic

4 . status
5 . compliment responses
6 . gender-based differences
7 . cross-cultural differences / miscommunication and
8 . application to Teaching English to Speakers of Other
   Languages (TESOL).

1. FUNCTION OF COMPLIMENTING BEHAVIOR

Communication is a series of communicative acts or speech acts which are used systematically to accomplish particular purposes (Austin, 1962). Wolfson (1981) claims that compliments function in a number of ways within discourse: greeting, thanking, opening a conversation, etc. However, it is considered that the major function of complimenting is creating or affirming solidarity (Wolfson & Manes, 1980; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Holmes, 1986, 1988; Herbert, 1989, 1990). Holmes (1986) claims: "... the simplest analysis of the function of compliments treats them as positively affective speech acts directed to the addressee which serve to increase or consolidate the solidarity between the speaker and addressee" (p. 486). Thus, it seems obvious that compliments function as positively affective speech acts. Herbert (1989) argues that not only compliments, but also compliment responses, fulfill a similar solidarity-negotiating function.

Brown and Levinson (1978) propose the theories of positive politeness and negative politeness, defining them as forms of redressive action counteracting the potential face damage of a face threatening act (FTA). They define these two types of politeness as follows:

> "Positive politeness is oriented toward the positive face of H [the hearer], the positive self-image that he claims for himself. Positive politeness is approach-based; it "anoints" the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects, S [the speaker] wants H's wants (e.g. by treating him as a member of an ingroup, a friend, a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked). .....
> Negative politeness, on the other hand, is oriented mainly toward partially satisfying (redressing) H's negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination. Negative politeness, thus, is essentially avoidance based, and realizations of negative-politeness strategies consists in assurances that the speaker recognizes and respects the addressee's negative-face wants and will not (or will only minimally) interfere with the addressee's freedom of action."
> (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 75)

It appears that compliments conform to their description of utterances which may

be used as positive politeness devices. They reduce the threat of a FTA by "anointing" the addressee's positive face, by "noticing" or "attending" to the addressee's interest (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Holmes (1986) points out that obvious examples are compliments which occur in close proximity to request and directives. Similarly, compliments are frequently used to soften criticism (Turner & Edgley, 1974; Wolfson, 1983). Johnson (1992), analyzing compliments in peer-review texts, claims that writers used compliments not only to establish and maintain rapport with their addressees, but also to redress two kinds of FTAs: a global FTA (peer-review as a whole) and a specific FTA (specific criticisms and suggestions for revision). "To redress the global FTA, they used the strategies of opening and closing their letters with compliments. To soften specific FTAs, they used several strategies that involved pairing compliments with criticisms or suggestions" (Johnson, 1992, p. 67). Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989) claims that compliments can be used as a "pre-act" to prepare the ground for another act.

However, it is also argued that compliments and compliment responses can themselves be considered as FTAs (Brown & Levinson, 1978). In other words, a compliment in itself may threaten the addressee's negative face (a person's want that his or her actions be unimpeded by others) as well as function as a redressive strategy in the context of a more threatening act. Similarly, compliment responses may threaten the speaker's positive face (a person's need to have his or her wants recognized as desirable by others) (Holmes, 1986, 1988).

2. STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF COMPLIMENTS

In their study of complimenting behavior in American English, Manes and Wolfson (1981) discovered that one of the most striking features of compliments in American English is their total lack of originality. In other words, compliments are remarkably formulaic speech acts. In their corpus of 686 compliments, Manes and Wolfson (1981) reported that a small number of lexical items and syntactic patterns were found. Holmes (1986) also reported similar findings in her corpus of 517 New Zealand compliments.

a) Lexical Features

To be more specific, the overwhelming majority of compliments fall within a highly restricted set of adjectives and verbs (Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Wolfson, 1983; Wolfson & Manes, 1980). Manes and Wolfson (1981) point out that 80% of all the compliments in American data were adjectival in that the compliments depended on an adjective for their positive semantic value. What is striking is that only five adjectives (nice, good, beautiful, pretty and great) are used with any frequency. These five adjectives occur with such frequency that of all adjectival compliments in the corpus,

two-thirds make use of these five adjectives specifically.

Creese (1991), comparing his American data with British data, claims that there seems to be very little lexically that distinguishes the two groups. The four most often used adjectives in Britain are "good, nice, great, and lovely," which account for two-thirds of the British data.

