

**A Sociolinguistic Investigation of  
Compliments and Compliment Responses  
among Young Japanese**

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## Abstract

This dissertation is a sociolinguistic investigation into the system of the speech act of complimenting among young Japanese. Sociolinguistic studies on complimenting have been rather extensively carried out in Western academic discourse since the 1980s. The rapid development of this field went hand in hand with the existing growing body of work on speech acts, linguistic politeness and language and gender studies, all fields which came to flourish during the 1960s-80s. The speech act of complimenting has so far been overwhelmingly regarded as one of the most obvious positive politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson 1987; Holmes 1995) and also as a feminised sociolinguistic practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Herbert 1990). However, the sociolinguistic examination of complimenting in non-Western speech communities remains less well investigated.

This dissertation challenges some traditional premises about the nature of this speech act and explores how sociolinguists should go about analysing this variable in the context of a non-Western speech community. In so doing, I highlight that applying localized cultural knowledge plays a crucial role in unfolding the social and linguistic systems of complimenting in a Japanese speech community.

The analysis presented here draws on a corpus consisting of more than 40 hours of recordings with 67 young Japanese university students, collected through ethnographic techniques. Fieldwork was conducted for over a year in order to obtain these data in southern Japan (namely, Kumamoto and Oita prefectures). A total of 369 compliment utterances within 143 compliment sequences were extracted and transcribed from this corpus.

To achieve a satisfying sociolinguistic understanding of this speech act, the data are analysed with a combination of both the qualitative methods of discourse analysis and the quantitative methods of variationist sociolinguistics.

This dissertation brings much needed discussions of this variable situated within non-Western contexts and hence makes significant contribution to the field, by adding new perspectives and findings about complimenting behaviour. On the one hand, my work found some regularity in compliments which parallel the findings of previous studies. This itself is a new insight in the field of compliments studies, namely, that there are cross-culturally (if not universally) pervasive properties of complimenting. On the other hand, this study highlighted some originality in this speech act among the young Japanese. The construction and application of compliments in the case of Japanese substantially manifest its complex and intricate sociolinguistic system, which my dissertation is dedicated to describing through the naturally occurring data of spoken Japanese.

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is of my own composition, and that it contains no material previously submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. The work reported in this thesis has been executed by myself except where due acknowledgment is made in the text.

Chie Adachi  
Edinburgh, January 2011

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## List of Abbreviations

ADJ	adjective
COP	copula
GEN	genitive case (particle)
GM	goal marker
HON	honorific (title, suffix)
NA	nominal adjective
NEG	negative, negation
NOM	nominative case
NP	noun phrase
OM	object marker
PAST	past tense
POL	polite form
PROG	progressive form
Q	quotative marker
QM	question marker
SFP	sentence-final particle
TOP	topic marker
VP	verb phrase

## Transcription Conventions

.	end of utterance
„	interruption by another utterance, indicates the utterance is not complete
,	a short pause
?	a question utterance
??	a tag question
[ ↑ ][ → ][ ↓ ]	rising, parallel, falling intonation
/number sec/	seconds of silence
=	latching
...	reluctance to continue/ finish the utterance
< >{ < }	over lapping where it starts
< >{ > }	over lapping where it ends
【 【   】 】	before completing an utterance (indicated by 【 【 at the end of uncompleted utterance), the next utterance by another starts (indicated by 】 】 at the beginning of a new utterance)
[]	voice quality, e.g. loud / fast / high-pitched / etc
()	short back-channeling
< >	laughter; <laugh>
""	quoted speech
#	inaudible words

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This dissertation is a sociolinguistic investigation into the system of the speech act of complimenting among young Japanese. Sociolinguistic studies on complimenting have been rather extensively carried out in Western academic discourse since the 1980s. The rapid development of this field went hand in hand with the existing growing body of work on speech acts, linguistic politeness and language and gender studies, all fields which came to flourish during the 1960s-80s. The speech act of complimenting has so far been overwhelmingly regarded as one of the most obvious positive politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson 1987; Holmes 1995) and also as feminised sociolinguistic practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Herbert 1990). However, the sociolinguistic examination of complimenting in non-Western speech communities remain less well investigated, with most of work heavily relying on theories and methodologies developed within Western academic discourse. This dissertation challenges some traditional premises about the nature of the speech act of complimenting and explores how sociolinguists should go about analysing this variable in the context of non-Western speech communities. In so doing, I highlight the fact that applying localized cultural knowledge plays a crucial role in unfolding the social and linguistic systems of complimenting in a Japanese speech community. This dissertation therefore provides some much needed discussion of this variable situated within non-Western contexts and hence

makes significant contribution to the field in which my work adds on new perspectives and findings about complimenting behaviour.

To achieve a satisfying sociolinguistic understanding of this speech act, data collected through ethnographic techniques are analysed with a combination of both the qualitative methods of discourse analysis and the quantitative methods of variationist sociolinguistics. Lakoff (2003), though referring to apologies, highlights the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in the discourse analysis of speech acts.

... we have to understand apologies as contributions to a large discourse, viewing them from a variety of perspectives, formal and functional, cognitive and interactive, individual and group, intralanguage and societal; to examine the apology from the perspective of phonology, syntax, lexical semantics, speech act pragmatics, conversational analysis, narratology, and sociolinguistics. In some ways, any speech act verb might illustrate the point.  
(Lakoff 2003:201)

This study therefore stands firmly within the “multidisciplinary approach for discourse analysis, an area that borrows from and contributes to many fields both within linguistics and outside of it” (Lakoff 2003:200).

## **1.2 Why do compliments matter? – The motivation for this study**

In order to establish the motivation for the current study, this section discusses three principal reasons why studying the speech act of complimenting is a beneficial contribution to the field of sociolinguistics, especially when looking at a Japanese speech community.

The first reason relates back to my general observation in life. From an early age, I could not help but notice that building fine interpersonal



relationships with people around you makes your life much better, and in some senses, easier. As Goffman (1956) argues, the self only exists in relation to or in contrast to others. Individuals are social beings in a way that we cannot avoid contacts with others in society. Given this, an inevitable fact for any individual, we have a drive to improve and make more positive relationships with others and society as a whole. We draw on numerous mediums to make this possible. Communication through language is one major medium that facilitates the process of forming relationships. As Austin (1962) would put it, language enables speakers to perform acts. Among the many acts that we perform daily through speech, complimenting is one of the principal speech acts that helps us establish positive interpersonal relationships with others. Compliments have been claimed to function as “social lubricants” which “grease the social wheels” (Wolfson 1983:89). Knapp et al. also report that “some people believe compliments are as critical to social success as oxygen is to breathing” (1984:12). It is so deeply embedded into our daily sociolinguistic activities that I believe it is safe to claim that we all give and receive compliments to a lesser or greater extent.

One illustration of how pervasive this speech act is and how vital people regard this speech act to be is the existence of numerous etiquette books on compliments and on how to give (and receive) compliments. On the website Amazon UK, if we search for books on ‘compliments’, there are 54,484 results. On Amazon Japan also, when searching for books on *home* (‘compliments’), we find 2,955 hits. These books cover everything from how to give compliments in various situations (e.g. romantic relationships, workplaces, and family contexts such as mother–daughter relationships) to

how (not) to accept compliments. Not only giving compliments, but also responding to compliments requires sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain 1980) and this is the kind of sociolinguistic competence which the current research aims to investigate among young Japanese.

Another example of how important people find complimenting is a website hosted by the British Broadcasting Cooperation, one of the biggest broadcasting companies in the world, called "Random Compliment Generator"

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/switch/slink/play/games/compliments/>). This programme gives web-visitors unlimited numbers of compliments every time they click the image of a heart appearing in the centre. Apparently, it is designed to "boost your ego and instantly make you feel good".

A French researcher Karbrat-Orecchioni describes a compliment as "un cadeau verbal", i.e. 'a verbal gift' (1987:15 cited in Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:145). Complimenting, therefore, is essentially a gift-exchanging (sociolinguistic) practice that we all seem to engage in, and as we have seen in the examples of etiquette books and the BBC website, it plays a significant role in how we imagine social relations.

This is precisely the reason why I study compliments: I intend to investigate the speech act of complimenting that is so fundamental in the sociolinguistic world that we live in. Nonetheless, despite their ubiquity, we do not usually pay close attention to something that is so natural for us to do. This dissertation therefore aspires to find out exactly how we (socially and linguistically) perform this speech act.

The second motivation for this study is the importance of studying compliments in Japanese. This dissertation examines 'Japanese' compliments rather than any other languages. As briefly mentioned, compliments have been studied rather well especially within English-speaking Western academic discourse since the 1980s. Golato points out that "compliments and compliment responses have been studied in detail in twelve different languages, and in 6 varieties of English alone" (2005:1). Out of these twelve languages, however, only four (Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Korean) are taken from non-English speaking and non-Western speech communities.

Although there have been several studies on Japanese compliments, this work on Japanese compliments is still rarely circulated within Western academic discourse. These studies also tend to focus on comparative studies between Japanese and American English (Araki & Barnlund 1985; Daikuhara 1986; Matsuura 2004). Studies solely dedicated to Japanese compliments are seldom seen within English-speaking Western academic discourse. Many of the studies on Japanese compliments remain within Japanese academia as they are written in Japanese (Kim 2006, 2007; Kawaguchi et al. 1996; Kumatoridani 1989; Maruyama 1996; Ono 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Terao 1996; Yokota 1985). Hence, this study aims to bridge the two academic discourses of Western/English-speaking and non-Western/non-English-speaking speech communities in the work of compliments. As I add another case study of Japanese speech community, the current study also makes a significant contribution to several sub-fields of linguistics, i.e. speech act studies, linguistic politeness and language and gender studies, through its overlapping research interests.

Last but not least, the reason why this study focuses on young adults as a targeted age group of speakers in particular is in order. After speakers begin to acquire sociolinguistic competence through adolescence and after critical period, university life is a crucial period where much identity construction and face work take place (Eckert 1989, 2000; Bucholtz 1999; Mendoza-Denton 2008). In so doing, speakers prepare themselves for moving into an adult world. Complimenting therefore, having a lot to do with these interactional activities, has been observed frequently within this age group of young adults (Billmyer 1990; Herbert 1990; Ishihara 2003; Johnson & Roen 1992; Kim 2006; Lorenzo-Dus 2001; Matsuura 2004).<sup>1</sup> Certainly, I have also witnessed compliments among older generation Japanese (age range +50). However, in more than 20 hours of recorded sociolinguistic interviews with this age group, complimenting was not detected as frequently as it was with young adults. This data is therefore not reported here. This thesis focuses on data from one group of young speakers, since comparing two age groups of speakers would have introduced too many variables to take into consideration for one study. Finally, being an insider for the speech community (as I was once a member of this community), meant some significant advantages for me as a researcher<sup>2</sup> – in particular, it made me more accessible to the community over a long period of time, which resulted in enriching my ethnographic data to a great extent.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the pilot recordings were also conducted with children at a kindergarten in Japan to see whether complimenting occurs, I found no compliments at all within this age group. See Chapter 3 for more discussion.

<sup>2</sup> I discuss in detail advantages and disadvantages of being an insider/outsider of the speech community under investigation in Chapter 3.

### 1.3 Research Questions

This section sets out the research questions that this dissertation aims to answer. The primary aim of this dissertation is to describe what the speech act of complimenting in a Japanese speech community involves sociolinguistically. Due to the nature of this speech act, issues relevant to speech act theory, linguistic politeness and language and gender are all closely related. The principal question that I will be asking throughout this dissertation is:

- 1) What do compliments socially and linguistically involve in a non-Western, non-English-speaking community, that is, among young Japanese?

In the course of tackling this primary question, the following questions about Japanese compliments and responses to compliments among young Japanese will also be addressed:

- 2) How frequently do compliments occur?
- 3) What linguistic features do compliments consist of? That is, what linguistic (semantic and syntactic) factors constrain the speech act of complimenting?
- 4) Given that compliments reflect community values, what do the speakers compliment others about? What are the topics of compliments?

- 5) How do the speakers build up the discourse of complimenting?  
What happens before first compliments occur?
- 6) Is complimenting a gendered speech act? Do women compliment more than men?
- 7) How does the social factor of status constrain this speech act? Do low status (junior) speakers compliment more than high status (senior) speakers?
- 8) How do the speakers respond to compliments? Do they accept/reject/evade compliments?
- 9) What do compliments do in interaction among young Japanese?  
What are the functions of compliments?

In order to answer a set of such variety of questions, the investigation requires an analysis that draws on interdisciplinary approaches. At different points, I will adopt both the qualitative method of discourse analysis (cf. Brown & Yule 1983; Holmes 2008) and quantitative method of variationist sociolinguistics (Labov 1972, 1994, 2001) in an effort to illuminate the naturalistic data collected using ethnographic techniques.

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

The dissertation is organised as follows: following the introduction and motivation to this study in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 outlines the background knowledge required to best understand this dissertation. Key concepts and terminologies that are crucial in my study are introduced in this chapter. In an attempt to establish what a compliment is, I consider various aspects of

compliments. First, I establish a stance that complimenting is one of the most pervasively performed speech acts. Secondly, in relation to linguistic politeness, the current study recognises complimenting as form of facework. Finally, the importance of considering the situated contextuality of compliments is highlighted. I then move on to discuss a few definitions of compliments drawn from previous studies in English and Japanese. This chapter also touches on some previous work that has focused on a range of aspects of compliments: the linguistic realizations of compliments, the topics of compliments, politeness (facework) and compliments, gender and compliments, and compliment responses.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the current study. My project is a methodological improvement on previous studies on compliments. While it has been the tradition to rely on elicited data in speech act studies, my analysis draws on more than 40 hours of recorded naturally occurring data. I collected this data through ethnographic techniques while on fieldwork in Japan. The first part of this chapter discusses what kinds of methodologies are available to researchers working on speech acts, including those which have been implemented in previous research. Following Jucker's (2009) typology of the three major methodologies within the field – “the armchair”, “the field” and “the laboratory” method, – I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of applying these methodologies to various types of research. In so doing, I verify that the field method is the methodology, which is best suited for the current study, given the research questions I ask. In this chapter, I outline the benefits of conducting group recordings combined with sociolinguistic interviews and lunchtime

recordings as a means of addressing the Observer's Paradox (Labov 1972, 1984). Chapter 3 then reviews some key issues regarding 'discourse', as my study largely draws on discourse analysis as an analytic tool in examining Japanese compliments. Not only a broad notion of discourse analysis is reviewed here, but also other closely related disciplines that deal with discourse are taken into consideration. Finally, the last part of this chapter discusses exactly how my fieldwork was conducted. How long was the fieldwork for? Who were the participants? How were ethical issues addressed? How was the data organised and transcribed into the corpus after the collection? – the answers to these questions will be found here.

The first half of Chapter 4 provides an overview of the data set: how many compliment sequences, compliments and compliment responses are analysed for this study (Research Question 2). I compare two sets of data across different styles<sup>3</sup>: sociolinguistic interviews and lunchtime recordings. The second half of Chapter 4 attempts to answer the question of what lexical items and syntactic patterns are involved with the construction of Japanese compliments (Research Question 3).

In Chapter 5, I examine Japanese compliments at a larger discourse level. Firstly, I discuss what topics elicit compliments among the Japanese speakers in my study (Research Question 4). Second, this chapter explores the relationship between compliments and power plays, using the community-specific notion of status (Research Question 7), the *senpai-kohai*

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<sup>3</sup> I use "style" as an umbrella term for different types of speeches conducted in different contexts and/or situations. As in Labov's work, (1972) style was measured based on the amount of attention paid to speech (e.g. 'casual' vs. 'careful' speech). For the fact that there are differences between two types of speech (sociolinguistic interviews and lunchtime recordings) in terms of formality or casualness of speech, the term style is called for here.



relation (Nakane 1988). The last part of this chapter is dedicated to the discussion of how compliments are built up in discourse (Research Questions 5 and 9). My naturally occurring conversational data indicate that complimenting often requires some kind of discourse work before compliments first occur. I illustrate how interlocutors (complimentees, complimenters and third-party participants) develop pre-compliment discourse and finally come to elicit compliments.

Chapter 6 looks especially at the social category of gender and its relationship to complimenting behaviour (Research Question 6, 7 and 9). To test the hypothesis that complimenting is a gendered speech act (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Herbert 1990; Holmes 1995), I analyse various social and linguistic features of Japanese compliments. There seem to be certain norms operating as the community, irrespective of gender (for example, the directness of compliments), while there are some constraints that women and men orient to differently, (for example, the dynamics of the *senpai-kohai* relationship). I co-opt a variationist approach to quantitative analysis, investigating whether there is any correlation between these (socio)linguistic factors and the way women and men pay compliments in the community.

Chapter 7 investigates compliment responses in Japanese: how the Japanese speakers respond to compliments given (Research Question 8 and 9). In this chapter, I first review some key concepts and studies regarding compliment responses in various languages. In so doing, I set out a typology for analysing compliment responses for the current study. I then demonstrate what interactional strategies are found in the corpus. I show, first of all, that not all compliments elicited compliment responses. Within the 209

compliment responses analysed, I further categorise them into the four response types: acceptance, rejection, evading and a combination of these strategies. Finally, in order to investigate what constrains the way compliments were responded to, the analysis again utilises multivariate analysis on the variation in compliment responses.

In Chapter 8, I discuss the particular lexical variable that frequently occurs within Japanese compliments: *sugoi* ('amazing'). This variable has a phonological variant, *sugee*, and I analyse the indexicality of these two variants. After touching on the referential meanings and the grammatical function of this variable, I show how this linguistic form of *sugoi/sugee* may carry out multiple pragmatic functions among young Japanese. I also investigate social meanings indexed through the use of these variants as my participants talk about them in a series of playback interviews (as outlined in Chapter 3). These two variants index a number of social meanings and stances within the act of complimenting and allow the Japanese speakers to perform numerous kinds of interactional work.

Lastly, Chapter 9 concludes with some findings and a summary of my research. In addition, as further implication of my research, I discuss the benefit of my research for language learners of Japanese. Because my study illustrates how this speech act is conducted appropriately by the competent speakers of Japanese, it has some pedagogical implications for language learners of Japanese.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review: Theoretical Frameworks and Previous Studies on Compliments**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the background knowledge needed to make sense of this dissertation is introduced. I touch on some key concepts and terminologies that have been used in the studies of compliments in the existing literature. There will be discussions of what a compliment is, the linguistic realizations of compliments, the topics of compliments, politeness and compliments, gender and compliments, and compliments responses. I also consider a few definitions of compliments from previous research, establishing the definition of compliment for the current study. The theoretical frameworks of these previous studies provide a range of perspectives, all of which are relevant – to a greater or lesser extent – to my own research.

### **2.2 What is a compliment? Towards a definition of compliments**

As research interest in speech acts has grown over the last half century, research on the speech act of complimenting has attracted a number of scholars in various disciplines: philosophers, pragmaticians, applied linguists and (interactional) sociolinguists. Their attempt to define what a compliment is has been more of a struggle and/or challenge than an easy task right from the start. This section discusses key issues in defining a compliment and illustrates some of the definitions of compliment from the

past literature. I then finally propose the definition of compliment on which the current study stands.

### **2.2.1 Complimenting as a speech act**

Austin was the first of many provocative philosophers in the 60s who began to realise that there is more to language than 'sense' – the literal meanings attached to language. In his world famous book, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), he proposes the idea that all utterances are indeed actions.

Austin distinguishes three aspects of meanings in language use: 1) the locution, 2) the illocution and 3) the perlocution. The locution can be understood at the semantic level: the literal meaning of the words uttered. He suggests that language has 'forces' to perform actions (the illocutionary force), and this usually produces some effects on the hearer (the perlocution). Austin also initially anticipated that many utterances contain performative verbs in utterances, e.g., 'apologize', 'object', 'promise' and so forth. For instance, through the utterance "I hereby apologize", the speaker clearly performs an action of apology. Austin's other contribution was the notion of 'felicity conditions' that make these performative utterances possible. He proposed that there are certain rules available to interlocutors to make sense of the speech acts. For instance, sincerity conditions, one of the components of felicity conditions, require speakers to perform speech acts in a sincere manner: these performative verbs are only effective if speakers mean what they say (I discuss intentionality and sincerity in the later section 2.2.5 in more detail).

However, as one can readily find counter examples, speech acts need not be realised with performative verbs or performed with sincere intentions. In the case of complimenting, it is more common to find compliments in forms such as “I love your dress” without any performative verbs, rather than “I (hereby) compliment you on your dress” with the performative verb, *compliment*.

Searle, one of the many students of Austin’s studying at Oxford at the time, attempts to solve this problem by introducing the notion of “indirect speech act” (1969). Indirect speech acts can be explained as some linguistic activity manifested through the use of non-prototypical forms. The utterance “Would you mind not smoking in here?” uttered by a restaurant owner to a customer is a declarative (“I order you not to smoke here”) performed indirectly by an interrogative form as a request. In the case of complimenting also, these indirect patterns are readily found and my corpus partly consists of this type of compliments.

### **2.2.2 Complimenting as facework**

Complimenting is essentially a type of speech act that gives evaluations (presumably positive evaluations) to addressees. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet put it, “compliments are social moves that live in a landscape of evaluation” (2003:145). This evaluative quality of complimenting suggests that these evaluations can potentially warm or in fact hurt addressees’ feelings, depending on how it is done.

On the one hand, complimenting can be a way of redressing potential face-threats. Johnson (1992) and Johnson and Roen (1992) investigated

students' peer reviews of their writing assignments and observed that 'pro forma' compliments were used to avoid only being negative in the peer-review. Students tended to use compliments as a type of encouragement and face-mitigating tool.

On the other hand, insofar as complimenting is eventually giving some sort of evaluation and/or judgement about attributes of addressees, one cannot avoid potential face-threats to addressees through this speech act. These issues have been widely dealt within the field of linguistic politeness (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987).

It would not be an exaggeration to state that Brown and Levinson (1987) were the most influential scholars in the history of linguistic politeness theory. They introduced to linguistics the notion of 'face', originally pioneered by Goffman (1967), in explaining linguistic politeness phenomena. They define face as "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (1987:61). They further distinguish two types of face: positive and negative face in which they describe as following:

(a) Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition

(b) Positive face: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants

(Brown & Levinson 1987:61)

Because face is "the public self-image" (1987:61) that is open to negotiation through interaction with others, face can be damaged and threatened as well

as motivated and enhanced. Brown and Levinson call these former acts Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs hereafter). That is, for instance, some situations and/or activities where the interlocutors can possibly lose their face.

Another point in Brown and Levinson's theory that should be noted here is that they considered politeness 'strategy'. They proposed positive and negative politeness strategies that both address positive and negative face wants independently. Positive politeness strategy includes noticing and attending to the hearer's face, seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement, and joking. These tend to be used as in-group identity markers. On the other hand, negative politeness strategy includes being indirect conventionally, hedging, giving deference, apologizing and so forth. Consequently and perhaps not surprisingly, Brown and Levinson consider the speech act of complimenting to be one of the most obvious positive politeness strategies.

However, the biggest criticism to Brown and Levinson's theory was that they claim that positive and negative politeness are mutually exclusive and that a speech act falls into one of the two categories. Furthermore, they insist that some speech acts are inherently face-threatening, hence impolite or polite. This is, however, highly problematic, as some point out (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Mills 2003; Thomas 1995), since we can readily come up with counter examples in real life. According to Brown and Levinson, complimenting is a positive politeness strategy as speakers notice and attend to addressees' interests, wants, needs, goods, and so forth. However, simultaneously, complimenting can, for instance, set up a debt and even be interpreted negatively (Mills 2003). In some cultures, such as Samoan culture (Holmes & Brown 1987:526), when one compliments on something which

belongs to an addressee, this puts the complimented under pressure to offer the object to the addressee as a gift. In other words, depending on contexts and situations in which complimenting is articulated, this speech act need not be interpreted simply as a positive politeness strategy. As Meyerhoff argues, “it becomes extremely unlikely that a specific routine or gesture will ever be interpretable purely as a gesture of positive or negative politeness” (1999:229). This suggests that it is highly relevant to consider the power of ‘context’ in understanding the accurate illocutionary force of compliments.

### **2.2.3 Complimenting, other speech acts and politeness**

The relationship between speech acts and politeness is a very interesting and entwined one. To investigate this relationship in Japanese society, I conducted a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to investigate how the Japanese perceive compliments and other evaluative speech acts based on a politeness scale. The questionnaire was administered from January to February in 2008 in Japan. A total of 147 questionnaires (see Appendix 1 for the original questionnaire and Appendix 2 for the English translated version of the questionnaire) were distributed to Japanese participants in the age range 18 to over 50 (67 males and 80 females). There was a 100% return rate. Participants were invited to evaluate each speech act by choosing its politeness level on a scale from 1 (least polite) to 10 (most polite). Seven evaluative speech acts were selected for this research: sarcasm (*hiniku*), praise (*syousan*), flattery (*osezi*), insult (*buziyoku*), encouragement (*hagemasi*), compliment



(*home*) and appreciation (*kansya*). The results are shown in Figure 2.1 below.

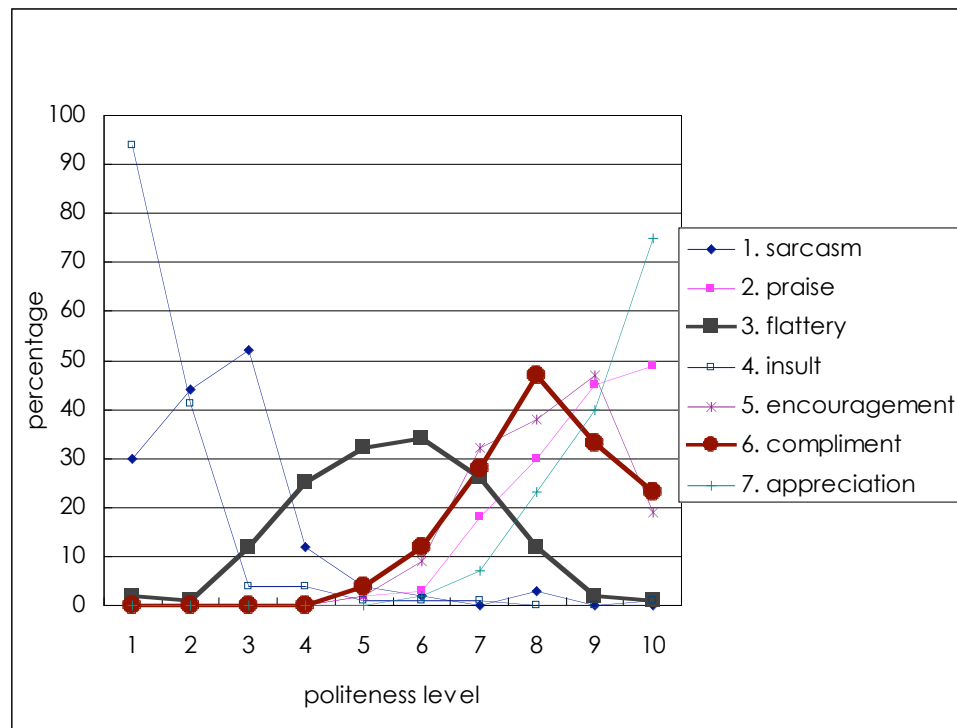


Figure 2.1 Distribution of Politeness Levels for Seven Speech Act Types in Japanese

It is noticeable here that, except the speech act of flattery, the six other speech acts are evaluated as either polite or rude, showing a peak on the left (least polite) or right (most polite) end. This result suggests that the Japanese are unsure of whether flattery is a polite speech act or not. Possibly it is confusing for the speaker because flattering is saying something ostensibly nice for the addressee, but not necessarily true to their honest evaluations. Put differently, politeness norms require people to behave in certain ways even though they end up being in a paradoxical situation. Overall, however, we may conclude that the

Japanese perceive the speech act of complimenting as more of a polite speech act.

#### **2.2.4 The importance of contextuality in complimenting**

For any speech acts, situated contextuality is the key to accurately understanding the illocutionary force of speech acts. Mills highlights the importance of aptly decoding context, stating that “compliments can also function in very different ways depending on the context” (2003:219). Holmes further indicates the possibility of compliments functioning as potential FTAs: “compliments may have a darker side then. For some recipients, in some contexts, an apparent compliment may be experienced negatively, or as face-threatening. They may be patronising or offensively flattering. They may also, of course, be sarcastic” (1995:119). I take the stance that any speech acts are essentially hardly ever to be ‘labeled’ according to the binary distinction of polite or impolite speech acts and/or positive or negative politeness strategies in Brown and Levinson’s sense.

Even compliments which are obviously intended positively can be interpreted as inappropriate, depending on context. For instance, the utterance “Great shirt” to a boss leading a discussion with other highly positioned employees at a business meeting can be regarded as inappropriate. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet put it, “inappropriate compliments are moves that might do wanted facework for the addressee in some situation, but do not do the facework called for in the utterance context” (2003:146). Paying more attention to “context” – when, how and to

whom speakers are paying compliments – is undoubtedly critical for precisely decoding the illocutionary force of this speech act.

This view of understanding the context also addresses the issue of addressees' active contribution to decoding the illocutionary force. Addressees inevitably attempt to infer what is implicated by speakers in conversations. Grice (1969, 1975) introduces the notion of conventional and conversational implicature to address these issues. Unlike conventional implicature, which is expressed as part of the literal meanings of words, conversational implicature can be inferred based on speakers' and addressees' shared norms in conversation. Since conversational implicature is not just generated by the inherent or literal meanings of the words uttered, decoding conversational implicature heavily relies on the context that the interactants are involved in. Such a mechanism is of course highly expected of interactants in decoding the illocutionary loads of complimenting as well.

Another notion that helps us understand the highly contextualised nature of any speech act is Gumperz's (1982) notion of "contextualization cue". Gumperz developed "interactional sociolinguistics" as a response to the criticism of early work of ethnography of communication (Slembrouck 2010), and believed that social and linguistic meanings are made available to interactants through cultural- and context-dependent interaction. In every interaction, hearers attempt to infer speakers' intention and to contextualize the social and linguistic activity. Speakers then follow what Gumperz calls contextualization cues, in order to make the best inference available to them in a specific interaction. His definition of contextualization cues is as follows:

Any verbal sign which when processed in co-occurrence with symbolic grammatical and lexical signs serves to construct the contextual ground for situated interpretations, and thereby affects how constituent messages are understood.

(Gumperz 1999:461)

Common contextualization cues are, for example, code-switching, style-shifting, prosodic, lexical and syntactic choices. Gumperz's notion of contextualization allows us to understand the potential (mis)interpretation and (mis)understanding in an interaction. Though decoding contextualization cues often requires culture-specific knowledge, speakers do not necessarily share the same background or culture-specific knowledge to decode the contextualization cues in the same way. In the case of paying compliments, for example, preferred or appropriate topics of compliments can vary across different cultures and trigger misunderstanding among interactants from different backgrounds.

### **2.2.5 Functions and intentionality in complimenting**

Although we as analysts wish to have such ability, unfortunately, we have no access to speakers' intentions. Analysts must bitterly accept that they will never be able to draw their conclusions by getting into speakers' heads. Instead, we turn our attention to analysing what compliments *do* in interaction, that is, the functions of compliments taking into consideration of both speakers' and addressees' perspectives.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) discuss the importance of considering the intentionality of interactants and give a typology of different

types of compliments according to speakers' potential intentions. They distinguish three types of compliments: 1) routine/formulaic compliments, 2) sarcastic compliments and 3) deceptive compliments.

First, through routine compliments, the intention of speakers is to simply give compliments and not to evaluate. Compliments of this sort do not need to be insincere, since speakers are not giving evaluations as such. It is part of good manners and maintaining social class hierarchies. A good example of this kind would be a guest compliments on food at the dinner table to the host. It is highly conventionalised as well as formalised: speakers are almost expected to say such pretty words as etiquette in specific contexts like the dinner table.

Second, the primary intent of giving sarcastic compliments is to attack the positive face of addressees. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet state that "the (openly) sarcastic compliment does something like mime an apparent compliment in order to mock it. It insults by appearing to compliment but making obvious that the putative positive evaluation in this situation is judged laughable, absurdly off the mark" (2003:154). In Eckert's study at a Detroit-area high school, she found that the girls used this type of compliment as a weapon to exclude certain girls from their group.

Finally, they claim that deceptive compliments are generated, in general, from self-interest. Those who pay this type of compliment might be regarded as "flatterers" or even as "phonies". Whereas the widely believed main function of complimenting is to make the addressee feel good about themselves, in deceptive complimenting, this is "not an end, but simply a means" (2003:155). Speakers intend to gain benefit in return for giving a

verbal gift, the compliment. To illustrate, staff at clothes shops complimenting customers trying out outfits not only intend to make the customers feel good about themselves, but also to make sales out of the interaction.

However, Eckert and McConnel-Ginet admit that sometimes the lines between these different types of compliments are not so clear, especially the line between routine and deceptive compliments. Speakers might want to genuinely make addressees feel good about themselves, but also to have addressees think warmly of speakers themselves in so doing. Again, we as researchers have no access to the answers to this kind of question since we cannot get into the speakers' heads.

As we have seen, it is sometimes difficult to judge the true intention of speakers (or addressees) involved in specific interactions unless overtly stated in their speech. Nonetheless, analysts should not have to give up analysing such a challenging variable like complimenting, but instead, we may turn our attention to what compliments do in interaction: the interactional functions of compliments and possibly, with plausible speakers' intentions and motives expressed in larger discourse and contexts.

### **2.3 Compliments in the West**

In this section, I consider some literature concerning definitions of a compliment. At the end of this section, I introduce the definition of a compliment on which the current study is based.

It would be appropriate and helpful to start off with the *Oxford English Dictionary* to look into how a compliment is defined in English. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a compliment as in the following:

“A ceremonial act or expression as a tribute of courtesy, ‘usually understood to mean less than it declares’; now, esp. a neatly-turned remark addressed to anyone, implying or involving praise; but, also applied to a polite expression of praise or commendation in speaking of a person, or to any act taken as equivalent thereto.”

(OED “compliment”, n.)

This definition sets out the concept that complimenting is a type of linguistic act. It approaches to the general notion of what a compliment is in English. However, it is still a rather broad definition. I would now like to turn to look at compliments from the perspective of speech act theory.

As I mentioned above, complimenting has been conceived as a type of speech act. Following the philosophical influences of Austin, Searle (1975, 1979) established the theory of indirect speech acts and proposed certain rules and/or conditions for speech acts in the attempt of systematizing and formalizing Austin’s work. Searle proposed a set of four rules for each speech act. Consider the example of “requesting” described in his book *Expression and Meaning* (1979).

- a) Propositional condition: H is able to perform A.
  - b) Preparatory condition: S wants H to do A.
  - c) Sincerity condition: S predicates a future act A of H.
  - d) Essential condition: Counts as an attempt by S to get H to do A.
- (Searle 1979:44)

To this end, Searle (1969) describes the conditions required for ‘congratulate’.

- a) Propositional act: Some event, act, etc. E related to H.
- b) Preparatory condition: E is in H's interest and S believes E is in H's interest.
- c) Sincerity condition: S is pleased at E.
- d) Essential condition: Counts as an expression of pleasure at E  
=[congratulate]  
(Searle 1969 cited in Thomas 1995:98)

Thomas (1995) exploits this regulation to describe the similar speech act, 'to compliment' by changing the last condition of 'to congratulate' from Searle's description.

- a) Propositional act: Some event, act, etc., E related to H.
- b) Preparatory condition: E is in H's interest and S believes E is in H's interest.
- c) Sincerity condition: S is pleased at E.
- d) Essential condition: Counts as a commendation of E or tribute to H  
=[compliment]  
(Thomas 1995:98)

These sets of rules are useful for considering the fundamental nature of speech acts and in fact, what conditions may constitute a specific type of speech act. However, as Thomas (1995) argues, there remain some problems with Searle's framework. Primarily, there seem to be limitations as to how we can distinguish complimenting from other closely related speech acts within his framework.

Wierzbicka's (1987) work deals with the notion of speech act theory from second language acquisition perspective. She claims that while speech act theorists focus on each speech act (performative verb), they do not clearly explain the differences and similarities between related speech acts. Also, she expresses her concerns with the use of ordinary dictionaries to look up speech act verbs. She calls these dictionaries "the best and the most



ambiguous modern dictionaries” including the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE hereafter). She claims that LDOCE inadequately describes words or verbs by making use of help from other words or verbs. Her attempt was to identify the ‘meanings’ of a word by enumerating all the components of a word, instead of replacing one unidentified meaning with various other meanings.

Wierzbicka’s work on English speech act verbs attempts to describe the meanings of different speech acts in English. She establishes 37 categorical groups of English verbs such as the ‘order’ group and ‘thank’ group. Compliment is identified as one of the components of the ‘praise’ group (16<sup>th</sup> group out of 37) along with other speech acts of praise, commend, boast, and credit. She describes the components of compliment as follows:

I perceive something good about your Y.  
I want to say something good about you because of that.  
I say: (something good about X and X’s Y)  
I feel something good about thinking about it.  
I say this because I want to cause you to know that I am thinking something good about you.  
I assume that you will feel something good because of that.  
(Wierzbicka 1987:201)

In the discussion following the description of these components, she makes some valid points of difference between compliment and praise. Although complimenting and praising both require positive judgements, complimenting has to apply to the addressee: “One can praise, but not compliment, someone who is absent” (1987:201). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet add to this reporting that “one can praise but not compliment absent third parties who are not expected ever to learn of the praise” (2003:145).

Wierzbicka then further claims that compliments should be directly something about the addressee. For example, "You have a lovely house." might hardly be a compliment, but praise. This means that praising some extended characteristics about the addressee does not count as a compliment. However, as well be seen in Chapter 5, my data shows that this does not apply to the Japanese data. In the Japanese society, the link between a person's surroundings and themselves is a very close tie. Praising the addressee's extended characteristics or possessions such as their family members and partners, for instance, was commonly observed in the Japanese data and these comments are treated very much like other typical compliments. I therefore consider these kinds also as compliments in my study.

With respect to studies on compliments, applied linguists in the early 80's were the ones who established the basis for studies on complimenting in the West (Manes 1983; Manes & Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1981, 1983, 1984). The fundamental finding of their studies was that the speech act of complimenting in English was formulaic and had a total lack of syntactic variety (see section 2.5). Unfortunately, their definition of compliment was rather unclear. Wolfson states that compliments are "social lubricants" and the major function of complimenting is "to create or to maintain solidarity between interlocutors" (1983:89). Although this definition considers what a compliment does in interaction, it does not really touch on what linguistic and sociopragmatic features a compliment possesses.

Holmes (1988, 1995) offers a much more holistic definition of a compliment, compared to Manes and Wolfson's accounts. Holmes takes a

stance from the perspective of speech acts and her definition informs us the idea of 'who is involved in doing what' in interaction when it comes to paying and receiving compliments. Holmes (1988, 1995) provides the following definition of compliment:

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.

(Holmes 1988:446; 1995:117)

This definition has since been favoured and implemented by a number of sociolinguists (Jucker et al. 2008; Jucker 2009). However, on a closer look, I would still argue that in this definition, it remains unclear who the credit is attributed to, because it is just stated as "usually the person addressed", while hinting that it could be someone other than the addressee. In the current study, I draw on Wierzbicka's (1987) account mentioned above for the addressee of compliments: the complimentee has to be present in the act of complimenting performed by the speaker (see also Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989).

Other researchers have tried to define compliments deductively in a bottom-up process. Some have done typological research on compliments by illustrating different examples of compliments taken from different sources (Eckert-McConnell-Ginet 2003; Golato 2005; Jucker 2009).

Conversely, there have been quite a few studies of compliments which have not made any clear claim as to the definition of compliments (cf. Herbert 1990; Jaworski 1995; Knapp et al. 1984; Kumatoridani 1989) and yet

they pursue their research based on their introspections of what a compliment is.

#### 2.4 Compliments in the East: case of Japanese compliments

Now I would like to draw attention to how compliments have been defined in Japanese society. Just as I did with English definitions of compliment, it is only fair to start with one of the most popular Japanese dictionaries: *Kojien* (5<sup>th</sup> edition) to see how *home* ('a compliment') is described.

<i>Monogoto</i>	<i>wo</i>	<i>hyouka</i>	<i>si, yosi</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>site</i>	<i>sono</i>	<i>kimoti</i>
things	OM	evaluate	do good	Q	do	this	feeling
<i>wo</i>	<i>arawasu.</i>	<i>Tataeru.</i>	<i>Syousan</i>	<i>suru.</i>			
OM	express	praise	applause	do			

"To express the feelings that one evaluates these things as good. To praise. To applaud." (*Kojien*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition)

This definition also shares the notion that complimenting is to express some positive evaluative characteristics that someone possesses. However, this definition does not clearly mention who is praised or complimented, nor does it explain the differences between complimenting, praising and applauding. I would now like to turn to consider how Japanese sociolinguists claim compliments behave in Japanese society.

Kodama (1996) provides a neat definition of Japanese compliments, which suggests some Japanese-specific features in complimenting. Consider the following:

<i>Homeru</i>	<i>toiu</i>	<i>gengo</i>	<i>koui</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>hanasite</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>kikite</i>
compliment	Q	speech	act	TOP	speaker	NOM	addressee
<i>aruiwa</i>	<i>kikite</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>kazoku</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>sore</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>ruisuru</i>
or	addressee	GEN	family	or	this	OM	belong
<i>mono</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>kansite</i>	<i>'yoi'</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>mitomeru</i>	<i>samazamana</i>	
thing	OM	about	good	Q	recognise	various	
<i>mono</i>	<i>nitaisite</i>	<i>kikite</i>	<i>wo</i>	<i>kokotiyoku</i>	<i>saseru</i>	<i>koto</i>	<i>wo</i>
things	towards	addressee	OM	comfortably	do	thing	OM
<i>zentei</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>meiziteki</i>	<i>aruiwa</i>	<i>anzitekini</i>	<i>kouteitekina</i>	<i>hyouka</i>	
presumption	OM	explicitly	or	implicitly	positive	evaluation	
<i>wo</i>	<i>ataeru</i>	<i>koui</i>	<i>dearu.</i>				
OM	give	act	COP				

“Complimenting is a (speech) act of giving positive evaluations explicitly and/or implicitly, based on the premise that it is to make the addressee feel good, about a variety of things that are related to the A, his/her **families** [my emphasis] or similar things that the S acknowledges as ‘good’.”  
(Kodama 1996:61)

What is distinctive from definitions of compliments in the West is that Kodama includes a wider consideration of what can be complimented on in Japanese society. In addition to some ‘good’ attributes that are directly related to the addressee, Kodama claims that a compliment could be extended to features about the addressee, specifically, including their family members. Although some disagree with this account (cf. Wiezbicka 1987), the findings of the current study confirm this account to the definition of a compliment.

Similar to Kodama’s definition, in her comparative study on compliments in Japanese and Korean, Kim (2006) provides a definition detailing who is involved in complimenting whom with what intention (or pragmatic function) and how the act of complimenting is conducted. Let us consider her definition as in the following:

*Home:*            *hanasite*   *ga*    *kikite*        *wo*    *kokotiyoku*   *saseru*  
 Compliment   speaker   NOM   addressee   OM   comfortable   make

*koto*   *wo*    *itosi,*    *kikite*        *aruiwa*    *kikite*        *ni*    *kakawarino*  
 thing   OM   intend   addressee   or        addressee   OM   relate to

*aru*    *hito,*    *mono,*    *koto*    *nikansite*    ‘*yoi*’    *to*    *mitomeru*  
 have   person   thing   thing   relate to   good   Q   recognise

*samazamana*   *mono*    *nitaisite,*    *tyokusetuteki*    *aruiwa*        *kansetutekini*  
 various        things    about        directly        or                indirectly

*kouteitekina*   *kati*        *ga*    *aru*    *to*    *tutaeru*    *gengokoui*    *dearu.*  
 positive        value        NOM   exist   Q   tell        speech act   COP

“Compliment: based on speakers’ intention of making addressees feel good, it is a positively evaluative speech act that the S conveys directly and/or indirectly, about A and/or a variety of things related to the A, that the S acknowledges as ‘good’, his/her related people, possessions, activities.”

(Kim 2006:38)

She then breaks down this definition into smaller components of compliments. She describes 1) who is to be complimented, 2) the topic of compliments, 3) the intention of complimenting and 4) how compliments are expressed.

1) *Home*            *no*    *aite:*        *kikite*  
 compliment    GEN   partner   addressee  
 “The person complimented: the addressee”

2) *Home*            *no*    *taisyou:*    *kikite*        *ni*    *kakawarino*   *aru*    *hito,*  
 compliment   GEN   things:    addressee   OM   relate to   exist   person

*mono, koto*    *nouti,*    *hanasite*    *ga*    ‘*yoi*’        *to*    *mitomeru*  
 thing   thing   among   speaker   NOM   good   Q   recognise

*samazamana*   *mono*  
 various        things

“The object of compliment: amongst the things related to the addressee, people, possessions, activities, that S acknowledges as ‘good’”

3) *Home no ito: kikite wo kokotiyoku saseru koto*  
 compliment GEN intention addressee OM comfortable make  
 thing

“The intention of compliment: to make the addressee feel good”

4) *Home no hyougen: tyokusetuteki aruiwa kansetutekini,*  
 compliment GEN expression directly or indirectly

*kouteitekina kati ga aru to tutaeru*  
 positive value NOM exist Q tell

“The ways to compliment: directly and/or indirectly to convey positive evaluations.”

As a whole, her definition clearly addresses: 1) who is complimented – the direct addressee in interaction; 2) what is the topic for compliments – attributes that are evaluated as good and are related directly or indirectly to the addressee; 3) what is the intention for complimenting – to make the addressee feel good; and finally 4) how compliments are realised – directly and/or indirectly.

## 2.5 The definition of a compliment in the current study

The definition for the dissertation is mostly taken from the definitions that Holmes (1988, 1995), Kodama (1996), Kim (2006) and Wierzbicka (1987) draw. Firstly, complimenting is an intended speech act. The speaker tries to convey positive evaluations or judgements about the addressee. Secondly, the addressee is always the person complimented, the direct receiver of compliments present in the interaction. Thirdly, the speaker can compliment not only qualities which are directly related to the addressee (e.g. the addressee’s appearance, personality, performance), but also a various

matters which are indirectly related to the addressee (e.g. addressees' possessions, family members). Fourth, the way compliments are paid can be explicit and/or implicit. Finally, to give a judgement as to whether or not a particular utterance is a compliment, – of course, we shall not forget – requires contextual- and cultural-dependant assessments. This leads us to the following definition:

Complimenting is a speech act in which the speaker explicitly and/or implicitly attempts to convey positive evaluations/judgements about the addressee's quality and a variety of matters closely related to the addressee.

Based on this definition, I analyse the compliments and their responses throughout this dissertation.

In the following sections, I look at some existing literature on various features of compliments.

## **2.6 Linguistic realisation of compliments**

A number of linguists have been interested in investigating how compliments are linguistically realised both at semantic and syntactic levels (see Chapter 4 for detailed discussions on the semantic and syntactic structures of Japanese compliments). For the first decade in the history of compliment studies, it was widely believed that complimenting is a very formulaic speech act (Manes & Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1981, 1983, 1984). This was not only suggested by American English studies mentioned above but it



was also found to be true in New Zealand English (Holmes 1988, 1995), British English (Creese 1991) and Finnish (Yläne-McEwan 1993).

