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The Compliment in the Arabic Language: A Pragmatic Study According to Dell Hymes' Model in Selected Narrative Texts[1]

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Abstract

Compliment is one of the practical speech acts, and how it is used plays an important role in the success or failure of communication with Arabic speakers. The use of compliments depends on factors that must be recognized, including the situation, speakers' position, and goals-factors that are relevant to pragmatic skills and cultural issues. This research chose the speech act of compliment for study, after extracting it from eight Arabic narrative texts and studying it according to the Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model and the descriptive-analytical method. This research aims to identify how to use compliments in the Arabic language, and to reveal the importance of paying attention to pragmatic and cultural matters in successful communication with Arabic speakers. The results showed the coordination between the parts of Hymes' model, where the nature of each part depends on the others. Using compliments in informal situations was higher than in formal situations. Most compliments occurred in equal and friendly situations. Nine purposes for using compliments were extracted, and the most-used was praise. The research revealed six tones that played an important role in communication. The tone of joy was used more than the others. Seven rules for compliment were also extracted, where positive features were more than the others. Furthermore, explicit compliments occurred more than implicit compliments. Five topics for compliments were extracted, where people's personalities and appearances occurred more frequently. There were seven linguistic styles for compliments, most of which were adjectives.

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1. Introduction

Pragmatics plays an important role in daily conversations between people. Therefore, every language learner must learn pragmatic skills to experience successful communication with target language speakers. One of the important sub-branches of pragmatics is speech acts. Thus, the present study chose to examine the speech act of compliment, considering its importance in communication and its place in daily conversations. In fact, knowing how to use this speech act in Arabic and the factors affecting it will lead to the knowledge of the cultural characteristics of Arabic speakers and, as a result, success in communicating with them.

1.2. Research Questions

1- What is the influence of Dell Hymes' model in examining how to use compliments in Arabic?

2- What are the linguistic methods of compliment in the Arabic language?

3- What topics are complimented in Arabic?

2. Literature Review

According to Yule (2010), "Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)" (p. 19). Among the branches of pragmatics, sociopragmatics is the subject of the present research, which examines the use of language in the context of society according to the verbal context, the situation, and the social position of the participants in the conversation. One of the most important cases studied in pragmatics is the theory of speech acts. Austin believed that these acts are done through words. This means that it is a linguistic or verbal act and it has a certain function in communication (Al-Jadie, 2014).

Hymes' model is one of the most common models in conversation analysis. Since Hymes believed that paying attention to the use of language among its speakers is an important issue that does not fit within the framework of linguistic rules, it should be done in the context of society and by examining social or cultural situations (Aghagolzadeh, 2014). Therefore, he proposed a model called SPEAKING, which consists of eight parts including Situation, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre.

3. Methodology

The research method used in this research is the descriptive-analytical method, where 53 examples of speech acts of compliment were extracted and analysed from eight Arabic narrative texts. This research has investigated the speech act of compliment according to the parts of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model. It also deals with the types of compliments and the subjects in which this speech act is used and has presented its most obvious linguistic methods.

Among the researches carried out in this field, the following can be mentioned:

Al-Zubaidi's article (2021), "Iraqi Online Compliments on Facebook and Instagram: A Cyber Pragmatics Analysis".

Nielson, El Bakary, and Al Batal's article (1993), "Egyptian and American compliments: A cross-cultural study".

The article of Farghul and Al-Khatib (2001), "Jordanian college students' responses to compliments A pilot study".

Ar-riyahi and Abdul Sattar's article (2019), "Gender Variation Elicited in the Intonational Patterns of Compliments in Everyday Spoken Iraqi Arabic: An Auditory Study".

This research aims to identify how to use compliments in the Arabic language and to reveal the importance of paying attention to pragmatic and cultural matters in successful communication with Arabic speakers.

4. Results & Discussion

This research investigated the speech act of compliment in eight Arabic narrative texts, according to the Dell Hymes' model, and referred to the types, topics, and methods of compliment:

Situation: The compliment was used more in informal situations (86.79%) than formal (13.21%).

Participants: In this section, three categories of participants were observed (equal and friendly (52.83%), unequal and formal (35.85%), and unequal and friendly).

Ends: In this section, nine purposes were extracted for using compliments (Praise (39.62%), agree and approve (16.98%), satisfaction, defense, achieving the desired, mocking, assuring, thanking, pointing out defects).

Act sequence: In this section, a part of one of the texts was examined as an example, and it was referred to how to use the compliment according to the verbal context and the situation, as well as the effect of these two on the dialogue components.

Key: Six tones were found in the use of compliments, which were joy (43.40%), surprise (24.53%), serious, begging, regret, and mockery.

Instrumentalities: The oral instrument was used in the reviewed texts.

Norms: Seven norms or rules were found in the use of compliments, including mentioning positive characteristics (33.96%), support (24.53%), surprise, positive comparison, compliment in response to compliment, achieving the desired, negation of the negative adjective.

Genre: The genre used in the examined texts was dialogue.

Types of compliments: The compliment is divided into two categories, explicit and implicit, with the amount of explicit compliments (86.79%) being more than the implicit (13.21%) ones.

Compliment topics: Five topics were found in this section, which were the personality of people (37.74%), appearance (people, objects, and foods) (35.85%), words, ideas, and events.

Linguistic methods of compliment: In this regard, seven methods were obtained, including mention of attributes (50.94%), emphasis (13.21%), call, comparative adjective, simile, surprise, and questioning.

5. Conclusion

The results showed the coordination between the parts of Hymes' model, where the nature of each part depends on the others. Using compliments in informal situations was higher than in formal situations and the reason for this can be the difficulty of using compliments in formal situations. Most compliments occurred in equal and friendly situations and the reason for this is probably the ease of using compliments there. Nine purposes for using compliments were extracted, and the most used was praise. The research revealed six tones that play an important role in the communication, with the tone of joy being used more than the others. Seven rules for compliments were also extracted, where positive features were more than the others. Explicit compliments occurred more than implicit compliments. In addition, five topics for compliments were extracted, where people's personalities and appearances occurred more than the others. Finally, there were seven linguistic styles for compliments, most of which were adjectives

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