In New Zealand, as well, 65% of the compliments used adjectives to express their positive affect (Holmes, 1986). The six most frequently occurring complimentary adjectives (nice, good, lovely, beautiful, great and neat) accounted for about two-thirds of all the adjectives used. The frequent usage or the majority of complimentary adjectives are, in fact, used by all three nations: the United States, Britain, and New Zealand.

With regard to non-adjectival compliments, the range of lexical items which occur in compliments is remarkably narrow. Non-adjectival compliments depended overwhelmingly on just a few semantically positive verbs with "like" and "love" alone accounting for 86% of the American data and 90% of the New Zealand data. Based on these studies, Holmes (1986), and Holmes and Brown (1987) claim that there are remarkable regularities in compliment behavior which appear to extend across different English-speaking communities. However, there are slight differences in the frequency of words (e.g. "lovely").

b) Syntactic Pattern

Compliment structure is even more severely restricted on the syntactic level than on the semantic level (Manes & Wolfson 1981; Wolfson, 1983; Wolfson & Manes, 1980). To be specific, more than 50% of the compliments in the corpus make use of a single syntactic pattern:

NP is/looks (really) ADJ (e.g. "You look good.")

In addition to this one major pattern, two others:

I (really) like/love NP (e.g. "I like your shirt.")

and

PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP (e.g. "That's a good system.")

account for an additional 16.1% and 14.9% of the data, respectively. Thus, only three patterns are actually required to describe 85% of the American compliments. Holmes (1986) points out that these three patterns also account for 78% of the New Zealand data. Knapp, Hopper, and Bell (1984) point out that their American data support

the presence of formulae for compliment form although they show less formulaic rigidity. Johnson (1992) also states that, in peer-review writing, too, writers make use of a slightly wide, but restricted set of syntactic patterns.

Manes and Wolfson (1981) argue that compliments are formulas just as much as thanks and greetings are. They also point out that compliments are highly structured formulas which can be adapted with minimal effort to a wide variety of situations in which favorable comments are required or desired. Thus, it seems that compliments can be attractive English as a Second Language (ESL) material for ESL teachers to make use of in the classroom. However, Holmes (1986) claims that the pragmatic information needed to use and to respond appropriately to compliments is not easy to acquire.

3. TOPIC

Some researchers point out that the topics of compliments in American English fall into two major categories: appearance and performance (Creese, 1991; Knapp, Hopper, & Bell, 1984; Manes, 1983; Wolfson, 1983). Wolfson (1983) comments that these categories are 1) those having to do with appearance (apparel, hair-dos, homes, furniture, automobiles, and other possessions); and 2) those which comment on ability in general and those which refer to a specific act well done.

The same pattern emerged as well in the New Zealand data. Holmes (1986) claims that the vast majority of compliments refers to just a few broad topics: appearance, ability, good performance, possessions and some aspect of personality or friendliness. Appearance and ability account for 81.3% of the data. Comparing his American data with the South African data, Herbert (1989) also reports that the topic of compliments are broadly similar. The vast majority of the South African compliments concerned personal appearance. Creese (1991) argues that her British data also fall into these categories. Thus, these studies indicate that there is some agreement in norms among these English-speaking countries at this broad level concerning appropriate topics of compliments.

However, Creese (1991) points out that a difference does exist in the frequency order of the topics of compliments between the United States and Britain: the largest category in her American data is for appearance compliments (65.8%). In her British data, it is for ability compliments (54.3%). According to Manes (1983), certain cultural values are reflected in compliments and responses. Therefore, further analysis might reveal differences within the categories concerning which aspects of appearance or which particular possessions are considered appropriate for comment.

4. STATUS

Wolfson (1983) notes that "the overwhelming majority of all compliments in American English are given to people of the same age and same status as the speaker" (p. 91). Knapp, Hopper, and Bell (1984) report that compliments between status equals account for 71% of their American data. This finding is also supported by New Zealand data (Holmes, 1986; Holmes & Brown, 1987). Holmes (1986) comments that the New Zealand data consists predominantly of compliments between status equals. She points out that compliments between equals are given most frequently in the New Zealand community.