At the lexical level, Manes and Wolfson (1981) found that compliments with semantically positive adjectives accounted for 80% of their entire data set (686 compliment utterances collected in total). Furthermore, many observed that compliments exploited only a few adjectives that carry positive semantic load (Manes & Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1981; Holmes 1995). According to Manes and Wolfson (1981), two thirds of their data accounted for the following five adjectives. Consider Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Adjectives used in American compliments (from Manes & Wolfson 1981)

Adjectives	Tokens	Percentage
nice	125	22.9%
good	107	19.6%
pretty	No data	9.7%
beautiful	No data	9.2%
great	No data	6.2%

To a greater or lesser extent, other studies also generated the same kind of adjective lists above (Creese 1991; Daikuhara 1986; Holmes 1988, 1995; Kumatoridani 1989). This suggests that there is a limited range of lexical items, that is, positively evaluative words, to be used in complimenting.

The verbs carrying positive semantic load in compliments are also found to be highly restricted. Manes and Wolfson (1981) claim that the verbs

*like* and *love* occur in 86% of all compliments that contain semantically positive verbs.

In total, as much as 96% of all compliments found in Manes and Wolfson's American English corpus were expressed with either the semantically positive adjectives in Table 2.1 and/or the verbs *like* and *love*.

As for the syntactic pattern of compliments, it has been argued that its pattern also lacks much variety. Holmes gives a table showing the distribution of syntactic patterns in New Zealand compliments as follows (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Syntactic patterns of compliments and speaker gender in New Zealand (from Holmes)

Syntactic formula	Female %	Male %
1. NP BE (LOOKING) (INT) ADJ e.g. That coat is really great	42.1	40.0
2. I (INT) LIKE NP e.g. I simply love that skirt	17.8	13.1
3. PRO BE (a) (INT) ADJ NP e.g. That's a very nice coat	11.4	15.6
4. What (a) (ADJ) NP! e.g. What lovely children!	7.8	1.3
5. (INT) ADJ (NP) e.g. Really cool ear-rings	5.1	11.8
6. ISNt NP ADJ! e.g. Isn't this food wonderful!	1.5	0.6
Subtotals	85.7	82.4
7. all other syntactic formulae	14.3	17.6
Totals	100.0	100.0

(Holmes 1995:128, Table 4.1)

This was consistent with Manes and Wolfson (1981) who also found that 85% of the data set was accounted for by only three patterns of (1) - (3) in Holmes' table.

At the morphological level, Manes and Wolfson (1981) suggest that there are some morphological constraints as well as semantic ones on these adjectives and verbs. Compliments are rarely produced with comparatives or superlatives of adjectives. As for tense, they emphasize that they found no example of future tense compliments in their data. They did, however, find occasional instances of progressives, present perfects and conditionals. Let us consider the examples of each case below.

Examples of

Comparatives: "Your accent is charming. Much nicer than ours."

Superlatives: "Hank, that's some of the best banjo picking I've ever heard."

Progressive: "Jane, you're looking great as usual."

Present perfect: "I've always loved that shirt."

Conditionals: "I think you'd be good in law school."

(Manes & Wolfson 1981:122)

In sum, in the initial stage of compliment studies, it was widely believed that "the speech act of complimenting is, in fact, characterised by the formulaic nature of its syntactic and semantic composition" (Manes & Wolfson 1981:123).

However, the formulaic quality of Manes and Wolfson's and Holmes' data set could be explained by considering how they collected their data. That is, their results might be an artifact of the methodologies that they employed. Since they heavily relied on notebook methods, collecting compliments in passing and writing them down soon after encountering compliments in spontaneous discourse, it is possible that the researchers might be subconsciously better attuned to prototypes of compliments. In other words, the stereotypical conception of what a compliment is, may have

had a significant effect in creating a large corpus of stereotypical compliments lacking in diversity.

As I will discuss in more details in Chapter 4, my data reveal that syntactic patterns of Japanese compliments are in fact rather diverse and complex.

## 2.7 Topics of compliments

What speakers compliment at others on is another intriguing aspect to investigate in compliment studies (see Chapter 5 for more detailed discussion). Objects of compliments directly reflect not only what individuals value but also what the whole society values. As Manes puts it, a compliment is “a mirror of cultural values” (1983:96). She further claims that “compliments are of particular interest, however, in regard to the reflection and expression of cultural values because of their nature as judgements, overt expressions of approval or admiration of another’s work, appearance, or taste” (1983:96-97). Understanding what is appropriate to compliment on in a specific context and/or culture is an important factor to consider from various perspectives (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Manes 1983; Wieland 1995). Also from a politeness perspective, complimenting on an inappropriate topic can be face-threatening to addressees.

Holmes (1995) reports that a large number of compliments refer to only a few topics: appearance, ability, performance, possessions and personality. In her New Zealand data, as many as 81% of compliments referred to either appearance or ability.

Acknowledging something new about the addressee or their possessions is a common topic of compliment. For instance, "Nice hair cut", from one friend to another after noticing that s/he has a new hairdo, is an acknowledging-the-new type of compliment. They further claim that this type of compliment tends to occur in the very beginning stage of interaction. Bambi Schieffelin also informally observed this tendency among university students in New York: "A few years ago I was looking (very informally) at compliments, and found that with American college students they were usually at the very beginning of an interaction – one would remark on something upon seeing the person right away, or at the beginning of a phone call – but rarely later on in the conversation – and if they did – it was marked with some type of "excuse" for not noticing something right away – like a new haircut" (personal communication with Schieffelin, April 2009).

As noted earlier, topic selection within compliments can represent cultural differences as every community has its own societal values. Wieland (1995) suggests what is considered to be acceptable as the object of a compliment is culturally determined. In her study on compliments exchanged between Americans and French at dinner table in France, the Americans preferred to compliment on appearance more than the French. Araki and Barnlund (1985), in a comparative study of compliments between American English and Japanese, showed that the Japanese tended to compliment on personal traits more significantly than Americans while Americans' focus was on the addressee's appearance and personal traits. Adachi (2007) also found that the British students focused on more extrinsic features about addressees – appearance and possessions – whereas the

Japanese students were more likely to compliment on intrinsic features such as personality and ability. This study suggested that the Japanese might prefer complimenting someone who they know enough to be able to comment on intrinsic features of addressees, the British speakers, on the other hand, often complimented even strangers. This naturally forces them to comment on visually accessible extrinsic features as the speakers may not know much about the addressees.

## **2.8 Power play and compliments**

Complimenting can be also a display of power play between interlocutors in interaction (Chapter 5 discusses this issue in detail). A number of studies showed that compliments tend to occur between status-equals, enhancing and reinforcing the solidarity between them (Herbert 1990; Holmes 1988, 1995, Knapp et al. 1984; Wolfson 1983). In other words, social status places rather significant constraints on the production of compliments. For instance, students complimenting a professor after his/her inaugural lecture by saying "Well done" might not quite work as opposed to a professor saying "Well done" in evaluating students' assignments. Knapp et al. (1984) report that 71% of compliments occur between status-equals, 22% from higher to lower status and only 7% from lower to higher status. The reason why the second most frequent is from higher status to lower and not vice versa might be the fact that complimenting is essentially giving evaluations and evaluations are usually given from high to low in social hierarchy.

But of course, other social factors, such as psychological distance, can sometimes outweigh social status constraints depending on the context. Matsuura (1994) found that American students refrain from complimenting their instructors whereas Japanese students tend not to hesitate to compliment them as long as psychological closeness outweighs the status issue. Even compliments from people of lower social status to people of higher status may be accepted, as long as the constraints are somehow mitigated. Making the compliment utterance more indirect is one way of mitigating and managing face-threats. Hence, "I learned immensely from your lecture. Thank you very much, Professor" would be readily seen as an appropriate compliment from a student to a professor in Japanese. As we shall see, this type of compliment indeed does occur every so often in my data.

## **2.9 Gender and compliments**

Complimenting has been regarded as a highly gendered speech act (Herbert 1990; Holmes 1995; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). It has been widely believed that complimenting is predominantly something that women perform (cf. Herbert 1990; Holmes 1988, 1995). However, as we shall see in Chapter 6, my data challenges this hypothesis in the Japanese case. Holmes' New Zealand data suggests that women gave 68% of all the compliments collected and received 74% of them. On the other hand, compliments between men were very rare, only 9% of all the compliments recorded. Other studies also supported this result in American English (Herbert 1990), in Polish (Lewandowska-Tomaszcyk 1989) and in written

discourse of peer-review in American English (Johnson & Roen 1992).

Remembering that complimenting is primarily a positive politeness strategy that attends addressees' positive face, these results possibly suggest that women are generally more sensitive and attentive to these faces. In fact, Holmes (1995) claims that men see complimenting as more face-threatening and use it for more of referential oriented goals in conversation while women see it as more of positive politeness strategy as a marker of solidarity.

Holmes (1995) gives one example of a male compliment that is referential goal oriented:

Mick and Brent are neighbours. They met at Brent's gate as he arrives home.

Mick: New car?

Brent: Yeah.

Mick: Looks as if it will move.

Brent: Yeah it goes well I must say.

(Holmes 1995:124)

First of all, as for gender differences in the realisation pattern of compliments, Holmes (1995) found that apart from the most common syntactic patterns, which were almost equally used by both men and women (patterns 1-3 in Table 2.2 above), there were no gender differences in preferred realisation patterns. Women preferred the rhetorical pattern (What (a) ADJ NP! – pattern 4 in Table 2.2 above) while men used the minimal pattern ((INT) ADJ (NP) – pattern 5 in Table 2.2 above) more than women. Holmes explains that this is because women tend to enhance the force of positively affective speech and men, on the other hand, tend to decrease the force by keeping it minimal as men are more likely to see complimenting as



FTAs. Herbert (1990) further supports Holmes' argument. He found gender differences in "personal focus" in compliments: women exploit more linguistic personal focus than men. He observed that between females 82.4% of the 1062 compliments collected had a personal focus (the use of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun in compliments as opposed to 3<sup>rd</sup> person or impersonal nouns, e.g. it/they). On the other hand, between males, it was only 31.6% of the time that men used this pattern.

Secondly, with regard to gender differences in topical choices in compliments, Holmes (1995) found that 61% of compliments between women referred to appearance whereas between men only 36% of compliments were on appearance. Compliments on possessions were more preferable between men, but not from men to women.

Lastly, as far as power play is concerned, Holmes mentions that although majority of compliments occur between status-equals, when compliments occur between status-unequals, "higher status females were twice as likely to receive compliments as higher status men" (1995:135). She explains this by making the reference to the inequality of social status for men and women: "perhaps higher status women are perceived as more receptive to compliments (especially from men) than their male counterparts, because in the society as a whole women are generally regarded as socially subordinate, and less powerful and influential than men" (1995:136).

## **2.10 Compliment responses**

It was once commonly believed that a simple response of "Thank you" was a prescriptively correct answer to a compliment (cf. Herbert 1986, 1990).

However, it was found that people were doing more than just accepting compliments in the reality of strategic compliment responses. Responding to compliment means that the recipient would face the interactional dilemma due to the clash of politeness principles (Pomerantz 1978). To better understand this dilemma, I first refer to Leech (1983)'s work on Politeness Principles.

Leech (1983) was one of the first traditional theorists of politeness who understood politeness phenomena within pragmatics starting from a Gricean and speech-act theoretic perspective. Leech developed politeness theory to explain "why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean" (1983:80). He proposes Politeness Principle (PP hereafter) as follows:

Minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs;  
Maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs  
(Leech 1983:81)

He then further introduces a number of maxims: Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy maxims. I only refer to Modesty and Agreement maxims here as they are essential notions when we analyse compliment responses. Leech (1983) defines Modesty and Agreement maxim as in the following:

Modesty maxim: Minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self.

Agreement maxim: Minimize disagreement between self and other;  
maximize agreement between self and other.

(Leech 1983:132)

In general, interlocutors follow Agreement Maxim to avoid conflicts between themselves. Also, because a compliment is a verbal gift, the recipient would naturally have the urge to accept the gift. However, in the case of complimenting, Modesty Maxim would clash with this Agreement Maxim. Because compliments are essentially positive evaluations about the recipient, by accepting them the addressee might seem to praise oneself.

Pomerantz (1978) was the first to study this dilemma in responding to compliments in American English. She generalises the contradictory conditions which constrains the act of responding to a compliment:

- i) Agree with the speaker
- ii) Avoid self-praise

(Pomerantz 1978:81-82)

In short, the interactional dilemma is: how can one accept a compliment without sounding self-praising?

Holmes (1995) broadly categorises three types of compliment responses: accept, reject and deflect/evade. Her results suggest that more than 60% of responses fall into the acceptance category in New Zealand. In Herbert's (1990) study on American English, he found out that out of 12 types or strategies to respond to compliments, disagreeing with compliments was relatively uncommon: 10% in Herbert's data. These studies also made reference to gender differences in responding to compliments. Holmes found no significant gender differences in compliment responses whereas Herbert found that women were more likely to agree with semantic content of compliments than men did in his American data.

Responding to compliments has a further interest for cross-cultural differences. Chen's (1999) study shows that in Chinese society, the Modesty Maxim outweighs the Agreement Maxim in the case of complimenting. He records 96% of rejection patterns in China as opposed to 13% of Americans. Some other Asian studies also generally follow this trend: in Japanese (Koike 2000) and in Korean (Han 1992) the most preferred response strategy was to reject or be modest about the compliments. In some studies, to evade or question the appropriateness of compliments was the most preferred strategy (Barnlund & Araki 1985; Yokota 1985). Kim (2006) further looks at larger discourse level of Japanese compliment responses. She reports that the combination of different strategies across compliment discourse (e.g. first reject but then accept compliments as the discourse proceeds) was the most preferred strategy for the Japanese (nearly 40%). The second preferred strategy was to skillfully evade compliments, which accounted for nearly 30% of her Japanese data.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have reviewed the background knowledge required to best understand this dissertation. I introduced some key concepts and terminologies that are crucial in my study. In defining what a compliment is, I considered a number of aspects of complimenting. First, I situated complimenting as a speech act. Second, in relation to linguistic politeness, the current study considers complimenting as kind of facework. Third, I highlighted the importance of considering the local contextuality of

compliments when establishing a holistic understanding of what a compliment is in interaction.

I then moved on to discuss a few definitions of compliments from past literature of compliment studies in the West and Japan. Last but not least, in order for me to provide a background for the elements of compliments which we will consider in later chapters, I reviewed some previous work on various aspects of compliments: the linguistic realizations of compliments, the topics of compliments, politeness and compliments, gender and compliments, and responses to compliments.

The next chapter discusses the methodology implemented in this study. Drawing on Jucker's (2009) typology of methodologies within speech act research, I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each method and explain why the current study chooses specific methodologies over others. This chapter will further explain why these are the most suited methodologies for the research questions (stated in Chapter 1) that the present study is interested in answering.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the methodologies employed for the current study are discussed. Before describing the methodologies that I applied to this study, I first discuss methodologies that have been predominantly used in speech act research in the past and some issues that they raise. I then discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of each methodology and explain why I chose to exploit these methodologies in particular to obtain naturally occurring data as my research resource. As an analytic tool that the current study draws on, discourse analysis and its closely related concepts are also reviewed and introduced here.

### **3.2 Methodologies and their issues in previous speech act research**

In the literature on research into speech acts, the methodology for data collection had heavily relied on elicited data (Beebe & Cummings 1996; Golato 2003; Rose & Ono 1995; Yuan 2001). The major forms are Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs, henceforth) and role-plays. Some argue that this has restricted the development of the research on speech acts (Boyle 2000; Jaworski 1995; Rose & Ono 1995). Although researchers did find some advantages to these methodologies, there has always been a discussion of how closely the data obtained by these ad hoc ways actually reflect how people talk in their everyday life.

Jucker (2009) discusses in detail the methodological issues raised around speech acts research in detail. He takes a case study of

complimenting to show that different methodologies can produce different effects and results with regard to researchers' interests and research questions. He categorises three types of methodologies in linguistic data collection: 1) the armchair method, 2) the field method and 3) the laboratory method. These concepts were first developed by experimental pragmatics (Noveck et al. 2004) and are in fact very useful to understand the methodological frameworks of the study I undertake in this dissertation. Hence, in what follows, each category shall be discussed.

### **3.3 Methodological frameworks in previous speech act research**

This section reviews methodologies in the area of speech act studies following Jucker's (2009) framework. For each method, theoretical frameworks and their (dis)advantages are discussed. In the end, I make a claim as to what the best possible methodology is in the study of speech acts.

#### **3.3.1 The armchair method**

According to Jucker (2009), the armchair method refers to linguistic data collection methodology that is based on intuited data. The name comes from the fact that researchers do not go out to a field or laboratory to obtain their data. He further proposes that there are two subcategories of this method: the philosophical method and the interview method. With the philosophical method, researchers mostly rely on their introspection and intuitions to produce the data. With the interview method, instead of researchers relying on their own intuitions, they ask speakers about language

and language use. Jucker concludes that this methodology is suitable if researchers are interested in the nature of speech acts in order to get perceptions and attitudes of speakers towards certain speech acts. However, they have limitations to this method for studying the actual realization of speech acts. For instance, it will be difficult to investigate the frequency and distribution of specific patterns of complimenting or who compliments whom more in what situation.

### **3.3.2 The field method**

The field methods are “empirical methods of investigation to analyse actual use of natural language” (Jucker 2009:1611). They include three sub-categories: the notebook method, the philological method, and the conversation analytical method.

First of all, in the notebook method, which has been a dominant methodology in the past literature of compliment research (Herbert 1990; Holmes 1988, 1995; Manes 1983; Manes & Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1981, 1983, 1984), researchers go out to a field with a notebook and write down what they hear as speech acts in question. Wolfson calls this method an “ethnographic approach” and states that it “is the only reliable method of collecting data about the way speech acts function in interaction” (1983:95). The upside of this method is that researchers are able to observe the most naturalistic conversation and to provide sociological information about the interaction. This sociological information may include informants’ age, sex, context/setting of interaction and so forth. On the other hand, Jucker (2009) and Yuan (2001) suggest that the accuracy of the data collection remains



questionable as researchers are limited in their capability to remember and write down accurately what they heard, especially, for example, in conversations with many conversational turns.

Secondly, “in the philological method, the researcher reads data and typically novels or other fictional materials” (Jucker 2009:1616). While the strength of this method is that researchers can always go back to the resource, its weakness lies in the unrealistic reflection of day-to-day language use in fictional materials. Rose (2001), for instance, looked at forty contemporary films to study compliments and responses to compliments and found that the results on pragmalinguistic categories (e.g. compliment formula) were fairly similar to the notebook data that were reported by Manes and Wolfson (1981). However, after detailed analysis, some striking differences were revealed between Rose (2001) and Manes and Wolfson (1981), such as gender distribution and compliment response strategy. This suggests that scripted or written data may not reflect what speakers really do in conversations.

Finally, in conversational analytical method as applied by Pomerantz (1978) and Kim (2006), researchers deal with actual conversations that are ‘naturally’ obtained and their transcriptions. This is obviously considered to be the closest description of everyday-life language use possible. As Yuan (2001) points out “natural data are highly regarded for their authenticity”. However, some disadvantages still remain. The method is very time-consuming and depending on the frequency of production of certain speech acts, it might be difficult to obtain a significant number of speech acts in investigation (Beebe & Cummings 1996; Jucker 2009; Yuan 2001). In other

words, researchers have very little control over the production of speech acts. Furthermore, researchers might also have to relinquish control over certain information about informants: in such naturalistic situations, it is not always easy to keep track of the information that researchers need, e.g. age, gender, social status, and social relations between interactants. In my fieldwork, for example, I left recording devices in the common room and I was sometimes not present when the recording was taking place. Hence it was sometimes difficult for me to chase up who was involved in the recording and to include all their sociological information.

Nonetheless, as we shall see, this is the method that I chose to apply to my study and I explain why I choose this method in later sections of this chapter.

### **3.3.3 The laboratory method**

In the laboratory method, researchers design and conduct experiments on targeted informants to elicit data. Under the category of this method, Jucker (2009) discusses two examples: DCTs and (visually-recorded) role-plays.

In DCTs, informants are given certain situations in a questionnaire and are required to write down what they would say in the given contexts. In role-plays, which can also be recorded orally or visually, informants are asked to act out in given contexts that highlight or are designed to feature the speech acts under investigation.

As I mentioned earlier, DCT has been the dominant methodology for speech act research especially from cross-cultural perspectives (cf. Yuan

2001). Beebe and Cummings (1996) discuss the benefits and limitations of this method in detail. The benefits of DCT include, for example, the opportunity 1) to gather a large amount of data quickly, 2) to create an initial classification of semantic formulas and strategies that are likely to occur in natural speech, 3) to study the stereotypical, perceived requirements for a socially appropriate response and 4) to ascertain the canonical shape of speech acts in the minds of speakers of that language (Beebe & Cummings 1996:80). On the other hand, DCT has shortcomings in the way that it restricts: 1) the actual wording used in real interaction, 2) the range of formulas and strategies used, 3) the length of response or the number of turns it takes to fulfill the function, 4) the depth of emotion that in turn qualitatively affects the tone, content, and form of linguistic performance, 5) the number of repetitions and elaborations that occur and 6) the actual rate of occurrence of a speech acts – e.g., whether or not someone would undertake the given speech act at all in a given situation (Beebe & Cummings 1996:80).

Unsurprisingly, given the difference between DCTs and role-plays, the differences in the results have proven to be salient. Yuan's (2001) research on the speech act of refusals shows that oral DCTs, i.e. the role-play data, produced longer responses, more explanation particles, more repetitions, more inversions, more omissions and occasionally more turns in Chinese speakers' refusing behaviour.

Rose and Ono (1995) discuss methodological issues in the study of the speech act of requesting in Japanese, comparing DTCs and Multiple Choice Questionnaires. They found statistically significant differences in strategies used by Japanese female participants as elicited by these two methods.

Golato (2003) also reports that in her comparative study of DCTs and naturally occurring data on German compliment responses, differences were found in the way participants responded to compliments.

#### **3.3.4 What is the best method for speech act research?**

Regardless of differences in the strengths and weaknesses of each methodology, one point that speech act researchers seem to agree on is that different methods are well suited for answering different questions. Furthermore, the best possible option would be to apply more than one methodology or approach in a study. In other words, there is no one perfect methodology out there to be implemented. In Jucker's words, "the ideal research method for the investigation of speech acts, and in particular for the investigation of compliments, does not exist" (2009:1633).

#### **3.4 Collecting naturally occurring data for sociolinguistic research**

As sociolinguists, we are essentially interested in how people talk in their everyday life. The primary focus has been on how sociolinguists can collect naturally occurring data and by natural, we often mean naturally occurring spoken language. In order for researchers to obtain as natural data as possible, many methodologies and approaches have been invented by a number of sociolinguists. In this section, I touch on some classic methodologies that have been widely used in the field of sociolinguistics.

### **3.4.1 Sociolinguistic interviews**

Sociolinguistic interviews have been widely used in the field of sociolinguistics as a classic methodology “to approximate as closely as possible a casual conversation” (Schilling-Estes 2007:171). The sociolinguistic interview was originally designed by William Labov (1972, 1984). In sociolinguistic interviews, tape-recording devices are usually involved. Questions and topics are prepared by researchers in a way that will encourage speakers’ to engage in natural conversations. Schilling-Estes (2007) points out two primary benefits of this method. Firstly, it allows researchers to collect a large amount of speech in a relatively short amount of time. Secondly, the quality of recording is likely to be high, given that the basic style of the sociolinguistic interview is one on one, face-to-face interaction. In addition, because interviewers can systematically manipulate topics, questions or even the situations, researchers may encourage the interviewees to produce styles that they are interested in looking at. However, there is a fundamental problem that any researcher collecting naturalistic data would have to face: the Observer’s Paradox.

### **3.4.2 Observer’s Paradox**

Observer’s Paradox is something that sociolinguists are often confronted with: the fact that sociolinguists are interested in investigating what speakers do when they are not observed, but the only way to investigate is to observe them (cf. Meyerhoff 2006). Although the main goal of sociolinguistic interviews is to elicit as natural conversation as possible, researchers often find that if people know that they are being recorded for

some linguistic research, they become self-conscious about how they talk and this affects their use of language. Conversations like these are therefore less desirable for sociolinguists. However, ethical considerations in sociolinguistic research mean that it is strictly forbidden for researchers to record people's conversations without their permission, even though "to obtain the data most important for linguistic theory, we have to observe how people speak when they are not being recorded" (Labov 1972:113). People's speech and words are their own intellectual property and they have rights to their own speech or words.

Sociolinguistic fieldwork may involve three factors that can trigger the observer's paradox: i) presence of interviewer, ii) presence of recording devices and iii) setting of the task itself (Meyerhoff et al. forthcoming).

To overcome the observer's paradox, sociolinguists have tried to modify styles of recordings for the best interest of their research.

### **3.4.3 Modifications to address the observer's paradox**

Sociolinguists tried a number of different approaches to counterbalance the observer's paradox. In Labov's (1972) study, he set up a "danger of death" question, a well-known method for eliciting highly natural and vernacular style. People were asked to talk about experiences when they thought: "*This is it*", facing situations of serious danger. Labov, Cohen, Robins and Lewis (1968) tried increasing the number of interviewees, to include a group of friends of the informant, to make the situation of the recording more natural and relaxed. Some tried increasing the number of interviewers: Walt Wolfram's (1998) study in Ocracoke used natural pairs

like husband-wife teams. Some were successful in obtaining data without using any interviewers at all being present at the recording (cf. Macaulay 2002).

The next section focuses on the positive effects of group recordings as a way of mitigating the observer's paradox and obtaining more naturalistic and spontaneous speech.

#### **3.4.4 Group recordings**

As a way of addressing the observer's paradox, positive evaluations have been made with respect to group recordings for eliciting highly natural conversations. Because there is a group of people in interaction, speakers may feel more relaxed with familiar faces, which may reduce some of the unnaturalness of a recording event. Speakers also have a plenty of control over what to talk about with whom and when.

Because of my research interest, in fact, research questions for the current study can only be answered through the investigation of how a group of people talk and interact in everyday life. This is also the reason why studies on socialization often exploit this method (Makihara 2005; Schieffelin 1990; Ochs 1992): they investigate interactions among a group of people including children and their parents.

However, this does not mean that I intend to ignore some of the downsides of this method. With group recordings, it often assumes that researchers lose control over the recordings to some extent. Researchers might not get such high quality recordings if there is more than one person. This is because in a group, multiple talks can overlap at the same time, or

non-speech activities that speakers do can cause noise, which interferes with the recording of their speech. Also, researchers often do not have control of group dynamics. There will always be some informants who (dis)like to talk more than others in the group. Finally, this method can be a highly time-consuming process. As I mentioned earlier, it is often difficult to count on the production of certain speech acts with this method, unless it is controlled in some ways, with the result that it might take a considerable amount of time until researchers can obtain enough of the data they want to investigate.

Nonetheless, despite these potential disadvantages, I have chosen to employ group recordings because I believe that the merits of this methodology outweigh the demerits in answering the research questions stated in Chapter 1.

### **3.5 On "Discourse"**

In this part of the section, I refer to some key concepts and related fields that cooperate with and are imbedded within discourse analysis. Since my analysis heavily draws on the discourse analysis approach in analysing complimenting, it is essential to understand what is involved with this type of approach. The current study understands discourse in the terms of Holmes (2008):

Among sociolinguists, the term 'discourse' is generally used to refer to stretches of spoken or written language which extend beyond an utterance or a sentence.

(Holmes 2008:356)



The following sections describe a rich array of tools and crucial concepts in analysing discourse.

### 3.5.1 Discourse Analysis

To understand what discourse analysis aims to achieve, I start with Michael Stubbs' (1983) remark on discourse analysis.

The term discourse analysis is very ambiguous. I will use it in this book to refer mainly to the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected spoken or written discourse. Roughly speaking, it refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore, to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language in use in social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers.

(Stubbs 1983:1)

The primary concerns which Stubbs identifies are located at the following three levels: 1) in discourse analysis, discourse refers to either spoken and written discourse, 2) discourse analysis aims to study larger linguistic units than the sentence levels and 3) discourse analysis concerns the interrelationship between language use and society. In short, as expressed in Brown and Yule's words, "the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use" (1983:1).

Put differently, discourse analysis is a tool for analysing discourse, at large, language use in society. As Holmes claims, "discourse analysis provides a tool for sociolinguists to identify the norms of talk among different social and cultural groups in different conversational and institutional contexts" (2008:356).

Having said that, discourse analysis is not a single established field or approach. It is an interdisciplinary field that has influences on and from a number of hybrid disciplines across humanities and social sciences, such as philosophy, linguistic anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and psychology (Lakoff 2003).

In what follows, I touch upon some other independently established disciplines that concern discourse analysis and inter-linking fields that take consideration of discourse analysis approach. These concepts are fundamental in understanding what I attempt to achieve in this dissertation and how I intend to analyse the sociolinguistic variable of complimenting.

### **3.5.2 Linguistic Anthropology**

As indicated by the name itself, linguistic anthropology is a branch of anthropology. The main goal of anthropology is to provide an integrated description or account of humans and human behaviours. Linguistic anthropology then gives rise to the analysis of human language and human communications through the lens of the anthropological approach. As Hymes defines it, linguistic anthropology is “the study of speech and language within the concept of anthropology” (1963:277). Duranti also states that “linguistic anthropology must be viewed as part of the wider field of anthropology not because it is a kind of linguistics practiced in anthropology departments, but because it examines language through the lenses of anthropological concerns” (1997:4). As discourse analysis is concerned with language use in society, linguistic anthropology equally shares their overlapping interests.

Given that the initial primary goal of linguistic anthropology was to document and describe American indigenous people's languages, historical myths, and narratives, the dominant methodology in this field heavily relies on ethnographic fieldwork and description, on which the next section focuses.

### 3.5.3 Ethnography of communication

Ethnography is a branch of anthropology and first of all a method (Duranti 1999). Duranti defines ethnography as follows:

An ethnography is the written description of the social organization, social activities, symbolic and material resources, and interpretive practices characteristic of a particular group of people. Such a description is typically produced by prolonged and direct participation in the social life of community and implies two apparently contradictory qualities: (i) an ability to step back and distance oneself from one's own immediate, culturally-biased reactions so to achieve an acceptable degree of "objectivity" and (ii) the propensity to achieve sufficient identification with or empathy for the members of the group in order to provide an insider's perspective. (Duranti 1999:85)

In short, ethnography, as a method first and foremost, emphasizes the importance of a longitudinal participation-based approach that gives rise to the knowledge of ordinary people's communication and the daily life of a specific community. Ethnographers are expected to face a methodological dilemma, however: to become "one of them" as an insider to achieve insights into a particular group, but also to remain an outsider in order to retain as

much objectivity as possible in their research.<sup>4</sup> In my study, I was both an insider and an outsider to this speech community and this meant a great deal of advantages (see section 3.7.1).

I would like to note here however, that recently, there have been some scholars who use ethnographic approach in a much broader sense. For instance, in the 1980s, applied linguists such as Manes and Wolfson (1981) in the United States referred to the notebook method (see section 3.3.2) as ethnographic approach. However, the notebook method does not necessarily require longitudinal observation-based participation in the community, following up the same people over a long period of time. Researchers using the notebook method could basically go out to the streets and make notes of linguistic data even uttered by strangers. Among some scholars, it seems that anything other than interview methods can be referred to as ethnographic. However, in my study, I intend to use “ethnography or ethnographic research” in the original sense stated above in Duranti’s remarks.

It was the well-known sociolinguist, Dell Hymes, who offered a theory of ethnography of communication: a description on the nature of ways of speaking within speech communities. Hymes’ work was influential, bridging the study of specific language use and the study of the community where such language use was constructed.

A general theory of the interaction of language and social life must encompass the multiple relations between linguistic means and social meaning. The relations within a particular community or personal repertoire are an empirical problem, calling for a mode of description that is jointly ethnographic and linguistic.

(Hymes 1972:39)

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<sup>4</sup> Because of the shared interest in looking at what ordinary people do in a given society, sociology, for instance, also exploits this ethnographic approach. Goffman (1989) in particular discusses issues of researchers being an insider and outsider.

His contribution on ethnography of communication was at three levels: 1) he implemented the ethnographic approach, 2) studied communicative events that constitute the society and 3) provided a model for speech events describing different components. Hymes considers communicative/speech events as units of participation in two ways: ways for people to belong to a community and ways to constitute a community (Duranti 1997). He postulates that there are rules of speaking that are followed by communicatively competent speakers in the speech community follow to make sense of the world (which then draws attention to “fluent speakers” on the notion that there are differences in linguistic ability across speakers). Speech events were governed by these rules and there are some fundamental components of speech.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, this dissertation aims to unfold the rules of communication that young Japanese speakers employ in the act of complimenting.

#### **3.5.4 Interactional Sociolinguistics**

Interactional sociolinguistics was originally developed by John Gumperz (1982) and was generated by the criticism of early work in the ethnography of communication. This field hence shares its interests and concerns with other closely related fields such as anthropology, sociology and linguistics.

Gumperz believes that social and linguistic meanings are made available to interactants through cultural- and context-dependent interaction.

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<sup>5</sup> Hymes (1974) calls this model SPEAKING; it consists of sixteen components of speech represented by the eight letters of SPEAKING, namely, 1) Settings, 2) Participants, 3) Ends, 4) Act sequence, 5) Key, 6) Instrumentalities, 7) Norms and 8) Genres.

In every interaction, hearers attempt to infer speakers' intention and to contextualize the social and linguistic activity. Speakers then follow what he calls contextualization cues, to make the best inference available to them in specific interaction. His definition of contextualization cues is as follows:

Any verbal sign which when processed in co-occurrence with symbolic grammatical and lexical signs serves to construct the contextual ground for situated interpretations, and thereby affects how constituent messages are understood.

(Gumperz 1999:461)

Common contextualization cues are, for example, code-switching, style-shifting, and prosodic, lexical and syntactic choices. What his theory made significant within this field was that his notion of contextualization allows us to understand the potential (mis)interpretation and (mis)understanding in interaction. Decoding contextualization cues often require culture-specific knowledge, however, speakers do not necessarily always share the same background or culture-specific knowledge to decode contextualization cues in the same way. In the case of responding to compliments, for instance, preferred topics of compliments can vary and trigger misunderstanding across different cultures. Wineland (1995), for example, explores cultural differences in complimenting at dinner table conversation between French and Americans. He found that complimenting on addressees' appearance was preferred by the Americans whereas the French often showed embarrassment and discomfort to this sort of compliment.

### 3.5.5 Goffman in Sociology

The Canadian born sociologist Erving Goffman was one of the most influential theorists who studied spoken interaction. He made a significant impact on the development of sociolinguistics. He introduced some powerful concepts to the field of sociology (e.g. face, frame analysis, keying, footing, to name but a few) and then later developed the field of ethnomethodology (see also section 3.5.3). These concepts are still widely applied to better understand human communication and discourse. His analytical focus was on physically and socially situated activities and their systems, e.g. talk between strangers at a train platform. He used the term “interaction order” to refer to the set of systematic domains that form practical daily behaviours and/or movements.

My concern over the years has been to promote acceptance of this face-to-face domain as an analytically viable one – a domain which might be titled, for want of any happy name, the interaction order – a domain whose preferred method of study is micro analysis.

(Goffman 1983:2)

He also studied the organisation of interaction that deals not only with meanings, but also with the involvement of social actors. His frame analysis gives rise to understand how social actors, i.e. the interactants, organise their experience with regard to social activities. Goffman states that a central concept of frame analysis is the notion of *key*: “a set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else” (1974:43-44). He defines keying by providing certain conditions of keying: 1) a systematic

transformation is involved, 2) participants are meant to know that a systematic alternation is involved, 3) cues will be available, 4) keying is not restricted to events perceived within any particular class of perspectives and 5) keying performs a crucial role in determining what it is we think is really going on. This last point, in particular, reminds us that we ought to look for keying in interaction in understanding what is involved with the named act of complimenting.

Another prominent concept of his is the notion of *footing*. Footing “stands for a speaker’s and hearer’s shifting alignments in relation to the events at hand, as a combination of production/reception format and participation status” (Slembrouck 2010). This notion of footing is capable of distinguishing multiple layered levels and roles of speakers. Goffman (1981) claims that the speaker can be differentiated at three levels: 1) animator, 2) author and 3) principal. For instance, let us consider an example of TV commercial. The voice heard on the advert is the animator, the advertising agency who came up with the words is the author, and finally the manufacturer who came up with the original idea of all is the principal. In the act of complimenting, the speaker usually takes up on all of the three levels simultaneously. However, in the rare cases of reported speech of compliments (e.g. “Kenzo said that you were great at that presentation”), the complimenter can be animator and principal, but the quoted person can be the author (i.e. Kenzo).

Last but not least, we shall not forget his establishment of the notion of *face* (see Chapter 2 for the later development of face by Brown & Levinson). Goffman defines face as follows:



The positive social value which a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taking during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes.

(Goffman 1967:5)

He understood the importance of sense of self and others. Hence, his argument of face construction was that face was mutually constructed, interpreted and reproduced in the encounters and interactions between others and self. As I argued in Chapter 2.2.2, the act of complimenting which inevitably requires interaction with others, is deeply concerned with this kind of face work that Goffman identifies.

### 3.5.6 Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysts are another group of scholars who take discourse seriously. They take the stance that talk is a sequence of social acts. They are predominantly interested in looking at naturally occurring (often spoken) conversations which are often obtained in ethnographic ways. They are curious about what social actors do in conversation. The field was established by Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff in the early 1970s. Their focus was on conversational exchanges and social order of conversations. They proposed certain terms and specifically, analytic tools in the study of conversations.

Conversation analysis claims that communication is organised sequentially and that successful exchanges are due to a *turn-taking system*. Speakers in conversations take turns to let the conversation flow and they are

also expected to cooperate in meaningful conversation. Look at the example below:

A: Hello  
B: Hello

(Sacks 1992:3)

Once “Hello” was uttered by A, this calls for B to give certain response, i.e. “Hello”, which makes the whole exchange as a greeting. This is also called an *adjacency pair*: “a sequence of two utterances, next (i.e. adjacent) to one another, and [it] produces by two different speakers” (Schegloff & Sacks 1973 cited in Duranti 1997:250). Conversation analysts believe that there are preferred actions and hence, if some trouble or problems occur in the conversation, repairing can be mundanely introduced.

However, there have been criticisms that conversation analysis does not take consideration of cultural or historical contexts. This approach has been criticized for its ‘narrow’ sense of analysing conversation. As Holmes argues, “[conversation analysis] emphasises that the analyst should only make use of information available from the text being analysed and should not refer to extra-textual, ethnographic information. .... No extra contextual information is needed” (2008:381). Hence, their focus is on the text under investigation and conversation analysts believe that members’ rules and norms of social behaviour are portrayed in the actions (which is then being extracted as texts).

This part of the chapter has looked at discourse analysis and its related concepts to better understand discourse and discourse analysis as an analytic tool on which the current study is based. In the upcoming section, I

describe methodologies implemented in my study in detail and further motivate the selection of these methodologies.

### **3.6 Methodologies in the current study**

Given the advantages and disadvantages of various methodologies considered above in both speech acts and sociolinguistic research, I decided to make use of group recordings for the current study. This section describes in detail the approaches that I employed. Keeping in mind that there is no one perfect data collection methodology (Jucker 2009), I conducted three different approaches of recordings throughout my fieldwork: 1) semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews, 2) lunchtime recordings, and 3) playback interviews in order to best answer my research questions.

#### **3.6.1 Semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews**

In most Labovian sociolinguistic research, sociolinguistic interviews are the classic method of obtaining conversational data as mentioned above in section 3.3.1. Although the original style of sociolinguistic interviews is one interviewer with one interviewee, which most of the researchers would call “structured”, researchers can modify the style of interviews in order to fit the goals of their research (cf. Milroy & Gordon 2003; Wolfram 1998). As I am interested in the nature of complimenting behaviour among young adults in Japanese society, I needed to have a group of people interacting in recordings, hoping to observe compliments between interlocutors. It is called “semi”-structured, instead of “structured”, since some questions are

prepared in advance, but others arise during the interview itself (see also Bucholtz 2007; Tagliamonte 2006).

Each interview was mainly composed of two to four people, apart from the researcher, and was carried out for about an hour on average. In the interviews, I gave my participants questions and topics that I would like them to discuss and they were allowed to talk freely about these among themselves. The interactions between the researcher and the participants were restricted as much as possible, allowing the maximum opportunity for the participants to talk. As the interviewer, I was present at all times of the recording to guide the participants, making sure everything went smoothly. The balance of gender, the number of females and males in the study, was controlled as much as possible. When setting up schedules for interviews prior to the actual interviews, one of my main concerns was to assure that I have a good balanced sample of people with regards to gender. In total, after a year of my fieldwork, I had 31 groups of sociolinguistic interviews with 23 male and 22 female individuals, some of whom participated in more than one interview. These consisted of 11 only male-only groups, 12 only-only female groups and 8 mixed sex groups. Each group included two to four participants.

### **3.6.2 Lunchtime recordings**

To achieve a higher level of naturalness in my dataset, I conducted group recordings over lunchtime in the common room of the department where I was working within. In this common room, there were always some students either studying or chatting. Two of my audio-recording devices

were left on a table of this common room over lunchtime to record students' conversations for 10 days in total. Lunchtime was the best time of the day to conduct recordings as it was the peak time when a significant number of students were present and they seemed to be very relaxed and natural over food with their friends. All the students knew that I was conducting recordings (I explain this in detail in section 3.8) and they did not mind me hanging out in the room from time to time. In fact, they were very friendly, helpful and curious about what a senior student from their department, who now is studying abroad, was up to. I was sometimes present (not all the time) to make sure that everything was up and running smoothly and also, more importantly, to observe their behaviour by taking field notes. I made most of my fieldwork observation notes over the lunchtime. It was the most precious time for me to encounter their fascinating and peculiar behaviour especially in the speech act of complimenting.

### **3.6.3 Playback interviews**

As part of my sociolinguistic interviews, I conducted playback interviews when I went back to the field for the second time. This method was originally pioneered by Gumperz (1982) and was extremely useful for my research in order to investigate the participants' ideas and perceptions about complimenting.

I first identified nine intriguing interactions that included complimenting behaviour and extracted them as sound files from the first recording and had participants listen to them with the transcription that I had prepared. They were then asked to talk about each interaction in regard

to what they thought was going on in those interactions and why. This method was useful to elicit Japanese native speakers' intuitions about events that are perceived to be compliments.

In total, I had 19 playback interviews with 22 male students and 18 female students that made up the second stage of my fieldwork.

### **3.7 On the fieldwork**

This section is devoted to describing the procedure of my fieldwork step by step, and lays out in detail how my fieldwork was conducted.

#### **3.7.1 Who? – The participants**

In the first place, my original intention was to look at complimenting behaviour across generations in Japanese society. As a pilot test in the summer of 2007 before entering the University of Edinburgh in September 2007, I carried out recordings with kindergarten children (age three to five years), university students and women over the age of 50. As a result, I found that among kindergarten children complimenting behaviour was hardly ever observed. The children were still at the stage where they seemed most clearly oriented to get praise or compliments from others, such as their teachers, and did not seem to have developed the competence of complimenting at others. This suggests that socialization in compliment routines commences in later stages of our lives. In fact, as Manes and Wolfson (1981) claim, because compliments are linguistic 'social lubricants', speakers need to develop the sense of others first and care for them in order to be able to pay and receive

compliments appropriately in society. Hence, to become a competent speaker of complimenting, speakers need to first of all develop the sense of others' face and learn how to attend to it before they can give compliments appropriately to others.

As for the older generation over the age of 50, I collected nearly 20 hours of recorded conversations with a total of 35 speakers throughout the two stages of my fieldwork. In these conversations, I did observe complimenting behaviour.<sup>6</sup> However, as I started the analysis with the data from young generation, I realised that there were already so much to be analysed about complimenting behaviour in Japanese society among the younger speakers. Also, because of the time constraints on my fieldwork, I could not conduct playback interviews with the older speakers. This made the older generation data incompatible with the young generation data to some extent. For these reasons, I decided not to deal with the older generation data set for my PhD project although I intend to go back to these data in my future research.

The outcome is therefore that my research focus is on young Japanese adults. In order to get the best data possible, I decided to go back to the university where I graduated from. Most of the professors and staff in the department knew me. Moreover, because I did my Masters there as well, a lot of the junior students also knew me. This made it easier for me to get informed consent from participants and to get smoothly started with this community of practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992). Most importantly, I had been once one of the members of this community of practice for 6 years

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<sup>6</sup> Complimenting behaviour among older generation was, however, not as frequently observed as the young generation.

myself. In this sense, therefore, I was an insider. On the other hand, I was also an outsider who left this community at one point in the past and came back as a (sociolinguistic) researcher. This side of my status provided me with the opportunity to step back and observe speakers in the most objective ways possible (Goffman 1989).

In total, 67 university students (29 males and 38 females) participated in my research either in sociolinguistic interviews or lunchtime recordings, with some participating in more than one recording. Table 3.1 and 3.2 below provide information about the participants. In order to protect their identity, pseudonyms were invented for each individual. I included their year of study as it is a crucial key to understand the status relations in university settings in Japan. The year of study is based on when I started my fieldwork. Hence, when I went back for the second time, 4<sup>th</sup> year students already graduated and the rest had moved in to the year above.



Table 3.1 Male participants

Males	Pseudonyms	Age	Year of study	Participation for:		
				Jan/Feb 08	Jul/ Aug 08	Lunchtime recording
1	Hirosi	20	2nd yr	yes	yes	yes
2	Takeo	20	2nd yr	yes	yes	yes
3	Goro	20	2nd yr	yes	yes	yes
4	Syun	19	2nd yr	yes	yes	yes
5	Katu	19	2nd yr	yes	yes	
6	Kenzi	23	masters	yes	yes	yes
7	Hisasi	20	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
8	Itiro	20	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
9	Tosiro	21	3rd yr	yes		
10	Akira	22	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
11	Syotaro	21	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
12	Daisuke	21	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
13	Hiro	20	2nd yr	yes	yes	
14	Eizi	21	2nd yr	yes	yes	yes
15	Hideo	20	3rd yr	yes	yes	
16	Motoo	19	1st yr		yes	
17	Yosuke	19	1st yr		yes	
18	Nori	20	2nd yr		yes	
19	Ryoya	19	1st yr		yes	
20	Asahi	19	1st yr		yes	
21	Kyoiti	19	1st yr		yes	
22	Takeru	19	1st yr		yes	
23	Masaru	19	1st yr		yes	
24	Takesi	NA	4th yr			yes
25	Gengoro	NA	4th yr			yes
26	Tetu	NA	4th yr			yes
27	Kaname	NA	4th yr			yes
28	Taro	NA	4th yr			yes
29	Tomo	NA	5th yr			yes

Table 3.2 Female participants

Females	Pseudonyms	Age	Year of study	Participation for:		
				Jan/Feb 08	Jul/Aug 08	Lunchtime recording
1	Saki	20	2nd yr	yes	yes	
2	Motoko	19	2nd yr	yes	yes	
3	Nozomi	22	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
4	Tika	21	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
5	Miho	20	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
6	Moyo	32	1 <sup>st</sup> yr master s	yes		
7	Miki	22	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
8	Kaori	22	3rd yr	yes	yes	
9	Noriko	21	3rd yr	yes	yes	
10	Mako	21	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
11	Mami	20	3rd yr	yes		
12	Momoko	21	3rd yr	yes		yes
13	Ayumi	21	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
14	Konomi	20	4 <sup>th</sup> yr	yes		
15	Eri	20	1st yr	yes	yes	
16	Hanako	20	2nd yr	yes	yes	
17	Nao	22	3rd yr	yes	yes	
18	Akiko	22	3rd yr	yes	yes	yes
19	Hitomi	20	1st yr		yes	
20	Yoko	20	2nd yr		yes	
21	Emi	21	2nd yr		yes	
22	Tomoko	20	1st yr		yes	
23	Manami	NA	4th yr			yes
24	Yosiko	NA	4th yr			yes
25	Ei	NA	4th yr			yes
26	Mie	NA	4th yr			yes
27	Yoriko	NA	4th yr			yes
28	Kanari	NA	4th yr			yes
29	Maho	NA	4th yr			yes
30	Mayo	NA	4th yr			yes
31	Kanako	NA	4th yr			yes
32	Taeko	NA	4th yr			yes
33	Aiko	NA	4th yr			yes
34	Tieko	NA	4th yr			yes
35	Rie	NA	4th yr			yes
36	Arata	NA	4th yr			yes
37	Nanako	NA	4th yr			yes
38	Kyoko	NA	4th yr			yes

### 3.7.2 Where? – The setting

I conducted my fieldwork at the English department of the Education Faculty at a university that is located in the southern part of Japan. This is where I obtained my Bachelor and Masters. Knowing the system and people in the university so well enriched the ethnographic analysis of my research especially. I used a classroom in the department for the sociolinguistic interviews so that the environment for the recording was relatively quiet and comfortable for the students. The lunchtime recordings, as mentioned above, took place in the common room of the department where students came in to have lunch, chat and study with their friends. The following pictures illustrate how the recordings were made and give some ideas of how students were interacting.



Picture 1: Participants in the common room of English department



Picture 2: Male participants at lunchtime recordings

### 3.6.3 When?

I conducted my fieldwork as a pilot and at two separate times after the pilot. The pilot was conducted in July 2007 for just over two weeks. The first stage of data collection took place in January and February in 2008 for about a month. Then I went back for more data collection as the second stage in July and August 2008 for just under two months. My primary research interest lies in looking at the nature of complimenting behaviour in Japanese society. Longitudinal research made it possible to observe what constitutes a compliment in Japanese and how competent speakers of complimenting conduct their acts. Going back to the same people and the same community of practice over a long period of time played a significant role in my research (cf. Goffman 1989; Schieffelin 1990).

### 3.7.3 How much data obtained?

In total, I obtained a total of more than 40 hours of recorded conversations with university students including lunchtime recordings and sociolinguistic interviews. Table 3.3 shows the total hours of recordings (see Appendix 3 for a comprehensive list of the recordings).

Table 3.3 Hours of recorded conversations

Lunchtime recordings	13'14'05
Sociolinguistic interviews	27'26'29
<b>Total hours of recording</b>	<b>40'40'34</b>

### 3.7.4 What happened after the recordings? – The data organisation

As soon as the recording was done, the sound files were saved in at least two places, on my laptop and hard disk that I prepared, with the dates and times of the recordings and participants' pictures. In each interview, I asked all the participants to write their names on white cards and take pictures with these cards in front of them in order for me to remember their faces and names (see Picture 3 below). Fortunately, all my participants were happy to do so and none of them refused after I had promised that their private information would be confidential. This helped me immensely in remembering my informants quickly and matching their voices. This was especially true when listening to the lunchtime recordings conducted without my presence.



Picture 3: Participants in the sociolinguistic interviews

I then used Microsoft Media player, Microsoft Word and Elan 6.0 to transcribe all the possible complimenting-like behaviours that I detected in the recordings. I used Microsoft Word to transcribe the first set of recordings, and Elan 6.0 for the second set. Elan 6.0 (<http://www.la-mpi.eu/tools/elan/download>) is a piece of software that anybody can download for free online. This is a useful programme for linguists as it allows us to deal with sound files and inserting transcriptions as words at the same time.

In the end, I found 143 complimenting sequences with 369 compliment utterances in the corpus. I transferred them to Excel using Basic Transcription System for Japanese (BTSJ hereafter), developed by Usami (2003). BTSJ was designed for Japanese linguists to transcribe spontaneous spoken Japanese data. I will show the transcript conventions used in BTSJ in the last section of this chapter (see section 3.10). All the transcription was

organised in Excel following BTSJ, with Japanese descriptions of *Hiragana*, *Katakana* and *Kanji*. I then transcribed them in English orthography (*Kunrei-shiki* system):

<http://www.transliteration.com/transliteration/en/japanese/iso-3602-kunrei-shiki/>). Some are glossed with linguistic features underneath and then translated in English. The following example illustrates part of my corpus in the Excel sheet.

### Example 3.1 Example of compliment sequence in the corpus

Number of turns	Names of speakers	Gender of speakers	Utterances	English translation
1	Researcher	f	<i>Ogoru?</i>	Do you treat girls?
2	Takeo	m	<i>Boku desu ka? (R:un) boku ogon nai desu ne.</i>	Me? I don't.
3	R	f	<i>Saisyō no de-to demo? Dare to itte mo?</i>	Even on your first dates? No matter who you are with?
4	Takeo	m	<i>Dare? Tabun dare to itte mo, &lt;tte koto wa nai desu&gt;{&lt;}</i> .	Who with? Maybe not with anybody.
5	<b>Hirosi</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>&lt;Tamani demo boku ni ogotte kureru tai&gt;{&gt;}, yoku.</b>	<b>You treat me well sometimes.</b>
6	Takeo	m	<i>A, boku musiro, otoko tomodati toka kouhai toka ni ogorimasu.</i>	Oh yeah I treat my mates or my junior students rather.
7	R	f	<i>A, sou nan da, &lt;sore wa nande?&gt;{&lt;}</i>	I see. Why is that?
8	Takeo	m	<i>&lt;Betuni onnanko ni&gt;{&gt;} gokoru toka....,</i>	Not particular reason... treating girls...
9	<b>Hirosi</b>	<b>m</b>	<b><i>Tukiai ii mon ne, nanka.</i></b>	<b>You are like, a sociable person.</b>
10	Takeo	m	<i>U:n, nanka, sou desu ne.</i>	Yeah, like, for some reason.
11	Takeo	m	<i>Maa, kouhai dattara /2sec/ yappa, /1sec/nansuka /1sec/ kawaigarau, mitai na</i>	If they are my junior students, then I would look after them.
12	Hirosi	m	<i>Ma, zibun mo sou sarete kita kara, tabun, senpai kara.</i>	He has been also treated like that by his senior students.
13	R	f	<i>&lt;A: naruhodo ne&gt;{&gt;}</i> .	Ah I see.
14	Takeo	m	<i>Sou da ne{&lt;}</i> .	That's right.

Italics: Japanese; bold: compliments

### 3.8 Ethical issues

Taking ethical issues seriously is an essential element in any form of research. This is also highly supported by the Linguistics department at the University of Edinburgh. Information is available on line



(<http://www.ling.ed.ac.uk/local/howto/>) and I made use of this in my research.

One of the first steps of my research was to ensure that all the participants were informed of the purpose and contents of my research and that they were comfortable with them.

Prior to my arrival, an announcement was made to all the students in the department by my former supervisor at the university that a senior student was coming back to conduct some linguistic research. They were encouraged to kindly help their senior who was coming back all the way from the United Kingdom.

When I arrived there at the university, I personally made a little speech to thank all the students who were willing to help me with my research and explained what I was going to do and why. To avoid as many artifacts as possible in my research, I did not explain in detail the purpose or the content of my research. In other words, I did not tell them that I was interested in looking at their complimenting behaviour. I did, however, mention that I was interested in their day-to-day language use and how they interacted with each other. I also told them that I was hoping to carry out audio-recordings with them. This was repeated at the beginning of most of the interviews as well.

For the lunchtime recordings, which potentially targeted an unlimited number of the students in the department, a different approach was required. To make sure that all the students in the common room knew that I was conducting the recordings, I put a notice on the blackboard indicating that the recording was taking place, so that those who did not wish to

participate could avoid coming into the room at that time. The notice included my name and contact number so that if anyone had complaints or questions they could contact me. Furthermore, I assured them that they had every right to withdraw afterwards. Also, if they did not want me to use specific conversations that were recorded, they could always come and talk to me and these would be deleted.

### **3.9 Reliability of the data**

In order to demonstrate the reliability of my data set and corpus, I have conducted reliability tests. I asked another native speaker of Japanese to check roughly 10% of randomly selected data from my corpus. That corresponded to 15 complimenting sequences, which included 35 compliment utterances, out of a total of 143 sequences and 369 compliment utterances.

For the test, she agreed to identify which of the selected utterances were 'compliments'. She was given the definition of compliment, which was established in the current study (see Chapter 2) so that she understood what the present study regarded as a compliment in the speech community. She was, of course, encouraged to give judgements based on her intuitions as a Japanese native speaker. As a result, out of 35 utterances that I had classified as compliments for the corpus, she recognised 32 as compliments. The rate of overlap was therefore 91.4 percent.

### 3.10 BTSJ transcription conventions

In this section, I illustrate the BTSJ conventions that I used for the current study. These are exemplified in Table 3.4. Note that the original convention of BTSJ is slightly modified: the original version was designed to use Japanese scripts, whereas the English alphabet was used for the current study.

Table 3.4 Transcription Conventions

.	the end of utterance
„	interruption by another utterance, indicates the utterance is not complete
,	a short pause
?	a question utterance
??	a tag question
[ ↑ ][ → ][ ↓ ]	rising, parallel, falling intonation
/number sec/	seconds of silence
=	latching
...	reluctance to continue/ finish the utterance
< >{ < }	over lapping where it starts
< >{ > }	over lapping where it ends
【 【 】 】	before completing an utterance (indicated by 【 【 at the end of uncompleted utterance), the next utterance by another starts (indicated by 】 】 at the beginning of a new utterance)
[]	voice quality, e.g. loud/ fast/ high-pitched/ etc
()	short back-channeling
< >	laughter; <laugh>
""	quoted speech
#	inaudible words

### 3.11 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter discussed what kind of methodologies are available to speech act researchers and those which have been implemented in previous research on speech acts. Following Jucker's (2009) work on the

three major types of methodologies – “the armchair”, “the field” and “the laboratory” method – I discussed the pros and cons of applying these methodologies to different studies. In so doing, I verified that the best suited methodology for the current study is the field method. Benefits of conducting group recordings combined with sociolinguistic interviews and lunchtime recordings were evaluated in order to address the Observer’s Paradox.

Next, I reviewed some key issues regarding discourse analysis as the present study primarily takes the analytic stance of discourse analysis as a methodology in examining Japanese compliments. Not only the broad notion of discourse analysis was considered here, but also other closely related disciplines that deal with discourse were taken into consideration.

Finally, I demonstrated exactly how my fieldwork was conducted, covering when it was conducted, who the participants were, what the setting for recordings was, how much data I obtained and how close attention was paid to ethical issues. I also addressed the issue of how I organised the data after data collection: reliability test and transcription conventions.

In the next chapter, I consider the linguistic structure of Japanese compliments – the syntactic and semantic patternings of compliments gathered in this study.

## **Chapter 4. The data set and linguistic structures of Japanese compliments**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I primarily investigate and discuss compliments at the utterance level. What I mean by this is that I am first and foremost concerned with compliments as utterances, rather than compliments as organised at larger discourse levels. I pay attention to the linguistic structure of Japanese compliments in particular to demonstrate the internal constraints in the construction and production of Japanese compliments. I will not look at what happens before and after compliments or how consecutive compliments are generated and developed after the first compliment's turn, as I shall discuss these elements in Chapter 5 and 7. In what follows, I first describe the overall picture of my data set. I then move on to focus on the linguistic structure of Japanese compliments collected for the current study: the lexical semantic and syntactic patterning of compliment utterances. Finally, I discuss the use of hedges and boosters that co-occur within Japanese compliments.

### **4.2 The data set**

Before I begin to look into the linguistic and social features relevant to Japanese compliments, I shall present the overall picture of Japanese compliments in my data set. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, I conducted semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews and free conversational style recordings over lunchtime. For the most part, I present the results separately according to these different styles as this gives us an interesting basis for discussion

later on. In the sociolinguistic interviews, I have 19 interviews where compliments occurred while I have 9 days of lunchtime conversations for the free style conversations. I have organised my data in terms of three units of analysis. I differentiate between *compliment sequences*, *compliments* and *compliment responses*. In the next two pages, I will define these units. Table 4.1 illustrates how many compliment sequences, compliments and compliment responses were collected for this study. In total, I extracted 143 compliment sequences, which consisted of 369 compliments and 209 compliment responses. As we can see, it is worth differentiating these units because there is far from a one to one correspondence between them. Even compliments and compliment responses do not always comprise a canonical adjacency pair. In most cases, compliments outnumber responses.

Table 4.1 Number of compliment sequences, compliments and compliment responses collected across different styles

Sociolinguistic Interviews	Number of sequences	Compliments	Responses
1	8	16	6
2	5	11	9
3	1	2	2
4	1	1	1
5	2	4	2
6	10	17	13
7	2	2	2
8	2	2	2
9	2	10	3
10	4	7	5
11	4	6	5
12	1	2	1
13	1	1	1
14	2	4	1
15	1	1	1
16	3	12	8
17	2	5	0
18	2	9	6
19	2	9	6
Sub total	55	121	74
Lunchtime Recordings			
1	13	34	22
2	6	8	4
3	5	14	8
4	9	22	14
5	14	39	31
6	16	60	25
7	15	36	19
8	6	14	5
9	4	21	7
Sub total	88	248	136
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>209</b>

Each compliment sequence represents one stretch of talk that starts from the point where a topic related to a compliment is introduced till the next new topic is introduced. For the notion of sequence, this study draws on the guidance of Pomerantz and Fehr (1997):

“In order to identify a sequence, look for identifiable boundaries. For the start of the sequence, locate the turn in which one of the participants initiated an action and/or **topic** [emphasis mine] that was taken up and responded to by co- participants. For the end of the sequence, follow through the interaction until you locate the place in which the participants were no longer specifically responding to the prior action and/or **topic**.”

(Pomerantz & Fehr 1997:71)

In my dissertation, I use the term ‘topic’ as in the sense of ‘discourse topic’ as introduced by Keenan and Shieffelin (1976) as opposed to the grammarian’s notion of sentential topic (cf. Hockett 1958). In other words, the topic here is not a simple NP subject (typically thought of as a sentential topic in sentences by grammarians), but a proposition which indexes “what is talked about” in a particular segment of discourse (Brown & Yule 1983). As we will see, sometimes, the introduction of a compliment topic itself is a compliment. Within one compliment sequence – once the topic of the compliment is introduced – we can often find more than one compliment, especially given that all the recordings were conducted with multi-parties. Example 4.1 shows one compliment sequence which included multiple compliments. The bolded utterances indicate compliments.



### Example 4.1 Compliment sequence

Context: Kanako and Aiko are both 4<sup>th</sup> year female students. They are preparing their handouts for the thesis presentation

1	Kanako	f	<i>Ai-tyan no genkoo mo, kono katati ni sita to:?.</i>	Did you also follow this format for your handouts?
2	Aiko	f	<i>Un, kono katati ni sita.</i>	Yeah I did.
3	Aiko	f	<i>Ima, ##tyan no genkoo mite:, aaiu, sono no:to no katati ni siyou ka dou ka mayotta kedo, (u:n) mendoukusai ken, &lt;kore de ii ya, to omotte&gt;{&lt;}.</i>	I just saw ##tyan's handouts and wondered if I should follow the note like that format, but I could not be bothered, so 'this was alright', I thought.
4	Kanako	f	<i>&lt;U:n, ii to omou&gt;{&gt;}, ii to omou.</i>	<b>Yeah, I think it's good. I think it's good.</b> (first compliment)
5	Aiko		<i>Zya nai? Datte, mekuru pe:zi ga sugoku ooku natte:,,</i>	Don't you think? Because otherwise there will be too many pages.
6	Kanako	f	<i>Sugoi ne, kore yomi yasu sou.</i>	<b>Amazing, it looks so easy to read.</b> (second compliment)
7	Aiko	f	<i>Honto:?.</i>	Really?
8	Kanako	f	<i>Kono hen toka.</i>	Here, for example.
9	Kanako	f	<i>Ato iti gyōu iti gyōu de?</i>	Line by line?
10	Aiko	f	<i>Un, kai gyōu ni sita, zenbu.</i>	Yeah, I changed it all line by line.
11	Kanako	f	<i>A:, sugo:i.</i>	<b>Amazing.</b> (third compliment)
12	Aiko	f	<i>Iya iya iya iya.</i>	No, not at all.
13	Kanako	f	<i>Sugoi.</i>	<b>Amazing.</b> (fourth compliment)
14	Kanako	f	<i>Amaa, doko de kaeru toka wa zibunde oboeteru kanzi?.</i>	Then you remember when to change (the page).
15	Aiko	f	<i>N:, bangou hutta.</i>	Yeah, I put page numbers.
16	Kanako	f	<i>A, sasuga.</i>	<b>Indeed (I expected you to be so good).</b> (fifth compliment)
17	Kanako	f	<i>A, kouiu, kouiu tokoro tte koto?</i>	You mean, these?
18	Aiko	f	<i>Un, un, &lt;sou sou sou&gt;{&lt;}.</i>	Yeah, yeah.
19	Kanako	f	<i>&lt;A:&gt;{&gt;}, sugoi.</i>	<b>Amazing.</b> (sixth compliment)
20	Kanako	f	<i>/5sec/ A, yomi yasu sou kore.</i>	<b>It looks easy to read.</b> (seventh compliment)
21	Aiko	f	<i>Iya:.</i>	Not at all.
22	Kanako	f	<i>U:n, /7sec/ arigato:.</i>	Yeah, thank you (for showing it to me).
23	Aiko	f	<i>Uun.</i>	No prob.
24			Topic Shift	

In line 1, Kanako introduces a new topic on the format of the handouts that they were trying to make for their thesis presentation. From line 1 to 3, Kanako and Aiko are setting up a basis for a compliment to occur.<sup>7</sup> Line 4 is the first compliment in this sequence which generated Aiko's response in line 5. From that point on, as Kanako was actually looking at Aiko's handouts in her hands, compliments were repeatedly paid by Kanako to Aiko in line 6, 11, 13, 16, 19 and 20. Therefore, in this one compliment sequence, we can observe a total of seven compliments.

In other words, in the entire data set, there were 143 first-turn compliments and the rest of 226 compliments were second/third/fourth/onwards higher order compliments. I draw on Golato's (2005) framework of first and second compliments. She states that "the term 'first compliment turn' [is] to be understood as a compliment which is the first compliment given within a sequence" (2005:27). Second compliments are "those compliments that are given by a second interlocutor either before or after the compliment recipient has responded" (2005:133). Hence, I call these compliments in order – first, second, third and so on – depending on what order in the sequence the compliment occurred. The interlocutors often give more than one compliment on the same topic within a sequence, especially when multiple participants are involved in interaction.

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<sup>7</sup> I discuss the organisation of compliments at the level of discourse in Chapter 5, e.g. how the interlocutors build up pre-compliment discourse, therefore, I will not discuss in detail how the compliments are constructed and developed within compliment sequences here in this chapter.

Once a compliment related topic is brought up, on average, the Japanese speakers tend to produce 2.6 compliments – for every sequence, we find 2.6 compliments on average ( $369 \text{ compliments} \div 143 \text{ sequences} = 2.58$ ).

Based on Labov’s notion of ‘style’ (Labov 1972), my study draws on two types of styles: sociolinguistic interviews (more careful speech) and lunchtime recordings (casual speech). In terms of these styles, it is clear that more compliments occurred in casual speech: 121 compliments emerged in the sociolinguistic interviews (out of 27 hours and 26 minutes, i.e. 1646 minutes of recording) while there were 248 compliments in the lunchtime recordings (out of 13 hours and 14 minutes, i.e. 794 minutes of recording). A total of 45 individuals (23 males and 22 females) participated in the sociolinguistic interviews and 41 students (17 males and 24 females) took part in the lunchtime recordings (see Table 3.1 and 3.2 in Chapter 3). This result tells us that in the sociolinguistic interviews, on average every individual complimented 3 times ( $121 \div 45 = 2.68$ ) and a compliment occurred on average every 14 minutes ( $1646 \div 121 = 13.60$ ). On the other hand, in the lunchtime conversation, on average, every person complimented 6 times ( $248 \div 41 = 6.04$ ) and a compliment occurred every 3 minutes ( $794 \div 248 = 3.20$ ) on average. The table below illustrates the frequency of compliment production per person and minute.

Table 4.2 Compliments production across time and individual in the two styles of speech

	Per person	Per minute
Sociolinguistic interviews	3 times	14 minutes
Lunchtime recordings	6 times	3 minutes

We may speculate as to the reason for finding more compliments in the casual style of speech than in the sociolinguistic interviews. It seems there are two possible reasons for this. The first is the difference in stances that each style of speech entails. Lunchtime conversation is usually more dynamic and ongoing. Over lunchtime recordings, there was no regulation as to who can enter the room or what should be talked about. On the other hand, in the sociolinguistic interviews, I as a researcher was present at all times for each interview and controlled the organisation of the talk to some extent, e.g. the topics that should be talked about. The number of interviewees also did not change within one interview. Hence, the sociolinguistic interview was under more static conditions compared to the lunchtime recordings where the number of speakers, and who was involved in what conversation, was an ongoing, changing matter. Because of the nature of different stances across different styles of speech, the production of compliments was constrained accordingly.

Secondly, there might exist differences of interactional functions or goals across these two styles of speech. Within ongoing interaction of natural speech, speakers are often involved with a number of ritual and interactional performances: fostering, reinforcing, negotiating and mending friendships, passing information, doing facework through small talk and so forth. Given that one of the primary functions of the speech act of complimenting is “to create or to maintain solidarity between interlocutors [as] social lubricants” (Wolfson 1983:89), this function of complimenting fits more readily into the dynamics of the casual speech than into the static nature of sociolinguistic interviews.

However, in terms of number of turn-taking (Sacks et al. 1974) within sequences, the current data shows little differences across styles. For the sociolinguistic interviews, within 55 sequences, I coded a total of 731 turns (that is, 13 turns on average per sequence), while for the lunchtime recordings, within 88 sequences, I coded a total of 1025 turns (that is, 12 turns on average per sequence).<sup>8</sup> Table 4.3 summarises this result.

Therefore, this indicates that the reason we see more compliments in the lunchtime recordings is *not* because the lunchtime recording sequences were longer and afforded speakers more opportunities to compliment each other. It seems to be a general difference in stylistic resources that speakers draw on in the different styles or contexts.

Table 4.3 Number of sequences and turns across styles

	Number of sequences	Number of turns	Average turn per sequence
Sociolinguistic interviews	55	731	13.29
Lunchtime recordings	88	1025	11.64
Total	143	1770	

Finally, when we compare the number of compliment responses with the number of compliments, it shows that compliments do not necessarily require responses: there were 369 compliments compared to 210 compliment responses collected in total. This indicates that a third of compliments were ignored or lost in conversation and some of the compliment turns were not completed with any (at least recognisable verbal) responses from the complimentees. There might be two reasons for this. The first is a structural

<sup>8</sup> The difference across styles was not statistically significant (chi-square = 0.547,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.459$ ).

constraint. When there are multi-parties involved in interaction as complimenters, it is often the case that the interactants jump into the conversation, complimenting the same person/object, instead of multiple people complimenting on different people/topics simultaneously. Hence, even if there are multiple complimenters involved in compliment sequences, there will be only one recipient, which structurally produces one response to the possible multiple compliments given.

The second is a social and interactional constraint. In some cases, silence as a response to the paid compliment might be a tactical choice for the Japanese speakers. This may be due to a specific characteristic of Japanese culture that values humbleness. Accepting a compliment can inevitably be construed as self-praise as it means admitting the quality that the complimentee was claimed to have by the speaker. On the other hand, disagreeing with others is in general a face-threatening strategy not only for the Japanese but also for a number of other cultures (Pomerantz 1978). Hence, choosing neither of the two – accepting or disagreeing with the compliment – might be an interactionally tactful choice for the Japanese speakers. I will undertake a detailed discussion and analysis of compliment responses in Chapter 7.

### **4.3 Direct and indirect compliments**

Compliments are not always explicit and unambiguous in common with the vast majority of speech acts (Austin 1962; Grice 1967; Grundy 2000; Levinson 1983; Searle 1969, 1975; see also the discussion on intentionality as a requisite condition for compliments in Chapter 2). This is due to the fact that

one form can perform more than one (interactional) function and one function can be achieved through various forms (cf. Grundy 2000; Holmes 1986). There are explicit/direct compliments as well as implicit/indirect compliments (Boyle 2000; Herbert 1990; Jaworski 1995; Knapp et al. 1984; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989). Explicit and direct compliments are ones where speakers reconstruct meanings based on conventional implicature – literal meanings encoded in words/phrases, while implicit and indirect compliments are based on conversational implicature – non-conventional meanings that are decoded in a highly context-dependent manner. Indirect compliments require more inference work for the addressees to reconstruct these ambiguous utterances as compliments – the participants would need to rely on the interpretation of contexts (Brown & Yule 1983: 33). Let us consider the following examples of direct and indirect compliments.

#### Example 4.2 Direct compliment

*Arata san no happyou yokatta desu.*

Arata HON GEN presentation good.PAST POL

“Arata’s (your) presentation was good.”

#### Example 4.3 Indirect compliment

*Sugoi tema kakari sou.*

very trouble cost seem

‘It seems it costs much trouble (to make these vegetables).’

Example 4.2 is a clear case of a compliment in that it is directly addressed to and about the addressee, and also marked with explicit positive evaluative marker, *yokatta* (good.PAST). In 4.3, explicit positive evaluative words were not uttered, nonetheless, based on the inference that the speaker found it worth mentioning that the addressee had made such effort to make the vegetables, it is considered to be an instance of indirectly praising the addressees' effort. These examples show that some utterances require more (or less) inferential work. Consequently, I found both direct and indirect compliments in my data set. Especially with regards to indirect compliments, I coded for highly contextual and non-conventional utterances that index conversational implicature (Grice 1969, 1975). Although it was one of the important goals of my dissertation to account for as wide a range of compliments as possible, I acknowledge the possibility that some indirect compliments may have been missed, and there may have been a tendency to find more direct/explicit compliments (Jaworski 1995).

Table 4.4 Number of direct and indirect compliments in the corpus

	Direct compliments	Indirect compliments
Sociolinguistic interviews	93	28
Lunchtime recordings	154	94
Total	247	122

As Table 4.4 shows, in total, I found 247 direct compliments and 122 indirect compliments from my corpus.



#### **4.4 Linguistic features of Japanese compliments**

This part of the chapter focuses on the analysis of the linguistic structures of Japanese compliments. First of all, I start with the lexical semantic features of Japanese compliments. Given that compliments should in theory express some sort of positive evaluation (as we saw in Chapter 2), it is often the case that the linguistic structure of compliments includes lexical items that carry positively evaluative semantic loads. I show that the majority of Japanese compliments are expressed with adjectives carrying positive evaluations but also that nominal adjectives, nouns and verbs are exploited to a much lesser extent. Then I move on to discuss the syntactic patterns of Japanese compliments. I demonstrate what syntactic structure is involved in constructing Japanese compliments. Then I finally analyse hedges and boosters that are embedded into the compliments mitigating and/or reinforcing their illocutionary force.

#### **4.5 The lexical semantics of Japanese compliments**

In this section, I focus on the semantic features of Japanese compliments. As mentioned earlier, with the majority of compliments, it is often the case that some kind of positive evaluations are embedded in the components of compliment utterances. This is often overtly marked at the semantic or syntactic levels. In order for speakers to clearly and unmistakably convey positive evaluations, positive semantic loads are often explicitly expressed in lexical items, for example, in adjectives, nominal

adjectives, verbs and nouns. We shall look at each component individually in the following sections.

#### 4.5.1 Adjectives

In studies of compliments in the West, it has been claimed that English compliments only exploit a few lexical items in the construction (Manes 1983; Manes & Wolfson 1981; Holmes 1988, 1995; Wolfson 1983, 1984). In their American English data, Manes and Wolfson (1981) found that out of 686 compliments collected for their study, 546 compliments exploited the positive semantic load of a small set of adjectives. The most frequently found adjectives in their data were *nice* (22.9% of all the compliments expressed with adjectives), *good* (19.6%), *pretty* (9.7%), *beautiful* (9.2%) and *great* (6.2%).

In the Japanese compliments also, these positive evaluative components are in fact mostly expressed with adjectives appearing in either predicate or attributive positions. Table 4.5 shows the adjectives that carried positive evaluative loads within the Japanese compliments.

Table 4.5 A list of positive evaluative adjectives in Japanese compliments

	Adjectives	English translation	Number of tokens
1	<i>sugoi/sugee</i>	'amazing'	78(64 / 14)
2	<i>ii/yoi</i>	'good'	40(34 / 6)
3	<i>kawaii(rasi)i</i>	'cute'	26
4	<i>omoshiroi</i>	'interesting / funny'	17
5	<i>erai</i>	'admirable'	16
6	<i>wakai</i>	'young'	12
7	<i>yasasii</i>	'kind'	7
8	<i>kakkoi</i>	'cool'	5
9	<i>subarasii</i>	'wonderful'	4
10	<i>uresii</i>	'glad'	4
11	<i>hayai</i>	'early / fast'	3
12	<i>yabai</i>	'mental'	3
13	<i>kasikoi</i>	'clever'	2
14	<i>tanosii</i>	'enjoyable'	2
15	<i>okasii</i>	'funny'	2
16	<i>dekai</i>	'big'	1
17	<i>tuyoi</i>	'strong'	1
18	<i>akarui</i>	'bright'	1
19	<i>kuwasii</i>	'familiar'	1
	Total		225

*Sugee* is a phonologically reduced variant derived from *sugoi* ('amazing').

Hence, the total number of instances of *sugoi* and *sugee* account for approximately 35% of the adjectival items (78 tokens out of 225 in total).

Following this, given that *yoi* is also a phonological variant of *ii* ('good'), the total tokens of *yoi* and *ii* make up 18% of the entire data set (40 tokens out of 225). Then *kawaii* ('cute') comes in as the third most frequently used term occurring 12% of the time (26 tokens) when adjective items are used.

This almost parallels Kim's (2006) list of adjective items in compliments. She found that the four most frequently used adjectives in her Japanese data are *ii* ('good'), *sugoi* ('amazing'), *kawaii* ('cute') and *erai* ('admirable'), in that order.

Daikuhara (1986) also supports this result in that 80% of Japanese compliments collected for her study used adjectives and in that the top 5 most frequently used adjectives were *ii* (good: 25%), *sugoi* (amazing: 23%), *kirei* (beautiful: 12%), *kawaii* (cute: 8.6%) and *oisii* (delicious: 7.6%).

It seems that the term *sugoi/sugee* (amazing) – a semantically stronger and hyperbolic form than ‘good’ or ‘nice’ or possibly ‘great’ – is more frequently exploited in my data (across three Japanese compliment studies) compared to English data. I will discuss the indexicality and stance of this variable in Chapter 8 as these variants are loaded with highly salient social meanings in this community and suggest potential grammaticalization in progress.

#### 4.5.2 Nominal adjectives

Next, I show a lexical category which is particular to Japanese, nominal adjectives, carrying positive evaluative semantic loads. In traditional Japanese grammars, this category is called *keiyoo-doosi* (‘adjectival verb’ in direct translation). However, since many Western grammarians call this “nominal adjectives/ adjectival nouns” (McClure 2000; Shibatani 1990) due to their being able to take the copula, and hence functioning like nouns and adjectives, in this dissertation, I also refer to them as nominal adjectives. The following example illustrates nominal adjectives appearing both in predicate and attributive positions.

Example 4.4 Nominal adjective in predicate position

*Ano hito wa sunao da.*

that person TOP honest COP

“That person is honest.”

Example 4.5 Nominal adjective in attributive position

*Sunao na hito.*

Honest COP person

“honest person”

Table 4.6 shows a list of positive evaluative nominal adjectives found in the data set.

Table 4.6 A list of positive evaluative nominal adjectives in Japanese compliments

	Nominal adjectives	English translation	Number of tokens
1	<i>sunao</i>	'honest'	9
2	<i>kirei(zuki)</i>	'beautiful'	4
3	<i>naisu</i>	'nice'	3
4	<i>ziyuu</i>	'free'	3
5	<i>osyare</i>	'fashionable'	3
6	<i>suki</i>	'like'	2
7	<i>zyouzu</i>	'good at'	2
8	<i>akutibu</i>	'active'	1
9	<i>teinei</i>	'polite'	1
10	<i>daizi</i>	'important'	1
11	<i>kogara</i>	'small'	1
12	<i>surenda:</i>	'slender'	1
13	<i>suteki</i>	'wonderful'	1
14	<i>mame</i>	'diligent'	1
15	<i>zyentoru</i>	'gentle'	1
16	<i>surimu</i>	'slim'	1
17	<i>kanpeki</i>	'perfect'	1
18	<i>kateiteki</i>	'homely'	1
19	<i>mottomo</i>	'reasonable'	1
20	<i>saikou</i>	'the best'	1
	Total		39

This result tells us that the quality of honesty is referred to frequently among the Japanese university students (9 out of 39 tokens of the nominal adjectives, or 23% of the time when nominal adjectives are used), which reflects the socially highly valued characteristic of being honest. Another thing to be noticed here is that there are quite a few borrowed words from English<sup>9</sup>: *naisu* ('nice'), *akutibu* ('active'), *surenda:* ('slender'), *zyentoru* ('gentle'), *surimu* ('slim'). Two possible reasons for this might be in order. First of all, all my participants were young university students and it is, in fact, the younger generations who are more willing to join the globalization and use 'global

<sup>9</sup> McClure (2000: 229) discusses how borrowed words from English into Japanese tend to be expressed using the *katakana* script and to be nominal adjectives.

language', that is, English (Layweryns 2002). Secondly, they all belonged to the English department, hence they might have had more access to and capability of using these English words as their repertoire of compliments.

### 4.5.3 Verbs

To a much smaller extent, compared to the use of adjectives and nominal adjectives, verbs may also carry positive assessments in the construction of Japanese compliments. Positive evaluative verbs found in the data set are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 A list of positive evaluative verbs in Japanese compliments

	Verbs	English translation	Number of tokens
1	<i>dekiru</i>	'can (do)'	5
2	<i>ganba(tte)ru</i>	'do best'	4
3	<i>aisareteru</i>	'be loved'	2
4	<i>niau</i>	'suit'	2
5	<i>kima(tte)ru</i>	'look cool'	2
6	<i>ukaru</i>	'pass'	2
7	<i>tukusu</i>	'serve'	2
8	<i>sukareteru</i>	'be liked'	1
9	<i>kitaisareteru</i>	'be expected'	1
10	<i>rikai aru</i>	'understand'	1
11	<i>ogoru</i>	'treat'	1
12	<i>ikeru</i>	'can go'	1
13	<i>waka(tte)ru</i>	'understand'	1
Total			25

First of all, the frequency of verbs with positive evaluative elements is relatively low when compared to the adjectives and nominal adjectives explained above: a total of 225 tokens of adjectives and 39 tokens of nominal

adjectives compared to 25 tokens of positive evaluative verbs (cf. Golato 2005).

Secondly, although previous research suggested that positive evaluative verbs often include *love* and *like* in English (Wolfson & Manes 1981; Holmes 1988, 1995), the Japanese data did not find the equivalent to the same extent. In fact, there are no tokens of *suku* ('to like') or *aisu* ('to love') found in my data. This result is also strongly supported by data from Taiwan Mandarin (Wang & Tsai 2003). Rather, the state of complimentees that they are loved or liked or expected by somebody seems to be a quality that deserves positive evaluations in this community. The passive progressive forms of *aisareteru* ('being loved'), *sukareteru* ('being liked'), *kitaisareteru* ('being expected') are observed. In all of the cases, the agent and patient are omitted and only the verb appears, with the inflections for passive and progressive (generally, *-(r)are* for passive, *-te iru* for progressive).

#### 4.5.4 Nouns

Finally, the positive evaluative nouns used in the Japanese compliments are shown in Table 4.8.



Table 4.8 A list of positive evaluative nouns in Japanese compliments

	Nouns	English translation	Number of tokens
1	<i>itiban</i>	'best/no. 1'	2
2	<i>sekai iti</i>	'world's no.1'	1
3	<i>miriyoku</i>	'charm'	1
4	<i>(nihon no) daihyou</i>	'representative (of Japan)'	1
5	<i>buyuuden</i>	'legend'	1
6	<i>fan kurabu</i>	'fan club'	1
7	<i>yosa</i>	'good'	1
Total			8

The lexical category of nouns turns out to be the least favoured category for carrying positive evaluative load. There were only 7 items and 8 tokens in total.

#### 4.6 Syntactic patterns of Japanese compliments

In this section, I turn my attention to the syntactic patterns of Japanese compliments. As I discussed earlier in Chapter 2, previous research, especially on English compliments – American and New Zealand English – argues that English compliments lack a diverse range of syntactic patterns and shows the most simplistic syntactic patterns in compliments. For instance, Manes and Wolfson (1983) claims that 53.6% of the compliments gathered for their study make use of a single syntactic pattern: *NP is/looks (really) ADJ*.

In the case of Japanese, also, the majority of the compliments seem to occur only in a small range of syntactic frames. The significant difference here, however, is that for categorising the syntactic patterns of compliments in my data set from previous studies, my categorisation paid attention to

where the positive evaluations are structurally expressed in the compliments. In Japanese compliments, there are three positions that can potentially carry positive evaluations: predicate, attributive and subject positions. In the following sections, I illustrate each of syntactic patterns.

#### **4.6.1 Predicates**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of the positive evaluations within compliments are carried by predicates. As I have shown above, these positive evaluations are expressed with adjectives, nominal adjectives, verbs and nouns appearing in this position. I consider each of these in turn.

#### **Adjectives**

The majority of the components of predicates for Japanese compliments are adjectives. The most generalised pattern of Japanese compliment with adjectives is expressed formulaically in 4.6 below. Apart from the adjective embedded in the structure, all the components are optional as indicated by the use of brackets. As discussed in Tsujimura (2007), null anaphora are common phenomena in Japanese: Japanese allows speakers to omit subjects and objects in a sentence.

Example 4.6 (NP) + (TOP/NOM) + ADJ + (COP) + (NP) + (SFP)

The following examples show the possible variants of the formula shown in 4.6 found in my data set. The list is laid out in order from the most simple

(smaller number of components) to the more complex (more components) constructions.

Example 4.7 ADJ

*Kirei.*

beautiful

Example 4.8 NP + ADJ

*Kore kawaii.*

this cute

“This (is) cute.”

Example 4.9 ADJ + NP

*Yabai kore.*

mental this

“This (is) mental.”

Example 4.10 NP + ADJ + COP

*Okaasan wakai desu.*

mother young COP

“(Your) mother is young.”

Example 4.11 ADJ + COP + NP

*Ii zyan are.*

good COP that

“That is good.”

Example 4.12 NP + TOP + ADJ

*Kore ga suteki.*

this NOM wonderful

“This (is) wonderful.”

Example 4.13 NP + NOM + ADJ + COP + SFP

*Maiku ga tiisai desu ne.*

microphone NOM small COP SFP

“(This) microphone is small.”

Example 4.14 NP + TOP + NP + ADJ + COP + SFP

*Takatiho wa are sugoi desu ne.*

*Takatiho* TOP that amazing COP SFP

“*Takachiho* (a name of a place) is amazing, that.”

In addition to these patterns which fit the formula 4.6, the following three patterns were also found to utilise adjectives.

Example 4.15 ADJ + Q + think

*Ii to/tte omou*

Good Q think

“(I) think (that is) good.”

Example 4.16 How + ADJ

*Nanto suteki.*

how wonderful

Example 4.17 Why ADJ

*Nande sonna omae kuwasii no?*

why so much you familiar QM

“Why are you so familiar with it?”

Example 4.15 illustrates a case where a positive evaluation with an adjective is carried in an embedded clause. Example 4.16 is an exclamative form that is also reported in English compliments (Manes & Wolfson 1981; Holmes 1995). Holmes (1988, 1995) found that this syntactic pattern was favoured especially by New Zealand females. Out of all the syntactic patterns found in New Zealand data, she observed that women used this pattern 7.8% of the time, whereas men used it 1.3% of the time. With this rhetorically emphatic construction, Holmes claims that the females intend to enhance the illocutionary force of this speech act. However, this was a very rare pattern in my Japanese data. As a matter of a fact, only one case was found, and it turned out to be uttered by a male participant. One of my informants also

mentioned that this is such a rare construction that it produces an exaggerated and theatrical effect. Example 4.17 shows that the positive evaluation is carried in the adjective *kuwasii* ('be familiar with'). The interesting point is that it is embedded in the interrogative form. It is a nice example of a case of an indirect speech act (Searle 1969, 1975) that was discussed in Chapter 2. The speech act of complimenting was articulated through a different type of speech act: a question. This utterance occurred soon after the recipient of the compliment had thoroughly explained the topic under discussion with memories from about 10 years ago. Hence from this context it is clear that the speaker was not really asking why the complimentee could talk about this topic with such vast knowledge but was simply praising the ability to have done so. It is again a highly rare structure for a compliment and I found only one case of this sort in the corpus.

### **Verbs**

As noted in 4.5.3 above, compared to the use of adjectives in compliments, verbs carrying positive evaluative semantic loads were relatively rarely observed. There are broadly two patterns found in the data set.

Example 4.18 VP

*Niau.*

suit

“(It) suits (you).”

Example 4.19 V.PASSIVE.(PROG)

*Aisareteru ken ne.*

love.PASS.PROG because SFP

“Because (you are) being loved.

Example 4.19 refers to cases where the verbs are passive forms. In Japanese, this type of passive construction was more frequently observed than the active form which is often reported in English data (‘I love/like your tie’ pattern). Manes and Wolfson (1983) found that this active voice pattern accounted for 16.1% of compliments and Holmes (1995) found that in New Zealand English, 17.8% of the female compliments and 13.1% of male compliments conformed to this pattern. Instead, we see passive voice pattern in the Japanese data. In these passive cases, often the syntactic subject – i.e. the patient in the active construction – and the agent are omitted. The verb with the passive morpheme *-(r)are* is all that is left. Furthermore, in all of the examples with passive sentences, the progressive and/or resultative (state) morpheme *-te iru* was attached. This may be because the *-te iru* form “refers to a state resulting from an event and the state remains to hold true now” (Tsujimura 2007:370). In giving a compliment, this concept of continuity in the quality mentioned plays an important role (see the later section 4.6 for

more detailed discussion of the problematic use of the past tense in compliments).

## Nouns

As was the case with compliments formed with the use of positive evaluative verbs, positive evaluative nouns were very rarely found in the corpus. The following three patterns were found in the data set.

Example 4.20 NP+NOM+NP+COP

*Sore ga miryoku da.*

that NOM charm COP

“That is a charm.”

Example 4.21 NP+ NOM + V

*Fan kurabu ga atta.*

fan club TOP be.PAST

“There was a fan club.”

Example 4.22 VP + NP

*Itte yare yo buyuuden wo.*

tell do.IMPERATIVE SFP legend OM

“Tell (the researcher) your legend.”

The most frequent pattern is shown in Example 4.20 i.e., positive evaluative nouns appearing in predicates. The structure shown in Example 4.21 was the



only case where the subject (*fan kurabu*: fan club) carried positive evaluations. Example 4.22 is the only example of a positive evaluative noun (*buyuuden*: legend) appearing as an object in an imperative form. This is another good example of an indirect speech act: complimenting is realised here through the speech act of ordering. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet put it: “compliments do not usually announce themselves explicitly.... Even imperatives can be used to impart a compliment” (2003:148).

#### 4.6.2 Attributes

Next, I present examples of adjectives and nominal adjectives carrying positive evaluations in the attributive positions. First, Example 4.23 shows the canonical use of an adjective modifying a noun.

Example 4.23 ADJ + NP + COP

*li papa da yo.*

good papa COP SFP

“(He is a) Good papa.”

Next, nominal adjectives can also appear in the attributive position (as was also shown in Example 4.5 above).

Example 4.24 NA + COP + NP

*Sunao na ko.*

honest COP child

“Honest child”

Furthermore, sometimes it is possible to be loaded with positive evaluative items in both predicate and attributive positions. The following example is a case in point.

Example 4.25 NA+COP+NP+NOM+NP

*Sunao na toko ga yosa.*

honest COP point NOM good

“Honesty is your good point.”

In the example above, both attributive and predicate components carry positive evaluations: nominal adjective *sunao* (honest) in the attribute and noun *yosa* (good) in the predicate.

Up until now, I have described what lexical items can be exploited in the construction of Japanese compliments and what syntactic patterns and features are found in the data set. I now show the distribution of these patterns. Figure 4.1 shows the number of tokens and the distribution for each pattern, based on their position in the utterance.

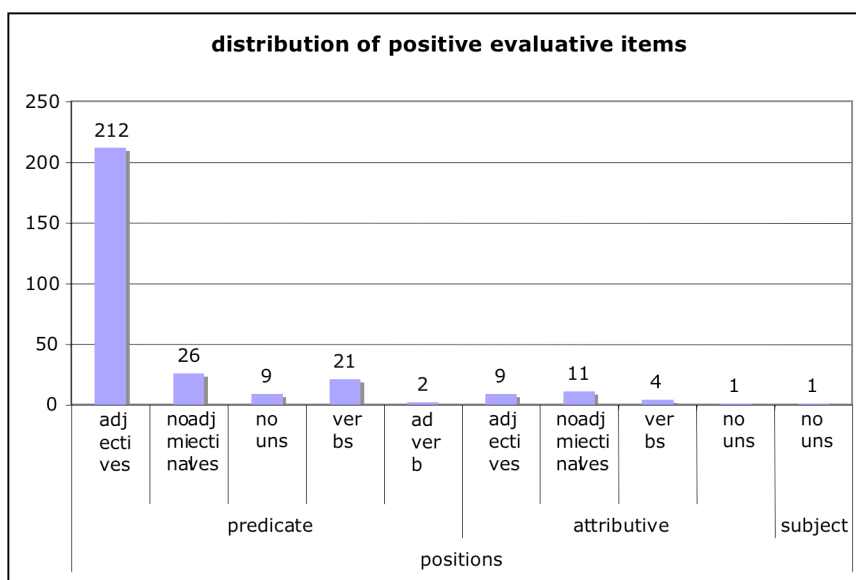


Figure 4.1 Number of tokens of lexical items across positions

As shown in Figure 4.1 above, the typical component of Japanese compliments is actually a variety of adjectives appearing in predicate positions.