Compliments also exist between status unequals. Some researchers argue that the great majority of compliments which occur in interaction between status unequals are given by the person in the higher position (Jones, 1964; Knapp et al, 1984; Sims, 1989; Wolfson, 1983). Wolfson's data show that compliments from higher status to lower status were found to be twice as likely to be on the subject of the addressee's ability than on appearance or possessions. On the other hand, compliments to status equals or those from lower status to higher status are likely to pertain to appearance and possessions.

Contrary to Wolfson's findings, the New Zealand data by Holmes (1986) indicate that compliments upwards are as frequent as those given downwards. She points out that compliments given upwards and downwards were twice as likely to relate to work performance or skill as to appearance, whereas with compliments between equals, just the reverse was true. Thus, differences do exist between the American data and the New Zealand data. However, the point to keep in mind is that much of the data in the New Zealand sample came from informal interactions between friends. Holmes (1986) argues that particular settings tend to correlate with particular patterns. If that is the case, further research is necessary to ensure the patterns identified in New Zealand by expanding the sample population to include a variety of status types.

5. COMPLIMENT RESPONSES

Herbert (1989) argues that compliment responses are an interesting object for study since there is relatively strong agreement within the speech community as to what form actually constitutes a "correct response." It is believed that a correct response to a compliment is a simple "thank you." Wolfson (1989a), too, claims that a simple "thank you" is nearly always appropriate as a compliment response in American English.

Pomerantz (1978) points out that responses represent the recipient's (the person receiving the compliment) resolution of conflicting conversational constraints. Holmes (1986) continues that in any conversational exchange, the preferred second part, or

response, will represent an agreement with the previous utterance. Thus, there is pressure on the recipient of a compliment to agree with the complimenter and to accept the compliment. On the other hand, there is strong pressure on the speakers to avoid or minimize self-praise. Similarly, Leech (1983) points out that the first of these constraints is the Agreement Maxim and the second is the Modesty Maxim. The Modesty Maxim puts pressure on the recipient of a compliment to reject the compliment and thus to disagree with the complimenter. These two maxims obviously conflict in practice.

However, Herbert (1989) claims that it is possible that both of these principles can be subsumed under a broader interpretation of the Solidarity Principle. That is, one conforms solidarity with the previous speaker by agreeing with that speaker's assertion and by avoiding/negating self-directed praise. He claims that the typical response is Return (e.g. "I like your sweater." "Thank you. I like yours, too.").

In his study of compliments and compliment responses, Herbert (1989) compares response strategies between English-speaking university students in the United States and in South Africa. He reports that the proportion of "Acceptances" as a compliment response type increased significantly in the South African data. That is, "Acceptances" account for 76% of the South African data, as opposed to less than half that frequency (32%) in the American corpus. Another notable point is that while 28% of the American responses are "Nonagreements" (e.g. "Scale down", "Disagreement"), less than 11% of the South African responses were so categorized. Thus, it can be argued that language performance is quite different from language prescription, at least in the United States.

The New Zealand data collected by Holmes (1986) show that the most common response to a compliment is to accept it (61%); it is relatively rare that New Zealanders overtly reject compliments (10%). Thus, these studies demonstrate that even when speech communities share a single set of linguistic resources, they may differ significantly in the allocation of those resources. In other words, culturally appropriate behavior depends on the knowledge of the sociocultural norms of language use, not only of the common language used. The relative proportion of compliment acceptances (36% [the United States] vs. 76% [South Africa] vs. 61% [New Zealand]) reflects different norms for compliment response in these three language varieties. Here, we have to keep in mind that the real number might be different since Holmes utilized a different categorization system from Herbert. It should also be noted that as Herbert (1989) suggests, the lack of a specified, exclusive set of criteria for the category assignment may have led to the subjective assignment in certain instances. That is, certain items in the corpus might well have been assigned to one category or another rather than to a specific one to be considered.

Although both Herbert and Holmes provide the frequent distribution of each response type, they did not take into account the particular situation at all. In his

study of compliment responses, Ashikaga (1993) argues: "The frequent distribution of compliment response types indicates that particular settings tend to correlate to particular patterns. ... Although it is believed that a favorable response to a compliment is a simple "thank you," Americans utilized a variety of response types according to the situations" (p.23). Kanouse, Gumpert, and Canavan-Gumpert (1981) contend that praise of performance poses fewer problems of acceptance than praise directed at the whole person. Manes (1983) comments: "A common response to compliments on the result of talent or hard work is to deny that one deserves the credit" (p. 101). Thus, it seems that there is a relationship between response type and situation. Therefore, this researcher believes that further research should take into account situational factors, also.