As a small project to compare my compliments data with other regular Japanese utterances, I extracted 100 clauses at random from my corpus which may (or may not) include compliment utterances (see Appendix 4). I excluded interrogative and imperative sentences and only counted declarative sentences. I then checked the predicates in these clauses. I found that in the 100 randomly selected clauses, 12 had adjectives, 4 nominal adjectives, 18 noun phrases, and the remaining 66 had verb phrases in the predicates. Copulas were not counted as part of the verb phrase, but coded for, depending on what was carried with: adjectives, nominal adjectives and nouns. Hence, this shows that regular Japanese clauses primarily consist of verb phrases in the predicates, whereas the Japanese

compliments consist mainly of adjectives in the predicates, as shown in Figure 4.1 above.

#### 4.7 Tense, aspect and mood in Japanese compliments

This section explores the use of tense, aspect and mood in Japanese compliments. Japanese basically has two tenses: non-past and past (Tsujimura 2007). Non-past forms can express present and future tense reading in Japanese. The vast majority of Japanese compliments exploit non-past tense. In common with what has been found for English compliments (Manes & Wolfson 1983), there seems to be a strong constraint on the use of future tense in Japanese compliments. Not many incidents of clear future tense were found in my data. The following examples illustrate the canonical pattern for tense marking (non-past and past) found in Japanese compliments.

##### Example 4.26 Non-past (Present)

*Kawaii.*

ADJ

cute

##### Example 4.27 Past tense

*Maza:gu:su omositokatta desu yo.*

Mothergoose interesting.PAST COP SFP

“(your presentation on) Mother Goose was interesting.”

Example 4.28 Non-past (Future)

*Ukaru tte.*

pass Q

“(You will) pass (the exam).”

In 4.26, there is actually no overt tense marking. A predicate without any overt tense marking is interpreted as non-past, which underlines the fact that present tense is assumed to be the default. On the other hand, when marking past tense, as shown in 4.27, there is an overt past morpheme (usually *-ta*). In 4.28, the verb stem is a non-past form, which usually suggests present tense. However, because this was uttered after the addressee was talking about the exam coming up in a month at the time and how nervous she felt, the context generates a future tense interpretation.

However, because complimenting is essentially giving evaluations about the quality that addressees possess, constraints on past tense seem to be in order to some extent: preferably, compliments tend to be about attributes that are continuously positive features of the addressees in the present. If a compliment is about the continuous quality of the addressee, e.g. personality, then the use of past tense might indirectly indicate the lack of this quality in the present. The following extract illustrates this case.

Example 4.29 Problematic use of past tense in Japanese compliment

Context: Hitomi is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year female student and Daisuke is a 4<sup>th</sup> year male student. They are talking about how popular Daisuke was when Hitomi was in the first year.

1	Hitomi	f	<i>Demo Daisuke san, demo saisyo are desu yo ne, fan kurabu toka ne, tirahora attan desu yo.</i>	<b>But in my first year there was your fan club (in the department).</b>
2	Daisuke	m	<i>Kako kei?.</i>	Past form?
3	Hitomi	f	<i>Saikin kikan ## &lt;laughing&gt;.</i>	I don't hear it recently.
4	Researcher	f	<i>Hahaha &lt;laugh&gt;.</i>	Hahaha.
5	Hitomi	f	<i>Yappa, ano:, ikioi aru toki ni ika nai to ike nakattan desu yo, Daisuke san.</i>	After all, you should have pushed it when the time was yours, Daisuke san.
6	Daisuke	m	<i>Ima wa owatta to?</i>	It's over now?
7	Hitomi	f	<i>Wakannai.</i>	I don't know.
8	Daisuke	m	<i>Mazide?.</i>	Really?
9	Hitomi	f	<i>Mada ike masu yo, mada mada, ikeru, to omoimasu yo.</i>	<b>I think you can still go (make it happen).</b>

In line 1, Hitomi comments that Daisuke had a fan club at the department when she was in her first year. However, because it was expressed with the past tense, it threatens Daisuke's face as seen in his response in line 2.

Daisuke shows a sad face expression at this point and continues to question whether or not his popularity is really over, shown in line 6 and 8. This urges Hitomi to give a remark that she thinks Daisuke is still popular although the assertiveness of the proposition is mitigated with the use of *to omoimasu* (I think that).

Next, we turn to aspectual features in Japanese compliments. Japanese has various ways of encoding aspectual information – “aspectual information can be encoded by varied modes in Japanese: (i) by grammatical morphemes,

(ii) internally to individual verbs, and (iii) by compounds” (Tsuji-mura 2007:369). The following examples were found.

Example 4.30 Present progressive

*Ganbatte masu ne.*

do best.PROG POL SFP

“(You are) doing a good job.”

Example 4.31 Past progressive

*Minna ga hohoen de miteta.*

everybody NOM smile and see.PROG.PAST

“Everybody was smiling and looking (at you).”

Example 4.32 Present perfect

*Eigo zyouzu ni natte kaette kita yo ne.*

English good GM become return come.PAST SFP SFP

“(You) have come home with good English.”

Example 4.33 Past perfect

*Kyoko san kyonen yappa ukatte masu kara ne.*

Kyoko HON last year after all pass POL because SFP

“Kyoko san had passed (the exam) last year after all.”

Finally, let us consider modals. Japanese modals are represented with particular expressions (McClure 2000:150). One of the conditionals which

signals 'if' in English, was observed in the Japanese compliments. The Japanese morpheme for this function is *-tara*.

Example 4.34 Conditional

*Attara tanosi sou.*

have.COND fun seem

“(It) would be fun (if we had you).”

This is one of the indirect compliments described above. Utterance 4.34 does not explicitly state any specific qualities of the addressee, but instead, indicates the potential positive effect if the speaker could spend time with this addressee.

However, these examples (4.30-4.34) using aspect and mood in the Japanese compliments were very rarely observed in my corpus. As Manes and Wolfson point out, “compliments typically use only verbs which are not marked for aspect” (1981:122). It seems clear that with the construction of compliments, there are strong constraints on tense, aspect and mood features. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the compliments exploited simple non-past (present) and to a lesser extent, simple past tense. Table 4.9 below shows the distribution of frequency for each pattern.



Table 4.9 Distribution of tense, aspect and mood features in Japanese compliments

Tense	Non-past	Present	324
		Future	3
	Past	Past	32
<b>Sub total</b>			<b>359</b>
Aspect	Progressive	Present progressive	9
		Past progressive	2
	Perfect	Perfect present	2
		Perfect past	1
	Non-aspect marking		345
<b>Sub total</b>			<b>359</b>
Mood		Conditional	5
Agreement type (no-tense / aspect marking)			10

#### 4.8 Comparisons of degree

Because complimenting entails some form of social assessment, naturally, the structure of compliments can sometimes take the form of a comparative or superlative construction. Unlike English, Japanese does not have inflectional morphology for comparative constructions. Instead, the information is represented with lexical items such as *motto* (more) and *itiban* (no.1 / the best). The next two examples show both comparative and superlative patterns.

##### Example 4.35 Comparative construction

*Iya iya kotti motto wakai.*

no no this more young

“No no, this (person) is much younger.”

#### Example 4.36 Superlative construction

*Eigoka*                      *no*    *naka*    *de*    *itiban*    *otoko*    *darō.*

English department GEN inside in no.1 man COP

“ You are the no.1 man in the English department.”

Two comparative examples and three superlative examples were found in the data set.

#### 4.9 Agreement

Although syntactically there is not too much to discuss about what I call agreement type compliments, these are interactionally interesting in their own light. This type of compliment only expresses agreement with previously paid compliments.

This structure usually consists only of one lexical item – e.g. *tasikani* (certainly) and *un/sou* (yes). Yet, it takes a properly recognised turn in compliment sequences enhancing the illocutionary force of the compliment for the addressee. In other words, these are always second/third/higher order compliments in sequences. Because syntactically it takes much simple forms, I coded this type separately from the above mentioned categories. It does not fit into any other categories that I have described so far. Examples of this agreement type are shown below.

#### Example 4.37 Agreement sound

*un / so*

yes

#### Example 4.38 Adverbial phrases

*Tasikani*

certainly

#### 4.10 Others

Finally, there were some constructions which do not fall into the existing categories, specifically negation and ellipsis. I provide some examples that include adjectives (not necessarily positive evaluative ones) as the core component of positive evaluations but also make use of negation. In other words, these are not explicit positive evaluative adjectives, however, there seems to be a pattern of functioning as a compliment. The first example of this kind shows that in order for the sentence to be a positively evaluative utterance, the speaker must negate any adjectives and/or embedded clauses with negative connotations. In this way, the speaker eventually turns the sentence around into what is effectively a positive evaluation.

#### Example 4.39 ADJ + COP + NEG

*Debu zya nai yo.*

fat COP NEG SFP

“You are not fat.”

In some contexts, this type of construction is even more powerful than the unmarked positively evaluative construction of compliments. Because the speaker purposely negates the negative quality that the addressee is more or

less explicitly concerned about, the addressee receives an even stronger positive evaluation. In other words, this construction of negating negative connotations is somehow marked compared to other standard constructions of positive evaluative utterances.

The next example that exploits negation is the use of a tag question, *zya nai* (Hinds 1986). Consider the following case.

Example 4.40 ADJ COP NEG

*Kirei zya nai?*

Beautiful COP NEG

“Beautiful, aren’t you?”

In previous studies, it has been claimed that tag questions are a kind of hedge which softens the illocutionary force of a speech act (Laureyewns 2002; Tannen 1990). However, as Holmes (1984a, 1984b, 1995) argues, there are several functions that tag questions can serve. In the case of complimenting, the majority of tag questions were facilitative tags (Holmes 1984a), i.e., tags that encourage and elicit addressees’ responses in alliance with speakers’ agreement. I will discuss in detail the function of these tags later in section 4.11.

Lastly, example 4.41 illustrates nicely the highly elliptical nature of Japanese language, such that the speakers are able to omit a number of components in a grammatical sentence. In the next example, even the predicate – the actual positive evaluation – was omitted.

#### Example 4.41 NP

*Senpai mo mada mada.*

senior too still still

“(You) senior (are) still (young) too.”

Because the interlocutors were talking prior to this utterance about how this senior (the researcher) looks young for her age, the complimenter did not have to repeat himself. Japanese syntax allows for speakers to omit arguments and predicates and yet be grammatical. The omitted component was clearly meant to be the adjective *wakai* (young), which appeared in the previous utterances. Hence, this type of elliptical compliment is always a higher order compliment (second / third / and so on) rather than a first turn compliment.

#### 4.11 Boosters and hedges in Japanese compliments

With any type of speech act, it is possible to mitigate the illocutionary force of its act. Fraser (1980) argues that especially the speech act of delivering unwelcome affect towards the addressee is often mitigated through linguistic devices to minimize the negative affect on the addressee. For example, uttering “I am so deeply sorry to be the one that has to tell you that you are not welcome here,” instead of “Get lost” is one example of a mitigated speech act of ordering. But this type of mitigating and negotiating the illocutionary force of speech acts is not only true of those which may convey unwelcome affect to the addressee. The illocutionary forces of compliments can also be modified.

Holmes (1984b) argues that modifying the illocutionary force of a compliment can be done in two possible ways: either boosting the affect of this positively affective speech act of complimenting or attenuating the affect.

Consequently, my definition of hedges and boosters basically follows Holmes' (1984a, 1984b, 1995) framework. Hedges attenuate or soften the illocutionary force of a speech act while boosters emphasize or boost the force.

In what follows, I investigate the use of hedges and boosters in Japanese compliments. It is essential to consider the functions and meanings of both hedges and boosters as these linguistic devices signal a variety of affective meanings and functions in discourse. Both hedges and boosters signal two kinds of meanings: modal and affective meaning (Holmes 1984a, 1984b). According to Holmes (1984a), modal meaning expresses "the degree of certainty with which the speaker wishes to assert the validity of a proposition" (1984a: 48). For example, hedges can help express the speaker's uncertainty towards the proposition that s/he is making whereas boosters can accentuate speaker's certainty about the proposition. On the other hand, affective meaning signals speaker's attitudes towards the addressee rather than towards the proposition itself. With regards to the speech act of complimenting in particular, Holmes states that "speech acts belonging to the category of expressives, such as compliments and criticisms, may be modified by linguistic devices expressing different degrees of feeling" (1984b: 347). Because of the nature of complimenting, the hedges and boosters exploited are more likely to index affective meaning rather than modal meaning. There are quite a few linguistic devices to express and/or

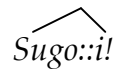
mitigate the illocutionary force of compliments found in my data set. In the following section, I exemplify these linguistic devices drawing upon Holmes' (1984b) framework. She identifies four categories of boosters and hedges: prosodic devices, syntactic devices, lexical devices and discourse devices. I touch on each category in turn.

#### **4.11.1 Boosters in Japanese compliments**

First, I offer examples of linguistic devices that function as boosters enhancing the illocutionary force of Japanese compliments. As can be readily imagined, reinforcing the illocutionary force of a compliment is often welcome because of the nature of this speech act – the handing over of the 'verbal gift' of positive evaluation that may contribute positive affect to the addressee. If the compliment itself is a verbal gift, then boosters are the 'wrappings and ribbons' of the verbal gift that make the present look even more beautiful. Drawing upon Holmes' (1984b) framework, I show the following four types of devices found in my corpus: 1) prosodic, 2) syntactic, 3) lexical and 4) discourse devices of boosters.

In regard to prosodic devices, as Holmes puts it, "contrastive pitch and contrastive volume are linguistic devices which may be used to increase the force of speech acts" (1984b: 351). Similarly, in the Japanese compliments, prolonged vowels with strong stress signal emphasised speech. The intonation for this pattern is usually rising and falling at the end, as indicated in 4.42.

Example 4.42

  
*Sugo::i!*

amazing

Next, I show that some syntactic structures can increase the force of compliments. Although tag questions have been considered primarily as a type of hedge (Fraser 1980; Holmes 1984a, 1995; Lakoff 1972), tag questions can indicate more than just the speaker's uncertainty (attenuation of the proposition). Indeed, they may have a number of functions (Cattel 1973; Holmes 1984a, 1984b, 1995). The next example is a case in point.

Example 4.43

*Wakaku nai desu ka?*

young NEG COP QM

"She is young, isn't she?"

Holmes (1995) calls this type of tag question "facilitative tags". They are positive politeness devices that encourage the addressee to join the interaction. Facilitative tags do not display modal meaning – i.e. they are not about speakers' uncertainty towards the proposition – but instead speakers often use tag questions to elicit a response – in the case of a compliment, agreement from the other interlocutors involved in the interaction.

Secondly, interrogative structures can also boost up the force of compliments when the proposed content of the question is obviously known



to the speaker and the addressee (Kempson 1975 cited in Holmes 1984b: 352).

This can be seen in 4.44.

Example 4.44

<i>Nande</i>	<i>omae</i>	<i>sonna</i>	<i>kuwasii</i>	<i>no?</i>
why	you	so	familiar	QM

“Why are you so familiar (with this topic)?”

Similarly, exclamative forms produce a strong and even exaggerated affect. As mentioned above, one of the Japanese informants reported that this type of exclamative even has a theatrical, dramatic effect, as its rarity gives it significant power. Example 4.45 is the only example of an exclamative form found in my corpus.

Example 4.45

<i>Nanto</i>	<i>suteki.</i>
how	wonderful

Lexical items can also function as boosters. The first example of lexical items is adverbial intensifiers. Various intensifiers can be found with the Japanese compliments:

*tyoo* (‘very’), *honto(ni)* (‘really’), *sugoi* (‘very’), *bari* (‘very’), *mettya* (‘very’), *mazi* (‘really’)

Next, since Japanese does not have inflectional morphology to construct superlative forms, the superlative meanings are expressed at the lexical level (also discussed in section 4.8):

*sekaiiti* ('world's number-one'), *itiban* ('number-one'), *saikou* ('the best'), *kanpeki* ('perfect')

Finally, boosters, even to a lesser extent, can be found with a modal meaning, generally expressing that the speaker is certain about the proposition that s/he is making. These do not modify the speaker's attitudes towards the addressee, but simply show the speaker's degree of certainty about the proposition. In these cases, the following adverbial phrases are found:

*tasikani* ('certainly'), *zettai* ('definitely'), *sorya* ('of course')

Last but not least, let us consider discourse devices. As Holmes suggests, "there are a number of linguistic forms which can perhaps be described as intra-textual or metapragmatic devices for boosting the illocutionary force of utterances" (1984b: 354). She discusses cases in which the repetition of a speech act itself boosts the force of this speech act. In compliment discourse also, we find some examples of the linguistic strategy of repeating the compliment utterance to increase/reinforce the force of the compliment. This repeated speech may be produced in two ways: by the same speaker within a turn or by the multiple speakers involved within a compliment sequence. Consider Example 4.46.

Example 4.46

*Sugoi, mettya sugoi.*  
 amazing very amazing

One speaker can him/herself repeat the same proposition, as in 4.46, or multiple speakers can repeat the same compliment proposition to the same addressee. Consider Example 4.47.

Example 4.47 Discourse repetition

Context: All fourth year students. Maho and Takesi are complimenting Rie on how she managed to clean the mess at her boyfriend's house.

1	Rie	f	<Haisuikou[ ↑ ]>{>} mitaina[ ↑ ]? <i>Are zubotte dasite, zenbu kou aratte...</i>	Like the drain? I took all that out and washed it.
2	Maho	f	<Era:i>{<}. <i>&lt;Era:i&gt;{&lt;}</i>	<b>Admirable.</b>
3	Takesi	m	<Era:i>{>}. <i>&lt;Era:i&gt;{&gt;}</i>	<b>Admirable.</b>
4	Rie	f	<i>A, mazi iraira suru tto omotte...</i>	I thought "I am really pissed off."
5	Takesi	m	<i>Sugo:i, nan da kan da de kedo tyoo ne, &lt;tukusiteru yo ne:&gt;{&lt;}</i>	<b>Amazing, no matter what, after all, you serve (your man) so much.</b>
6	Maho	f	<Erai yo ne:>{<}. <i>&lt;Erai yo ne:&gt;{&lt;}</i>	<b>Admirable.</b>
7	Rie	f	<i>Ganbatten dayo:.</i>	I am trying my best.
8	Takesi	m	<i>Sugee.</i>	<b>Amazing.</b>

As a response to the addressee's confession in line 1, Maho and Takesi, at the same time, compliment Rie in line 2 and 3. Rie responds to this in line 4 avoiding the acceptance of this compliment which may have triggered the repeated compliments for herself. In line 5 Takesi compliments Rie again. Maho in line 6 repeats the same proposition to compliment Rie again. In line

7, Rie indirectly accepts the compliments and then Takesi praises her again in line 8. This type of repeated speech act at the discourse level was observed very frequently in my data, i.e., 68 times. In both types of repetition, the illocutionary force of the proposed speech act is reinforced. The following table 4.10 illustrates a list of boosters found in the data set and their frequency.

Table 4.10 A list of boosters found in the corpus

Types of device	No.	Devices	English translation	Number of tokens
Prosodic device	1	Long stressed vowel		28
Syntactic device	2	Facilitative tag		22
Lexical devices	3	Interrogative		1
	4	Exclamative		1
	5	<i>sugoi</i>	'very'	7
	6	<i>yappa</i>	'after all'	6
	7	<i>honto(ni)</i>	'really / truly'	5
	8	<i>mettya</i>	'very'	5
	9	<i>zenzen</i>	'not at all'	5
	10	<i>ttyoo</i>	'very'	4
	11	<i>mada</i>	'still'	4
	12	<i>(sekai) itiban</i>	'(world's) number 1'	3
	13	<i>yoku</i>	'often / well'	3
	14	<i>mazi</i>	'really'	2
	15	<i>tasikani</i>	'certainly'	2
	16	<i>zettai</i>	'definitely'	2
17	<i>nanto ittemo</i>	'whatever they say'	2	
18	<i>beta</i>	'very'	1	
19	<i>saikou</i>	'best'	1	
20	<i>kanpeki</i>	'perfect'	1	
21	<i>sorya</i>	'of course'	1	
22	<i>bari</i>	'very'	1	
23	<i>zutto</i>	'always'	1	
24	<i>zenbu</i>	'all'	1	
25	<i>ippai</i>	'many'	1	
26	<i>motto</i>	'more'	1	
Discourse device	27	Repetition		68
Total				179

As Table 4.10 shows, a wide range of booster devices frequently occurs with Japanese compliments. This is presumably because boosters fit in well with

the primary function of complimenting: maintaining and reinforcing the relationship between the interlocutors.

#### **4.11.2 Hedges in Japanese compliments**

Now, let us turn our attention to the device which complements boosters, namely, hedges. The study of hedges has attracted a number of linguists (Aijmer 1987, Fraser 1980, Hewitt & Stokes 1975, Holmes 1984a, 1984b, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1995). There has been a significant amount of literature on this topic, even more so than on the boosters (Holmes 1984a). There is a great deal of discussion about the definition and function of hedges. However, for the sake of this dissertation, I will basically follow the definition given by Holmes (1984a, 1984b, 1990, 1995) mentioned above: hedges attenuate the illocutionary force of speech acts. Through the use of hedges, the speaker wishes to express either modal meaning (uncertainty towards the proposition that s/he is making), or affective meaning (attitudes towards the addressee).

In general, it is not common to find hedges with positive affective speech acts such as complimenting and praising because there is a conflict between the intent of the speech acts and the effect of a hedge. Since the act of complimenting involves a positive assessment of the addressee, it is rare to find cases where the speaker chooses to decrease its force; it is more common for speakers to try to increase the force of affective speech acts through boosters. As we would predict, therefore, I found fewer tokens of hedges than boosters in my data set (81 tokens of hedges as opposed to 179 tokens of

boosters). In what follows, I illustrate how these 81 tokens of hedges were used with the Japanese compliments.

First of all, as for the prosodic devices, although Holmes (1984b) suggests that weakened stress, low volume and high pitch may suggest reduction of illocutionary force, I did not find any clear examples of these kinds of strategy in my data. As for syntactic devices, I found only one example of a tag question which seemed to signal uncertainty towards the proposition that the speaker made. Consider 4.48.

Example 4.48

*Sunao na kanzi ga iin zya nai no, tabun.*

honest COP feeling TOP good COP NEG SFP perhaps

“Perhaps, your honesty is good, isn’t it?”

In the previous context, the recipient of this compliment, Nanako was referred to as a girl who would not serve men, compared to the other girl, Rie, who served her boyfriend so well (cooking for him and cleaning his house, etc). Rie was being praised by Takesi (the giver of the compliment) for this. It seems then that Takesi gave this compliment to Nanako in order to save Nanako’s face, but he was not entirely sure whether it was a strong argument that girls being honest and capable of standing up to men, and not serving men, was a good thing, especially after he had complimented Rie on this matter. This type of tag question – which Holmes (1995:80) calls ‘epistemic modal tags’ – helps to indicate this modal meaning of uncertainty

of the proposition. Furthermore, another hedge in the end: *tabun* (perhaps) adds up to this uncertainty.

With regards to lexical hedges, I draw on Lauwereyns' (2002) work. She gives a list of Japanese hedges which my list is partially based on. The following table gives the list of lexical hedges found in my data set, along with the syntactic and discourse devices which are also used in Japanese hedges although less extensively.

Table 4.11 A list of hedges found in the corpus

Types of devices	No.	Japanese hedges	English translation	Number of tokens
Lexical devices	1	<i>nanka</i>	'like'	25
	2	<i>omotte/omou/omoimasu/omoimasita</i>	'I think / thought'	9
	3	<i>-mitaina (kanzi)</i>	'look / feel like'	9
	4	<i>-sou</i>	'seem'	8
	5	<i>tabun</i>	'perhaps / maybe'	4
	6	<i>-tteiuka/toiuka/nantoiuka</i>	'or rather; or what should I say'	4
	7	<i>kyou</i>	'today'	4
	8	<i>-toka</i>	'or something'	3
	9	<i>tyotto</i>	'little'	2
	10	<i>-rasii</i>	'seem'	1
	11	<i>-youna</i>	'seem'	1
	12	<i>-yarou</i>	'probably'	1
	13	<i>-kana</i>	'I wonder'	1
	14	<i>wakannai</i>	'I don't know'	1
	15	<i>nandesuka</i>	'what shall I say'	1
	16	<i>saikin</i>	'recently'	1
	17	<i>tamani</i>	'sometimes'	1
	18	<i>ima</i>	'now'	1
Syntactic device	19	Epistemic modal tag		1
Discourse device	20	Open proposition		3
Total				81



It is clear from this table that the use of “*nanka*” is exceptionally high, in proportion to the other lexical items: 25 tokens. This is also reported in Lauwereyns (2002). She suggests that especially younger speakers may use hedges as speech play, possibly to promote solidarity and to express group-identity among themselves (Lauwereyns 2002:254-5). My research might support this argument of interactional functionality because also in my data, the use of *nanka* seemed to function as a silence-filler and did not act solely as an index of uncertainty or of affective meaning towards addressees. To give an example, *nanka* was often used more than once in a single utterance especially when the speaker was struggling to find the accurate words (see 4.50 below).<sup>10</sup>

Another interesting finding was that some lexical items in compliments can limit the illocutionary force of compliments to some extent. Items 7, 16, 17, 18 in Table 4.11 above are examples of this kind. The utterance “You look gorgeous today / recently / sometimes / just now” expresses positive attitude towards the addressee, but it does not implicate that this positive attribute exists at any time other than the specified time frame. Hence, this type of compliment can sometimes be seen as problematic and in fact, one could question and correct its content:

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<sup>10</sup> Impressionistically, it seems that discourse functions of this *nanka* might have reached an advanced stage functioning as more than just a hedge, however, this is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For the future research, I intend to investigate the discourse functionality of *nanka*.

Example 4.49 Problematic use of hedge in Japanese compliment

Context: Kenzi compliments Ayumi on being kind.

1	Kenzi	m	<i>Saikin yasasii ne.</i>	<b>You are kind recently.</b>
2	Ayumi	f	<i>Nan desu ka?: Itumo watasi yasasii desu yo, dareka to tigatte.</i>	What do you mean? Always I am kind, unlike somebody.

Finally, in terms of discourse devices, one example was found in the data set: open proposition. The speaker does not finish the utterance that s/he started, but instead leaves room for it to be interpreted by the addressees. Consider the following example:

Example 4.50

*Nanka ne, Hideo no koto minna ne, nanka,*  
 like SFP Hideo GEN thing everybody SFP like

*zettai zyentoru dakara ne, nanka... tte itteta kedo...*  
 definitely gentle because SFP like... Q say.PAST but...

“Like, everybody said that Hideo is like definitely gentle like, but...”

Here, the female speaker did not finish the sentence, leaving the proposition of what was supposed to come next fuzzy and open. This type of hedge occurred three times in the entire corpus of hedges in the Japanese compliments.

#### 4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I first provided the overview of the data set, showing exactly how many compliment sequences, compliments and compliment responses were analysed for this study. I compared the two sets of data across styles (sociolinguistic interviews and lunchtime recordings) and discussed potential reasons for obtaining such different patterns in the two styles.

Then I examined linguistic features of Japanese compliments. The lexical semantic and syntactic features of the compliments were discussed in detail. This study revealed that a remarkably high proportion of Japanese compliments rely on the use of various adjectives for conveying positive assessments and judgements.

Finally, the use of hedges and boosters within the production of compliments were considered. The Japanese speakers tended to use more boosters with compliments and more varieties of them when compared to hedges, presumably because of the potential affects on addressees, since boosters maximize the positive illocutionary force of this speech act as opposed to hedges, which might potentially reduce its force.

Having looked at Japanese compliments at syntactic and semantic levels in this chapter, in the next chapter, I will discuss compliments at a larger discourse level. Development of compliments discourse in interaction is the primary concern of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5. Social factors and interactional discourse of Japanese compliments**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I explore social and interactional features and/or functions of the Japanese compliments collected for the current study. As we have seen in the last chapter, linguistic constraints play some role in governing the production of Japanese compliments. The focus of this chapter is to show that beyond the level of the utterance, there are also social and interactional factors that seem to be the key to understanding the construction and structure of Japanese compliments. In what follows, I first look at what topics Japanese compliments refer to and then move on to discuss how power relations come into play, in order to better understand complimenting behaviour among young Japanese. Finally, I demonstrate where in interaction compliments occur and investigate how interlocutors set up compliment discourse before the first compliment turns occur.

### **5.2 Topics of Japanese compliments**

As I argued in Chapter 2, the topics of compliments directly represent what is valued (and what is not) in a given society. As Manes (1983) puts it, a compliment is “a mirror of cultural values”. Because compliments reveal (positive) assessments as socially recognised attributes, by exploring what topics get articulated (and equally what not), we can understand what is considered to be valuable and praiseworthy in a given society. As Manes claims, “compliments represent one means whereby an individual or, more

importantly, society as a whole encourage, through such reinforcement, certain desired behaviours" (1983:97). These assessment-giving compliments, therefore, directly reflect social values at the time.

To give an example, a study carried out in the 1980s revealed that in Poland, by far the most preferred topic for compliments was on possessions (Herbert 1991). Jaworski (1995) suggests that this was due to the fact that in Poland in the 1980s, consumer goods were generally unavailable so that compliments functioned as congratulations on managing to obtain these goods and also as information-seeking to obtain information about the goods so that complimenters could also visit the places where the goods could be obtained. Jaworski further states that "the use of compliments in their congratulatory function removes Polish compliments even more from the typical, solidarity-marking function of American English compliments" (1995:79). This shows that compliment topics do not just tell us about social values, but they also reflect how the members of society understand the (interactional) functions of complimenting.

Another example serves to show how compliments on specific attributes and not others can be tied up with societal belief and value systems. In Arabic societies, for example, Nelson et al. claim that "many Arabs believe in the evil eye – that someone can cause harm by looking at a person or a person's property" (1993:297). They discuss, as an example, the case of a Jordanian student who had a serious car accident two weeks after his British friend complimented him on his car and they report that this compliment destroyed a friendship. It was believed that the British friend gave the evil eye and hence caused the accident, by paying a compliment on

the Jordanian's car. This example shows that societal beliefs may constrain what compliments should (not) be paid.

It seems then that in theory, there is an infinite number of topics that speakers can compliment each other on in day-to-day life. Nevertheless, once the data set is analysed, it becomes clear that the majority of compliments refer only to a small range of topics. This trend has been recognised by a number of researchers (Barnlund & Araki 1985; Daikuhara 1986; Golato 2003, 2005; Herbert 1990; Holmes 1988, 1995; Kim 2006; Manes 1983; Nelson et al. 1993; Wolfson 1983). As a typology for topics of compliments, I generally draw on Holmes' (1988, 1995) framework of compliment topics. Holmes introduced a few categories of compliment topics: Appearance, Possessions, Ability/Performance, and Personality. Often, it is difficult to distinguish Ability apart from Performance – successful commendable performances are often consequences of having the ability to do something. Put differently, these two categories are closely intertwined and hence inseparable. Therefore, for the sake of this dissertation, I did not make a clear distinction between the two, also following Holmes' (1995) framework. Her data showed that as much as 81% of New Zealand compliments fall into the categories of Appearance and Ability/Performance. Manes (1983) and Wolfson (1983) also found similar results in American English.

In addition to these four categories introduced above by Holmes (1995), in this dissertation, I add "Extension of self" as a separate category, as this appears to be a crucial characteristic topic of Japanese. This category refers to compliments that focus on features or attributes that are not directly about the complimentee, but are closely related to them, such as addressees'

family members, partners and the place where the addressee comes from. In some frameworks (e.g. Wierzbicka 1987), these are not considered to be compliments since they are not concerned with direct features of addressees. Nevertheless, for example, in Poland (Jaworski 1995; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989) and in Japan (Kim 2006; Ono 2003a,b), this type of comment is frequently observed and seems to fulfill primary functions of compliments. Moreover, they receive the same sorts of responses as other types of compliments did.

I illustrate some examples of compliments for each topic as in the following:

#### Example 5.1 Possessions

*Are            kawaii    zyan.*

that            cute        COP

“That [mobile phone] is cute.”

#### Example 5.2 Appearance

*Ei            san,        nanka    tyou     kire:.*

Ei            HON      like      very     beautiful

“Ei san, (you are) like, very beautiful.”

### Example 5.3 Ability / Performance

*Arata san no happyou yokatta desu.*

Arata HON GEN presentation good.PAST COP

“Arata’s (your) presentation was good.”

### Example 5.4 Extension of self

*Honto ii papa da yo tabun.*

really good papa COP SFP maybe

“Your father is really good, maybe.”

### Example 5.5 Personality

*Ayumi tyan yasasii ne.*

Ayumi DEM kind SFP

“Ayumi is kind.”

Table 5.1 below shows the distribution of compliment topics in the corpus.

Table 5.1 Number of compliments across topics of compliments

Topics of compliments	Number of tokens	Percentage
Possessions	19	5%
Appearance	45	12%
Ability / Performance	214	58%
Extension of self	43	12%
Personality	48	13%
Total	369	100%

As is clear from Table 5.1, the most frequently commented topic within Japanese compliments was Ability / Performances (58% of all the



compliments), whereas the least frequent topic was Possessions (only 5% of the total).

This overall picture of the current study is slightly different from the findings of previous studies on English compliment studies (Manes 1983, Holmes 1988, 1995, Wolfson 1983), which have found that the topic of Appearance was the topic by far the most frequently commented and Ability/Performance was the second most frequently raised topic. Note that in the Japanese data, however, Appearance was not the most preferred topic of all.

In an earlier comparative study of British and Japanese compliments (Adachi 2007), I found that the British students that I surveyed preferred to compliment on Possessions or Appearance, i.e. extrinsic/public features, whereas the Japanese students that I surveyed most preferred to compliment on Performances or Personality, i.e. more intrinsic/private features strongly related to the core characteristics of the addressee. Japanese studies also support this result – intrinsic/private features such as Personality and Performance were most preferred among Japanese university students (Kim 2006) and among Japanese TV programmes and film characters (Ono 2003a). Let us now consider the relationship between topics of compliments and the degree of accessibility. This is schematized in Figure 5.1.

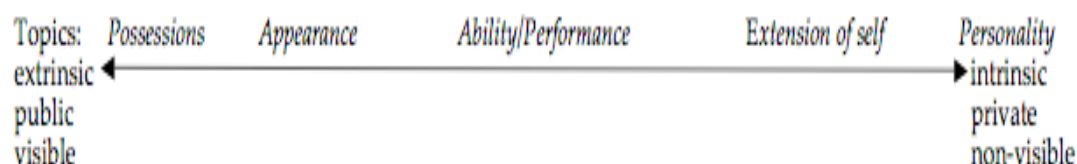


Figure 5.1 Scale of compliment topics with regards to accessibility

The scale in Figure 5.1 shows more extrinsic and public information of visible features (i.e. more accessible) such as Possessions on the further left and more intrinsic and private information of non-visible features (i.e. less accessible) such as Personality and Extension of self on the right. Extrinsic features are temporally constrained characteristics of addressees and may readily be changed into something else. They are more peripheral and temporal attributes of addressees. For example, changing somebody's bag, earrings or hair-do is relatively more easily done than changing somebody's personality or behaviours, because the latter are constructed over the years of their lives. Extrinsic features are also visible from the outside. The speakers would not have to know addressees especially well in order to be able to comment on these extrinsic features such as Possessions and Appearance, due to the visibility of these features.

In fact, in my Masters' research I observed many cases where the British students complimented even strangers on these features. By contrast, strangers could not be complimented on intrinsic features such as Personality or Ability/Performances, as the speaker has only just met their addressee. Intrinsic features are more core attributes and it takes time and relational (face) work to recognise these features, as they do not constitute information which is public to all. As far as the additional topic of Extension of self is concerned, this fits into the right hand side of the scale above. Being able to pay a compliment on the addressee's family members or partners requires that speakers know their addressees well enough beforehand at a personal level to appropriately construct compliments on these topics.

So then, what does it mean that the Japanese preferred to compliment on Ability/Personality the most? In my study, all the participants were university students who studied in the same department and they all knew each other fairly well. This might explain why my participants preferred to compliment on Ability/Performances in particular – because they knew each other well enough that they recognise these intrinsic features. Not only Ability/Performances, but also other intrinsic features such as Extension of self (12%) and Personality (13%) were relatively frequently commented on. Furthermore, for interactional reasons, giving compliments on intrinsic features might reinforce the relationship among interlocutors by sharing each other's core features and approving them. Another possible explanation for this phenomenon is that because universities (especially Japanese ones) are institutions where the competition between students is highly salient, comments on each other's Ability/Performances are valuable and assessable resources in this particular community of practice.

### **5.3 Complimenting as power play**

Because complimenting involves the handover of social evaluations between interlocutors, it is reasonable to consider who is entitled to give compliments and who is not. The power relationship between participants should constrain the way compliments are paid and also the direction of the compliment. In previous studies, it has been claimed that the majority of compliments are exchanged between status equals in English (Holmes 1995; Knapp et al. 1984; Wolfson 1983) and also in Japanese (Kawaguchi et al. 1996; Matsuura 2004; Ono 2003a). In Wolfson's words, "the overwhelming

majority of all compliments are given to people of the same age and status as the speaker” (1983: 91). Holmes also confirms this result in her New Zealand data showing that 80% of the compliments gathered occurred between status equals (Holmes 1988, 1995). As Holmes puts it, “compliments typically occur in informal interactions between friends” (1995:134).<sup>11</sup> This should not be a surprise given that the primary function of complimenting is to maintain and reinforce social relations between interlocutors. It is people of the same status who would exploit the act of complimenting the most as one of the major positive politeness strategies which foster their social relationships.

Before I start the detailed analysis of how compliments are paid especially when power differences exist, I first ought to define what I mean by power relations and status differences in this speech community. This is a Japanese culture-specific norm of power that is especially relevant and salient within university settings, as discussed in the following sub-section.

### 5.3.1 *Tate syakai* (vertical society), Japan

Japan is a place where a clear social hierarchy is expected and the people of Japan are often obliged to act accordingly. As the anthropologist Nakane (1988) argues, it is a *tate syakai* (vertical society) in which the social ladder and ranking systems are highly salient.

Within various domains of organised institutions (for example, workplaces, universities and sport teams), there is a social hierarchy which is

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<sup>11</sup> Within her notion of ‘informal’, Holmes considers psychological distance between the speakers and hearers as well (see also Knapp et al. 1984; Matsuura 2004). However, this is not the focus in my study.

specific to Japanese culture. In this hierarchy, Nakane (1988) identifies *senpai* (senior) and *kohai* (junior) relations as follows:

A Japanese finds his world clearly divided into three categories: *Senpai* (Seniors), *Kohai* (Juniors) and *Douryou* (Equals)... These three terms would be subsumed under the single term 'colleagues' in other societies.  
(Nakane 1988:10)

It is relative age that gives rise to the status differences between people in these settings of universities, workplaces and sport teams. The year of entry and years of service to the institution are the determiners of this ranking system. It is important to note, however, that this ranking system has generally nothing to do with the abilities or skills that participants bring to the institutions. It is a relatively deterministic and static relation where the *senpai* are those who entered the institutions earlier and have served them longer than the *kohai* and hence the *senpai* is automatically in a higher position on this ladder than the *kohai*.

As an illustration of this, Nakane (1970) reports on an annual literary award where a young writer had received an award for his novel. At the award ceremony, this novelist said, "It is indeed a great honour for me. I am rather embarrassed to receive the award while some of my *senpai* have not yet got it" (Nakane 1970: 26). This example illustrates that even talented writers are obliged to address this social hierarchy and orient to *senpai-kohai* relations, regardless of their success and ability to produce best-selling novels.

In school settings, the school age/grade is the deterministic factor creating the relative *senpai* and *kohai* status. At a university, the domain that

my study is based on, the final year students are automatically the highest and the first years are the lowest of the ladder without any further consideration. Consequently, this social hierarchy system has a large impact on how they interact with each other. The clearest manifestation of this is the way they talk. The *kohai* are usually expected to use polite forms or honorifics to their *senpai*.

### 5.3.2 The *senpai-kohai* relation and the act of complimenting

Previously, it has been suggested that the majority of compliments occur between people of the same status (Knapp et al 1984; Herbert 1990; Holmes 1995; Wolfson 1983). In Holmes (1995) study, for example, 80% of all the compliments she gathered occurred between the status equals. This is because the primary function of complimenting fulfills the needs of interactional work between people of the same status. Compliments as 'social lubricants' (Wolfson 1983:89) grease the wheel of social relationships between friends.

Besides people of the same status maintaining and fostering their relationship through complimenting, people of different status may exchange compliments too. Because an evaluative component is inherent to any compliment, when there is an imbalance in power relations between complimenters and their recipients, the direction of compliments tends to be from the higher status speaker to the lower status speaker (Holmes 1995; Kawaguchi et al. 1996; Knapp et al. 1984). To illustrate, it is appropriate for professors to compliment their students' accomplishment on their assignments, while it is (in most cases) inappropriate for students to

compliment professors on their success in giving good lectures. The latter does not easily work, because students are usually novices in the field (the powerless), and they are complimenting on a topic of which professors are the experts (the powerful). In other words, it is more likely to be high risk for the lower status person to compliment the higher status person than vice versa as this act threatens the face of the higher status person.

Nonetheless, it is not impossible for lower status speakers to compliment higher status speakers as long as other felicity conditions are met for compliments to work (Kawaguchi et al. 1996; Knapp et al. 1984; Ono 2003a,b). For example, in order to decrease face-threats, lower status speakers may make utterances indirect, use honorifics, or choose different topics suited for higher status complimentees. For instance, Kawaguchi et al. (1996) claims that ritualized and conventionalized types of compliments are relatively lower risks of face-threats when paid to speakers of higher status.

The current study shows that the proportion of compliments between status non-equals was relatively high compared to previous studies. In the current study, the most preferred pattern was compliments between status equals (61%), the second most preferred direction of compliments was from *kohai* (the lower status) to *senpai* (the higher status) which accounted for 24%. The least preferred was from *senpai* to *kohai* (15%). This is shown in Table 5.2. In other words, nearly 40% of all the compliments gathered for this study were exchanged between speakers of different status. This trend was found to be true across the two different styles: both in the sociolinguistic

interviews and the lunchtime recordings.<sup>12</sup> This result, therefore, contradicts the traditional picture where if there is imbalance in power relations, compliments are more likely to come from higher status speakers to the lower.

Table 5.2 Distribution of compliments across status relations

	Sociolinguistic interviews	Lunchtime recordings	Total
Between status equals	159	66	225 (61%)
From <i>senpai</i> to <i>kohai</i>	36	18	54 (15%)
From <i>kohai</i> to <i>senpai</i>	53	37	90 (24%)
Total	248	121	369 (100%)

What might explain this divergence from the previous pattern? In Japanese society, the notion of *uti* (insiders) and *soto* (outsiders) is pertinent (Hendry 2003; Matsuura 2004; Nakane 1970). It is usually believed that Japanese people are conditioned to be more polite towards outsiders (Matsuura 2004:164). The *uti* and *soto* notion usually applies to the family vs. non-family members, however, if we extend this notion to university students, and treat students of the same status as in-group and students of a different status as out-group, then the results may be explained within this framework. Let us assume that same status students in the context of the institution are in-group members and different status speakers (i.e. speakers of different years of study) are out-group members. Speakers who have higher status than themselves, namely, the outsiders, are more distant addressees. The *senpai* are not just high risk face-threatening targets of compliments, but they are a target that needs to be respected and paid

<sup>12</sup> The difference between the three possibilities was statistically significant (chi-square= 132.146, *df* = 2, *p* = 0.0001)



attention to. It may be that the *kohai* are expected to do a lot of (face) work for their *senpai* – being polite towards them and showing them respect – through various kinds of linguistic practices. In order to achieve this, complimenting and/or praising might be one politeness strategy. On the other hand, the fact that this distance that needs to be respected because of *uti-soto* notion might explain why compliments from *senpai* to *kohai* occur less frequently.

To some, however, a compliment from *kohai* to *senpai* may be seen as a form of flattery.<sup>13</sup> The next example illustrates a *kohai* to *senpai* compliment sequence.

#### Example 5.6 (Potential) Flattery

Context: Nozomi is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year female and Arata is a 4<sup>th</sup> year female student.

As Nozomi came in, she started to compliment Arata on the thesis presentation she did the day before.

1	Nozomi	f	<i>Otukaresama desu.</i>	Hello.
2	Nozomi	f	<i>Arata san no happyou yokatta desu.</i>	<b>Your (Arata's) presentation was good.</b>
3	Arata	f	<i>A, arigato:.</i>	Thank you.
4	Nozomi	f	<i>Sugoi kikiyasukatta desu.</i>	<b>It was very easy to listen to.</b>
5	Arata	f	<i>Honto:?.</i>	Really?
6	Nozomi	f	<i>Hai.</i>	Yes.
7	Arata	f	<i>Iya, demo sore wa Nihongo Eigo dakara da yo.</i>	But, that's because it's Japanese English.
8	Arata/ Akiko	f/f	<i>Hahaha &lt;laugh&gt;.</i>	Hahaha
9	Nozomi	f	<i>Iya, demo kikitai tte omou &lt;happyou desita&gt;{&lt;}.</i>	<b>No, but your presentation made me want to listen.</b>
10	Arata	f	<i>&lt;Hahaha&gt;{&gt;}, mo:u.</i>	Hahaha.

<sup>13</sup> Knapp et al. (1984) discusses 'suspected flattery' from low status to high status speakers.

In this segment, Nozomi uses polite forms throughout whereas Arata uses plain forms which also indicate Arata's status as *senpai*. Nozomi starts off this sequence, complimenting that Arata's presentation was good (line 2). Arata accepts this in line 3 with appreciation. In line 4, Nozomi further adds why she thought it was good. Arata seemed to be surprised by this (line 5) and downgrades herself saying that her English is Japanese (accented /influenced) English which is why Nozomi found it easy to listen to (line 7). Then in line 9, Nozomi explains even further emotional impacts that Arata's presentation had, which is taken up with an embarrassment token of *mo:u* by Arata in line 10. Nozomi compliments three times within this short interaction, expressing her respect to Arata not only at the linguistic levels with the use of polite forms, but also at the interactional level, praising the success of her presentation three times. The entire interaction goes smoothly without any problem or misunderstanding. From this example, it seems that Nozomi is confident complimenting (or even flattering) a *senpai* and does not see it as a high risk of a face-threat. This type of compliment on Ability / Performance from *kohai* to *senpai* was the most common topic (almost 70% of the time) as shown in Figure 5.2 below.

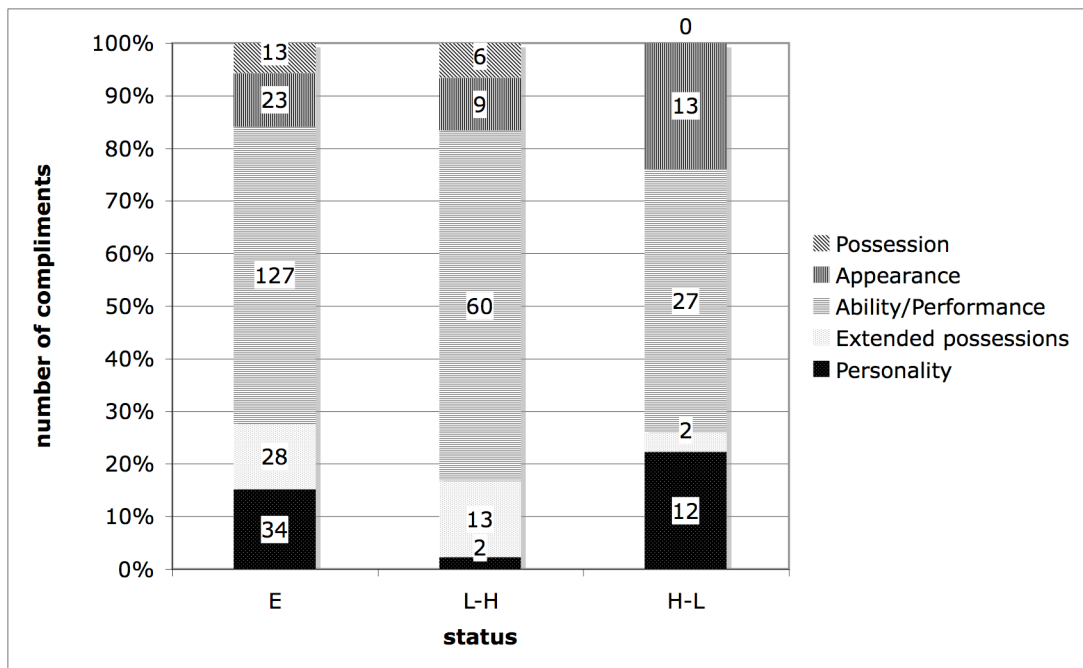


Figure 5.2 Compliments by topics and status

\*E: between speakers of the same status, L-H: from *kohai* to *senpai*, H-L: from *senpai* to *kohai*. Raw numbers of each topic are shown for each segment.

It seems then that the *kohai* might see complimenting their *senpai* as a necessary routine rather than a potential face-threatening act to the *senpai* especially when the compliment topic is Ability/Performance.

#### 5.4 Where do compliments occur within sequences?

To the best of my knowledge, there has not been much discussion in the past literature as to how and where compliments occur in interaction. Compliments are typically taken out of most of their context or larger discourse and analysed as individual utterances (Holmes 1988, 1995; Manes 1983; Pomerantz 1978; Wolfson 1983; see also Chapter 4). This may be due to the methodological tradition within speech act studies which relies on elicited data. Previous researchers, therefore, might not have had enough

discourse or context to consider these elements. It may also be because it was once believed that “compliments could occur anywhere” (Knapp et al. 1984:29). However, as my data reveal, compliments do not just appear out of nowhere. Rather, they require a lot of discourse and interactional work by interlocutors before they can occur. This is exactly the point that I focus on in this section.

Kim (2006) deals with this element of complimenting and I will, from time to time, refer to her framework when appropriate. Recall the definition of how compliment sequences are identified for this dissertation (discussed in Chapter 4) – that is, one sequence is organised as starting from the point where a related topic to compliments is introduced and continues till the next new unrelated topic is introduced. Based on this definition, I further categorise compliments into three groups, depending on where in a sequence a compliment occurred: at the beginning of a sequence, inter-located within a sequence or at the end position in a sequence.

As far as compliments occurring at the beginning of sequences are concerned, the most common case was that the compliment itself is the introduction of a new topic. Manes and Wolfson also comment on this phenomenon – “compliments often serve to initiate a conversation” (1981:126). These topics were often concerned with the newness of the addressee.<sup>14</sup> Compliments that open up a conversation often concern Appearance (e.g. a new hair-do) or Possessions (e.g. a new bag). The first compliment in the sequence in Example 5.7 is a case in point.

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<sup>14</sup> In Chapter 2, I discussed the “recognising-the-new” type of compliments which has been studied in the past literature.

Example 5.7 Compliment in the beginning position

Context: This conversation takes place as soon as Ei comes into the common room. All the participants are 4<sup>th</sup> year female students.

1	Yosiko	f	<i>N? Ei-san, nanka tyou kire;, &lt;nanka&gt;{&lt;}. </i>	<b>N? Ei, like, looks beautiful today.</b>	<b>Topic introduction = 1<sup>st</sup> compliment</b>
2	Ei	f	<i>&lt;Nani ga?&gt;{&gt;}. </i>	What?	
3	Yosiko	f	<i>Nanka kirei zya nai?. </i>	<b>Like beautiful, aren't you?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> compliment</b>
4	Ei	f	<i>Kami:?. </i>	My hair?	Response
5	Manami	f	<i>Onee sama ya ne, &lt;kyou&gt;{&lt;}. </i>	<b>You are lady-like today.</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> compliment</b>
6	Mie	f	<i>&lt;Onee sama ya:n&gt;{&gt;}. </i>	<b>Lady-like.</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> compliment</b>
7	Yosiko	f	<i>&lt;U:n, nanka, kyou...&gt;{&gt; } a, kami kana?. </i>	Yeah, somehow, like, today...maybe your hair?	
8	Ei	f	<i>Are nan desu yo, pa:ma sita. </i>	I had it permed.	Response
9	Yosiko	f	<i>Sutopa?. </i>	Straightening perm?	
10	Ei	f	<i>Sou sou sou=. </i>	Yeah yeah yeah.	
11	Manami	f	<b>=a;, kire;, kawaii:.</b>	<b>Beautiful, cute.</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> compliment</b>
12	Yosiko	f	<i>Kawaii: ne. </i>	<b>Cute.</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> compliment</b>
13	Manami	f	<b>U:n.</b>	<b>Yeah.</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> compliment</b>

Secondly, I also found compliments which had the effect of closing the sequence. Although the reason for this phenomenon remains a little unclear, there were cases where new topics were introduced and the conversational topic shifted into something else before the compliments previously paid received any responses. In these cases, I categorised these compliments as occurring at the end of the sequence. The following interaction is an example of this type.

### Example 5.8 Compliment in the ending position

Context: the two participants are both 4<sup>th</sup> year male students. They are preparing handouts for the presentation on their dissertation.

1	Kaname	m	<i>Hyousi tukutta?</i>	Did you make the cover (for handouts)?	Topic introduction
2	Tetu	m	<i>Un, atode tukuru.</i>	Yeah I will make (one) later on.	
3	Kaname	m	<i>Tukuru?.</i>	Will you?	
4	Kaname	m	<i>He:, erai ne.</i>	<b>Heh, (you/it are/is) admirable.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>
5	Takeshi	m	<i>Tetun...Tetun tte</i>	Is Tetun your name?	Topic shift

Finally and most dominantly, it is clear from my data set that the majority of compliments occur in inter-located positions in sequences. In other words, a majority of compliments require the introduction of a compliment topic prior to them and develop into a larger compliment discourse after. In most cases, some discourse work prior to the occurrence of the first compliment turn – e.g. introducing the topic and setting up felicity conditions – needs to be done appropriately. Furthermore, compliments are usually expected to be taken care of after their occurrence, that is, complimenting usually stimulates some responses from the complimentee, thus completing a compliment adjacency pair. The participants are actively and momentarily involved in organising and developing compliment sequences and discourse. The next example illustrates inter-located compliments developing into a larger discourse than just a first turn compliment pair.

Example 5.9 Compliment in the inter-located positions

Context: R is the researcher, Takeo and Hirosi are 1<sup>st</sup> year male students.

1	R	f	<i>Ogoru?</i> .	Do you treat girls?	Topic introduction
2	Takeo	m	<i>Boku desu ka? (R:un) boku ogon nai desu ne.</i>	Me? I don't.	
3	R	f	<i>Saisyo no de-to demo? Dare to itte mo?</i>	Even on your first dates? No matter who you are with?	
4	Takeo	m	<i>Dare? Tabun dare to itte mo, &lt;tte koto wa nai desu&gt;{&lt;}</i> .	Who with? Maybe not with anybody.	
5	Hirosi	m	<i>&lt;Tamani demo boku ni ogotte kureru tai&gt;{&gt;}, yoku.</i>	<b>You treat me well sometimes.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> compliment</b>
6	Takeo	m	<i>A, boku mushiro, otoko tomodati toka kouhai toka ni ogorimasu.</i>	Oh yeah I treat my mates or my junior students rather.	Response
7	R	f	<i>A, sou nan da, &lt;sore wa nande?&gt;{&lt;}</i>	I see. Why is that?	
8	Takeo	m	<i>&lt;Betuni onnanko ni&gt;{&gt;} gokoru toka....,,</i>	Not particular reason... treating girls...	
9	Hirosi	m	<i>Tukiai ii mon ne, nanka.</i>	<b>You are like, a sociable person.</b>	<b>2nd compliment</b>
10	Takeo	m	<i>U:n, nanka, sou desu ne.</i>	Yeah, like, for some reason.	Response
11	Takeo	m	<i>Maa, kouhai dattara /2sec/ yappa, /1sec/nansuka /1sec/ kawaigarau, mitai na</i>	If they are my junior students, then I would look after them.	
12	Hirosi	m	<i>Ma, zibun mo sou sarete kita kara, tabun, senpai kara.</i>	He has been also treated like that by his senior students.	
13	R	f	<i>&lt;A: naruhodo ne&gt;{&gt;}</i> .	Ah I see.	
14	Takeo	m	<i>Sou da ne{&lt;}</i> .	That's right.	

Table 5.3 illustrates the overall picture of where in a sequence Japanese compliments (utterances) occur and what percentage of all compliments are represented by this distribution.

Table 5.3 Distribution of positions of compliments in sequences

	Beginning	Inter-located	Ending	Total
Sociolinguistic interviews	9	104	8	121
Lunchtime recordings	17	221	10	248
Total	26 (7%)	325 (88%)	18 (5%)	369(100%)

As seen in Table 5.3, the majority (88%) of the compliments occurred in inter-located positions within sequences while only 7% of compliments occurred in the beginning and 5% at the end. This result illustrates that compliments do not just occur out of nowhere – in fact, intricate discourse work is much needed and is accordingly done by the participants before and after a first turn compliment.

In the next section, I undertake a more detailed discussion of how the compliment discourses are organised within sequences among the young Japanese. I will examine what happens before a compliment – what the Japanese speakers do to build up the conditions for compliments to work and what happens after the compliment.

### 5.5 Compliment Discourse – what happens before first compliment turns?

Before the occurrence of first compliment turns, it is usual that interlocutors engage themselves with discourse work of some sort – e.g.



inserting contextualisation cues (Gumperz 1982) – in order to build up a felicitous environment for compliments to appropriately occur. Kim (2006) reports that 65.3% of Japanese compliments collected for her study required discourse work prior to the first compliments. In my data, this is also found to be true at the utterance level as shown in Table 5.3 above: the majority of compliments occurred in the inter-located positions.

In addition, at the sequence levels, out of 143 compliment sequences that I found in my corpus, 117 (82%) sequences had some kind of pre-discourse before the first compliment turns.

I now look into how the discourse work prior to the first turn compliments is constructed. Kim (2006) argues that the pre-discourse can be led or introduced by either of the two interlocutors: complimentees or complimenters. Since my method includes multi-party interactions, there is one more option besides the two options that Kim suggests: third parties other than complimentees and complimenters, namely, those who introduce a topic, but then do not participate in actually giving and receiving compliments. The following table illustrates who led the pre-compliment discourse.

Table 5.4 Distribution of leaders of pre-compliment discourse

	Complimentees-led	Complimenters-led	Third parties-led	Total
Sociolinguistic interviews	33	10	3	46
Lunchtime recordings	31	29	11	71
Total	64 (55%)	39 (33%)	14 (12%)	117

This shows that 55% of compliment sequences were set up by the complimentees, 33% were led by the complimenters and 12% were led by third parties in interaction. This result differs from Kim's Japanese data where she shows that 58.1% of compliment sequences were led by the complimenters as opposed to 41.9% led by complimentees.<sup>15</sup>

I shall now move on to discuss how this pre-discourse work is constructed and developed by the Japanese speakers.

### 5.5.1 Pre-compliment discourse led by complimentees

Kim (2006) suggests that pre-compliment discourse introduced by complimentees is made up of eight strategies:

- 1) Information-giving (*Zyohou teikyou*)
- 2) Information-inquiry (*Zyohou youkyuu*)
- 3) Show of determination (*Kessin*)
- 4) Self-deprecation (*Ziko hige*)
- 5) Expression of emotions (*Kanzyou no hyougen*)
- 6) Promising (*Yakusoku*)
- 7) Suggesting (*Teian*)
- 8) Self-boasting (*Ziman*)

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<sup>15</sup> In her Korean data, the difference is even bigger: 71.7% of the sequences were led by the complimenters.

In my view, some of these categories overlap somewhat (especially, Information-giving and Suggesting). As a result, in my data set, I detected only five strategies for introducing compliment topics by complimentees:

- 1) Boasting
- 2) Information-giving
- 3) Display of having done something for others
- 4) Self-criticism
- 5) Display of gratitude

These strategies all triggered compliments later on in the discourse and we shall see how the participants manage these for each case.

### **1) Boasting**

First of all, there were cases where complimentees talked about personal quality of their own. Some may suggest that this is a type of boasting about oneself. A boasting statement, which is in effect a compliment about the speaker themselves, can directly trigger a compliment from others. The following example illustrates this case.

### Example 5.10 Boasting

Context: All of the four students are 4<sup>th</sup> year females, preparing for their presentation.

1	Aiko	f	<i>Atasi, ganbatte bideo kara syasin tukutta.</i>	I did a good job of making a video from pictures.	Boasting
2	Mayo	f	<i>A, honto:? [↑].</i>	Really?	
3	Kanako	f	<i>Sugee.</i>	<b>Amazing.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>
4	Tieko	f	<i>Sugo:i.</i>	<b>Amazing.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Compliment</b>

In line 1, Akiko clearly speaks about her effort and ability to have made a video clip out of pictures for her presentation. This type of pre-compliment discourse tends to generate a recognition type of compliment from complimenters. Another thing to note here is the speaker's own evaluation is often obviously stated: in this case, Akiko's *ganbatte* (do a good job) signals this.

### 2) Information-giving

Next, with the information-giving strategy, complimentees could be just referring to a fact or stating opinions and as a result, this ultimately triggers a compliment. Let us consider the next example.

### Example 5.11 Information-giving

Context: Akiko is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year female and Arata is a 4<sup>th</sup> year female student.

Talking about career plan after their graduation.

1	Akiko	f	<i>Atasi, koko de hataraku yotei desu.</i>	I intend to work here (after graduation).	Information-giving
2	Arata	f	<i>Doko doko?.</i>	Where where?	
3	Akiko	f	<i>Koko de.</i>	Here (at this university).	
4	Arata	f	<i>Koko? [ ↑ ], sugo:i.</i>	Here? <b>Amazing.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>
5	Akiko	f	<i>Atasi koko ga daiiti sibou nande.</i>	Because my first choice is here.	Response

In line 1, Akiko, the complimentee, simply states her intention of what she is going to do after her graduation. After clarification of where exactly Akiko is willing to work (line 2-4), in line 4, Arata compliments Akiko: *sugo:i* (amazing) for Akiko to be aiming for getting a job at the university. The background information for this interaction is that it is difficult to get a job as a member of the administrative staff at the university. This type of pre-discourse was often observed in the way that complimentees talk about their plans or intentions or something that they have done in the past. They come about without the speakers' display of any overt affective attitudes or their own evaluations of these incidents. Put differently, complimentees do not clearly state their own affective judgements, e.g. that they are proud of what they are going to do or have done; instead, they simply state these facts without any overt evaluations. Therefore, the more ambitious your plans/intentions/previous acts are, the more likely it is that potential complimentees will elicit compliments.

### 3) Display of having done something for others

Next, I show a case where complimentees talk about something that they did for specific recipients – usually including complimenters. Because complimentees clearly state the favours that they have done for their audience, this can invite a compliment as a type of appreciation. The next example illustrates this.

#### Example 5.12 Display of having done something for others

Context: Hiroshi is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student and came to see Ayumi, 4<sup>th</sup> year student to borrow past exams from the course that Ayumi attended 2 years ago and that Hiroshi was going to take the exams for.

1	Ayumi	f	<i>Kon naka ni tabun, kako mon toka zenbu haittoru ken.</i>	Perhaps all the past exams are here in this.	Display of having done something for others
2	Hiroshi	m	<i>A, motte itte iin desu ka?.</i>	Ah can I take them with me?	
3	Ayumi	f	<i>Un.</i>	Yeah	
4	Hiroshi	m	<i>Hori Hori sensei desu ka.</i>	Is this Professor Hori's?	
5	Ayumi	f	<i>Kore ga, ## no: imi.</i>	Here, what ## means.	
6	Hiroshi	m	<i>Sugee, sugoi tasukarun desu kedo.</i>	<b>Amazing, this is very helpful.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>
7	Ayumi	f	<i>Desyo:?.</i>	Isn't it?	Response

In line 1, Ayumi states that she has put all the necessary past exams in one file for her junior friend, Hiroshi. He checks in line 2 if he can take these past exams that Ayumi brought with him and Ayumi confirms this in line 3. In line 6, Hiroshi shows his gratitude through his compliment for her kindness and helpfulness. As seen in this example, if the statement of what s/he did for others is given to them, then it generates a compliment as a type of

gratitude. Since a compliment is a 'verbal gift', the recipient of the favour can quickly pay off a certain amount of debt that s/he has accrued with a compliment (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:152). In the above case, Hiroshi is paying off some of his debt (the fact that Ayumi prepared the past exams for him) with a compliment as a verbal gift to Ayumi in return.

#### 4) Self-criticism

The fourth type of set up is when complimentees show low self-esteem or self-doubt and put themselves down. In such a set up, interlocutors are likely to feel an obligation to say something nice back to this person as a type of encouragement.

#### Example 5.13 Self-criticism

Ei is a 4<sup>th</sup> year international student from China. Ei and Mie, a 4<sup>th</sup> year Japanese student, were talking about the presentation on their dissertation.

1	Ei	f	<i>Tinamini eigo de kaku:? Nihongo? Watasi nani wo kaku? Mo, watasi nanimo wakara:n (huhuhu).</i>	What language shall I write in? What shall I write? I don't know anything.	Self-criticism
2	Ei	f	<i>Nihongo mo heta, eigo mo heta.</i>	My Japanese is bad and so is my English.	Self-criticism
3	Mie	f	<i>Heta zya nai si &lt;laughing&gt;...sugoi yo:.</i>	<b>It's not bad, it's amazing.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>

Ei in line 1 and 2 shows her low confidence about her language ability in Japanese and English. Mie in line 3 replies to this with a positive evaluation about Ei's ability in languages. Especially in these cases where one is not confident about something and is trying to share this insecurity with addressees, it is highly expected for the audience to reply with positive

reinforcement. A compliment is a useful tool in these cases functioning as encouragement. This was something often heard from my participants at the playback interview.<sup>16</sup> This particular extract was of the examples discussed in the playback interviews and a number of my participants reported this as a type of encouragement.

### 5) Display of gratitude

Finally, complimentees may show gratitude to someone which then can generate a compliment as a result. Because showing gratitude is a way of providing the addressee with positive affect, sometimes speakers reply to this with yet another positive affective utterance, namely a compliment.

#### Example 5.14 Display of gratitude

Motoo is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year male student and R is the researcher. This conversation takes place when the interview was nearly finished.

1	R	f	<i>Zya kyou wa totuzen datta kedo arigatou, Motoo kun mo:.</i>	Thank you very much today, although it was a sudden call for you to join me today.	Display of gratitude
2	Motoo	m	<i>A, hai, &lt;omosirokatta desu&gt;{&lt;}.</i>	<b>Yes, (your interview) was interesting.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>
3	R	f	<i>Honto, &lt;sugoi sankou ni nari masita&gt;{&gt;}.</i>	Really, it was very useful.	Response
4	R	f	<i>Iya iya arigatou.</i>	Thank you very much.	

In line 1, i.e. the researcher, complimentee, was wrapping up the interview and shows the gratitude towards the informants for coming in. Then Motoo in line 2 replies saying that the interview was interesting to him which is a

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 3 for the detailed description of playback interviews.



compliment for the researcher as she designed this interview. The importance of this type is that positive affective utterance of displaying gratitude is reciprocated with compliments. Because showing gratitude is a positive affective speech for the addressee, it might be natural for the addressee to reply with yet another positive affective speech act – a compliment.

Finally, the next table illustrates the distribution of the five strategies that I described above.

Table 5.5 Distribution of five strategies implemented by complimentees

Complimentee-led strategies of introducing a compliment topic	Number of sequences	Percentage
1) Display of self quality	17	27%
2) Information-giving	34	53%
3) Display of having done something for others	5	8%
4) Self-criticism	6	9%
5) Display of gratitude	2	3%
Total	64	100%

### 5.5.2 Pre-compliment discourse led by complimenters

It seems highly plausible to think that compliments occur because the person who makes the compliments actively sets up the environment for them to occur, inserting contextualization cues, paying attention to the addressee's face and so forth. However, as shown in Table 5.4 above, my corpus reveals that only 33% of the sequences were set up by complimenters compared to 55% by complimentees. In this section, I will illustrate how complimenters set up compliment discourse.

Kim (2006) describes five strategies for introducing the compliment topic by complimenters:

- 1) Question/ checking (*Situmon/kakunin*)
- 2) Information-giving (*Zyohou teikyou*)
- 3) Attention (*Tyuumoku*)
- 4) Expression of emotions (*Kanzyou no hyougen*)
- 5) Comparison (*Hikaku*)

In my study, however, the majority falls into the broad two strategies: 1) inquiry about the topic and 2) statement about the proposition of the topic under consideration. In addition, there was one case where the complimenter introduces a topic by displaying gratitude.<sup>17</sup> I will illustrate these strategies in the following.

### **1) Inquiry about the compliment topic**

First and foremost, the majority of the topic introduction done by the complimenters involve various ways of inquiring about the topic. By inquiring about the topic, the complimenter displays that they recognise some attributes of the addressee, setting up a condition which later allows them to give assessments on this topic. The next example illustrates this recognition type of inquiry about the compliment topic.

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<sup>17</sup> As was demonstrated in Example 5.14, in this case, the complimenter introduces a topic with gratitude and soon moves on to pay a compliment.

Example 5.15 Inquiry about the topic (vol. 1)

Context: This interaction took place soon after Aiko came into the common room. Nanako, Aiko, Yosiko and Rie are all 4<sup>th</sup> year female students.

1	Nanako	f	<i>Akiko san kami kittano?.</i>	Akiko, did you have a hair cut?	Inquiry
2	Aiko	f	<i>Kami kitta:.</i>	I did.	
3	Yosiko	f	<b>A: niatteru:.</b>	<b>It suits you.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>
4	Aiko	f	<i>Kami kitte simatta, hontoni?.</i>	I've had it cut, really?	Response
5	Yosiko	f	<b>Kawaii yo ne:.</b>	<b>Cute.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Compliment</b>
6	Nanako	f	<b>U:n.</b>	<b>Yees.</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Compliment</b>
7	Aiko	f	<i>&lt;Akusidento&gt;{&lt;}.</i>	(It was) an accident.	Response
8	Rie	f	<i>Akusidento tte {&gt;}&lt;laughing&gt;.</i>	Accident, haha.	
9	Aiko	f	<i>Sippai sita kana, konnani mizikaku naru nante...</i>	It was a fail, I didn't think that it was going be this short.	
10	Aiko	f	<i>/3sec/ Atuine:, demo koko suzusii ne, sugoi.</i>	It's hot outside, but cool here inside.	Topic shift

In the above example, Nanako presumably had the intention to compliment Aiko in the first place. In other words, the inquiry in line 1 seems to be laid out to bring up the topic to compliment later on. Even though the first and second compliments are paid by the other participant, Yosiko in line 3 and 5, Nanako gives the agreement type of compliment in line 6. In these cases, the complimenters might already know the direction of compliments and hence one might say that complimenters actively and directly design the felicitous environment for compliments to occur.

However, inquiring about the topic might occur even when complimentes might not know what the outcome of this inquiry is going to be. The following example illustrates this.

### Example 5.16 Inquiry about the topic (vol. 2)

Context: Kaname and Tetu are both 4<sup>th</sup> year male students, making handouts for their thesis presentation.

1	Kaname	m	<i>Hyousi tukutta?</i>	Did you make the cover (for the hand out)?	Inquiry about the topic
2	Tetu	m	<i>Un, atode tukuru.</i>	Yeah, I will make that later.	
3	Kaname	m	<i>Tukuru?</i>	(Will you) make it?	
4	Kaname	m	<i>He;, erai ne.</i>	<b>Admirable.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>

When Kaname makes an inquiry about whether or not if Tetu made a cover for his handout in line 1, Kaname is not sure what the answer is going to be. Then the response was positive – Tetu is willing to make the cover expressed in line 2, Kaname shows his surprise in line 3 and then gives a compliment in line 4. To put differently, if the response in line 2 was negative, then it might have been the case that the compliment would have never occurred. Therefore, in these cases, the occurrence of compliments relies on the response of the inquiry made by complimenters.

### 2) Statement about the compliment topic

Although making an inquiry is the primary strategy that the complimenters employ, the other strategy involves making statements that are ‘worth commenting on’ about specific topics. Often the complimenters express their opinions about the topics in consideration, however, this may also be done as a statement of fact, in a most objective way. Consider the next example.

Example 5.17 Statement about the topic

Context: Yosiko and Rie are both 4<sup>th</sup> year female students. Yosiko talks about the postcard that Rie sent.

1	Yosiko	f	<i>Ne sugoi sa; ano sa; hagaki kimasita.</i>	Hey, the postcard came.	Statement 1
2	Rie	f	<i>N?.</i>	What?	
3	Yosiko	f	<i>Hagaki ga ne: kita no:.</i>	The postcard came.	Statement 2
4	Rie	f	<i>A, a: &lt;laughing&gt;.</i>	Ah hahaha.	
5	Yosiko	f	<i>Arigato:u.</i>	Thank you.	
6	Yosiko	f	<i>Sugoi, nanka, go, go teinei ni doumo: to omotte.</i>	<b>It was like very polite, I thought.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> compliment</b>
7	Rie	f	<i>Haha, ieie.</i>	Haha, no worries.	Response

Yosiko gives two objective statements (line 1 and 3) about the fact that she received a postcard from Rie. After the second try, when Rie understands what postcard Yosiko means (line 4), Yosiko firstly expresses her appreciation in line 5. Then she gives a compliment on Rie's polite behaviour in line 6. In this extract, it seems that Yosiko organises the environment to be able to give a compliment about the postcard Rie sent by simply bringing up this topic as a statement prior to the occurrence of the compliment.

In addition, complimenters may state their opinions about certain matters. An interesting case of this is when complimenters dare complimentees. The following is a case in point.

Example 5.18 Statement about the topic: daring

Context: Hitomi is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year female and Daisuke is a 4<sup>th</sup> year male. At the beginning of the interview, Daisuke is writing their names down on the sheet for me to remember.

1	Hitomi	f	<i>Mou zettai kake nai darou na...</i>	I bet you can't write (my name in Kanzi).	Daring
2	Hitomi	f	<i>/7secs/ oo [loud].</i>	/7 seconds silence/ Oh!	
3	Daisuke	m	<i>Namenna.</i>	Don't underestimate me.	
4	Hitomi	f	<i>Subarasi.</i>	<b>Excellent.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Compliment</b>

In line 1, Hitomi dares Daisuke to write her name in Chinese characters.

When she finds out that Daisuke has actually managed to do so, she gives a compliment in line 4. In this case, Hitomi established an environment by daring that Daisuke deserves a compliment as a result.

In this section, I have so far illustrated how complimenters establish the environment for compliments to occur. Table 5.6 shows the distribution of these three strategies found in the data set.

Table 5.6 Distribution of three strategies implemented by complimenters

Complimenters-led strategies of introducing a compliment topic	Number of sequences	Percentage
1) Inquiry about the topic	22	56.4%
2) Statement about the topic	16	41%
3) Display of gratitude	1	2.6%
Total	39	100%

### 5.5.3 Pre-compliment discourse led by third-parties

As we have seen above, it is usually the case that the introduction of compliment topic is set out by either complimentees (55% of the sequences as

seen in Table 5.4 above) or complimenters (33%) prior to the occurrence of first compliments. Nonetheless, a smaller portion of sequences (12%) was set up by third parties in the interaction rather than those who end up being complimentees or complimenters. What usually happens is that third parties introduce topics which later on develop into what compliments are about, but these speakers do not get involved with giving or receiving these compliments.

There is one thing to be noted here especially with regards to the methodology that I implemented. In the sociolinguistic interviews, I, as the researcher, led the interview, gave topics for my informants to talk about and controlled its direction to some extent. Sometimes, therefore, these topics that I gave them directly became the topics for the participants to initiate compliments to each other. Hence, pre-discourse done by third parties include cases where I introduced topics in the interview, but then refrained from getting involved with developing discourse afterwards.

Example 5.19 below illustrates a case where a third party in the interaction introduces a topic which then invites others to give compliments about this topic.

Example 5.19 Introduction of compliment topics by the third parties

Context: Ayumi, Momoko and Itiro are 4<sup>th</sup> year students. Kenzi is a male master's student. R is the researcher. While R observes their interaction, they all revise for exams.

1	Ayumi	f	<i>Dororitti:</i> .	Dororitti: (the name of a coffee drink that was popular at the time but seen to be calorific)	Topic introduction (statement)
2	Momoko	f	<i>Dororitti, mou nemui to omotte &lt;laughing&gt;.</i>	Dororitti, I thought I was sleepy.	
3	R	f	<i>Ko:hi: ka;, &lt;iru yo ne&gt;{&lt;}.</i>	(Yeah, you) need coffee.	
4	Momoko	f	<i>&lt;Hai, mou...&gt;{&gt;}.</i>	Yes, already...	
5	Itiro	m	<i>Sore meccha karada ni wari: ken, zettai.</i>	That (coffee) is definitely really bad for you.	
6	Momoko	f	<i>Debu no moto desyo.</i>	It is the source of being fat.	
7	Itiro	m	<i>Debu...debu no syoutyou yo &lt;laughing&gt;.</i>	Haha, the symbol of fat.	
8	Kenzi	m	<i>Iya Momoko san mou tyotto debu ni natte mo iin zya nai yo.</i>	<b>No, Momoko, it would be ok even if you become a bit fatter.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> compliment</b>
9	Itiro	m	<i>Momoko san, Momoko san, Momoko san ne;, tikinnanban kuttotte mo ne;, gari no syoutyou dan ne.</i>	<b>Momoko, Mokomo, Momoko, you are the symbol of skinny even if you eat deep-fried chicken.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> compliment</b>

In line 1, Ayumi simply introduces a coffee drink as discourse topic and then leaves this conversation once after all although she continues to be at present. Yet this topic continues to be the central interest for the rest of the interlocutors. When Itiro makes a comment on this drink being bad for Momoko's health (line 5), Momoko agrees with him that it is likely to make her fat. However, Momoko is in fact, a very slim girl and Kenzi and Itiro acknowledge this through compliments in line 8 and 9. As background cultural knowledge, being slim/skinny in Japan is a very much desired feature for girls.



Through this extract I have shown that it is possible for third parties to introduce compliment topics rather than complimentees or complimenters. The manner in which third parties introduce compliment topics, is either 'inquiry' or 'statement' type strategies that I described in 5.5.2. This is shown in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Distribution of two strategies implemented by third parties

Third parties-led strategies of introducing a compliment topic	Number of sequences	Percentage
1) Inquiry about the topic	9	64%
2) Statement about the topic	5	36%
Total	14	100%

## 5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined Japanese compliments at the discourse level. Firstly, topics of compliments as social values of the community were discussed. It is the more intrinsic features, especially ability and performances that the Japanese speakers seem to value highly within this community. I argued that this social value, in turn, might reflect the nature of this community. The fact that my participants all know each other fairly well and spend quite a lot of time together (as they belong to the same department) made this particular topic highly accessible to them. What is more, comments on ability are assessable and valuable to them since universities are the institutions where (especially academic) competition is highly recognised among these students.

Second, I explored the relationship between compliments and power play. Taking the community-specific notion of status, the *senpai-kohai*

relation, I found that the majority of Japanese compliments (60% of compliments) occur between the status equals. However, as many as 40% of the compliments were exchanged between speakers of different status. Furthermore, unlike the findings of some previous studies, my data show that compliments given from speakers of low status to those of high status were more frequently found than vice versa.

Finally, the last part of this chapter was dedicated to the discussion of how compliments are built up in discourse. My naturally occurring conversational data indicate that complimenting often require some kind of discourse work before first turn compliments can occur. I then looked at how complimentees, complimenters and third-party participants set up compliment topics and how this discourse develops into eliciting compliments.

In the next chapter, I discuss the gendered nature of this speech act. The perception that “women compliment more than men do” will be addressed. Chapter 6 aims to test the assumptions about the relationship of gender to this speech act which have been made by a number of previous researchers (cf. Herbert 1990).

## Chapter 6. The gendered nature of Japanese compliments

### 6.1 Introduction

Gender has been one of the most well-investigated social factors in language variation research, even by comparison to other social categories such as class, age and ethnicity. After the innovative work done by Lakoff (1973, 1975), language and gender research developed under the influence of a number of theories. Here, I briefly touch on three models that have been influential in the field of language and gender research.

First, following the feminist movement in the late 60s, the "dominance model" was proposed (cf. Fishman 1983; Lakoff 1973, 1975; Zimmerman & West 1975). This suggests that language expresses social power and women's language is a reflection of a male-dominated society.

Second, a body of scholars claimed that women and men come to share different cultural knowledge through the different gendered practices which they participate in throughout their life. This was called the "difference model" (cf. Maltz & Borker 1982; Tannen 1990). Women's and men's language differences stem from these diachronically differently required (social and linguistic) practices. The focus of this model was on describing the differences between men and women and not on problematising dominance or the power inequality between them.

Finally, the most influential approach in current language and gender research is the model that holds gender is more of a fluid, diverse and creative category. This "social constructionist model" rejects the deterministic application of the categories of women and men and argues

that speakers actually perform gender (cf. Abe 2004; Barrett 1995; Bulter 1990; Bucholtz 1999; Holmes & Schnurr 2006; Ochs 1992; Podesva 2007). These researchers propose that because speakers are actively involved in constructing gender, along with sexuality, speakers' gender identities can be creatively expressed, and hence are changeable at specific moments in time.

The current study takes the stance of the difference model as a starting point to look into language and gender, especially in the case of Japanese compliments. However, the present study does not assume that gender is a single determining factor in language variation. It aims to explore the relationship between gender and other social/linguistic factors and to seek potential explanations for the observed variation that might be derived from gender.

Similarly, within speech act studies, there have been some researchers interested in investigating the relationship between specific types of speech acts and gender effects (Forbes & Cordella 1999; Herbert 1990; Holmes 1988, 1989, 1995; Meyerhoff 1999; Ochs 1992). As Ochs (1992) proposes, certain speech acts indirectly index and are associated with gender. Complimenting is one speech act that has been argued to indirectly index femininity as a linguistic and social practice (Cameron 2001, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Herbert 1990; Holmes 1995; Mills 2003).

Furthermore, the analysis of Japanese data is a rich resource for testing the proposed relationship between gender and this speech act, as the Japanese language has been a central interest for language and gender research (Jugaku 1979; Ide 1979; Okamoto 1996; Shibamoto-Smith 1985, 2003; Reynolds 1985). The Japanese language enjoys a rich array of gender-

preferential linguistic practices – some of the most frequently studied variables are address terms (Kanamaru 1993; Nagura 1992), (sentence-final) particles (Kawasaki & McDougal 2003; McGloin 1990; Shibamoto-Smith 1990; Takano 1998), pitch range and intonation (Ohara 1992, 2004) and also linguistically constrained politeness such as honorifics (Ide 1991; Ide & Sakurai 2004; Ide & Yoshida 1999; Mizutani & Mizutani 1987; Okamoto 2004).

This study therefore provides a good foundation for examining the gendered-ness of this variable, the speech act of complimenting, in the claimed-to-be gendered language, Japanese.

## **6.2 Compliments in language and gender research**

A number of researchers have found gender differences in the production and construction of compliments, both in English (Bolton 1994; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Herbert 1990; Holmes 1986, 1988, 1995; Johnson & Roen 1992; Knapp et al. 1984; Mills 2003; Rose 2001; Wolfson 1984) and in Japanese (Maruyama 1996; Matsuoka 2003; Matsuura 2004). Their primary conclusion is that women give and receive compliments more than men do and furthermore, that women and men construct linguistically and interactionally different types of compliments. Herbert (1990) and Holmes (1988, 1995) suggest that this is due to the fact that women and men understand the functions of this speech act differently. Women consider complimenting to be a useful tool for maintaining and reinforcing social relationships among themselves, while men understand this speech act to be more face-threatening, especially when exchanged between men.

Compliments from men to men seemed to have strong associations with non-masculine (even gay) personae and this could be problematic for some men, given the strong heteronormative nature of many communities (Kitzinger 2006; Queen 2005).

In this chapter, I explore this notion of a gendered speech act, focusing on complimenting in Japanese. I first consider some of the other social factors that are closely intertwined with gender, and which give rise to differences in producing certain kinds of compliments. Secondly, I consider some linguistic features of Japanese compliments across gender. Finally, I conduct a multivariate analysis on the variation in the form of produced compliments across gender, in order to investigate what linguistic and /or social factors constrain the way women and men exchange compliments. Therefore, the overall purpose of this chapter is to test the hypothesis that complimenting is a feminised speech act.

### **6.3 Social variables as ‘contexts’ in understanding complimenting as a gendered speech act**

In this section, I explore the relationship between certain social factors and the production of compliments. The principal social variable throughout this chapter is of course gender, as previous researchers have suggested that gender is the key factor in constraining the production and construction of compliments (Herbert 1990; Holmes 1986, 1988, 1995; Johnson & Roen 1992; Rose 2001; Wolfson 1984). With this in mind, I also look into four other social variables that seem to closely interact with gender: the (in)directness of compliments, style, the topics of compliments, and status of the interactants.

The idea is that gender, or any other social variable for that matter, does not constrain linguistic and social practices as a single deterministic factor, but rather, that such variables closely intersect with each other, especially in the course of identity construction (Cameron 2005; Cheshire 2002; Dubois & Horvath 1999; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992; Haeri 1994; Meyerhoff 1996; Romaine 1994).

Previous studies and their findings on compliments especially in the West suggest a set of interesting questions to be answered when looking at the Japanese case in terms of these five social factors (gender, (in)directness, style, topics, and status). The following questions will be considered and answered:

1) (In)directness, gender and compliments:

How do women and men produce (in)direct compliments in the given speech community?

2) Gender and compliments:

Is complimenting also a gendered speech act in Japanese? Do Japanese female students give and receive more compliments than male students?

3) Style, gender and compliments:

How does style interact with the production of compliments across gender in the Japanese case?

4) Topics of compliments and gender:

What do women and men compliment about in this speech community of young Japanese?

5) Status, gender and compliments:

How does complimenting help us better understand status relationships across gender in the Japanese case?

### **6.3.1 (In)directness, gender and compliments**

First of all, I investigate how women and men produce direct or indirect compliments in the Japanese case. The status of (in)directness may in fact lie somewhere in between social and linguistic features because both linguistic and social factors need to be taken into consideration in order to define this factor (see Chapter 4 for the definition). Let us recall the following question:

1) (In)directness, gender and compliments:

How do women and men produce (in)direct compliments in the given speech community?

Having identified direct and indirect compliments based on the definition given in Chapter 4, I further categorised these compliments by gender. The result is shown in the following table.



Table 6.1 Direct and indirect compliments across gender

Gender of participants (speaker-addressee)	Direct compliments	Indirect compliments	Total
female-female	112 (65%)	60 (35%)	172 (100%)
female-male	44 (67%)	22 (33%)	66 (100%)
male-female	56 (67%)	27 (33%)	83 (100%)
male-male	35 (73%)	13 (23%)	48 (100%)

Though a chi-square test did not show statistically significant differences for (in)directness (chi-square = 1.046,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.79$ ), in all combinations of speakers, Japanese speakers tended to pay more direct compliments to their addressees than indirect compliments. For compliments between men, this trend is particularly strong (73% of all compliments are direct). As a whole, Japanese speakers seem to be happy to do complimenting in explicit ways, producing conventional and non-context-dependent compliments. The overall picture of Japanese speakers preferring to give direct compliments, as we saw in Chapter 4, holds across both genders. Hence, it might be concluded that in terms of the (in)directness of the compliments paid, there seems to be no gender differences among the young Japanese. In other words, the use of direct compliments seems to be a general norm that the Japanese speakers seem to orient to: women and men both produce direct compliments. In the upcoming sections, we will gradually come to see some gender differences within this norm.

### 6.3.2 Gender and compliments

Let us consider the second principal question:

2) Is complimenting also a gendered speech act in Japanese? Do Japanese female students give and receive more compliments than male students?

At first glance, the answer is yes. It appears to be the case that among young Japanese, women give and receive more compliments than men do. If the number of compliments is counted, Table 6.2 below shows that Japanese female students gave 238 compliments as opposed to male students who gave 131 compliments. As for recipients of compliments, women received 255 compliments while men received 114 compliments.

Table 6.2 Distribution of compliments across gender of participants

Gender of Addressees	Females	Males	Total
Speakers			
Females	172	66	238
Males	83	48	131
Total	225	114	369

However, we ought to be careful with this analysis, since the number of speakers in each gender dyad was not controlled in this study (specifically in the lunchtime recordings). As a result, the raw numbers of compliments

produced are not comparable. In order for us to be able to consider gender differences in the compliments produced and received, I introduce a baseline which we can use to compare the tokens of compliments: cumulative total participation.<sup>18</sup> Female speakers participated in recordings 122 times in total whereas male speakers participated 71 times. Using this unit of measure, we obtain the average of produced compliment tokens by each gender, which then we can compare. This is shown in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 Average production of compliments per total participation

	Tokens of compliments	Cumulative total participation	Average
Female speakers	238	122	1.95
Male speakers	131	71	1.85
Female recipients	225	122	1.84
Male recipients	114	71	1.61

Normalised according to cumulative total participation, women produced an average of 1.95 compliments and men produced an average of 1.85 compliments. In addition, women received 1.84 compliments on average while men received 1.61 compliments on average. According to chi-square tests, the difference across gender (comparing tokens of compliments to cumulative total participation) was not statistically significant.<sup>19</sup> We may conclude therefore that there was no statistically significant gender difference, in terms of giving and receiving compliments among these Japanese speakers.

<sup>18</sup> Please refer to Appendix 5 for identifying the number of participation to which each individual contributed.

<sup>19</sup> For the gender of speakers (givers of compliments), chi-square = 0.091,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.763$ ; for the gender of recipients of compliments, chi-square = 1.993,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.158$ .

### 6.3.3 Style, gender and compliments

Our consideration of these two aspects of gender and complimenting has started to break down the picture of women giving and receiving more compliments. Let us now consider another social variable, the style of speech. This is the third question to be considered.

3) How does style interact with the production of compliments across gender in the Japanese case?

Previously, there has not been much discussion of style within speech act studies. This is presumably because speech act studies for decades have heavily relied on elicited data (Jucker 2009) and their focus was not on naturalistic data. However, it seems valuable to consider in what contexts speakers are more likely to produce compliments, if we are interested in investigating how competent speakers conduct complimenting in their day-to-day life. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the current study examines two styles of speech within which the participants produced compliments: sociolinguistic interviews and casual conversations over lunchtime.

Similarly, I use the cumulative total participation as a point of departure for comparing the production of compliments in each style. In the sociolinguistic interviews, females participated 67 times in total and males participated 37 times in total. In the lunchtime recordings, females participated 55 times and males participated 34 times. The results here suggest some stylistic differences in the production of compliments across gender. Consider Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Distribution of compliments across gender and style

Gender of speakers	Style	Tokens	Cumulative total participation	Average
Female	SIV	63	67	0.94
Female	LR	175	55	3.18
Male	SIV	58	37	1.56
Male	LR	73	34	2.14

(SIV: Sociolinguistic Interviews/LR: Lunchtime Recordings)

On average, women complimented significantly more in the lunchtime recordings (3.18 times per participation) than in the sociolinguistic interviews (0.94 times; chi-square = 28.291,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.000001$ ). On the other hand, there was no statistically significant difference in males' production of compliments across style (chi-square = 1.135,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.286$ ). Yet again, gender differences across styles were not statistically significant. In the sociolinguistic interviews, the gender difference was not significant (chi-square = 3.501,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.061$ ) and neither was there a difference between males and females in the lunchtime recordings (chi-square = 2.323,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.127$ ). However, the female-male comparison for the sociolinguistic interviews has a  $p$ -value of 0.06, which is quite close to 0.05 to suggest a trend towards statistical significance. Although I need more data to verify this, there is the possibility that there might indeed be a difference between the males and females in their tendency to compliment in the sociolinguistic interviews (with females complimenting more than males). Even though it may not be the case that women in general compliment more than men, women may compliment more than men in a particular context – i.e. in this case the sociolinguistic interviews.

Taken together with the style-based difference that was found for females, these results make a very interesting case for gender-based stylistic difference in complimenting among the young Japanese.

#### **6.3.4 Topics of compliments and gender**

Fourthly, I investigate what women and men compliment about. As discussed in Chapter 5, what gets articulated as compliments reflects societal values in the speech community. As Manes puts it, compliments are “a mirror of cultural values” (1983:96). If we were to assume that women and men share different cultures (as suggested by some language and gender theorists; e.g. the difference model associated with Tannen 1990), it is worth exploring what topics female and male speakers pay compliments about. There might be differences in what sort of things are referred to or realised as compliments across gender, because women and men value different attributes in other people (cf. Holmes 1988, 1995). Hence, this section attempts to answer the fourth research question:

4) Topics of compliments and gender:

What do women and men compliment about in this speech community of young Japanese?

Following the framework that I discussed in Chapter 5 for topics of compliments, I coded the topics of compliments across the genders. The results are shown as follows in Table 6.5 and Figure 6.1.