6. GENDER DIFFERENCES

a) Compliments

Wolfson (1983) points out that women give and receive significantly more compliments than men do. This same pattern has been found in comparable New Zealand data (Holmes & Brown, 1987; Holmes, 1988). However, an important point to note is that the overwhelming majority of the data collectors in the New Zealand study was female, and that Wolfson did not provide figures. Therefore, compliments appear to occur more frequently between females and to be given most often by females. However, more research is needed to confirm the validity of this finding across a broader range of contexts.

Based on data from New Zealand English, Holmes (1988) found that women exhibited a slight preference for the formula "I (really) like/love NP" over "PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP"(e.g. "That's a nice coat"), as opposed to men, who used both formulas with equal frequency. The major sex-based difference in formula use was the markedly greater frequency of "What (a) ADJ NP!" (e.g. "What lovely earrings!") in the speech of women, whereas men use the minimal pattern (e.g. "Great shoes!") significantly more frequently (Herbert, 1990, p. 203).

Herbert (1990) considers compliments according to the "personal focus" of the act, that is, whether the compliment subject is expressed with a surface 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person focus. He found that approximately 60% of the male-offered compliments are impersonal expressions versus 20 percent of the female compliments. On the other hand, 1st person compliments dominate among female speakers regardless of the sex of the addressee. By contrast, 1st person compliments rarely occur in the speech of males, especially when addressed to other males. This correlates to the literature of sex-differentiating language behavior (e.g. Swacker 1976, cited by Herbert) that women employ personal focus more frequently than men in many contexts.

Lakoff (1973) maintains that some adjectives (e.g. adorable, charming, lovely) are

used almost exclusively by women. With regard to adjectives used in compliments, however, Wolfson (1984) claims: "... although there are restrictions on how the adjectives may be used to and about men, there seems to be no limitation whatever on their use by men" (p. 240). Thus, the sex of the addressee might be a more important sociolinguistic variable than the sex of the speaker in conditioning the choice of speech form (Wolfson, 1983).

Concerning the topic of compliments, females are much more likely to receive appearance compliments (78%) than males (22%) (Knapp et al, 1984). Compliments on personal appearance typically involve women as speakers or addressees, or both (Holmes, 1988; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Manes, 1983). Wolfson (1983) claims that while women frequently receive compliments on their appearance from both men and women of the same, higher, and lower status in work settings, there seems to be a strong constraint against the giving of appearance-related compliments to higher-status males, especially in work-related settings. However, Holmes and Brown (1987) claim that New Zealand men receive appearance compliments although the vast majority of them are given by women.

b) Compliment Responses

Herbert (1990) claims that compliments offered by males are more likely to be accepted than compliments offered by females, especially if offered to a female. However, it is not the case that females simply accept more compliments than men do. Herbert argues that it is the sex of the person offering the compliment that serves as a better predictor of compliment acceptance. For instance, with regard to "Appreciation token" responses (e.g. "Thank you"), he found that almost one-half of male compliments received this response as opposed to 13% of compliments by females. Female complimentees utilize this response almost one and one-half times as often as male complimentees. Therefore, he generalizes that male compliments are accepted, one way or another, particularly by female recipients.

On the other hand, Herbert (1990) continues that there is a high incidence of "Nonacceptance" to female compliments, especially the subtype HISTORY. This occurs when the addressee offers a comment or series of comments on the topic of compliment. He also claims that male compliments are likely to be accepted whereas female compliments, especially those addressed to other females, are more likely to meet with "Nonagreement" responses (e.g. "I hate it"). Thus, "the sex of the complimenter is a good predictor of the likelihood of these "Nonagreement" responses, but the sex of the respondent is not" (Herbert, 1990, p. 215). It seems that the sex of participants is a very important social factor in complimenting.

7. CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES/MISCOMMUNICATION

Cross-cultural research on compliments and compliment responses has been done on Japanese (Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Benander, 1990; Billmyer, 1990; Daikuhara, 1986; Fukushima, 1990), Polish (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989), Italian (Piazza, 1984), and Mexican-Americans (Valdes & Pino, 1981). Sociolinguistic studies based on the ethnography of speaking (Hymes, 1962) have made it clear that languages differ greatly in patterns and norms of interaction.

It is considered that paying appropriate compliments and identifying them accurately are aspects of communicative competence which may differ in a variety of ways from one culture to another (Holmes & Brown, 1987). Even in two English speaking communities, the United States and South Africa, differences do exist in how native speakers respond to these compliments (Herbert, 1989; Herbert & Straight, 1989). Creese (1991) argues that there exist differences in syntactic formulas and topics of compliments between the United States and Britain.

"Paying compliments is a troublesome aspect of the English language for learners from different cultural backgrounds" (Holmes & Brown, 1987, p. 525). For instance, Wolfson (1981) comments that Indonesian ESL learners in the United States found it difficult to understand why, from their point of view, Americans used compliments so frequently. Barnlund and Araki (1985) report that Japanese in the United States are often troubled and overwhelmed by the frequency and excessive phrasing of American compliments. Malaysian students in New Zealand make similar comments (Holmes, 1986). These indicate the possibility that different cultural values may affect participants' perceptions of the intended illocutionary force of an utterance.

This researcher would like to comment on the differences in complimenting behavior between Japanese and American people. Daikuhara (1986) conducted the research on compliment/responses in Japanese and pointed out that the majority of compliments in her data made use of a very small, restricted set of adjectives. Daikuhara's data also show that a great similarity can be found between American and Japanese compliments in the attributes that are praised. Her conclusions are that it seems that compliments in Japanese show a lack of originality or are in a sense formulaic, at least in terms of semantics. Manes and Wolfson (1981) drew the same conclusion about compliments in American English.

However, there appears to be a great difference in how to respond to compliments between Americans and Japanese. Kataoka and Kusumoto (1991) point out: "It is not polite to accept praise in Japan. One is supposed to deny and humble oneself" (p. 45). In other words, any Japanese expression that corresponds to "thank you" in American English would usually be interpreted as strangely conceited by the Japanese (Aoki & Okamoto, 1988; Kato & Rozman, 1988; Okushi, 1990). Fukushima (1990) claims that Japanese generally deny a compliment even if the proposition of the

compliment is true and they sincerely appreciate it. He further argues: "... the disagreement in the rejection statement is only a secondary illocutionary act and the primary act of the negative response is to indicate the modesty of the speaker, receiver of a compliment" (p. 12).

In fact, the analysis of compliment responses shows that 95% of all reactions to praise fell into what Pomerantz (1978) calls "the self-praise avoidance" category, while only 5% shows what she calls "appreciation" (acceptance of a compliment, i.e. "Thank you") (Daikuhara, 1986). Leech (1983) argues that Japanese mores make it impossible to agree with praise by others of oneself, indicating that the Modesty Maxim takes precedence in Japan over the Agreement Maxim. Hatch (1983a, 1983b) comments that Japanese ESL speakers' denial of the positive evaluation results in the native speakers' reinforcing the compliment, which leads to uneasy continuation of these small speech events for complimenting.

Such differences may result in more serious misunderstandings because of the fact that there is so much similarity in the attributes praised between American and Japanese compliments. These similarities can lead to the assumption that the use of this speech act is identical in the two societies. This great difference, along with the dimensions of responses and frequency of occurrence of each topic, may well cause the speaker to behave inappropriately in intercultural communication if s/he does not know the rules of speaking that his/her interlocutor follows. What may result is serious communicative interference if the interlocutor interprets such conduct as an insult according to his/her own rules (Daikuhara, 1986). Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991) point out that unless speakers use appropriate language, they run the risk of appearing uncooperative at the least, or more seriously, rude or insulting. Advanced learners who have high linguistic proficiency are expected to have high pragmatic competence as well.

Thomas (1983) also points out that pragmatic failure constitutes a very important and much neglected source of cross-cultural miscommunication. Thomas (1983) points out:

> Grammatical errors may be irritating and impede communication, but at least, as a rule, they are apparent in the surface structure, so that H [the hearer] is aware that an error has occurred. Once alerted to the fact that S [the speaker] is not fully grammatically competent, native speakers seem to have little difficulty making allowances for it. Pragmatic failure, on the other hand, is rarely recognized as such by non-linguists. If a non-native speaker appears to speak fluently (i.e. is grammatically competent), a native speaker is likely to attribute his/her apparent impoliteness or unfriendliness, not to any linguistic deficiency, but to boorishness or ill-will. While grammatical error may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language-user, pragmatic failure reflects badly on him/her as a person. Misunderstandings of this nature are almost certainly at the root of unhelpful and offensive national stereotyping: "the abrasive Russian/German", "the obsequious Indian/Japanese", "the insincere American", and "the standoffish Briton". (Thomas, 1983, p. 96–97)

Thus, it seems that pragmatic knowledge plays a considerably important role in avoiding cross-cultural miscommunication.