Table 6.5 Gender of participants and topics of compliments

Topics/ Gender of participants	Possessions	Appearance	Ability/ Performance	Extension of self	Personality	Total
female-female	13(8%)	21(12%)	99(57%)	19(11%)	20(12%)	172 (100%)
female-male	2(3%)	10(15%)	37(56%)	6(9%)	11(17%)	66 (100%)
male-female	2(2%)	8(10%)	44(53%)	16(19%)	13(8%)	83 (100%)
male-male	2(4%)	6(13%)	34(71%)	2(4%)	4(8%)	48 (100%)

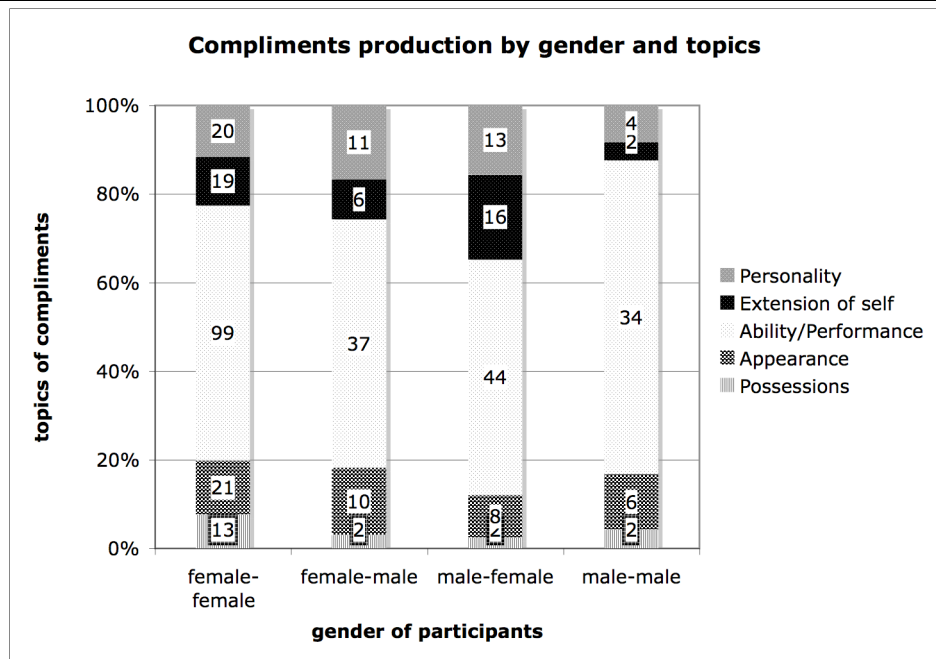


Figure 6.1 Compliments production by gender and topics (The numbers displayed in the columns are raw numbers)

Differences across all the gender patterns are not statistically significant (chi-square = 15.57,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = 0.21$ ).<sup>20</sup> However, as we have seen in Chapter 5, the general trend for Japanese speakers to compliment on Ability/Performance is still apparent across gender here: 57% of compliments between women, 56% of compliments from females to males, and 53% of compliments from males to females are related to Ability/Performance. In particular, men seem to prefer compliments about this topic the most, at a high rate of 71%.

Secondly, female speakers, in general, seem to compliment on extrinsic features such as Possessions and Appearance slightly more than their male counterparts do (19% of compliments by female speakers were on the two extrinsic features of Possessions and Appearance, compared to 14% by male speakers) (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of the compliment topic scale and intrinsic vs extrinsic features).

Thirdly, there seem to be relatively strong constraints on compliments from males to females – men are more likely to compliment women on an extension of the self (19%) compared to other gender dyads (11% between women, 9% from women to men and 4% between men).

Overall, female speakers seem to prefer complimenting more on extrinsic features such as Possessions and Appearance. On the other hand,

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<sup>20</sup> Gender differences were tested in all the possible combinations, however, none of the combinations was significant. The results show that:

- 1) The difference between compliments from female to female and compliments from female to male is non-significant (chi-square = 2.99,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.559$ )
- 2) The difference between compliments from male to female and compliments from male to male is non-significant (chi-square = 8.47,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.075$ )
- 3) The difference between compliments from female to female and compliments from male to female is non-significant (chi-square = 6.52,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.163$ )
- 4) The difference between compliments from female to female and compliments from male to female is non-significant (chi-square = 3.64,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.456$ )



male speakers seem to prefer topics that are more intrinsic (Ability/Performance and Extension of self). This result may support the claim made by Holmes (1988, 1995) and Manes (1983) that men are less likely to compliment on Possessions and Appearance as they see these categories to be face-threatening. Holmes provides an interesting quote from David Britain to support this claim:

To compliment another man on his hair, his clothes, or his body is an extremely face threatening thing to do, both for speaker and hearer. It has to be very carefully done in order not to send the wrong signals.  
(Britain, personal communication, cited in Holmes 1995: 133)

In the Japanese case, especially between men, the most preferred topic was indeed Ability/Performance. This may also support what Eckert and McConnell-Ginet have proposed: “it is part of a linguistic practice by which women are regularly complimented on (i.e., judged on the basis of) their appearance while men are complimented on (i.e., judged on the basis of) their accomplishments” (2003:78).

### **6.3.5 Status, gender and compliments**

Investigating how the speech act of complimenting is done provides us with some indication of how society as a whole understands the relationship between gender and status. Let us now assess the final question:

5) Status, gender and compliments:

How does complimenting help us better understand status relationships across gender in the Japanese case?

Because complimenting entails passing social evaluations on the addressee, looking at the persons to whom these evaluations are directed gives us some ideas of what the societal norms are in terms of status and gender. Figure 6.2 below shows the distribution of compliments by both gender and status.

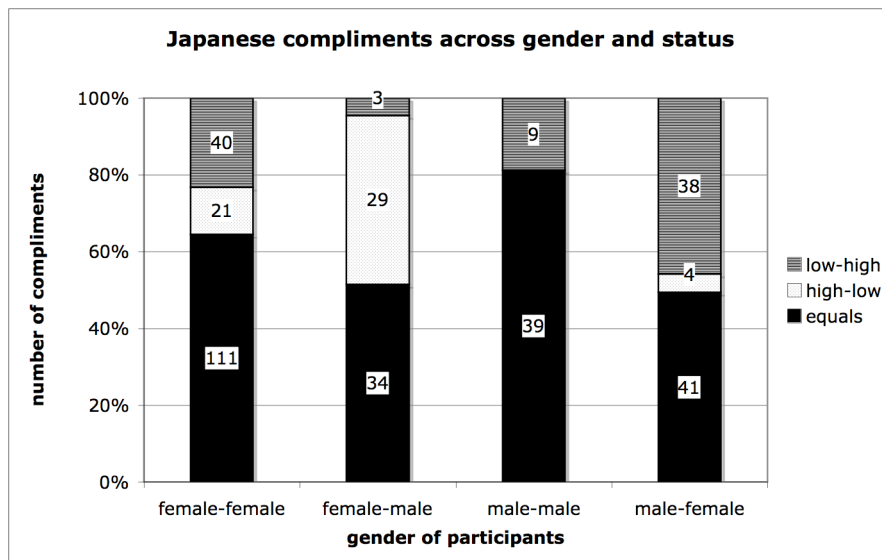


Figure 6.2 Compliments across gender and status (all styles)

First of all, what is to be observed here is that more than 50% of all the compliments in all the gender dyads were exchanged between status equals (as also discussed in Chapter 5). This trend is especially strong between speakers of the same gender. Sixty five percent of compliments among women (N=111) and 81% of compliments among men (N=39) are exchanged between status equals.

However, in cross-gender interactions, we find a somewhat different picture. Of the compliments directed from females to males, 44% of the compliments (N=29) are from *senpai* female speakers to *kohai* male speakers. On the other hand, 49% of compliments (N=38) paid by males to females are from *kohai* male speakers to *senpai* female speakers. This result is notable for two main reasons. First, previous studies have showed that compliments between status unequals do not occur very frequently, but here we see that they do occur in this community. Second, this data suggests an intimate interaction between highly local and societal power relations. The *senpai-kohai* status relationship is highly local, existing independently of the societal norm of a gendered power dynamic.<sup>21</sup> And yet we observe here that when it comes to the act of complimenting, these two systems seem to interact with each other.

This result, therefore, seems to indicate at least two things. First, it seems that high status males in cross-gender interactions are generally not involved with giving and receiving compliments, in contrast to high status females. In particular, as for the compliments exchanged between only males, there were not any cases of *senpai* males giving compliments. In addition, only 4.5% of compliments are given from *kohai* females to *senpai* males and 4.8% of compliments are from *senpai* males to *kohai* females.

Secondly, this result might support the claim made by Holmes (1995) on the interaction of gender and power in complimenting:

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<sup>21</sup> The local concept of *senpai-kohai* relationship is primarily constrained by the length of study in this community – year of study deterministically decides who is *senpai* and *kohai*. Conversely, gender (power) relationship exists at the more global and societal level.

Perhaps higher status women are perceived as more receptive to compliments (especially from men) than their male counterparts, because in the society as a whole women are generally regarded as socially subordinate, and less powerful and influential than men. This may legitimate behaviour that might otherwise be considered presumptuous.

(Holmes 1995:136)

In other words, the direction of compliments reflects the overall social norms about status relations between the genders. If we assume that women are socially constructed as generally subordinate in Japanese society, then *senpai* women are actually in a position where the power play of complimenting may be conducted with men (including even lower status men). This unusual higher status of women, drawn from this local level of the *senpai-kohai* relationship warrants compliment exchange with (even *kohai*) males and makes higher status women legitimate partners both as recipients and givers of compliments.

#### **6.4 Linguistic factors in understanding complimenting as a gendered speech act**

In what follows, I discuss some linguistic variables that constrain the production of Japanese compliments across gender. Some researchers have found gender differences in the linguistic structures of compliments (Bolton 1994; Herbert 1990; Holmes 1988, 1995; Wolfson 1984). Let us briefly review Holmes' (1988, 1995) results on syntactic patterns of compliments in New Zealand English across gender, as shown in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6 Syntactic patterns of compliments and speaker gender (from Holmes, 1988)

Syntactic formula	Female (%)	Male (%)
1. NP BE (LOOKING) (INT) ADJ e.g. That coat is really great	42.1	40.0
2. I (INT) LIKE NP e.g. I simply love that skirt	17.8	13.1
3. PRO BE (a) (INT) (ADJ) NP e.g. That's a very nice coat	11.4	15.6
4. What (a) (ADJ) NP! e.g. What lovely children!	7.8	1.3
5. (INT) ADJ (NP) e.g. Really cool ear-rings	5.1	11.8
6. Isn't NP ADJ! e.g. Isn't this food wonderful!	1.5	0.6
7. All other syntactic formulae	14.3	17.6
Totals	100	100

(Holmes 1988:453, 1995:128)

Holmes (1988, 1995) found that the most frequently used syntactic patterns (patterns 1-3) were very similar across gender, but, there were gender differences in the use of patterns 4 and 5. Women used more of the emphatic pattern (pattern 4), increasing the force of compliments while men used more of the minimal pattern (pattern 5), reducing the force of compliments. This result was consistent with her larger claim that women see the main function of complimenting to be solidarity building and men see it as more of a face-threatening act. Therefore, these previous results that I cite here on syntactic variation in compliments across gender raise the following questions to be answered in the Japanese case.

- 6) What syntactic patterns do women and men prefer to use within their compliments among young Japanese?
- 7) How do women and men use boosters and hedges in complimenting, given that both boosters and hedges are claimed to be feminised linguistic devices?

Before moving onto the analysis of linguistic constraints on Japanese compliments, I should refer to the linguistic constraints (as discussed in Chapter 4) that I did not take into consideration with regards to gender, and give the reasons for this.

- Tense and aspect – since the majority of Japanese compliments in the data set mostly account for non-past (simple present) and/or simple past, we do not find much variation with regards to tense and aspect (see Chapter 4 for the detailed discussion of this variable).
- Position of positive evaluative lexical items of Japanese compliments – because Japanese compliments mostly comprise predicates carrying positive semantic loads, we do not find much variation here (see also Chapter 4).

#### 6.4.1 Syntactic variation of Japanese compliments and gender

This first linguistic variable that I deal with here is syntactic variation in the form of Japanese compliments. Let us recall the sixth question:

- 6) What syntactic patterns do women and men prefer to use within their compliments among young Japanese?

In a departure from the previous work on the syntactic formula of compliments (cf. Holmes 1988, 1998; Manes & Wolfson 1981), I categorised compliment utterances into three groups with regards to the number of lexical and/or syntactic constituents, in order for the framework to better suit the linguistic characteristics specific to Japanese. I did not count copula and (sentence final) particles as separate constituents, but instead considered them as part of the preceding segments. Each of the syntactic patterns coded is exemplified as follows.

##### **Minimal pattern (number of constituents = 1): 128 tokens/369**

###### Example 6.1

*Sugoi (ne/zyan).*

Adjective (SPF / COP)

“Amazing.”

Example 6.2

*Niatteru.*

Verb

“(You) look good”

**Complex pattern (number of constituents = 2): 68 tokens/369**

Example 6.3

*Sugoi kirei.*

very beautiful

“Very beautiful.”

Example 6.4

*Sukaretoru ken.*

like.PASSIVE because

“Because (you are) liked (by all).”

Example 6.5

*Sorya kimarimasu.*

definitely look cool.POL

“Definitely (you) look cool.”

Example 6.6

*Deki sou.*

possible seem

“(You) seem capable.”



**Complex-plus pattern (number of constituents = more than 3): 173/369**

Example 6.7

*Nanka ganbatte kita(ne).*

like do your best come.PAST(SFP).

“Like, you did your best to come today.”

The following Figure 6.3 illustrates the distribution of each pattern across the four types of gender dyad.

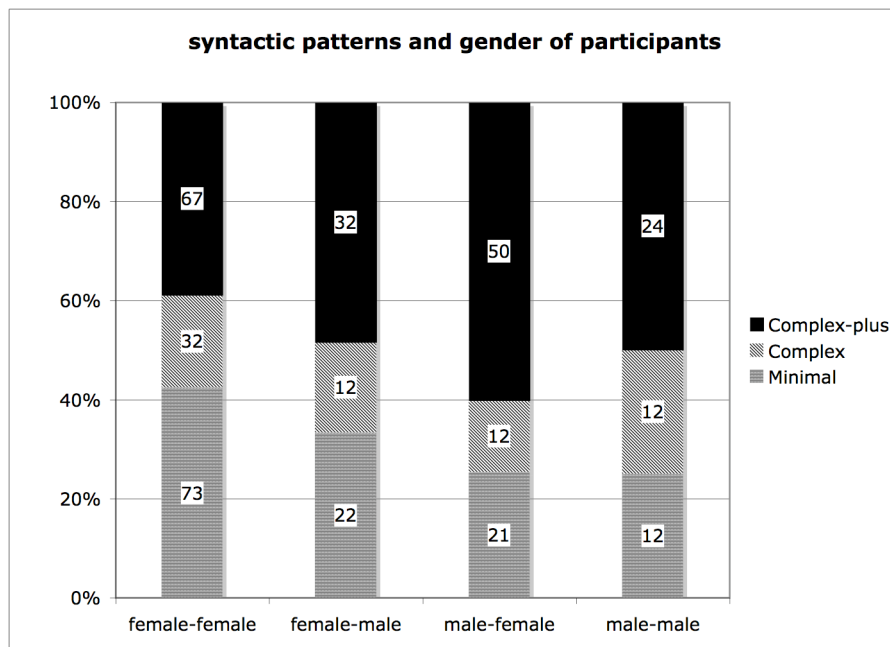


Figure 6.3 Syntactic patterns and gender of participants

As a general trend, it seems that female speakers prefer to exploit minimal patterns more than male counterparts: 42% of compliments between women and 33% of compliments from women to men made use of this pattern. Male speakers, on the other hand, exploited this minimal pattern only 25% of the time to women and 25% of the time to other men. On the

other side of the scale, male speakers seem to prefer the complex-plus pattern, especially when giving compliments to women – 61% of their compliments to women and 50% of compliments between men themselves. Women used this complex-plus pattern only 39% of the time to other women and 49% of the time to men. Overall, there seem to be relatively strong constraints for women to use the minimal pattern, particularly when giving compliments to other women, and for men to use the complex-plus pattern when paying compliments to women.

This result contradicts Holmes' (1988, 1995) results in some respects. In Holmes' in New Zealand data, men used more minimal patterns than women did, whereas in the current study, Japanese women seemed to prefer to use the minimal pattern more than men did. Furthermore, my data reveal that Japanese men construct more syntactically complex and longer utterances as compliments, particularly when paying compliments to women. However, it would be difficult to extend Holmes' argument about the motivation for use of minimal compliments to this data: it is unlikely that Japanese women are trying to reduce the force of compliments by using minimal patterns. Rather, based on my extended ethnographic observation, I argue that Japanese women choose this pattern, because minimal patterns fulfill the interactional functions that they expect complimenting to perform (i.e. the primary function of solidarity building).

In addition, recall that women produced a lot of compliments (though no more than men on average). Therefore, it might be Japanese women's stylistic choice involves selecting syntactically minimal patterns, but using them quantitatively. Japanese women might not construct syntactically

complex compliments, but instead, they are doing plenty of complimenting to make up for the potentially reduced force of syntactically minimal compliments.

#### **6.4.2 Boosters in Japanese compliments and gender**

In this section, I consider the use of boosters across gender within Japanese compliments. For the detailed discussion of boosters and what counts as boosters in this study, refer to Chapter 4.

Compliments, in general, tend to include boosters, as opposed to hedges, presumably for their reinforcing effects on the illocutionary force of compliments. Boosters and hedges produce complementary effects on speech acts performed by speakers: boosters enhance and strengthen the illocutionary force of speech acts and hedges attenuate the force (Bauer & Bauer 2002; Bruce 1980, 1999; Coates 1987; Holmes 1984a, 1984b, 1989, 1990). In total, 183 compliment utterances with boosters were found in the data set, as opposed to 75 utterances with hedges.

Boosters are one of the linguistic devices that researchers once believed to be properties of women's language (Lakoff 1973, 1975). Drawing on Lakoff's words, "women speak in italics, ... italics, if anything, seem to *strengthen* (note those italics) an utterance" (1975:56). Nonetheless, some researchers warn that linguists should carefully investigate the various functions and meanings of linguistic forms such as boosters and hedges when talking about gender differences (Dubois & Crouch 1975; Holmes 1990, 1995; Meyerhoff 1992). Although I do not go into the detail of the different functions and meanings of Japanese boosters within the speech act of

complimenting, I investigate whether women use more boosters in the Japanese compliments. Table 6.7 below shows the distribution of boosters across gender. In some cases, one compliment utterance may have both boosters and hedges, in which case, I counted them in both the boosters and hedges categories.

Table 6.7 Tokens of boosters across gender

Gender of participants (speaker-addressee)	Boosters (%)	Number of tokens / total number of compliments
female-female	58%	99 / 172
female-male	32%	21 / 66
male-female	47%	39 / 83
male-male	50%	24 / 48

Compliments between women are most likely to include boosters – nearly 60% of their compliments include a booster. On the other hand, compliments from females to males disfavour boosters the most – women use boosters to men only 32% of the time. Perhaps a little surprisingly, male speakers seem to use boosters with their compliments quite frequently as well: 47% of compliments between men and 50% of compliments from male to female speakers were boosted.

Just focusing on the boosters used by female speakers, 50% of their compliments included boosters  $((99+21) \div 238=50.4\%)$ , whereas for male speakers, it was 48% of the time  $((39+24) \div 131=48.09\%)$ . The difference across genders was not statistically significant (chi-square = 0.062,  $df = 1$   $p = 0.803$ ). Hence, overall, it is not just women who use boosters in their speech

more than men, but in fact, within the act of complimenting, men exploit boosters as much as women do.

This result, therefore, contradicts the previously made claim that women use more boosters than men. The case of Japanese compliments illustrates culture-specific practice in the use of boosters. However, I should mention that the current study does not look into the varied functions of boosters that might correlate with gender differences.

### 6.4.3 Hedges in Japanese compliments and gender

Finally, I discuss the use of hedges in Japanese compliments. As discussed above, hedges are not as commonly used within compliments as boosters, presumably because of their role in reducing illocutionary force. In total, I found 75 utterances with hedges out of 369 compliments.

Furthermore, hedges are considered to be another linguistic device that women use more than men, according to previous research on language and gender (Holmes 1988b; Lakoff 1973, 1975; Lauwereyns 2002). This section assesses the extra-linguistic applicability of this claim within Japanese compliments. Table 6.8 below describes the distribution of tokens of hedges found in the current study.

Table 6.8 Tokens of hedges across gender

Gender of participants (speaker-addressee)	Hedges (%)	Number of tokens / total number of compliments
female-female	13%	23 / 173
female-male	35%	23 / 66
male-female	23%	19 / 83
male-male	21%	10 / 48

Looking at the frequency of hedges used within compliments, it was actually men who used more hedges than women. Male speakers used hedges 22% of the time  $((19+10) \div 131=22.1\%)$  and this was more frequent than women who used them only 19% of the time  $((23+23) \div 238=19.3\%)$ . Although this difference was not statistically significant across genders (chi-square = 0.271,  $df = 1, p = 0.602$ ), the general trend from this result shows that men may tend to use more hedges within their compliments than women do, which actually contradicts the generalisation made in previous language and gender research.

Another interesting thing to be noted here is what female speakers are doing with hedges (and boosters). When compliments are exchanged between women, female speakers are least likely to hedge compliments (only 13% of all the compliments between females). On the other hand, as is clear from Table 6.8, when women give compliments to men, they seem more likely to hedge compliments (35% of all the compliments from females to males). This result, in some sense, correlates with the use of boosters – compliments from females to males were less likely to include a booster (32%). In addition, compliments between women were more likely to have boosters than any other kind of compliment (58%) and least likely to have hedges (13%). There seem to be some constraints, which we might call an addressee effect: depending on who women are giving compliments to, women tend to reinforce the force of compliments towards women with boosters, but attenuate their force with hedges when complimenting men.

## 6.5 Multivariate analysis on the speech act within language and gender research

In this section, I conduct a multivariate analysis in order to investigate how linguistic and social features constrain the way women and men exchange compliments in the given community. To some extent, the current approach assumes an essentialist dichotomy between women and men, by using this variable as dependant variable. However, previous chapters have spent a lot of time exploring the dynamics of the situations where my recordings took place. So it is against a fundamentally qualitative backdrop that I now venture a quantitative exploration of the data. Moreover, as a starting point to think about gender influences on language use, the quantitative variationists' approach provides us with some useful tools. It allows us to understand gender in wider contexts that might closely correlate with other linguistic and social factors, rather than thinking of gender as a single determining factor of linguistic variation (Cameron 2005; Dubois & Horvath 1999; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992).

To the best of my knowledge, there has not been much research done which utilises the variationist approach to help investigate how speech acts are constrained and stratified by linguistic and social conditions. There has been a tradition in the work of quantitative variationists to consider gender as one of the strongest determining (social) factors of linguistic variation (cf. Cheshire 2002). However, the variables that have been investigated so far are mainly phonetic (Batterham 2000; Labov 1966; Macaulay 1977; Milroy & Milroy 1978; Milroy et al. 1994; Trudgill 1972; Wolfram 1969) or morpho-syntactic (Nordberg & Sundgren 1998; Tagliamonte 1998; Takano 1998)

although recent work has also looked at discourse features (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003; Macaulay 2002, 2006; Meyerhoff 1994; Pichler 2008, 2010). These methods are generally not used with speech act variation.

Variationists who stayed away from dealing with discourse features and speech acts have a sensible reason for doing so: it is impossible to define an envelope of variation for a speech act. However, some suggest that this limitation is not fatal even if we cannot predefine an envelope of variation for something like discourse features (Macaulay 2002; Meyerhoff 1994; Pichler 2008, 2010). What I aim to explore in this section is whether the features we have been discussing in this chapter operate independently or are linked to each other when compliments are produced. Hence, the present study combines the perspective of both variationists and speech act theorists.

### **6.5.1 Variables and method**

This analysis takes the gender of the speaker as a dependent variable. In addition, I take eight other social and linguistic variables as independent variables that have been reported to have an influence on the gendered variation in compliments. I have discussed these variables along with a distributional analysis as above. Here, I review these independent variables with the specific factors for each one.



**Social/interactional factors:**

1. Style

(2 levels: sociolinguistic interviews / lunchtime recordings)

2. Status

(3 levels: between status equals / from *senpai* to *kohai* / from *kohai* to *senpai*)

3. Topics of compliments

(5 levels: Possessions / Appearance / Ability and / or  
Performance / Extension of self / Personality)

4. (In)directness

(2 levels: direct / indirect compliments)

5. Gender of addressee(s)

(2 levels: female / male)

**Linguistic factors:**

6. Syntactic structure

(3 levels: minimal / complex / complex plus)

7. Use of boosters

(2 levels: with / without boosters)

8. Use of hedges

(2 levels: with / without hedges)

These factors were first coded in Excel and then analysed using the statistical package Rbrul (Johnson 2009) – logistic regression for multivariate analysis.

## 6.5.2 Results

In this section, I present the results of the multivariate analysis of compliments across gender. The set of results which I will present is the variation in compliments when women/men *give* compliments, that is to say, taking the gender of the *speaker* as the dependent variable. I subsequently carried out multiple regression tests using gender of the *addressee* as the dependent variable. I will not, however, mention the results of this second analysis here as they were very similar to the results obtained when the gender of the speaker was the dependent variable, i.e., showing the same three significant factor groups in both analyses. The primary question that I am asking in this section is therefore: How much more likely is the speaker of a compliment to be female given all the other factors? Table 6.9 shows the result.

Table 6.9 Multivariate analysis of the contribution of factors selected as significant to the probability of compliments given by Japanese female speakers

Input probability		0.216	
Log Likelihood		- 208.968	
Total N		369	
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor weight</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Status (probability = 0.00000)			
Higher to lower	0.89	15	54
Equals	0.46	61	225
Lower to higher	0.29	24	90
Range	60		
Syntactic pattern (probability = 0.00021)			
Minimal pattern	0.64	35	128
Complex	0.46	18	68
Complex plus	0.42	47	173
Range	22		
Gender of addressee (probability =0.0069)			
Female	0.55	69	255
Male	0.39	31	114
Range	16		
Style (probability = 0.018)			
Lunchtime recordings	0.55	67	248
Sociolinguistic Interviews	0.40	33	121
Range	15		

\*Non-significant factor groups: boosters, hedges, (in)directness, topics of compliments.

Of the eight factors analysed, four factors – status, syntactic pattern, gender of addressee and style – came up as making a significant contribution to variation in compliments that women and men pay in the Japanese case. The factors which did not show up as significant in this analysis were boosters, hedges, (in)directness, and topics of compliments. To some extent, this result was not surprising: we did not find statistically significant differences across gender in the use of these features (see section 6.3.1, 6.3.4, 6.4.2, 6.4.3).

The factor weights shown in the table indicate how much more likely the speaker is to be female given each of these factors. Higher numbers, over

0.50, indicate a favouring effect for women giving the compliment and below 0.50 indicates a disfavouring effect. The bigger the range is for any dependent variable, the greater and more significant a contribution it makes in favouring female as the speaker of a compliment.

A few things quickly become clear from these results. Firstly, it is clear that status has the biggest effect by far (range = 60). A compliment from high to low status speakers is highly likely to be uttered by a woman (factor weight = 0.89) while a compliment from low to high status speakers is strongly disfavoured by female speakers. In addition, a syntactically minimal pattern of compliment is strongly favoured by women (factor weight = 0.64, range = 22). If the recipient of a compliment is female, there is a slight (but significant) effect favouring a female speaker (factor weight = 0.55, range = 16) rather than a male speaker. And finally, compliments in lunchtime conversations favour a female speaker (factor weight = 0.55, range = 15) and compliments in sociolinguistic interviews favour a male speaker.

### 6.5.3 Discussion

In order for us to understand what these figures may mean, it might be helpful to rethink the functions of compliments that (female and male) members of this community orient to in the act of complimenting. Given that status is the strongest constraint on who pays compliments, this might suggest that the act of complimenting is a display of power or a power play in this community. As we saw in Chapter 4, this community-specific notion of status, the *senpai-kohai* relationship, seems to be highly salient to the members of this community. In complimenting, young Japanese speakers are

most conditioned by status differences in relation to their addressees. This result seems striking, given that all my participants are university students whose status would be categorised as 'equals' in Western societies. Furthermore, previous literature suggests that the vast majority of compliments occur between same status speakers, indicating that complimenting signals solidarity rather than functioning as a power play. Nonetheless, in this community, the local notion of status seems to operate in a highly salient way.

If we were to assume any social meanings attached to different functions of compliments that may occur between status unequal speakers, compliments from status high to low speakers seem difficult to interpret anything other than sympathetic and encouraging. Conversely, compliments from low to high status speakers would be easily interpreted as flattery paid towards their superiors. Perhaps, through these encouragement types of compliments, women use them as a tool with lower status women who would appreciate this type of compliments.

Men, on the other hand, might be using the flattery type of compliments which might take more syntactic components, in order to flatter higher status men, since flattery usually involves over-the-top, exaggerated features – hence longer and more complex utterances. Also, as Jucker and Taavitsainen suggest, flattery takes “self-interested want to enhance the complimentee’s good opinion not as an end but as a means to some other goals” (2008:199). The Japanese men in this study might also be interested in obtaining something in return for themselves by giving compliments to status higher speakers.

Therefore, the result of this multivariate analysis confirms not only the community-specific constraints on the variation of compliments, but also gendered variation in the functions of complimenting. The community specific norm of status seems to be most salient and significant in constraining the way Japanese women and men pay compliments. Moreover, the relative importance of linguistic and non-linguistic conditioning factors might indicate that Japanese women and men seem to understand the function of complimenting differently. Japanese women may see complimenting as a sympathy-expressing encouragement tool whereas men might see it as a flattery device and a way of accruing something in return from the recipient of these compliments.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the relationship between gender and the speech act of complimenting. To test the hypothesis of complimenting as a gendered speech act, I have looked at various social and linguistic features of Japanese compliments. I found that there seem to be certain norms operating as the community, irrespective of gender, e.g. the (in)directness of compliments, while there are some constraints that women and men orient to differently in complimenting, e.g. the dynamics of the *senpai-kohai* relationship. Finally, I co-opted a variationist approach to quantitative analysis, in order to investigate whether there is any correlation between these (socio)linguistic factors and the way women and men pay compliments in the community.

The next chapter looks at compliment responses in Japanese. I especially pay attention to discussing what sorts of strategies are implemented in responding to compliments among the young Japanese. As “studies based on non-Western languages are scarce” (Farghal & Al-Khatib 2001:1486) in terms of compliment responses, Chapter 7 adds another case study of non-Western speech community, namely, the Japanese case, to the study of compliment responses.

## Chapter 7. Compliment responses in Japanese

### 7.1 Introduction

If we sociolinguists are interested in investigating the relationship between language and society and how language works in different speech communities, then not only are speech acts themselves deserving of attention, but the issue of how speech acts are taken up by co-members of the community is equally essential. Compliments together with compliment responses have provided an attractive field for exploring these interests from the perspective of various subfields of linguistics, e.g. sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, conversation analysis and ethnography of communication. Conversation analysts, for instance, analyse the sequence of compliments and their responses as an “adjacency pair” (Pomerantz 1978; Schegloff & Sacks 1973) and investigate how such adjacency pairs are organised and negotiated in interaction.

With regards to compliments and compliment responses, at least in Western societies, it was once strongly believed that accepting a compliment is the most appropriate way of responding to compliments (Herbert 1986; 1990). In Herbert’s words, “there is virtual unanimity among speakers of English that the prescriptively “correct” responses to a compliment is *thank you*” (1990:207). Herbert also cites a motivating quote from an American etiquette book:



When you are complimented, the only response necessary is “Thank you.” Don’t disparage yourself. If someone admires your dress, don’t say, “This old thing, I got it at a bargain sale.” A simple thank you is sufficient.

Johnson (1979:43-44), cited in Herbert (1986:76)

However, a number of researchers, including Herbert himself, have argued that this observation is too simplistic. Some claim that when naturally occurring interactions are examined, the way speakers respond to compliments is actually much more complicated than they thought it would be (cf. Herbert 1990). In practice, speakers employ a number of strategies in order to solve the interactional dilemma they face in responding to compliments. I will explore this interactional dilemma in detail in the following sections.

In this chapter, therefore, I firstly touch on some key research on compliment responses to set out a framework for the current study. I then move on to show the results. I especially pay attention to discussing what sorts of strategies are implemented among the young Japanese. As “studies based on non-Western languages are scarce” (Farghal & Al-Khatib 2001:1486) in terms of compliment responses, the current study is a contribution to the study of compliment responses by adding another non-Western community, the Japanese case.

## **7.2 Previous research on compliment responses**

In this section, I review some fundamental work on compliment responses within English-speaking communities. Compliment responses have been looked at in a variety of Englishes, including American

(Pomerantz 1978; Herbert 1986, 1990; Rose 2001), Australian (Davis 2008) and New Zealand English (Holmes 1988; 1995). These studies and their frameworks have been influential in analysing compliment responses not only in English-speaking communities but also in cross-cultural contexts.

As I briefly discussed in Chapter 2, Pomerantz (1978) was the first to investigate compliment responses from a conversation analytic point of view. Pomerantz' work on compliment responses in American English was (and still is) so innovative and significant that researchers still follow her framework in the literature on compliment responses. Primarily, her key finding is that the recipients of compliments face two conflicting constraints, or in other words, an interactional dilemma:

- A) Agree with and/or accept compliments
- B) Avoid self-praise

Pomerantz (1978:81-82)

The addressees of compliments would be first constrained by A as conversationalists generally prefer to avoid any conflict in conversation. This would incline complimentees to accept compliments. On the other hand, because compliments are in fact positive assessments, agreeing with compliments implies self-praise, which is what the second constraint B inclines speakers to avoid. Constraint B therefore encourages complimentees to reject compliments.

This dilemma can also be interpreted in light of Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle. The two competing systems that Pomerantz discusses are essentially the same as the two maxims that Leech develops: the agreement maxim and the modesty maxim. As briefly discussed in Chapter

2, here I repeat the two maxims that describe this interactional dilemma in the act of responding to compliments. Although Leech also explores other types of maxims in his work, here I only consider these two, as they are the most useful in explaining the dilemma involved in compliment responses.

Modesty maxim: Minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self.

Agreement maxim: Minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other.

Leech (1983:132)

In short, the dilemma that the recipients of compliments face is: how can one agree with, hence accept, compliments without sounding self-praising?

Because of this complex relationship between compliment responses and politeness issues, a number of researchers who work on linguistic politeness have looked at compliment responses as a rich source of data for exploring their interests across various cultural contexts (cf. Chen 1993; Holmes 1995; Yu 2003).

In her empirical data on American English, Pomerantz (1978) addresses the false nature of stereotypical response of accepting compliments. She claims that “a large proportion of compliment responses deviate from the model response of accepting compliments” and then goes on to report that “most compliment responses lie somewhere in between (not at the polar extremes of) acceptances and agreements on the one hand and rejections and disagreements on the other” (1978:81). Drawing on conversation analytic tools, Pomerantz describes two competing strategies: the preference system of supportive actions and the constraint system of self-praise avoidance. To illustrate an example, she discusses strategies named

“shifts” that satisfy the needs of these two competing constraints. In shifting, the addressees of compliments either downgrade the praise (“evaluation shift”) or shift the referent of the praise, by praising someone other-than-self (“referent shift”). Through this strategy, the recipients of compliments can indirectly accept and/or agree with compliments – i.e. satisfy constraint A – while because of this shift of evaluation or referent, their self-praise remains minimal – i.e. satisfying constraint B. Returning compliments, which she calls “returns”, is also one of these strategies.

A: Yer *lookin* good,  
B: *Great*. So’r you.

Pomerantz (1978:105)

Pomerantz claims that “as a solution type, returns offer a procedure through which a kind of agreement is performed which simultaneously satisfies the constraint of self-praise avoidance” (1978:106).

Next, building on Pomerantz (1978), Herbert (1986, 1990) discusses twelve compliment response types found in American English. His framework also starts with the two conflicting systems of agreement and non-agreement on one hand and acceptance and non-acceptance on the other. His study is based on 1,062 compliments collected by his university students from State University of New York in 1980-1983, using the notebook method (see Chapter 3). I review the twelve response types he identified in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 Compliment response types in American English (from Herbert)

Response types		N	%		
Agreement	Acceptance	1. Appreciation token "Thanks"	312	29.4	
		2. Comment acceptance "Yeah, it's my favorite too."	70	6.6	
		3. Praise upgrade "Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn't it?"	4	.4	
Non-agreement	Non-acceptance	4. Comment history "I bought it for the trip to Arizona"	205	19.3	
		5. Reassignment "My brother gave it to me"	32	3.0	
		6. Return "So's yours"	77	7.3	
		7. Scale down "It's really quite old"	48	4.5	
		8. Question "Do you really think so?"	53	5.0	
		9. Disagreement "I hate it."	106	10.0	
		10. Qualification "It's alright, but Len's is nicer"	70	6.6	
		11. No acknowledgement [silence]	54	5.1	
		12. Request interpretation "You wanna borrow this one too?"	31	2.9	
		Total		1062	100.1

(Herbert 1990:208-211)

Herbert's data reveal that among young Americans, a variety of strategies can be used in responding to compliments. In line with what Pomerantz (1978) suggested (although she did not provide distributional data to support it), Herbert reports that although the prescribed response is a simple "thank you", the acceptance strategy does not account for the absolute majority of the data set (1990:207).

Building on his work of American compliment responses (Herbert 1986), Herbert further looked into cultural differences. He compared this American data to South African data (Herbert & Straight 1989) and also investigated gender differences among young Americans (1990), showing some significant differences in both cases. His model of compliment response types constitutes an important contribution to and a systematic advancement on Pomerantz's model – fleshing out Pomerantz's generalisations with quantificational data. However, some might take issue with his classification of categories – for example, the strategy of questioning the truth value of compliments (by saying “do you really think so?”) is considered a display of non-agreement (strategy 8 in Table 7.1 above) in Herbert's (1990) framework, whereas for example, Holmes (1995) regards this as a kind of evading strategy.

Thirdly, I turn to Holmes' (1988, 1995) studies of compliment responses in New Zealand English. Her analysis draws on compliment responses gathered by her students implementing the notebook method. Her research is significant because she adopts a somewhat different but useful framework from the two models mentioned above. She adds another category named “deflect/evade” besides “acceptance” and “rejection” as first introduced by Pomerantz. I find this extra category very useful because in my Japanese data also, we see a number of cases where responses are neither acceptance/agreement nor rejection/disagreement. Holmes' framework of compliment responses is shown in Table 7.2 below. As she was interested in investigating gender differences in compliment responses, the table shows male and female use of these strategies separately.

Table 7.2 Compliment response and speaker gender in New Zealand (from Holmes)

Response type	E.g.	Female		Male	
		N	%	N	%
A. Accept					
1. Appreciation/agreement token	"Thanks, yes"	52	15.8	18	15.8
2. Agreeing utterance	"I think it's lovely too"	110	33	40	35
3. Downgrading utterance	"It's not too bad is it"	29	8.8	11	9.6
4. Return compliment	"You're looking good too"	14	4.2	4	3.5
Subtotal		205	62	73	64
B. Reject					
1. Disagreeing utterance	"I'm afraid I don't like it much"	23	7	5	4.4
2. Question accuracy	"Is beautiful the right word?"	7	2.1	3	2.6
3. Challenging sincerity	"You don't really mean that"	3	0.9	1	0.9
Subtotal		33	10	9	7.9
C. Deflect/Evade					
1. Shift credit	"My mother knitted it"	5	1.5	-	
2. Informative comment	"I bought it at that Vibrant Knits place"	33	10	9	7.9
3. Ignore	"It's time we were leaving, isn't it?"	8	2.4	6	5.3
4. Legitimate evasion	Context needed to illustrate	29	8.8	16	14
5. Request reassurance	"Do you really think so?"	17	5.2	5	4.4
Subtotal		92	27.8	36	31.6
Total		330	100	114	100

(Holmes 1995:141)

Holmes argues that in the New Zealand data, unlike the American data discussed by Pomerantz (1978) and Herbert (1986; 1990), by far the most preferred response is acceptance. It accounts for more than 60% of all the response types in both women's and men's data. What is also interesting about her results is that deflecting/evading compliments is relatively

frequent – 27.8% of female and 31.6% of male responses are of this type. In fact, deflection/evasion is more frequent than rejection as a response type. In the Japanese data also, as I will show, deflecting compliments seems to be an important interactional strategy in responding to compliments. The current study, therefore, basically takes Holmes' framework as a departure point.

### **7.2.1 Compliment responses in cross-cultural contexts**

This section reviews some work on compliment responses among non-English speaking communities, including Japanese. Studies on compliment responses have been undertaken by a number of researchers who work on second language acquisition (Han 1992; Nelson et al. 1996), intercultural communication (Araki & Barnlund 1985; Daikuhara 1986; Lorenzo-Dus 2001; Sharifian 2008; Tran 2007, 2010; Tang & Zhang 2008; Valdes & Pino 1981) and cross-cultural politeness (Chen 1993; Spencer-Oatey & Ng 2002; Yu 2003; Wang & Tsai 2003; Yousefvand 2010). The assumption made by these researchers is that because cultural norms influence the way (socio)linguistic competence develops, strategies for responding to compliments employed by speakers in cross-cultural contexts are expected to differ from one culture to another.

There are many comparative studies that have focused on cross-cultural differences in compliment response strategies: Valdes & Pino (1981) compare American English and Mexican-Spanish; Golato (2002, 2005) examines American English and German; Chen (1993) and Tang & Zhang (2009) discuss American English and Chinese; Nelson et al. (1996) investigate American English and Syrian Arabic; Barnlund & Araki (1985) and



Daikluhara (1986) look at American English and Japanese and Lorenzo-Dus (2001) compare British English and Spanish. In addition, some studies examine how second language learners (in)appropriately respond to compliments in their target languages: native Korean speakers interacting in English (Han 1992), native Japanese speakers conversing in English (Ishihara 2003).

Among these studies, one of the most influential studies of compliment responses in cross-cultural contexts is Chen (1993), which reports notable differences in response strategies across American English and Mandarin Chinese speakers. His primary finding is that American English speakers associate with Leech's agreement maxim more in responding to compliments, whereas Chinese speakers are largely motivated by Leech's modesty maxim. He reports that Chinese speakers rejected compliments 96% of the time while Americans accepted 40% of their compliments and rejected them only 13% of the time. However, I should mention here that his methodology draws on questionnaire-elicited data and this may not necessarily represent what the speakers actually do in naturally occurring interaction.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, Yu (2003) focuses on differences in Chinese speakers' linguistic politeness by investigating compliment responses when compared to Western-based politeness norms: "whereas negative politeness plays an important role in the realization of politeness strategies for native English speakers, the Chinese regard this type of face desires as irrelevant to politeness" (2003:1704).

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 3 for more detailed discussions of the advantages and disadvantages of different methodologies and data.

There have been some studies on compliment responses in Japanese (Barnlund & Araki 1985; Daikuhara 1986; Hirata 1999; Kim 2006; Koike 2000; Terao 1996). The majority of these studies point out that Japanese speakers often adopt neither accepting nor rejecting responses to compliments and utilize strategies somewhere in-between.

In their comparative study of American and Japanese compliment responses, Barnlund & Araki (1985) found that 18 Japanese speakers living in Japan most frequently questioned the accuracy of compliments (33%), kept silent or just smiled (25%), denied compliments (19%) and explained why compliments were not deserved (17%).

Terao (1996) also found a similar trend in his corpus of 1,037 compliments collected from TV talk shows and naturally occurring compliments collected through the notebook methods. He suggested that Japanese speakers accepted their compliments 30.4% of the time, rejected 25.5% of their compliments, and used other strategies (neither acceptance nor rejection) 44.1% of the time. He further suggests that in naturally occurring speech, speakers often combine different strategies in larger discourse of compliment responses.

To illustrate, speakers may reject compliments first and accept them later on. This combining strategy may be done within one turn (see Example 7.1) or across more than one turn (see Example 7.2).

Example 7.1 Combination of rejection and acceptance strategies within one turn

Complimenter: "You look nice in that shirt."

Complimentee: "I don't think so, but thank you."

Example 7.2 Combination of rejection and acceptance strategies across turns

Complimenter: "Your shoes are lovely."

Complimentee: "I don't think so."

Complimenter: "I think the colours especially suit you."

Complimentee: "Why, thank you."

Kim (2006) explores this idea in her study among young Japanese speakers. Her data reveal that the combination of different strategies was the most preferred strategy of all (42.9% of all compliment response types). The second frequent strategy was to evade the compliment (27.4%), the third was to reject it (18.7%), and the least preferred strategy was to accept compliments (11%).

In my Japanese data, I will show that the participants preferred to evade compliments among all the repertoire of strategies available to them. However, combining different strategies, as Kim (2006) and Terao (1996) suggested, was not widely used by my participants. In the following section, I will first describe the data set in the current study and then demonstrate what sorts of strategies were found.

### 7.3 Compliment responses in the current study

In this study, compliment responses are defined as verbal turns which occur immediately after compliments. Some responses are realised through non-verbal cues (e.g. gesture and eye-contact) and these are of interests to some scholars.<sup>23</sup> However, in this chapter, I only consider the verbal responses elicited by compliments. This is due to practical limitations on my fieldwork. Over the lunchtime recordings, I did not conduct video-recordings and sometimes I was not present to take notes, and therefore I simply do not have access to all the non-verbal exchanges that might have occurred. It should not be noted through that compliment responses in the present study also include some paralinguistic features, since vocalizations such as laughter and the recognition sound (e.g. “Ahhh”) are also considered as responses, insofar as they are realised as identifiable turns in sequences.

#### 7.3.1 The data set

When looking at compliment responses in the present corpus, the first observation that immediately caught my attention was that not all the compliments received responses. In fact, out of 369 compliment utterances analysed for this study, as many as 160 compliments (43% of the compliments) did not receive any response – at least verbally recognisable turns. Some compliments were followed immediately by a second and higher order of compliments (see Chapter 3) and hence there were instances of consecutive turns of compliments and no response. The recipients of

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<sup>23</sup> Holmes (2008:375), for example, discusses the importance of analysing non-verbal behaviours as one of the contextualisation cues.

compliments occasionally did not get a chance to respond to compliments because other parties already jumped in and carried forward the conversation. To the best of my knowledge, this point has not been widely pointed out in the past literature on compliment responses. This is presumably because the research on compliment responses has largely dealt with elicited data gathered through discourse completion tests and questionnaires. These methods force responses in the form of an adjacency pair, which previous researchers have considered to be the basic formula of the interaction. However, discourse completion tasks and questionnaires might not necessarily represent what actually goes on in naturally occurring compliments exchange. In naturalistic conversations with multiple parties, such as the group recordings I conducted, the style of interaction tends to be more dynamic and fluid (especially with multiple participants) where complete adjacency pairs might not be expected.

In my analysis of compliment responses, therefore, I analyse the remaining dataset of the 209 compliment responses. As I briefly mentioned above, the typology of compliment responses used in the current study basically follows Holmes (1995). The primary categories of responding strategies are the following three: 1) accept, 2) reject and 3) evade. Within these, as Holmes demonstrates, there are sub-strategies for each category. To better suit the Japanese data, some extra sub-categories are added. Furthermore, as Kim (2006) and Terao (1996) discussed in their Japanese data – though this was not considered in Holmes' (1995) work – I consider another category called “combination” which included turns where more

than one strategy or sub-strategies occurs in response turn. I will show examples for each strategy in the following sections.

#### **7.4 Results and discussion**

This section describes what compliment response strategies were employed among the young Japanese. I discuss each strategy in detail comparing the data to previous studies of compliment responses when appropriate. Overall, I found that the strategy of evading compliments was most preferred in this community (51.5% of all responses), acceptances accounted for 35% of the data set and finally, rejections accounted for 12% of all responses. Interestingly, a combination of these strategies was not very frequently found in my data set (only 1.5%) unlike some previous studies (Kim 2006). Figure 7.1 below shows the overall frequency of strategies employed in the Japanese data.

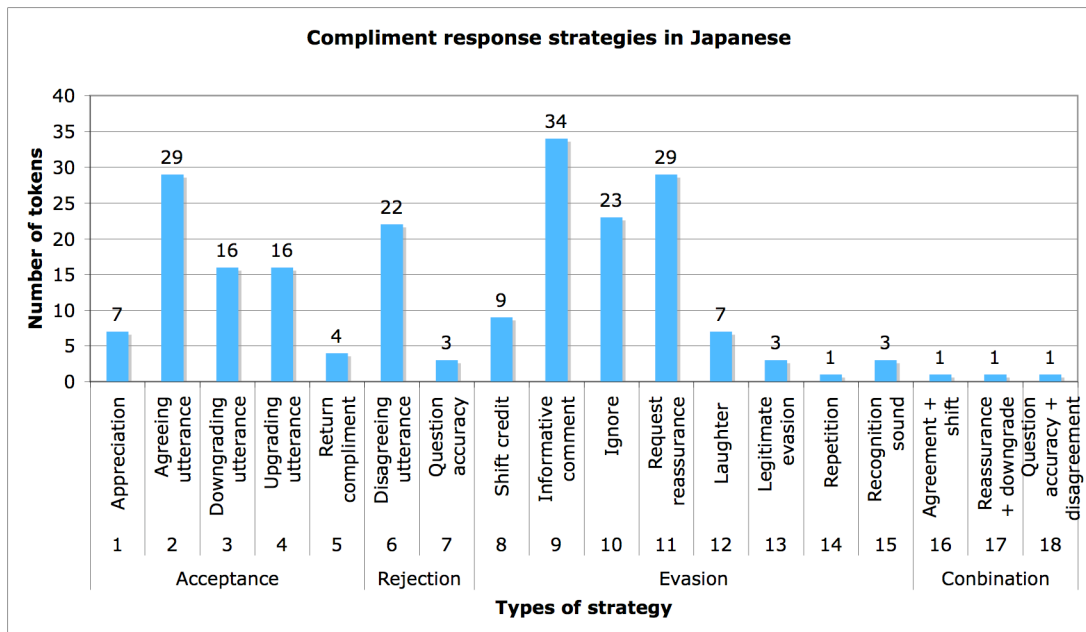


Figure 7.1 Compliment response strategies in the corpus

#### 7.4.1 Accepting compliments in Japanese

With regards to accepting compliments, five sub-strategies were found in the corpus. Consider Table 7.3 below. The percentage indicates the frequency of sub-strategies as a proportion of the entire data set of 209 compliment responses.

Table 7.3 Acceptance type of strategies in Japanese compliment responses

Response type	Compliments	Responses	Tokens	
			N	%
A. Accept				
1. Appreciation	<i>Zya-zi kimatteru.</i> "You look cool in the jersey"	<i>Arigatou gozaimasu.</i> "Thank you very much"	7	3
2. Agreeing utterance	<i>Tukiai ii mon ne.</i> "You have good social networks."	<i>Sou desu ne.</i> "Yes, I do."	29	14
3. Downgrading utterance	<i>Sugoi desu ne.</i> (about her cooking skill) "Amazing"	<i>Tenuki no sika tukutte nai desu yo.</i> "I only cook easy things"	16	8
4. Upgrading utterance	<i>Sugoi.</i> "Amazing"	<i>Desyo?</i> "Isn't it?"	16	8
5. Return compliment	<i>Yosiko siroi yo ne.</i> "Yoshiko (you are) pale / fair-skinned" <sup>24</sup>	<i>Akiko mo siroi yo.</i> "Akiko (you are) also white"	4	2
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>72</b>	<b>35</b>

As we can see from Table 7.3 above, the Japanese speakers accepted their compliments 35% of the time when they responded to compliments. This was the second most preferred response, after evading, among the young Japanese. Among acceptance types, the most frequently observed strategy was to agree with compliments (14%) and this parallels Holmes (1995) data. What is interesting, though, is that downgrading as well as upgrading compliments were found to be equally frequent (8% in each case). Kim (2006) also found this upgrading strategy in her data, although downgrading was more preferred than upgrading among her young Japanese. This upgrading strategy seems to violate Leech's modesty maxim and goes against the principle of avoiding self-praise. It might be then that among these university students, avoiding self-praise through downgrading is just as important as upgrading self-praise and that upgrading compliments

<sup>24</sup> Being fair-skinned or even pale in the Japanese society is a desirable feature of people, especially for women.



does not necessarily operate only as a violation of the modesty maxim within this community. By upgrading self-praise, they approve the praised value and reinforce the solidarity between them, addressing to their positive face wants ('(It is amazing), isn't it?' shown in the above example). Finally, unlike Holmes' (1995) New Zealand data, showing appreciation was not frequently observed in the Japanese case (3% in this dataset whereas 15.8% in Holmes').

#### 7.4.2 Rejecting compliments in Japanese

The majority of people outside (and perhaps inside) Japan would say that the stereotypical impression of Japanese people is that they are modest and humble. In compliment exchanges too, it has been claimed that the preferred response is to reject compliments or praise by saying "*Ie ie, sonna koto nai*" (No, no, that is not true) (Daikuhara 1986:120).

Just recently, I was presented with an interesting example of this kind. My Japanese girl friend came over for dinner and saw my Scottish boyfriend for the first time in a while. He greeted her in Japanese and she complimented him on his improved Japanese. He replied to this saying "Thank you" in English. However, she corrected him by saying that he should have said "No, it's still not good." She then taught him how to say this in Japanese, which came with the demonstration of how to bow with a waving hand when he says this phrase. This is a good example of what underlies the stereotype about Japanese people's behaviour with regards to compliment responses.

Despite this stereotype, my data reveal that this strategy was in fact the least preferred among young Japanese. They reject compliments only 12% of the time when they responded. Consider Table 7.4 below.

Table 7.4 Rejection type of strategies in Japanese compliment responses

B. Reject	Compliments	Responses	N	%
6. Disagreeing with utterance	<i>Sugo:i.</i> "Amazing"	<i>Sugoku wa nai.</i> "It is not amazing"	22	11
7. Question accuracy	<i>Eigoka no naka de itiban otoko daro.</i> "You are the most manly guy in the department"	<i>Nanya sore.</i> "What do you mean by that?"	3	1
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>

Not only did the Japanese speakers reveal little use of rejection as a compliment response, but also they showed little variety in the rejection types – they are only two sub-strategies of disagreeing and questioning accuracy of the compliment. The strategy of challenging sincerity, which was found in Holmes' study (1995), was not detected in the current corpus. This indicates that explicitly rejecting compliments is not the normative response to compliments within this community, regardless of the stereotypes that people may hold of the Japanese and the norms that my friend tried to teach my boyfriend.

### 7.4.3 Evading compliments in Japanese

Thirdly, I discuss how the speakers in my corpus evaded compliments. This strategy was the most preferred strategy of all. The speakers exploited evading strategies in responding to compliments more than 50% of the time. They also employed a variety of sub-strategies within this category. Table 7.5 below shows the results.

Table 7.5 Evasion type of strategies in Japanese compliment responses

C. Deflect/Evade	Compliments	Responses		
8. Shift credit	<i>Bari wakai ne!</i> "You are so young!"	<i>Kotti motto wakai.</i> "These guys are younger"	9	4
9. Informative comment	<i>Onee sama yan, kyou.</i> "You look lady-like today"	<i>Pa-ma sita.</i> "I had my hair permed"	34	17
10. Ignore	<i>Erai.</i> "Admirable"	<i>Arien.</i> "This can't be happening"	23	11
11. Request reassurance	<i>Aa, ii ne.</i> "That is nice"	<i>Omou?</i> "Do you think so?"	29	14
12. Laughter	<i>Honto ii papa da yo.</i> "Your father is nice"	Hahaha	7	3
13. Legitimate evasion	<i>Oatui.</i> "(you are a) hot (couple)"	<i>A: syaberitaku nee na:.</i> "I don't want to talk about it"	3	1
14. Repetition	<i>Kyou omositokatta.</i> "You were funny today"	<i>Haha, omosirokatta.</i> "Haha, I was funny"	1	0.5
15. Recognition sound	<i>Kekkou mame zya nai?</i> "You are rather diligent, aren't you?"	A:::	3	1
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>109</b>	<b>51.5</b>

When evading, speakers neither accept with compliments, nor reject with compliments. Hence, speakers do not show their obvious orientation to the agreement maxim or the modesty maxim as they refuse to follow either. Sub-strategies 8-10 indicate some kind of shift from the receiver of compliments.

In shifting credit, the recipient suggests someone other than the self who deserves the compliment. Providing information about the attributes that received a compliment is also a type of shift, moving focus to something other-than-self. Furthermore, ignoring a compliment and saying something unrelated is also a shift in that the topic is changed. To provide some context, in 10, Rie is complimented for looking after her boyfriend, however, she ignores this compliment and says something unrelated (the fact that he often does not look after himself and relies on her, cannot continue). These three types of shifts accounted for a large portion of evading strategies (32% of all compliment responses out of a total of 51.5% for evasions). Requesting reassurance of a compliment's accuracy was also found to be rather frequent (14%).

There are some strategies that are particular to the Japanese data even though they were infrequently detected. The Japanese speakers sometimes only laughed to a compliment instead of saying anything at all (7%). Similarly, recognition sounds such as "A:~" were found to take recognizable turns (3%). Finally, I found one case of repeating the same compliment utterance as a response, a strategy which has not been discussed in previous studies. In fact, paralinguistic cues of laughter and recognition sounds and the repetition of the compliment have, as far as I am aware, rarely been reported in the past literature. I believe that they are also strategies that Japanese speakers may consider very useful – not overtly accepting or rejecting compliments given, yet somehow showing some kind of recognition to the uttered compliments, or put differently, showing their participation in the exchange.

#### 7.4.4 Combining response strategies in Japanese

Some previous studies have suggested that combining different strategies is another important strategy to be considered in Japanese (Kim 2006; Terao 1996). In the study by Kim (2006) this was the most frequently detected strategy among Japanese university students. However in my data, only three cases of this kind were found. Table 7.6 illustrates these three strategies.

Table 7.6 Combination type of strategies in Japanese compliment responses

D. Combination	Compliments	Responses		
16. Agreement + shift credit	<i>Miyazaki ii ime-zi aru kara ii zya nai desu ka.</i> "Miyazaki has good impressions, so that's good"	<i>Maane, Higasi san no okage.</i> "Yes, that's thanks to Mr. Higashi"	1	0.5
17. Reassurance + downgrade	<i>Sugoi kikiyasukatta desu.</i> "(your English) was very easy to listen to"	<i>Honto:? Demo sore wa nihongo eigo dakara dayo.</i> "Really? But that's because my English is Japanese English"	1	0.5
18. Question accuracy + disagreement	<i>Sugoi hito nan desu yo.</i> "She is an amazing person"	<i>Nande? Okasiku nai? Sonna koto nai yo.</i> "Why? Isn't it wrong? I am not amazing"	1	0.5
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>1.5</b>

First, there was a case where the recipient agreed with the content of the compliment first and then shifted the credit to the person who possibly had something to do with it. The recipient implemented the acceptance strategy and the evasion strategy in the same turn.

Second, the recipient asked for reassurance and then downgraded the compliment given. In the above case, she says "*honto: (really)?*" to start with, but she does not wait for a reassurance response from the complimenter

before she downgrades the content: her English was easy to listen to, not because she is good at speaking English, but because her English is Japanese accented English (i.e. not native-like English).

In both the first and second cases, the evasion strategy seems to work as a cushion for accepting compliments. Instead of directly accepting compliments, by combining the acceptance strategy with the evading strategy, they might be able to satisfy both the agreement and modesty maxims.

In the third example, the recipient combined two sub-strategies. In this case, she questioned the accuracy of the compliment first and then rejected it within one turn.

#### **7.4.5 Refusing to deal with compliments?**

Overall, what do these results tell us in the end? The fact that evading is the most preferred strategy among the young Japanese and also the fact that as much as 160 out of 369 compliments did not receive responses might suggest the underlying system of interactional strategies in Japanese compliment responses.

First, it might suggest that accepting and rejecting compliments are two highly constrained strategies for the Japanese. This seemed especially true for the rejecting strategy: the Japanese exploited this strategy to a small extent (only 12%). If the highly important maxims of agreement and modesty were to be violated by accepting or rejecting compliments, the Japanese speakers might be refusing to do these two, hence end up evading

compliments. Silence, for example, might be also one way of avoiding the interactional dilemma.

Second, let us recall that within this community, in fact more than 40% of the compliments did not receive verbally recognisable responses at all. Within the rest of the data (i.e., the set of 209 compliments with responses), more than 50% of the compliments were somehow evaded - in other words, these responses proved difficult to interpret either as acceptance nor rejection. Following Holmes' (1995) framework, I have been using the term "evasion", but, perhaps this type of strategy might be better understood as 'avoiding either accepting or rejecting compliments'.

Finally, if we were to assume that the underlying system of dealing with compliments in the past was to reject them (as the conventional and stereotypical views about Japanese culture propose), then we might be facing a potential change in progress among young generations. The norm of rejecting compliments has come to be too constrained for some sociolinguistic reasons, especially within young generations, and hence the speakers have started to evade compliments altogether. To confirm this change, however, further research of at least apparent time data (comparisons of compliments among older generations) needs to be pursued (cf. Chen and Yang 2010).

## **7.5 Multivariate analysis on compliment responses in Japanese**

As has been pointed out (cf. Holmes 1995), it is a natural intuition to think that responses to compliments may be constrained by the properties of the compliment itself. A number of factors might influence this process.

Compliments about certain topics given from certain types of people in certain contexts might determine the likelihood of whether these compliments are more prone to be accepted or rejected.

In this section, I explore this idea by conducting a multivariate analysis. Given a number of factors that might constrain the distribution of compliments, I am interested in investigating whether some factors favour certain kinds of response over others. Through multivariate analysis on the responses of compliments in Japanese, I attempt to answer the following question: are some types of compliments more likely to be accepted/rejected/evaded/non-responded than other types of compliments?

Taking these four levels of compliment responses as discussed above (acceptance/rejection/evasion/non-response) as the dependent variable, I ran multiple regression tests in Rbrul (Johnson 2009). I excluded the 'combination' response type for this analysis, as only three cases of combinations were found in the data set, and was therefore so infrequent that it was more likely to skew the results. As for the independent variables, the same variables as discussed in Chapter 6 are considered. Here, I further add gender of the speakers as an independent variable. For convenience, I repeat these variables (six social and three linguistic) below.



### **Social/interactional factors:**

1. Style

(2 levels: sociolinguistic interviews/lunchtime recordings)

2. Status

(3 levels: between status equals/ from *senpai* to *kohai*/ from *kohai* to *senpai*)

3. Topics of compliments

(5 levels: Possessions/ Appearance/ Ability and/or  
Performance/ Extension of self/ Personality)

4. (In)directness

(2 levels: direct/indirect compliments)

5. Gender of speakers

(2 levels: female/male)

6. Gender of addressees

(2 levels: female/male)

### **Linguistic factors:**

7. Syntactic structure

(3 levels: minimal/complex/complex plus)

8. Use of boosters

(2 levels: with/without boosters)

9. Use of hedges

(2 levels: with/without hedges)

In what follows, I consider how much more likely it is for compliments to be accepted/rejected/evaded/non-responded given these constraints. The distributional results of each factor are shown in Appendix 6. I will not spend much time on the summary statistics of the distributional table here. Rather, I will focus on the statistically significant factors for each response type that emerged from the Rbrul analysis.

### **7.5.1 Accepting compliments in Japanese**

Firstly, I consider the acceptance type of compliment response. As I mentioned above, I ran multiple regression tests in Rbrul taking acceptance type as an application value against all the other three (rejection/evasion/non-response). Hence the question that I am asking here is: how much more likely is it for a compliment to be accepted given other social and linguistic constraints on the compliment? Table 7.7 below shows the result of this analysis.

Table 7.7 Multivariate analysis of the contribution of factors selected as significant to the probability of compliments being accepted

Input probability		0.201	
Log Likelihood		-176.2965	
Total N		366	
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor weight</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Status (probability=0.0113)			
High to Low	0.60	15	54
Low to High	0.53	24	88
Equals	0.37	61	224
Range	23		
Gender of addressees (probability=0.00841)			
Female	0.61	69	252
Male	0.40	31	114
Range	21		

\*Non-significant factors: style, topics of compliments, (in)directness, gender of speakers, syntactic structure, boosters, hedges

Only two factors out of the nine considered came up as significant factors favouring a compliment to be accepted. *Kohai* speakers tend to accept compliments from *senpai* (factor weight = 0.60) and also *senpai* speakers tend to accept compliments from *kohai*, even though this is a very weak effect (factor weight = 0.53). To put differently, when there is a difference in status, compliments are more likely to be accepted. Furthermore, compliments are significantly more likely to be accepted by female recipients than male counterparts – that is, women accept compliments more than men when compliments are paid to them.

### 7.5.2 Rejecting compliments in Japanese

Next, I consider how much likely it is for a compliment to be rejected when certain factors are considered. Table 7.8 shows the results.

Table 7.8 Multivariate analysis of the contribution of factors selected as significant to the probability of compliments being rejected

Input probability		0.076	
Log Likelihood		-84.4405	
Total N		366	
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor weight</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Status (Probability= 0.00897)			
High to Low	0.62	15	54
Low to High	0.60	24	88
Equals	0.29	61	224
Range		33	
Boosters (Probability= 0.0421)			
Yes	0.61	49	181
No	0.39	51	185
Range		22	

\*Non-significant factors: style, topics of compliments, (in)directness, gender of speakers/ addressees, syntactic structure, hedges

For rejection type of compliment responses as well, status turned out to be a significant factor – the  $p$ -value of significance for status was 0.0089. When there is a difference in status, compliments are significantly more likely to be rejected. Especially, *kohai* speakers favour rejecting compliments from *senpai* speakers (factor weight = 0.62). Along with the result for acceptance type, as discussed above, it seems that when there is a difference in status between speakers, compliments are more likely to go in the direction of being either accepted and/or rejected. In other words, compliments between different status speakers are prone to be acknowledged in either of these two directions.

Furthermore, the result shows that boosted compliments favour a rejection response (factor weight = 0.61) although the  $p$ -value for this variable indicates that this is a small effect ( $p = 0.042$ ). This intuitively makes sense if we assume that there is more pressure on the recipients to follow the

modesty maxim (i.e. to reject compliments) when the illocutionary force of a compliment is reinforced with a booster.

### 7.5.3 Evading compliments in Japanese

As for the most preferred response type – evading compliments – only one factor turned out to be significant. Moreover, the *p*-value for significance in this test was 0.048 – just below 0.05, indicating a small effect. Consider Table 7.9 below.

Table 7.9 Multivariate analysis of the contribution of factors selected as significant to the probability of compliments being evaded

Input probability		0.269	
Log Likelihood		-218.119	
Total N		366	
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor weight</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Status (probability=0.0481)			
Equals	0.57	61	224
High to Low	0.53	15	54
Low to High	0.40	24	88
Range		17	

\*Non-significant factors: style, topics of compliments, (in)directness, gender of speakers/ addressees, syntactic structure, boosters, hedges

Between speakers of equal status, the speakers slightly favour evading compliments (factor weight = 0.57). As we have seen above, when status difference exists, compliments are more likely to be either accepted or rejected. This adds up to the result here, that when compliments are exchanged between status equals, speakers are more likely to evade compliments.

#### 7.5.4 Non-response to compliments in Japanese

Finally, when the Japanese speakers did not respond to compliments, there were a few factors that significantly constrained this pattern.<sup>25</sup> Though the effects are not too large, it seems that this non-response pattern was the most constrained since as many as three factor groups came up as significant contributing factors for compliments to be ignored. Table 7.10 illustrates this result.

Table 7.10 Multivariate analysis of the contribution of factors selected as significant to the probability of compliments being not responded

Input probability		0.438	
Log likelihood		-242.1885	
Total N		366	
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor weight</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Status			
Equals	0.58	48	224
Low to High	0.54	40	88
High to Low	0.39	32	54
Range	19		
Gender of addressees			
Male	0.57	51	114
Female	0.43	41	252
Range	14		
Syntactic structure			
Complex	0.55	52	68
Minimal	0.54	50	127
Complex plus	0.41	36	171
Range	14		

\*Non-significant factors: style, topics of compliments, (in)directness, gender of speakers, boosters, hedges

Three factor groups showed up as significant: status, gender of recipient and syntactic pattern. This result suggests that between speakers of equal status, it is more likely for a compliment not to be responded (factor weight=0.58)

<sup>25</sup> This run showed step-up and step-down mismatch. I chose the step-down model for the discussion here since the log likelihood suggested a better model for the step-down (LL = -242.18) than the step-up model (LL = -247.11).

and also *senpai* speakers slightly more favour ignoring compliments from *kohai* speakers (factor weight = 0.54). Also, male recipients favour ignoring compliments more than women (factor weight = 0.57). Finally, compliments with syntactically more simple patterns tend not to receive responses (complex pattern factor weight = 0.55, minimal pattern factor weight = 0.54).

### 7.5.5 Importance of status difference among the university students

Through the multivariate analysis, at least one point became clear about the way in which responses are made to compliments within this community. Across the four multivariate analyses that I conducted above, status was a significant factor throughout. As we have seen in Chapter 6, it seems that the culture-specific notion of *senpai-kohai* status plays a key role in shaping how compliments are treated and responded to among the young Japanese speakers. When compliments are exchanged between speakers of the same status, these compliments tend to be evaded or ignored, whereas when there is a difference in status between speakers, compliments tend to be either accepted or rejected. This result of multivariate analysis on compliment responses also confirms what I argued in Chapter 6, that this particular status relationship operates in a highly salient way among these Japanese university students who would be otherwise considered “equals” in other societies.

### 7.5.6 Reanalysis

Lastly, I conducted a multivariate analysis on only the cases where compliments obtained responses. It may be expected there might be differences in quality between compliments which get a response of any kind and, not those which do not get a response at all. To do this, I excluded the non-responded variants from the analysis and only considered the three types of responses (accept/reject/evade) as the dependent variable. The table below shows the overall picture of these three analyses.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Please refer to Appendix 7, 8 and 9 for the comprehensive lists of each run.



Table 7.11 Multivariate analysis of the contribution of factors selected as significant to the probability of compliment responses (excluding non-responded variants)

Factor groups	Factor weight	%	N
<b>Accept</b>			
Input probability	0.027		
Log Likelihood	-132.44		
Gender of addressees ( $p=0.0419$ )			
Female	0.59	73	150
Male	0.41	27	56
Range	18		
<b>Reject</b>			
Input probability	0.065		
Log Likelihood	-72.58		
Status ( $p=0.0283$ )			
Low to High	0.63	26	53
High to Low	0.55	18	37
Equals	0.32	56	116
Range	31		
<b>Evade</b>			
Input probability	0.135		
Log Likelihood	-131.68		
Status ( $p=0.000292$ )			
Equals	0.69	56	116
High to Low	0.41	26	37
Low to High	0.39	18	53
Range	30		
Gender of addressees ( $p= 0.0177$ )			
Male	0.64	27	56
Female	0.47	73	150
Range	17		

\*Note: Total sample N=206

In the case of accepting and rejecting compliments, this reanalysis eliminated some factor groups that showed smaller effects in the first analysis. The factor groups of status (which showed  $p$ -value = 0.011 in the first analysis of accepting compliments) and boosters (which showed  $p$ -value = 0.042 in the first analysis of rejecting compliments) did not show up as significant contributions this time. In addition, the remaining factors in each case decreased the size of effects in the reanalysis. The  $p$ -value for the gender of

addressees in the case of accepting compliments dropped from 0.0084 to 0.042 (the range also decreased in size from 21 to 18); the  $p$ -value for status in rejecting compliments dropped from 0.009 to 0.028 (the range dropped from 33 to 31). On the other hand, the case of evading compliments gained stronger and more constrained results. The probability for status increased from 0.048 to 0.00029 (the range went from 17 to 30). And another factor group, gender of addressees, came up as a significant factor ( $p = 0.0177$ , range = 17).

This reanalysis therefore provides the insight that there are some differences in variability when we consider cases of getting any kind of responses compared to cases which receive no responses. When only responses are considered, the results of this reanalysis show that status still seems to be a highly salient constraint for cases of both rejecting and evading compliments. The size of this effect in both cases is shown to be fairly large (both ranges over 30). Additionally, it seems that the gender of recipients seems to be another constraint to consider, as this appears as a significant contribution in accepting and evading compliments (though the size of effect is rather small; range 18 for acceptance and 17 for evasion).

## **7.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have reviewed some key concepts and research relating to the study of compliment responses. I touched upon studies of compliment responses in various contexts to set out a framework for the current study. I then showed what interactional strategies were found in my data set when Japanese university students responded to compliments. I

showed that first of all, not all compliments elicited compliment responses. In fact, out of the 369 compliment utterances investigated, only 209 compliments elicited responses. These 209 compliment responses were then categorised into four major response types: acceptance, rejection, evading and combination of these strategies. It turns out that evading was the most preferred pattern among young Japanese (51% of the time). Finally, to investigate what constrains the way compliments were responded to, I conducted multivariate analysis. The results revealed that the culture-specific notion of status, *senpai-kohai* relations, is the most salient and significant factor in how compliments are treated within this community.

The next chapter looks at one lexical variable (*sugoi*) in particular – one of the linguistic devices (boosters) also analysed in this chapter, since this appears very frequently in Japanese compliments. I will also investigate the indexicality and stance of this variable within the speech community.

## Chapter 8. The pragmatic multi-functionality and indexicality of *Sugoi* and *Sugee*

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the multiple pragmatic functions and indexicality of the linguistically positive evaluative markers *sugoi* and *sugee* that are often detected in complimenting among young Japanese. The use of these variants in Japanese compliments is found to be very frequent and salient in my data. There are 79 compliments marked with the variants *sugoi/sugee*, out of 369 compliment utterances in total collected for the current study. This accounts for more than 20% of the entire data set, indicating that the use of *sugoi/sugee* in Japanese complimenting behaviour is non-trivial – at least among the young Japanese speakers that I surveyed.

In what follows, I first touch on key issues regarding indexicality, which helps to set out a structural frame for this chapter. I then introduce the descriptive meanings and grammatical functions of these positive evaluative words, *sugoi/sugee*, and then investigate how these variants perform multiple pragmatic functions in the act of complimenting. I then move on to show who uses these variants in the corpus and finally, I consider speakers' attitudes towards these variants – the indexicality of these variants understood by young adults in the speech act of complimenting.

### 8.2 On “indexicality”

It seems obvious to say that linguistic forms have meanings. Some

linguists have been interested in figuring out how certain linguistic forms index meanings and what kind of meanings they are. This relationship between linguistic forms and meanings has been discussed widely (Ochs 1992; Silverstein 1976, 2003). Ochs (1992) argues that meanings are directly and indirectly indexed through linguistic structures. Direct indexing refers to referential/literal meaning – semantic meanings that are attached to and inherent to linguistic forms. Indirect indexing refers to social meanings that are non-exclusively, creatively and temporally transcendentally created with linguistic variables. This kind of indexing in particular is the kind that interests sociolinguists and it has been a challenge to pursue what it is that linguistic forms index at the social level and how this happens (Johnstone & Kiesling 2008; Silverstein 2003). These social meanings are fluidly, interactionally and constantly created through use and hence they always have the potential to change. Language, including linguistic forms and the social meanings attached, is the moving and driving force of its own variation and change. Furthermore, language is something that speakers use, consciously and subconsciously, to pragmatically do their day to day interactional work, hence language activity itself is closely intertwined with identity construction for individual speakers (Bucholtz 2009; Eckert 2008; Moor & Podesva 2009; Snell 2010). Although Ochs (1992) was interested in the relationship between the construction of gender and language use, her theory is extremely useful in understanding identity construction through language use in general.

Knowledge of how language relates to gender is not a catalogue of correlations between particular linguistic forms and sex of speakers, referents, addressees, and the like. Rather, such knowledge entails tacit understanding of (1) how particular linguistic forms can be used to perform particular pragmatic work (such as conveying stance and social action) and (2) norms, preferences, and expectations regarding the distribution of this work *vis-à-vis* particular social identities of speakers, referents, and addressees.

(Ochs 1992:342)

This chapter investigates one linguistic form that is deeply embedded into the act of complimenting both at the levels of referential and social meaning.<sup>27</sup> The variable that I will be looking at in this chapter is *sugoi* and its phonologically reduced variant, *sugee*. Both of them share the same referential meanings and grammatical information (both function as adjectives and also, although less frequently as intensifiers). However, these two variants seem to carry socially different meanings. This is exactly the point I would like to explore as I go along in this chapter. To begin with, I will introduce the referential meanings of *sugoi/sugee*.

### 8.3 The referential meanings of *sugoi* and *sugee*

Before we start investigating what *sugoi* and *sugee* do in interaction, (and we shall see, these variants perform multiple functions), I shall here touch on their referential meanings, leaving the in-depth discussion of their roles at the level of social meaning until later in the chapter.

*Sugee* is a phonologically reduced variant of the standard form *sugoi*.

At the semantic level, there are no differences between these variants. In order to introduce the referential meanings of *sugoi*, I refer to *Kojien* (5<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Migdadi et al. (2010) also discusses that one linguistic form, *maašaallah* ('what God wishes'), performs multiple pragmatic functions in colloquial Jordanian Arabic, one of which is a compliment.

edition) – one of the most popular Japanese dictionaries in the country. There are five distinctive meanings for *sugoi* listed in *Kojien* (5<sup>th</sup> edition).

- 1) *Samuku tumetaku honemini kotaeru youni kanzirareru.*  
cold chill bone pain like feel.PAST  
“So cold and chilly that one can feel pain in the bones”
- 2) *Zotto suru hodo osorosii. Kimi ga warui.*  
creep do extent horrible. feeling NOM bad  
“Horrible that your flesh crawl. Bad feeling”
- 3) *Zotto suru hodo mono sabisii.*  
creep do extent thing lonely  
“So lonely that one feels terrified”
- 4) *Keiyō sigatai hodo subarasii.*  
express difficult extent wonderful  
“Amazing/ wonderful so that no words can describe it”
- 5) *Teido ga naminamide wa nai*  
extent NOM ordinary TOP NEG  
“Beyond the ordinary degree”  
e.g. “*sugoi benkyōka*” (a very hardworking person)

It is noticeable that there is a general distinction between the meanings of 1-3 and of 4-5. The meanings of 1-3 described above are negatively connotated while 4-5 are positively connotated. Regardless of these prescriptive potential meanings described above, young generation Japanese only choose to exploit the meanings of 4 or 5 in the speech act of complimenting.<sup>28</sup> Given that one of the primary functions of complimenting is to give positive evaluations to addressees, these last two positively connotated meanings serve this purpose very well. In other words, *sugoi* linguistically marks something extraordinary or amazing in the speech act of complimenting. *Sugoi* is an adjective as it appears in predicate positions. In

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<sup>28</sup> In the general use of *sugoi* in modern Japanese, even outside compliments, it is in fact difficult to find the meanings 1-3.

other instances, it proceeds and modifies the noun/ adjective/ adverbial phrases on which the term helps to put emphasis, functioning as an intensifier, similar to “very” in English. An example of each function – adjective and intensifier – is illustrated in the examples 8.1 and 8.2 below.

Example 8.1 *Sugoi* as an adjective

*Heta zya nai si sugoi yo.*  
 bad COP NEG and amazing SFP  
 “(Your Japanese or English) is not bad, it’s amazing.”

Example 8.2 *Sugoi* as an intensifier

*Ano toki no karami ga sugoi*  
 that time GEN interaction NOM very  
*omosirokatta yo.*  
 funny.PAST SFP  
 “That interaction was very funny.”

In the data set, not surprisingly, no example was found of the young speakers using *sugoi/sugee* with the meanings of 1, 2 or 3 described above in *Kojien*.

#### 8.4 Multiple pragmatic functionality of *sugoi/sugee*

In this section, I discuss the multiple pragmatic functions of the variants *sugoi/sugee*. All five of the functions observed in the data set will be discussed here – *sugoi/sugee* as linguistic forms to indicate 1) praise, 2)



surprise, 3) emphasis, 4) silence-filler and 5) mock impoliteness. For convenience and clarity, I only draw on examples of *sugoi* in this section, even though *sugee* can potentially carry out the same pragmatic functions.

First of all, the main and most frequently observed function of *sugoi* is to indicate speakers' praise for hearers in the context of complimenting. This could be effortlessly predicted following up the general positive meanings of *sugoi*: "something amazing, something beyond the ordinary" as described in *Kojien*. Because it carries a positive semantic load, this meaning can go hand in hand with the main function of complimenting: to make the addressee feel good.

The second main function of *sugoi* is to implicate surprise at the event or the utterance previously made in conversation. This meaning might have derived from the general referential meaning since one could be readily surprised at others' being "something beyond the ordinary".

The relatively minor functions of emphasis, silence-filler and mock impoliteness are also found in the data set. Although they do not account for a large portion of the data set, these three functions will also be illustrated with examples from the recordings in the following sections, as one of the fundamental goals of this chapter is to illustrate how a single linguistic form can carry out multiple pragmatic functions in naturally occurring interaction.

#### **8.4.1 *Sugoi* as a linguistic indicator for praise**

Firstly, as described above, the foremost function of the term is to indicate praise, as the literal meanings in the Japanese dictionary suggest. Let us consider the following example 8.3.

### Example 8.3 *Sugoi* as praise

Context: All four of the speakers are 4<sup>th</sup> year students. Mie is a female student who belongs to Professor Sibamoto's seminar. They are talking about this professor's seminar students practicing their presentation.

1	Takesi	m	<i>Kyou, teka, kyou, rensyuu suru no?.</i>	Will you practice (the presentation) today?
2	Mie	f	<i>Kyo:, u:n, go-zikanme owatte kara:, ano go-maru-nana de rensyuu.</i>	Yeah, we will practice at 570 after 5 <sup>th</sup> period today.
3	Yoriko	f	<i>He:.</i>	Heh.
4	Rie	f	<i>/3sec/ O: sugoi ne:, Sibamoto-zemi.</i>	<b>Sibamoto seminar students are amazing.</b>
5	Takesi	m	<i>E, ii na: sore.</i>	<b>That's good.</b>
6	Mie	f	<i>Kuru? &lt;laughing&gt;.</i>	Do you want to come?
7	Takesi	m	<i>E, kite ii no?.</i>	May I?
8	Mie	f	<i>A kurunda, hahaha (laugh).</i>	You really want to come, haha.

In line 1, Takesi asks whether if Mie and her seminar-students who belong to Sibamoto's seminar are practicing their thesis presentation. In line 2, Mie responds and gives the required information for Takesi: in fact, they are practicing after the 5<sup>th</sup> period in Room 570. This triggers an "appreciation sound" (cf. Golato 2005:29) "he:" in line 3 by Yoriko. In line 4, the use of *sugoi* and Rie's general tone seem to indicate that the speaker is sincerely praising Mie and Sibamoto's seminar students. Just before *sugoi* in line 4, there is admiration sound of "o:" reinforcing the function of praise in this context. This generates one more compliment from the third person Takesi in line 5. This type of compliment with the use of *sugoi* fits nicely into the felicity conditions that I discussed in Chapter 2:

1. Mie and her colleague students are practicing their thesis presentation.
2. Yoriko, Rie and Takesi think that this is admirable.
3. Yoriko, Rie and Takesi tell Mie that her (and her fellow colleagues') deed is admirable.
4. Yoriko, Rie and Takesi intend to make Mie feel good.

Furthermore, with respect to politeness theory, as some scholars have suggested, one of the main functions of complimenting is to attend to positive face wants (Brown & Levinson 1987). The predicate *sugoi* in this example clearly fulfils the main function of complimenting: it is a linguistic indicator expressing praise for some commendable action or event, thereby attending to positive face needs.

#### **8.4.2 *Sugoi* as a linguistic indicator for surprise**

As mentioned above, considering one of the primary referential meanings of *sugoi* was "something beyond ordinary" then *sugoi* can readily be extended to senses of indicating surprise – one could be amazed or surprised by something beyond ordinary. Consider the following example.

#### Example 8.4 *Sugoi* as surprise

Context: Both Akiko and Arata are 4<sup>th</sup> year female students. They are talking about their career plans after graduation.

1	Akiko	f	<i>Atasi, koko de hataraku yotei desu.</i>	I intend to work here.
2	Arata	f	<i>Doko doko?</i>	Where where?
3	Akiko	f	<i>Koko de.</i>	Here (at this university).
4	Arata	f	<i>Koko? [ ↑ ] (Akiko: hahaha), <b>sugo:i.</b></i>	Here? <b>Amazing.</b>
5	Akiko	f	<i>Atasi koko ga daiiti sibou nande.</i>	My first choice is (to work) here.

In line 1, Akiko sets out the direction of the conversational topic: future career after graduation. Arata is clearly intrigued by the utterance Akiko made and so asks a question to clarify the content of the proposition in line 2. When Arata finds out that Akiko wants to work at the administrative office of the university, which is apparently considered to be difficult to obtain, Arata puts rising intonation on the final segment *koko* ('here') implicating the tone of surprise, and *sugoi* right after confirms its function as an indicator of surprise with the prolonged vowel /o:/. This type of rising intonation followed by *sugoi* soon after is frequently observed in the data set. Also, there is a slight pause between *koko* with rising intonation and *sugoi*. Both of these factors indicate that Arata might have needed a moment to take in and understand the utterance, because of the possible surprise or shock.

#### 8.4.3 *Sugoi* as intensifier

The intensifier function of *sugoi* is a rather minor one. Since *sugoi* and *sugee* are not just adjectives but also adverbs, they can be used to reinforce and emphasise the force of the predicates. The following is a case in point.

Example 8.5 *Sugoi* as intensifier

Context: Interaction between two fourth year females. Yosiko is thanking Rie for the postcard that she received from Rie.

1	Yosiko	f	<i>Ne sugoi sa:, ano sa:, hagaki kimasita.</i>	Hey, the postcard came.
2	Rie	f	<i>N?.</i>	What?
3	Yosiko	f	<i>Hagaki ga ne: kita no:.</i>	The postcard came.
4	Rie	f	<i>A, a: &lt;laughing&gt;.</i>	Ah haha.
5	Yosiko	f	<i>Arigato:u.</i>	Thank you.
6	Yosiko	f	<i><b>Sugoi, nanka, go, go-teineini doumo: to omotte.</b></i>	<b>I thought it was like very polite.</b>
7	Rie	f	<i>Haha, ieie.</i>	No, not at all.

Here, as we have seen in Example 8.2 earlier, *sugoi* modifies the immediately following adverbial phrase, *go teineini* ('HON.prefix-polite'). *Sugoi* in line 6 emphasises the degree of *teineini* ('polite') and Yosiko even takes it to a further degree of politeness by using the honorific prefix *go*. In this sense, *sugoi* can be translated into "very" as in English. Another point to be raised in this case is that these types of appreciation compliments are very commonly found. In line 5, Yosiko thanks Rie for sending the postcard for her. Then in line 6, she goes on to say how she felt about Rie: she thought Rie was very polite for sending the post card. In general, it seems that the relationship between the speech act of complimenting and thanking is very closely intertwined. Doing something admirable or doing some favours can cause some type of benefit for the addressee (see also Chapter 5). In these cases, thanking as well as complimenting tend to co-occur (cf. Holmes 1995).

#### 8.4.4 *Sugoi* as silence-filler

There are some cases where *sugoi/sugee* might function as silence-fillers. This point was frequently raised in the playback interviews by the participants as well (see section 8.5 below). In the playback interviews, I asked participants what functions that they thought *sugoi/sugee* have in interaction, given that they so often use these variants. Let us consider the following example.

##### Example 8.6 *Sugoi* as silence-filler

Context: Both Maho and Takesi are 4<sup>th</sup> year students. Rie is in a relationship with a guy who is older and doesn't do much of his household work. Rie talks about how she had to take care of his place and how angry she was this particular day. Takesi thinks it is amazing of her to do so and also that she has a good character as a woman.

1	Maho	f	<i>Era:i.</i>	<b>Admirable.</b>
2	Takesi	m	<i>Sugoi yo ne: erai.</i>	<b>Amazing, admirable.</b>
3	Rie	f	<i>Mou mazi mukatuite ne: kyōu ira ira sinagara kita &lt;laughing&gt;.</i>	I was really irritated and I came to university irritated.
4	Takesi	m	<i>A: erai.</i>	<b>Admirable.</b>
5	Takesi	m	<i>Ahahaha&lt;laugh&gt;.</i>	Hahaha<laugh>.
6	Rie	f	<i>Arien.</i>	This has to stop.
7	Takesi	m	<i>Iya, ne, sugoi, souiu buki tte iu ka ne; hai...</i>	<b>But, see, that's like a weapon (which you can use to attract men).</b>

Throughout this interaction, a number of compliments were generated: in line 1 *erai* ('admirable'), in line 2 *sugoi* and *erai* ('amazing' and 'admirable') and in line 4 *erai* ('admirable'). These compliments are all addressed to Rie about her performance: how she has done housework for her boyfriend. Rie

does not acknowledge these compliments. In line 3, she simply explains how irritated she felt about having to do her boyfriend's housework. Even after the third compliment in line 4, she does not directly accept the compliment but instead, comments "This has to stop" in an ominous tone in line 6. Takeshi attempts to respond to this comment in line 7 with yet another compliment.

There are some keys to interpreting this *sugoi* as a silence-filler. Firstly, there are a lot of pauses in this utterance, in fact, after every word, indicating that he might be looking for what he can say to this poor girl. Secondly, this *sugoi* is inter-located between other silence-fillers such as *iya*, *ne*, and *souiu*. Even if we get rid of *iya*, *ne*, and *souiu* in line 7, the referential meaning of the entire sentence remains the same: "that's like a weapon (which you can use to attract men)." Therefore, it seems that the referential meaning of *sugoi* is bleached out and almost empty. Instead, it functions as a discourse marker, that is as a silence-filler. It might be possible to say that this is a shift from the canonical use of *sugoi*. My participants were also aware of the fact that they use these variants every so often, as reported in the playback interviews. One of the ideas that they frequently raised regarding *sugoi/sugee* is that these variants 'do not mean too much these days'. Some informants mentioned that *sugoi/sugee* is actually meaningless in some contexts. These comments seem to suggest a change in progress and that the speakers – especially young generations – might be aware of this potential change in progress. However, I do not have the real time data – or at least the apparent time data – to compare and confirm this trend.

#### 8.4.5 *Sugoi* as mock impoliteness

As the last example of *sugoi* functioning in an atypical way, I provide a case where the classically positive evaluative word *sugoi* can be used as a conversational strategy to mock addressees' face for interactional purposes – in this case, fostering solidarity between the speakers. At first glance, the utterance seems to be a typical compliment, i.e. addressing the addressee's face needs by giving positive evaluations, however, a closer reading of the contextual keys can give rise to a different interpretation of its illocutionary force. Golato (2005) also discusses these non-prototype compliments in her German data. She argues that "it is the placement of a potential compliment turn that is the crucial feature determining whether or not an utterance comes across as a compliment, or as some other (face-threatening) action" (2005:127).

Culpeper's (1996) and Leech's (1983) framework of mock impoliteness and the banter principle help us better understand this type of compliment. Culpeper suggests that "mock impoliteness, or banter, is impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence" (1996:352). Hence, it is important to notice that the face threat is not intended in mock impoliteness. Leech's (1983) framework of the banter principle also suggests a similar point as in the following: "in order to show solidarity with *h* [the hearer], say something which is (i) obviously untrue and (ii) obviously impolite to *h*" (1983:144). Because what the speaker says is clearly untrue and impolite, this generates a conversational implicature that the opposite is meant, relying on speakers' shared norms. Furthermore, Culpeper (1996) and Leech (1983) both agree that banter and mock



impoliteness most frequently occur between speakers of the same status and indicates that “the more intimate a relationship, the less necessary and important politeness is” (Culpeper 1996:352).

In the case of *sugoi/sugee* also, we will see that the contexts in which this variant is used are essential to retrieving accurately the illocutionary force of the utterance as a compliment. The next example illustrates this point.

Example 8.7 *Sugoi* as mock impoliteness

Context: Both Takesi and Gengoro are 4<sup>th</sup> year male students. This interaction took place as soon as Gengoro comes into the common room. Gengoro handed in his assignment late this morning and Takesi was informed of this by another mutual friend before this interaction.

1	Takesi	m	<i>Sugoi ne:, nanka syatyou-syukkin rasii ne, Gengoro-kun.</i>	<b>Amazing, I heard that you came in late like a boss, Gengoro.</b>
2	Gengoro	m	<i>Nante, nante, nante?.</i>	What what what?
3	Takesi	m	<i>Touzenno youni motte itta rasii ne:.</i>	You handed (the assignment) in late like it's normal.
4	Gengoro	m	<i>Tigau...tigau.</i>	No no it's not like that.

*Syatyou-syukkin* (literally translated as ‘boss-commute’) in line 1, is a phrase in Japanese that describes the high status of powerful bosses at workplaces. It indicates that these bosses are so powerful that they can come into work much later than the rest of the employees. This phrase is often used sarcastically against people who are actually not the ones with power, and yet seem to be acting like them. In this case, Gengoro is, in fact, merely a student and also a close friend to Takesi. Takesi is teasing Gengoro that he handed in his assignment late – taking the kind of liberties with deadlines

and schedules that a boss would. This interpretation fits well with Leech's framework of banter principle: "in order to show solidarity with *h*, say something which is (i) obviously untrue and (ii) obviously impolite to *h*" (1983:144).

This type of compliment, exploiting a mock impoliteness strategy, may not be canonical. It looks like a compliment at the sentence level on the surface, however, taken into consideration at the larger discourse level, it reveals a deeper level of face work – mocking the addressee's face and the interactional function – thereby fostering solidarity between the participants.

## 8.5 On stance and style

In the recent sociolinguistic literature, the notions of stance and style have become increasingly important as sociolinguists have started to think about how identity construction is done through language (Bucholtz 1999, 2009; Eckert 1989, 2000; Johnstone 2009; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Ochs 1992). According to Johnstone, "stance is generally understood to have to do with the methods, linguistic and other, by which interactants create and signal relationships with the propositions they utter and with the people they interact with" (2009:31). Stance, therefore, is a relational, interactional and fluid concept. In speakers' taking stance, they index their attitudes towards propositions that they make in discourse. Hence, (un)certainty, (un)friendliness, masculinity / femininity and the like are all part of stance-taking. In his work on fraternity men at a Virginia college, Kiesling (1998) shows that these fraternity men strategically and interactionally employ the (ING) variable to index their stances, signaling alignment with particular

ideologies that are important as a member of the fraternity. This stance is what Kiesling (2004) later on calls a “stance of cool solidarity” (2004:282).

Once these stances get repeatedly used among certain group members of the community, they become “styles” that are associated with certain situations or social groups and identities. The well-known work by Eckert (1989, 2000) explores this process: high school students in Detroit adopt not only their way of dressing, and their choice of school activities according to their membership in different communities of practice, but also certain variants of vowels to index their social identities and the ideologies of their social groups. All of these social moves and/or activities eventually come to be associated with “styles” known as “jock” or “burnout”. Similarly, Bucholtz argues that the Spanish slang term “güey” (‘dude’ in English) gets repeatedly used among Mexican American youth through multiple interactional functions and becomes “a marker both of interactional alignment and of a particular gendered style among Mexican American youth (2009:147).

In the work that I show in the following section, I attempt to show how the young Japanese understand interactional stance-taking through the variants of *sugoi/sugee*. Based on the ethnographic research that I have done, drawing mainly on the playback interviews (see Chapter 3), I discuss various stances associated with these variants as my participants talk about them in the interviews. In the act of complimenting, this variable has come to be repeatedly used among the Japanese. I suggest that the multi-functionality of this variable at the level of pragmatics (as we have seen above) and stance-taking (as we will see below) enables these speakers to mark their style as

that of young generation Japanese.