8. APPLICATION TO TESOL

It is believed that the ability to interact successfully in a foreign language speech community depends on communicative competence of which sociolinguistic rules are an important aspect. However, the issue of whether or to what extent sociolinguistic rules can or should be taught in the ESL/EFL classroom is a controversial one. For instance, Williams (1988) argues that the large number of language functions and speech acts makes the teaching of specific acts an unattainable goal. Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991) further claim that the ideal of classroom teachers is to make students more aware of the existence of pragmatic functions in language for their use.

Wolfson (1989b) stresses the importance of teacher's imparting the knowledge of sociolinguistic rules to their students. This should be done so that their students will be able to interpret values and patterns that might be unfamiliar to them. Thomas (1983) also points out:

> It is not the responsibility of the language teacher qua linguist to enforce Anglo-Saxon standards of behavior. Rather, it is the teacher's job to equip the student to express her/himself in exactly the way s/he chooses to do so – rudely, tactfully, or in an elaborately polite manner. What we want to prevent is her/his being unintentionally rude or subservient. (Thomas, 1983, p. 96)

This author believes that language learners would benefit greatly from information on how to interpret and how to respond to native speaker sociolinguistic behavior. However, the point we should keep in mind is that teachers should not try to change the value systems of people from other cultures or to attempt to persuade students to model their personal behavior on their teachers. However, it would be most helpful if teachers would instruct and would make their students aware of sociocultural differences that affect linguistic behavior.

Yorio (1980) claims that teachers do students a serious disservice in not teaching sociolinguistic rules. Holmes and Brown (1977) also argue that because students often do not know they are making pragmatic errors, they must be given appropriate feedback by their teachers. This researcher believes that language learners must be made aware of the differences and similarities between English and their native language.

With regard to the teaching of compliments, Holmes and Brown (1987) provide classroom exercises which are aimed at achieving sociopragmatic consciousness-raising.

Billmyer (1990) investigated the effect of classroom instruction in complimenting and found that learners in the tutored group consistently produced a greater number of norm-appropriate compliments than learners in an untutored group. She also reported that learners in a tutored group responded to compliments using a variety of deflect strategies and their responses were longer and more closely approximated the length of the native speakers' replies. She concluded: "... formal instruction of social rules of language use can assist learners in communicating more appropriately with native speakers of the target language in meaningful social interaction outside of the classroom" (p. 44). It should be noted, however, that both studies above do not take into account situations in which compliments/responses occur.

Wolfson (1983) points out that certain types of compliments are more or less appropriate to certain speech situations. Holmes and Brown (1987) commented that compliments on some topics may be more acceptable than others in a particular context. In case of compliment responses, as mentioned earlier, it seems that native speakers utilize a variety of response types depending on the situations. Thus, it appears that the situation plays a very important role in both complimenting and responding to them. However, as Johnson and Roen (1992) point out, the studies on compliment/compliment responses have not examined the relationship between language use and situation. In other words, little information is available about how complimenting works within particular activities and situations. Consequently, further research should be aimed at obtaining more detailed information on situational factors so that miscommunication does not occur.

CONCLUSION

How a communication is perceived by the recipient can make a tremendous difference in cross-cultural communication. It falls on teachers of all linguistic communities to be aware of sociocultural norms governing linguistic responses by any given nationality group. The next step for these teachers is to make their students aware of these sociolinguistic differences. Then, with greater awareness, students can interpret and respond appropriately in the target language.

It seems reasonable to assert that the analysis of the patterns of speech behavior such as compliment and compliment responses and the use of these research findings could be of considerable use to both teachers and students. It is hoped that, on the basis of ethnography and sociocultural norms, further progress can be made so that unnecessary miscommunication may be avoided. Such systematic comparison is greatly needed in order to understand the sources of communicative interference which may occur among interlocutors from different cultures.

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