## 8.6 The variants *sugoi* and *sugee*

With regards to the variant *sugee*, as I mentioned above, this is a phonologically reduced form of the standard form *sugoi*. Although the referential meanings are essentially the same for these two variants, the social meanings that come with the variants can be differentiated. According to Ide (1992), these phonologically reduced variants have derogatory connotations, and they are typical of men’s vocabulary and considered vulgar expressions. Furthermore, in her words, these vulgar expressions are ‘not allowed’ in women’s repertoire of morphemes and lexical items (1992:125). In fact, it has been claimed that Japanese female speakers are not encouraged to use these male-preferred forms in their talk. In the literature on Japanese language and gender, Japanese women’s language has been emphasised as an important part of gender identity construction that the society expects Japanese women to conduct (Jugaku 1979; Nakamura 2001; Okamoto & Sato 1992). However, my data contradicts this trend: men as well as women use the variant *sugee* in the context of complimenting. Table 8.1 illustrates this result.

Table 8.1 Tokens of *sugoi/sugee* across gender

Gender of speakers/ tokens	Female speakers	Male speakers	Total
<i>Sugoi</i>	49 (20.6%)	17 (13%)	66
<i>Sugee</i>	8 (3.4%)	5 (3.8%)	13
Total tokens of compliments	238 (100%)	131 (100%)	369

Overall, women used the variant *sugoi* more frequently than men: women used the *sugoi* variant 20% of the time when they gave compliments while men did so 13% of the time. Although the total tokens of the *sugee* variant are small, both genders use this variant at approximately the same rate: women used *sugee* 3.4% while men used it 3.8% of the time. Considering that women are supposedly 'not allowed' to exploit this variant at all in the first place (Ide 1992), this result seems striking.

In order to investigate why young Japanese females are using this variant, and to explore what social meanings and stances these variants carry, especially in the context of complimenting, I revisit the data from the playback interviews.

For the playback interviews, I interviewed 41 university students in total, some of whom were interviewed for the second time as well as at the first time recording conducted 6 months previously. The purpose of playback interviews was to access native speakers' perception of certain complimenting-like behaviour (see Chapter 3 for more discussion of the playback interviews). I extracted 10 instances of complimenting behaviour as sound files from the first recordings. I provided a transcription for the participants to follow as they listened to the sound files. Participants were asked to listen to the extracts first with the transcription and make comments about the underlined segments – i.e. the segments that I considered to be complimenting-like behaviour, but in which there was something unclear or unusual about these interactions. One of the extracts indeed included an interaction where girls used *sugee*, shown below as Example 8.8.

Example 8.8 Excerpt of *sugoi/sugee* in interaction used in the playback interview

Context: Except the researcher (R), all of the three speakers (Saki, Motoko and Takeo) are 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. They are talking about what first person pronoun forms they use towards people of higher status.

1	R	f	<i>Tatoeba zyaa, sore wa tomodati no aida to site, meue no hito toka niwa, nante iimasu?.</i>	Okay then, that's between your friends, how about when talking to someone higher in status?
2	R	f	<i>Zibun no koto iu toki wa, meue no hito ni hanasite iru toki.</i>	When you refer to yourself, talking to someone higher.
3	Saki	f	<i>"Watasi wa".</i>	"Watasi (female-preferred first person pronoun) wa"
4	Motoko	f	<i>U:n, "watasi wa".</i>	Right, "watasi wa".
5	R	f	<i>"Wa" "watasi wa" desyo? "wa".</i>	Wa, isn't it? As in "watasi."
6	Motoko	f	<i>"Wa".</i>	"Wa".
7	Saki	f	<i>/3sec/ "Boku wa" tte iun zya nai?.</i>	Don't you say "boku (male-preferred first person pronoun)"?
8	Takeo	m	<i>A, souiu toki ni, &lt;"zibun wa" ga&gt;{&lt;} detari suru kamo siremasen.</i>	Ah I think I use "zibun (male-preferred first person pronoun)?" in these cases.
9	Motoko	f	<i>&lt;"boku wa" tte iu?&gt;{&gt;}.</i>	Do you use "boku"?
10	Motoko	f	<i>A: <b>sugee.</b></i>	<b>Ah, amazing.</b>
11	Saki	f	<i><b>Sugee.</b></i>	<b>Amazing.</b>
12	Takeo	m	<i>"Boku wa" wa tabun tukai masu.</i>	I use "boku" sometimes.
13	Motoko	f	<i>"Boku wa" wo tsukau to?.</i>	Do you use "boku"?
14	Takeo	m	<i>Ue dattara... (R:a:).</i>	If I'm talking to someone higher.
15	Motoko	f	<i><b>Sugee.</b></i>	<b>Amazing.</b>
16	Takeo	m	<i>"Watasi"..."watasi" mo tsukau kana.</i>	I might use "watasi"..."watasi".

After they listened to this excerpt with transcription in their hands, informants came up with all sorts of comments and evaluations in regard to this use of *sugee* by young females. Through these comments, I could observe some recurrent ideas as to what social meanings and/or stances this variant indexes. As far as the stance-taking of this variant *sugee* is concerned, the use

of this variant seems to be associated with masculine speech, powerfulness, informality and ‘meaninglessness’. I will consider these social meanings and stances that come with this variant as in the following.

### 8.7 Stance-taking uses of *sugee*

First of all, as has been widely discussed in the past (e.g. Ide 1992), there seems to be a relatively strong association between users of *sugee* and masculine speech. Male participants, especially, showed more obvious attitudes to this point than the females in the interviews. The following comments were all extracted from male participants when they were asked to give reasons why they thought the girls in the recording used the *sugee* variant.

Example 8.9 Nori, male, 20

<i>Otoko</i>	<i>rasii</i>	<i>onna</i>	<i>dakara.</i>
man	like	woman	because

“Because she is a man-like girl”

Example 8.10 Katu, male, 19

<i>Onna</i>	<i>rasiku</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>nai</i>	<i>yo</i>	<i>ne.</i>
woman	like	TOP	NEG	SPF	SFP

“She is not feminine like”

Example 8.11 Itiro, male, 20

*Kankyou da to omoimasu.*  
environment COP Q think.POL

*Mawarini otoko ga ooin zya nai desu ka.*  
surrounding man TOP many COP NEG POL QM  
“I think it’s the environment. I bet she is surrounded by a lot of boys”

Example 8.12 Ryoya, male, 19

*Sugee wa sugoi yori otokoppoi.*  
sugee TOP sugoi than manly  
“*Sugee* is more manly than *sugoi*”

As we can see in Example 8.12, there is a direct comment on a clear evaluation of *sugee* as more typical of projecting a masculine persona compared to *sugoi*. Hence, as we can observe through these overt comments especially from male participants, although in reality – as I have shown the result in Table 8.1 above – females use this variant, *sugee* still indexes the stance of masculine speech especially when used by female speakers. Put differently, the girls’ atypical use of male-preferred form *sugee* might even suggest that the girls are orienting to unconventional personae.

Second, this variant seems to presuppose some power relation between speakers in the interaction. The following comments illustrate this point.



Example 8.13 Eizi, male 21

*Zyoge kankei desu.*

high-low relation COP

*Takeo no hou ga kono hutari yori sitani imasu yo.*

Takeo GEN comparisonNOM this two than down exist SFP

“It’s the status high and low relationship thing.

The boy is in the lower status than these girls.”

Example 8.14 Hanako, female, 20

*Sensei ni wa sugee to wa ie nai desu kedo.*

teacher to TOP sugee Q TOP say NEG COP but

“I wouldn’t be able to use *sugae* to *sensei*.”

Example 8.13 explains clearly who is provided to hold higher status or more power – the two girls who used *sugae* – and who is in the lower status in relation – the boy who was addressed with *sugae*. Example 8.14 orients to another important power relationship in Japanese society. In other words, social norms refrain students from using this variant *sugae* to higher status speakers such as *sensei* (‘teachers/professors’). The second stance that I suggest the *sugae* variant indexes therefore is the powerfulness of the *sugae* user in relation to the addressee.

Thirdly, as the point closely related to the stance of powerfulness, this variant indexes some form of informal stance in the interaction. The following comments support this point.

Example 8.15 Kyoiti, male, 19

*Dou gakunen de kudaketa kanzi.*

same year and relax feeling

“Between the same grade, they feel relaxed.”

Example 8.16 Mako, female, 21

*Sitasikute ki wo tukawa nai aite, kotoba tukai*

intimate care OM use NEG partner language use

*ni ki wo tukawa nakute ii aite ni tukau.*

OM care OM use NEG good partner OM use

“I would use it to someone intimate that I don’t have to think too much about which (linguistic) form to use.”

The second comment, shown in Example 8.16, especially explains just how much the Japanese are aware of different forms of language to be exploited in order to linguistically and interactionally reflect their social relations to the addressee. Mako frames an interesting relationship between language use, linguistic form and social relations. Depending on our social relationships with whomever we are talking to, we modify our utterances and choose specific linguistic forms. Social relations and social distance are one of the key constraints for speakers to determine which linguistic form to use. As we have seen in Chapter 6 and 7, the salience of social status was found to be significant within this community of university students. Evidently, as

indicated through these comments from the Japanese speakers, the variant *sugee* seems to index the stance of informality.

Finally and interestingly, what I often heard in the interviews was that the variant *sugee* actually does not have any (social) meaning. Consider the following comments from the interviews:

Example 8.17 Syotaro, male, 21

*Sugoi to omotte nai to omou.*

sugoi Q think NEG Q think

“I don’t think (she) really thinks it’s amazing.”

Example 8.18 Ayumi, female, 21

*Demo zettai kore hukai imi ga atte no*

but definitely this profound meaning NOM have GEN

*sugee zya nai yo ne.*

sugee COP NEG SFP SFP

“This is definitely not THE *sugee* that has profound meanings.”

Example 8.19 Noriko, female, 21

*Sugoi tte itte mo ironna imi de tukawareru kara.*

sugoi Q say even various meanings by use.PASSIVE because

*Aiduti no issyu mitaina.*

nodding GEN kind like

“Because *sugoi* has a range of meanings. It’s like a type of nodding.”

It is apparent from these comments above that the informants are aware of the literal meaning of *sugee*: amazing (as seen in Example 8.17). However, they further inform that *sugee* has “a range of meanings” and also functions as “a type of nodding” (Example 8.19). As shown in section 8.4.4 above, I noted that *sugoi/sugee* can also function as a silence-filler. With this in mind, it might be plausible to think that the variant *sugee* indexes the stance of supportive listening in interaction. It does not mean much in a literal sense, however it works as a discourse marker and/or interactional marker to indicate that the speaker is listening and participating in the conversation. From these comments, it seems that the young Japanese are aware of this newly created discourse function as they seem to orient to the fact that the original semantics of *sugoi/sugee* – literally ‘amazing’ – are virtually bleached in some kinds of interaction.

Overall, it might be the case that these variants are at some stage of change in meaning making and functions, given that there seems to be a shift in meanings/functions at the participants’ recognisable level from the literal meanings. One might even consider the possibility that this variable is going through some form of grammaticalization. To confirm this change, however, further research with historical data (at least apparent time data) will need to be conducted.

## 8.8 Indexicality of *sugoi* and *sugee* in the community of practice

To summarise what we have seen so far with regards to the variants *sugoi* and *sugee*, I consider the indexicality of these variants. Drawing on Ochs's (1992) indexical model, the following figures illustrate the indexical work that *sugoi* and *sugee* perform in the act of complimenting.

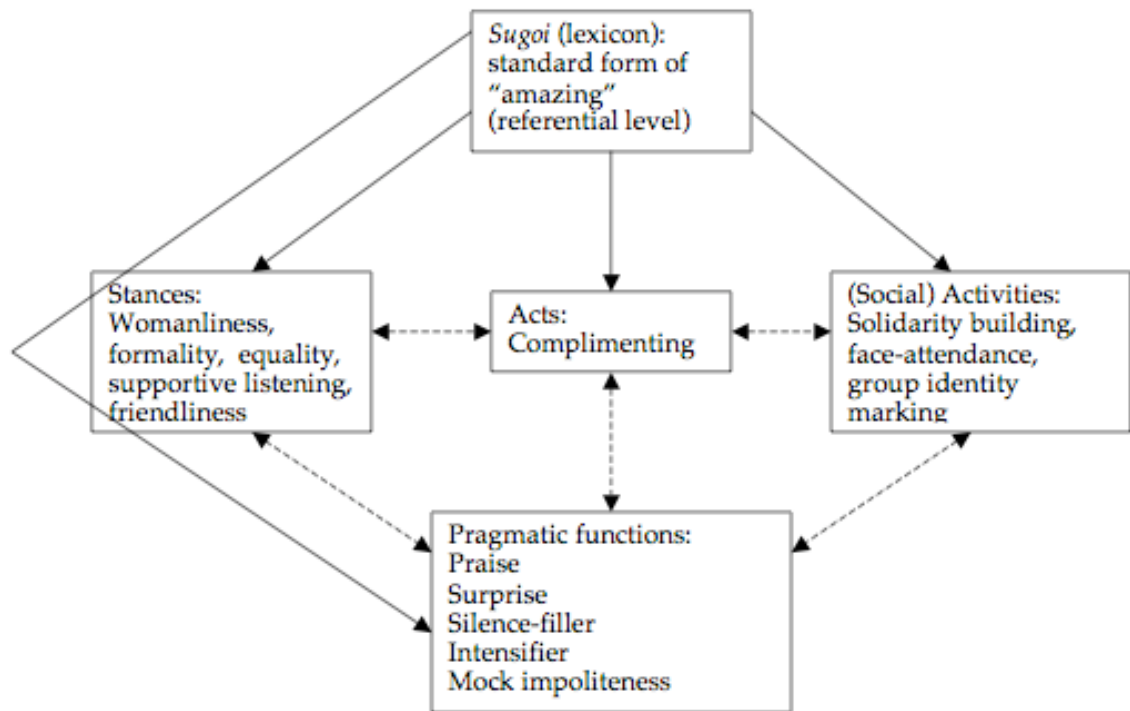


Figure 8.1 Indexicality of *sugoi*

- ▶ = direct indexical relations  
-----▶ = constitutive, indirect indexical relations

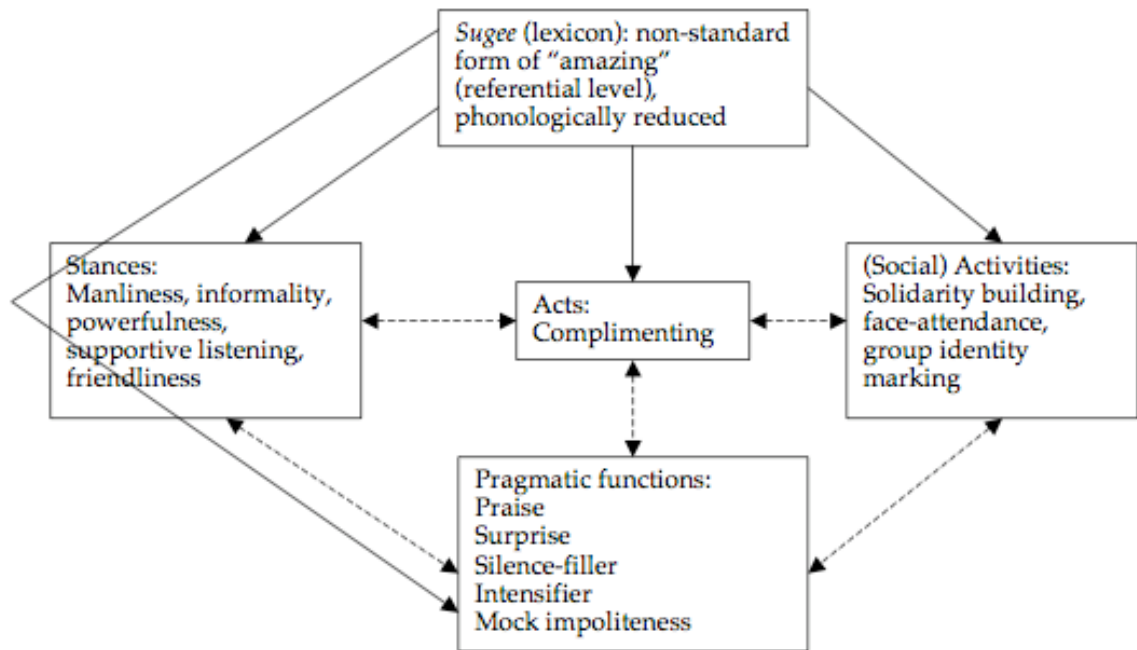


Figure 8.2 Indexicality of *sugee*

Uttering *sugoi* or *sugee* in the act of complimenting both directly and (most of the time) indirectly indexes a number of social meanings. It includes social activities (the macro-level of what it does in interaction) acts (complimenting), stances (attitudes towards the addressee and about speakers themselves), and pragmatic functions (micro-level of functions in interaction). These indexes are simultaneously, interactionally and temporarily drawn and created in on-going interaction. The *sugee* variant may take different stances from the *sugoi* variant, as shown in Figure 8.2.

It may seem that these two models compete with each other particularly in the instances of stance-taking. However, what should be noted here is that *sugoi* and *sugee* are used by both genders. Especially, for the *sugee* variant, women use this (claimed to be) male-preferred variant as men do. What then are these women doing with the use of *sugee*? I argue that

these women may not be achieving gender work through the *sugee* variant, but other kinds of social and interactional work that are indexed through these variants, for example, informality and supportive listening, which has most lately been created through repeated use. Female and male speakers strategically exploit these two variants in different situations for their numerous interactional purposes. From the distributional result and variability of these variants, one might draw the conclusion that these two models and systems of indexicality attached to the variants of *sugoi* and *sugee* co-exist within individuals.

## 8.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I considered the pragmatic multiple functionality and indexicality of the variable *sugoi/sugee* in the act of complimenting. After touching on the referential meanings and the grammatical function of this variable, I showed how these linguistic forms perform multiple pragmatic functions among young Japanese, drawing examples from the data set. Then I moved on to discuss the social meanings associated with these two variants. I investigated the stances that are potentially indexed through these variants as my participants talked about them in playback interviews.

In conclusion, these two variants index a number of social meanings and stances through the act of complimenting and allow the Japanese speakers to perform numerous kinds of interactional work. Moreover, we have seen the potential change in meaning making of these variants as the speakers oriented to this change at recognisable level.

Through our examination of the distribution of compliments and their structure in Chapters 4-7, we now have a much richer picture of how the speech act of complimenting takes place among young Japanese. Through the analysis of naturally occurring spoken data, I investigated not only what linguistic features compliments consist of at the utterance level, but also how the speakers build up the larger discourse of complimenting. In the final chapter, all the findings from the current study will be summarised which, then provides answers to the research questions set out in Chapter 1.



## **Chapter 9. Conclusion**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This dissertation set out to investigate what compliments sociolinguistically entail in a non-Western, non-English-speaking community, namely among young Japanese. An interdisciplinary study, which combined both the qualitative method of discourse analysis and the quantitative method of variationist sociolinguistics, was conducted to analyse naturally occurring compliments collected through ethnographic techniques. The forms of compliments, that is, their semantic, syntactic and discourse features and the functions of compliments as well as compliment responses among young Japanese have been analysed. Each chapter was designed to handle the nine secondary questions stated in Chapter 1, the findings of which, will be summarised shortly in the following.

### **9.2 Synthesis of findings**

In this section, I summarise the findings of the preceding chapters, and provide answers to each of the eight research questions (set out in

Chapter 1) in order to ultimately tackle the primary question (Research Question 1: What do compliments sociolinguistically involve among young Japanese?).

After establishing the foundation for the current study in Chapter 2, where I introduced key terminology and background knowledge from studies on compliments in the existing literature, Chapter 3 explored various methodologies and their potential (dis)advantages within speech act studies. In describing the methodology that my study chose to adopt, I proposed that analysing naturally occurring data for a speech act study, instead of relying on elicited data, is a methodological challenge which my study set out to take on. I hope to have shown that the approach of this study is advantageous.

The first half of Chapter 4 provided an overview of the corpus which was collected for this study. It consists of 369 compliment utterances, and 210 compliment responses within 143 compliment sequences. These were extracted from a corpus of more than 40 hours of recorded conversations. The corpus contained more compliments in the lunchtime recordings than in the sociolinguistic interviews, which informs us about the nature of complimenting: complimenting is more likely to be situated in casual

conversations among peers rather than in relatively formal interviews with a (*soto*) researcher.

In addressing Research Question 2 (How frequently do compliments occur?), the study found that in the lunchtime recordings, six compliments were produced per speaker on average and the speakers generated a compliment every three minutes on average, whereas in the sociolinguistic interviews, only three compliments were produced per person on average and a compliment was produced on average every 14 minutes. However, when looking at the number of turns taken within sequences, there was no statistically significant difference between the interviews and lunchtime recordings. This indicates how well the conversational floor was shared and circulated by the interlocutors once compliments were produced in both sociolinguistic interviews and lunchtime conversations.

The last half of Chapter 4 examined the linguistic features of Japanese compliments, in order to deal with Research Question 3 (What linguistic features do compliments consist of?). It investigated what semantic lexical items and syntactic structures were involved in constructing Japanese compliments. The primary finding was that Japanese compliments were

mostly constructed through the use of adjectives carrying positive assessments for addressees, and these were located in predicate positions. There were some linguistic and social constraints on tense and aspect marking within the construction of Japanese compliments. Present tense constructions were preferred in compliments rather than past or future tense constructions. This was because, I argued, there is a preference for compliments to refer to attributes that are continuously present in the addressee and this implicates an ongoing present reading (cf. Manes & Wolfson 1981). In addition, syntactic structures overtly marking aspect and mood were rarely observed within the Japanese compliments. Finally, the affective linguistic markers of boosters were much more frequently exploited by the Japanese speakers when complimenting, while the use of hedges was much less common.

Chapter 5 explored social factors and the larger discourse of Japanese compliments. First, the topics of compliments were analysed in order to evaluate the societal value of compliments in this community: what is considered to be worth commenting on within this community. This section was specifically designed to address Research Question 4 (What do the

speakers compliment others about?). The study found that the Japanese speakers most preferred to comment on intrinsic features of ability and/or performance (58% of the compliments can be classified as belonging to this category). I argued that this result reflected the interpersonal relationships that my participants held – they were all students in the same department who knew each other fairly well. Put differently, the attributes of ability and performance were highly accessible to the speakers. In addition, approving of each other by commenting on these kinds of qualities contributed to reinforcing the relationship among them in an institution where competition in academic performance is a highly salient activity. This plays a part in answering Research Question 9 (What do compliments do in interaction among young Japanese?).

Next, taking the community specific notion of the *senpai-kohai* relation, the potential power entailment of complimenting was discussed. The purpose of this section was to handle Research Question 7 (How does the social factor of status constrain this speech act?). Though the majority of compliments (60% of them) occurred between speakers of the same status, the remaining 40% were exchanged between speakers of different status. My

study proposed that complimenting in this community may also function as a form of power play rather than purely a means of marking solidarity as some previous research has suggested (cf. Holmes 1995). This finding also contributed to answering Research Question 9 (What do compliments do in interaction among young Japanese?).

Finally, in tackling Research Question 5 (How do the speakers build up the discourse of complimenting?), I investigated where in interaction compliments were situated and I discussed how the discourse of compliments was developed. My corpus revealed that compliments did not just appear out of context, but instead, the speakers put in some effort to build up the pre-discourse prior to the occurrence of first compliments. Perhaps surprisingly, it is complimentees who actively set up the discourse more than complimenters or third parties. I illustrated interactional strategies for how complimentees, complimenters and third-parties introduce compliment topics, building up to finally elicit compliments.

In Chapter 6, another crucial social factor with regard to complimenting, that is, the gender of the participants, was taken into consideration in an attempt to test the hypothesis that complimenting is a

gendered speech act (Research Question 6: Is complimenting a gendered speech act?). Although there seem to be some norms that women and men orient to equally – e.g., the (in)directness of compliments – there are some factors that indicate significant gender differences across compliments. By applying the variationist approach of multivariate analysis, I showed that the social factor of status (coded in terms of the *senpai-kohai* relationship) made the strongest contribution to the variation of compliments within this speech community. This strengthened the observation made in Chapter 5, namely that complimenting in this community displays power plays.

Chapter 7 investigated compliment responses in the corpus (Research Question 8: How do the speakers respond to compliments? Do they accept/reject/evade compliments?). The first important finding which had not been widely discussed in the past literature was that not all compliment utterances elicited (at least verbally recognisable) responses. In naturally occurring conversation, a number of compliments, in fact, tended to get ‘lost’ or not acted on in interaction. Next, following Holmes’ (1995) framework, I further analysed what strategies the Japanese speakers employed when they did respond to compliments. The Japanese speakers mostly evaded

compliments with various strategies (51.5% of the time when they responded), and secondly preferred to accept compliments (35%). The least preferred strategy was to reject compliments (12%).<sup>29</sup> Finally, by applying multivariate analysis, Chapter 7 further investigated what linguistic and social factors constrained the variation of compliment responses. The results revealed again that the culture-specific notion of status, the *senpai-kohai* relationship, was the most salient and significant factor in how compliments were treated within this community.

Chapter 8 looked at one lexical variable that frequently appeared within the construction of Japanese compliments: *sugoi* ('amazing'). Along with its phonologically reduced variant *sugoi*, *sugee*, I demonstrated that this variable was capable of performing multiple pragmatic functions in the context of complimenting (also addressing Research Question 9: What do compliments do in interaction among young Japanese?). In addition, drawing on Ochs' (1992) model of indexicality, I illustrated how this linguistic variable directly and indirectly indexed certain social meanings as my participants talked about them in playback interviews.

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<sup>29</sup> The remaining 1.5% of responses were categorised as a combination of the other response types.



### 9.3 Implications of the study

This study provides three broader implications that suggest contributions to the field of (interactional) sociolinguistics.

First, my study shows the great potential and advantage of dealing with naturally occurring conversational data for a speech act study. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the collection of naturally occurring conversational data has been a methodological challenge within the field since the traditional mode of data collection has been to elicit speech acts through discourse completion tasks or questionnaires (Beebe & Cummings 1996; Jucker 2009). Even when researchers believed in the ethnographic “field method” and implemented a “notebook method” (Holmes 1988, 1995; Manes & Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1983), I have argued that these methods made them likely to miss out on a large amount of sociolinguistic information. This study therefore provided the best naturalistic data possible in order to analyse how the Japanese speakers perform complimenting in non-scripted day-to-day conversations. As such, the analysis of this kind of data allows my study to draw authentic conclusions for questions that sociolinguists are interested in answering – and more specifically, keeps my study true to what

I set out to investigate: what complimenting sociolinguistically entails among young Japanese.

Second, in order to analyse such naturalistic data and also to examine various aspects of Japanese compliments, this study benefited significantly from combining the qualitative methods of discourse analysis and the quantitative methods of variationist sociolinguistics. As Lakoff argued, understanding the sociolinguistic nature of speech acts requires “an inter-, cross-, and multi-disciplinary approach for discourse analysis” (2003:200), there have been a number of researchers who have applied discourse analysis to study compliments.<sup>30</sup> However, to the best of my knowledge, no research has so far been conducted which has applied multivariate analysis from the variationist point of view to the variation of speech acts. The multivariate analysis enabled me to detect what social and linguistic factors make a significant contribution to the variation in the form of compliments. In Chapter 6 and 7 in particular, I showed repeatedly that the social factor of

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<sup>30</sup> Among those who have studied compliments, exemplary research which put the focus on discourse analysis include Golato (2005), Holmes (1988, 1995), Manes (1983), Manes & Wolfson (1983) and Wolfson (1981, 1983, 1984).

status emerges as the most salient factor in the sociolinguistically constrained system of complimenting within this community.

This study therefore calls for an enhancement and development of the traditional trend of speech act studies. It does so at the level of both data collection – obtaining naturally occurring data – and data analysis – combining discourse analysis and multivariate analysis to their mutual benefit.

Finally, as I indicated in Chapter 1, this study also aimed to conduct a holistic sociolinguistic analysis of Japanese compliments such as has not been seen within Western academic discourse. Researchers who have dealt with complimenting behaviour in Japanese have so far tended to carry out comparative studies between Japanese and (mostly American) English (Araki & Barnlund 1985; Daikuhara 1986; Matsuura 2004). Work which is solely dedicated to Japanese compliments largely tends to remain in Japanese academic discourse as it is written in Japanese (Kim 2006, 2007; Kawaguchi et al. 1996; Kumatoridani 1989; Maruyama 1996; Ono 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Terao 1996; Yokota 1985). My study therefore, is the first attempt to conduct large scale research entirely dedicated to Japanese compliments and their

responses. It also bridges both Japanese and Western, English-speaking academic discourses by providing a holistic sociolinguistic analysis of Japanese compliments and compliment responses for a non-Japanese readership.

#### **9.4 Limitations and directions for future research**

This section discusses limitations of my study and directions for further research. I propose three additional avenues in which the current research could be extended in the future.

First, one problem with my sample of speakers was that my research examined interlocutors who were relatively familiar with each other, which means that it was focused on only a small pool of speakers whose relation to each other was established within one speech community. Further research could look at different samples of speakers, for example, speakers who do not have established interpersonal familiarity prior to the exchange. Based on the framework that I established through this dissertation and its findings, this further research would allow us to see whether the interactional patterns and functions of compliments and responses change depending on the

existence of different kinds of interpersonal relations. Some researchers report that compliments between unfamiliar speakers can seem flirtatious or may even be constructed as sexual harassment (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Holmes 1988). This type of research however would require some serious ethical consideration as to how researchers could obtain such data of conversational exchanges between unacquainted speakers (Davis 2008).

Secondly, as my study on Japanese compliments contributes to the study of language and variation in describing how Japanese compliments and responses vary in their form and function, the next step for future research would be to turn our attention to another crucial aspect of sociolinguistics: the relationship between language variation and change.

When I discussed my findings with (especially Japanese) scholars at conferences, I often heard that my results might not represent variability in Japanese compliments and responses across all generations. In other words, the variation in compliments found in my study might not reflect the way older speakers of Japanese talk. This observation suggests that variation in the expression of this speech act may vary across age, which might provide research ground for finding age grading or lifespan change (Sankoff 2006).

Chen and Yang (2010), for example, found a dramatic change in responding to compliments among Chinese speakers over time. The 2010 study was a replication of Chen's (1993) study, and the results show that Chinese speakers now overwhelmingly accept compliments (63% of the time) as opposed to what Chen (1993) found seventeen years ago, when 96% of compliments were rejected.

In addition, becoming a competent speaker of complimenting, or any type of speech act for that matter, requires not only grammatical knowledge but also sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain 1980). The acquisition of speech acts needs to take place at some point in speakers' lives. To confirm this observation, my pilot test of recordings with the children in a Japanese kindergarten (age range three to five years) suggested that complimenting never occurred between these children, although compliments from teachers to children were frequently observed. I argued in Chapter 3 that this was due to small children not yet having developed an understanding of others' face, and hence, being incapable of performing speech acts such as complimenting that require such complex interpersonal facework. Given that "compliments are one means of socializing children into appropriate behaviour" (Golato

2005:211), much further work should be done with regards to when and how this type of socialization happens in the sociolinguistic world that children live in.

Finally, the findings of this research could be a potential contribution to the development of teaching materials that focus on how to perform the speech act of complimenting for learners of Japanese (see also Saito & Beecken 1997). As with native speakers of any language, acquiring second language sociolinguistic competence in how to conduct speech acts appropriately in a given community presupposes the learning of such sociolinguistic acts (cf. Rose & Ng 1999). As Sapir claims, “language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the textures of our lives” (1921:207). Because speech acts, including complimenting, are deeply embedded in and constructed through cultural system, the acquisition of speech acts demands profound cultural knowledge of the community. In fact, there has been a good deal of research that has highlighted the influence of cultural differences on the way compliments are paid and responded to, even within a variety of Englishes (Creese 1991; Henderson 1996) and there are even

more differences from a cross-cultural perspective (Araki & Barnlund 1985; Bilmyer 1990; Chen 1993; Daikuhara 1986; Farghal & Haggan 2006; Han 1992; Lorenzo-Dus 2001; Nelson et al. 1996; Sharifian 2008; Tang & Zhang 2009; Valdés & Pino 1981; Wieland 1995; Wolfson 1981; Yläne-McEwen 1993). Furthermore, Holmes and Brown (1987) expand on their research by exploring the possibility of applying knowledge about the way speech acts are conducted in anglophone societies to teaching ESL learners about speech acts. On the basis that my study provides a fundamental sociolinguistic understanding of how complimenting behaviour occurs among young Japanese, my results could contribute to develop a methodology for teaching this speech act to learners of Japanese.

## **9.5 Concluding remarks**

At the dawn of a prosperous era for work on compliments in the 1980s, the innovative researchers, Manes and Wolfson stated that in the attempt to “discover the regularities that exist on all levels, the syntactic, discourse and social as well as the semantic”, compliments in American English are impressive for their “total lack of originality”(2981:115).



Three decades on, my study on Japanese compliments builds on their work. On the one hand, my work found some regularity in compliments that parallel their findings. This itself is a new insight on the field of compliments studies suggesting that there are cross-culturally (if not universally) applicable properties of complimenting that I have also shown to hold in the Japanese case.

On the other hand, this study highlighted some aspects of this speech act which are original to the young Japanese. The construction and application of compliments in the case of Japanese manifest a complex and intricate sociolinguistic system which I hope to have illuminated in my dissertation through the naturally occurring data of spoken Japanese.

**Appendix 1: A questionnaire on Speech Acts**  
**(The original Japanese version)**

発話行為と丁寧さについての調査

調査にご協力いただきありがとうございます。私は現在、英国エジンバラ大学の人文社会科学言語学科博士課程で、日本人の発話行為（何かを言うことで何かを行うこと。特に「褒め」と「お世辞」）について研究を進めております。今回のデータは博士論文作成において重要な資料として使わせていただきます。但し、お答えいただいた方々の個人情報には保護されますのでご安心ください。

足立 知恵  
エジンバラ大学人文科学部  
哲学・心理学・言語科学研究科  
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0) あなたについて（当てはまるものに印をつけてください）

性： 男性 女性

年齢： 17以下 18～25 26～39 40～49 50以上

1) Part A

以下に発話行為を表す7つの単語があります。これらを見て右にある「丁寧さのレベル」（1：最も無礼⇔10：最も丁寧）においてそれぞれの言葉がどの程度丁寧であるか、適当な数字に丸をしてください。

丁寧さのレベル	最も無礼	←————→	最も丁寧
(例) 0：褒めちぎる	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—		10
1：嫌味(いやみ)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—		10
2：賞賛・賛美	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—		10
3：お世辞	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—		10
4：侮辱(ぶじょく)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—		10
5：奨励・励まし	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—		10
6：褒め(言葉)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—		10
7：感謝・謝辞	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—		10

\*\*\*\*裏に続く\*\*\*\*

## 2) Part B

以下に四つの場面と八通りの発話があります。それぞれの発話を右にある七つの言葉（発話行為）と照らし合わせて、当てはまると思われるものには「ハイ」、当てはまらないものには「イエエ」、全くこの発話行為とは関係ないと判断された場合には「?（どちらとも言えない）」に丸をつけて下さい。一つの場面につき二通りの発話がありますので、それぞれお答えください。

(例)あなたの兄妹が作ってくれた夕食(事実あなたはとても美味しいと思っている)についてあなたが一言：

A) 「すごく美味しいよ。ありがとう。」

① あなたの親友が新しいバッグ（事実あなた自身も良いなあ、と思っている）を持っていました。そこであなたは彼・彼女にこう言います。

A) 「それ、新しいバッグ？すごく良いね！」

B) 「それ、新しいバッグ？色がちょっと派手ね。」

② あなたは上司・大学教授と（上司・大学教授の）新しい髪形（事実あなたは、ひどい髪形だと思っている）について話していて、このように言います。

A) 「その髪型よくお似合いですね。お若く見えますよ。」

B) 「その髪型ひどいですね。」

	1 嫌味	2 賞賛・ 賛美	3 お世辞	4 侮辱	5 奨励・ 励まし	6 褒め (言葉)	7 感謝・ 謝辞
(例) A)	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?
① A)	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?
B)	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?
② A)	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?
B)	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?	ハイ イエ エ?

③ あなたが上司・大学教授だと想像してください。あなたは自分の部下・学生と話しています。その部下・学生はあるプロジェクトでとても良い成績を修めました。そこであなたは以下のように言います。

- A) 「よくやりましたね。次のプロジェクトも期待していますよ。」  
 B) 「まだまだですね。次はもっと頑張ってください。」

④あなたの親友が喫茶店で昨日あった出来事についてあなたに話しています。そこでその親友があなたにこう言います。

- A) 「〇〇（あなたの名前）は聞き上手だね。本当にいい人。」  
 B)\*あなたは親友の話が長いのであくびをしながら、少しよそ見をしていました。それを見た親友が、  
 「〇〇（あなたの名前）は聞き上手だね。本当にいい人。」

1 ・嫌味	2 ・賞賛・賛美	3 ・お世辞	4 ・侮辱	5 ・奨励・励まし	6 ・褒め（言葉）	7 ・感謝・謝辞
③						
A)	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？
B)	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？
④						
A)	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？
B)	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？	ハイ イイ エ？

\*\*\*ご協力ありがとうございました。\*\*\*

**Appendix 2: A questionnaire on Speech Acts (English translation)**  
**A questionnaire on Speech Acts**

Hello. My name is Chie Adachi and I am currently conducting a research on how the Japanese perceive and perform speech acts in Japanese. All of your information will be treated anonymously. Thank you very much for your time and contribution to this research.

Yours sincerely,  
Chie Adachi

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Linguistics and English Language Unit  
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences  
University of Edinburgh  
Email: [c.adachi@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:c.adachi@sms.ed.ac.uk).

**0) General Information about yourself**

\*gender / male female

\*age/ under 17 18-25 26-39 40-49 over 50

**1) Part A:**

There are 8 different words (names of speech acts) below. Please rank politeness level ranged from 1 (the least polite, i.e. impolite/rude) to 10 (most polite) by circling a number next to words.

Politeness level	rude-----polite
Irony (反語・皮肉)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10
Praise (賞賛)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10
Compliment (褒めことば)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10
Insult (侮辱)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10
Encouragement (奨励・励まし)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10
Flattery (お世辞)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10
Appreciation (感謝)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10
Sarcasm (皮肉・いやみ)	1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

\*\*\*\*Please turn the page over\*\*\*\*

**2) Part B:**

There are some situations where some conversations take place.

Please decide if it is a certain types of speech acts by choosing yes/no/NA/non applicable under each category

① Your best friend is carrying a new bag which you actually think is cool. Then you say:

- C) "Is that a new bag? It's cool!"
- D) "Is that a new bag? The colour is a bit of a wired colour, isn't it?"

② You are talking to your professor about his/her new hair cut which you actually think awful and say:

- C) "Sensei(sir), your new hair cut suits you very well. It makes you look even younger."
- D) "Sensei(sir), your new hair cut is awful."

③ Suppose you are a professor, and are talking to your student who got 80% on his/her last essay and say:

- C) "Well done, I am looking forward to reading your next essay."
- D) "This is not satisfactory. You should work harder on the next essay."

④ Your best friend is telling you a story at a café and s/he says to you:

- A) "You are a good listener. Really a nice person."
- B) (You were just looking out of window because his/her talk was very long)  
"You are a good listener. Really a nice person."

Irony	Praise	Compliment	Insult	Encouragement	Flattery	Appreciation	Sarcasm
A)Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA
B)Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA
A)Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA
B)Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA
A)Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA
B)Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA
A)Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA
B)Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA	Yes No NA

**Appendix 3: Comprehensive list of hours of recorded conversations  
for sociolinguistic interviews and lunchtime recordings**

<b>Lunchtime recordings</b>	
24.7.07	22'06
25.7.07	1'41'15
26.7.07	2'15'36
29.1.08	2'50'03
31.1.08	1'22'15
4.2.08	54'27
7.2.08	59'35
17.7.08	52'33
17.7.08 no.2	25'53
17.7.08 no.3	36'12
22.7.08	27'05
25.7.08 no.1	16'44
25.7.08 no.2	10'21
<b><i>Sub total</i></b>	<b><i>13'14'05</i></b>

<b>Sociolinguistic interviews (First stage)</b>	<b>Jan-Feb 08</b>
30/1/2008/group1	42'50
31/1/2008/group2	44'49
31/1/2008/group3	48'28
31/1/2008/group4	48'05
1/2/2008/group5	46'45
1/2/2008/group6	inaudible
1/2/2008/group7	39'31
4/2/2008/group8	50'53
4/2/2008/group9	56'51
4/2/2008/group10	45'01
7/2/2008/group11	35'26
7/2/2008/group12	35'44
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>8'14'23</b>
<b>Sociolinguistic interviews (Second stage)</b>	<b>Jul-Aug 08</b>
16/7/2008/group1	59'58
16/7/2008/group2	1'14'13
17/7/2008/group3	58'13
18/7/2008/group4	1'06'38
19/7/2008/group5	47'04
19/7/2008/group6	38'26
19/7/2008/group7	38'26
19/7/2008/group8	54'27
19/7/2008/group9	51'40
22/7/2008/group10	1'14'55
23/7/2008/group11	1'41'53
24/7/2008/group12	53'17
24/7/2008/group13	55'30
24/7/2008/group14	55'06
24/7/2008/group15	48'14
25/7/2008/group16	1'18'57
26/7/2008/group17	1'04'57
26/7/2008/group18	50'12
26/7/2008/group19	1'19'00
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>19'12'06</b>



#### Appendix 4: 100 Japanese clauses and their predicate components

	Japanese/Gloss	English translation	Components of predicates
1	<i>Sore wa hidoi.</i> that TOP awful	'That is awful'	ADJ
2	<i>Tyotto tigattara mousiwake nainda kedo</i> little if wrong sorry COP but	'If I'm wrong, I'm sorry'	ADJ
3	<i>Yasasii</i> kind	'Kind'	ADJ
4	<i>Demo tyotto tati warui yo ne</i> but little character bad SFP SFP	'But character is a little bad'	ADJ
5	<i>Tati warui</i> character bad	'Character is bad'	ADJ
6	<i>Yappa koukousei tte kawaii</i> after all high school students Q cute	'After all, high school students are cute'	ADJ
7	<i>Iya tigau tigau</i> no wrong wrong	'No, that's wrong'	ADJ
8	<i>Yabai ne, sore</i> mental SFP that	'That is mental'	ADJ
9	<i>Siroi mitaina</i> white like	'It's like white'	ADJ
10	<i>Tikaku nai desu ne</i> close NEG COP SFP	'It's not close'	ADJ
11	<i>Tikaramotina tokoro wa yappa otokorasiina to omou</i> powerful point TOP after all manly Q think	'Being powerful is manly, I think'	ADJ
12	<i>Riido site iku kanzi ga otokorasii</i> lead do go feeling NOM manly	'Leading (groups) feels like manly'	ADJ
13	<i>Kiserareta huku toka wa mitemiruto hurihuri</i> put on.PASSIVE clothes for example TOP see if flurry	'If you see the clothes that I was made to wear they look flurry'	Nominal Adjective
14	<i>Abunaku nai nara okkee de</i> dangerous NEG if OK COP	'It's OK as long as it's not dangerous'	Nominal Adjective
15	<i>Siturei da yo na</i> rude COP SFP SFP	'That is rude'	Nominal Adjective

16	<i>Daizyoubu desu</i> fine COP	'It's fine'	Nominal Adjective
17	<i>Mata kore tigua yatu ka, mitaina</i> again this wrong thing COP like	'This is again a wrong one'	NP
18	<i>Mazi Kyouzi bakana yatu</i> really Kyouzi stupid person	'Really, Kyouzi is a stupid person'	NP
19	<i>Reisei na hito</i> calm COP person	'A calm person'	NP
20	<i>Hohoemu teido mitaina</i> smiley extent like	'Like, to the extent where you can still smile'	NP
21	<i>Uti tuite koi taipu</i> me along come type	'A type that would say "Just follow me"'	NP
22	<i>Watasi no karesi ga souiu kanzi</i> I GEN boyfriend NOM that feeling	'My boyfriend is like that'	NP
23	<i>Yuujuhdannano wa otokorasiku nai imeezi</i> indecisive TOP manly NEG image	'Being indecisive is not a manly image'	NP
24	<i>Sono Kazi ga dansikou dattan yo ne</i> that Kazi NOM boyschool COP.PAST SFP SFP	'Kazi was in a boy school'	NP
25	<i>Sono utteta no ga Kyozi tte mata watasino</i> that sell.PAST Gen NOM Kyozi Q again my <i>betu no tomodati dattanda kedo</i> another GEN friend COP.PAST but	'The person who emailed me was Kyozi who was another friend of mine, but'	NP
26	<i>Boku youzinbukai otoko nande.</i> I cautious man because	'I am a cautious man'	NP
27	<i>Burakku meeru bayari no zidai nansu yo</i> black mail trend GEN generation COP SFP	'It was a generation that black mailing was trendy'	NP
28	<i>Iya hontouni sono ko yattanda kedo</i> no really that girl COP.PAST but	'No, it was really that girl'	NP
29	<i>Musiro mizugi made otoko mono desita</i> rather swimsuit even man things COP.PAST	'Rather, my swimsuits were boys''	NP
30	<i>Ie wa haha ga otoko no hito mo ima kara</i> family TOP mother NOM man GEN person too now from <i>no zidai wa kazi toka sinaito ikenai yo</i> GEN generation TOP housework e.g. do must SFP <i>toiu kangae dakara</i> Q idea because	'My mother has the idea that boys also ought to do housework from now on'	NP

31	<i>Mongen wa koukou no toki wa kuzi desu</i> curfew NOM highschool GEN when NOM 9pm COP	'Curfew was 9pm when I was in high school'	NP
32	<i>Hiki warai da si</i> withdraw smile COP and	'It was the withdrawn smile'	NP
33	<i>Omae ni makaseru taipu da yo</i> you to leave type COP SFP	'A type that leaves everything to you'	NP
34	<i>Tereru hito da ne</i> shy person COP SFP	'You are a shy person'	NP
35	<i>Onna no ko no tomodati ga dounokouno tte itta</i> girl GEN child GEN friend TOP this and that Q say.PAST	'A girl friend was saying this and that'	VP
36	<i>Mawari ga meeru siro yo</i> around NOM mail do SFP	'People around me told me to email her'	VP
37	<i>Sikiran</i> cannot do	'I cannot do that'	VP
38	<i>Ore ga utteyaru</i> I NOM email	'I will email her'	VP
39	<i>Usu tomo kakusin moten yan</i> lie even certainty have.NEG SFP	'I wasn't sure if it was a lie'	VP
40	<i>Mitomeru wake zya nai ken sa</i> admit reason COP NEG because SFP	'Because I can't admit it'	VP
41	<i>A: wakaru</i> ah understand	'I understand'	VP
42	<i>Hito wo sinzi raran</i> person OM trust cannot	'I can't trust people'	VP
43	<i>Hontoni Kazu ga utteru</i> really Kazu NOM email	'It is really Kazu emailing'	VP
44	<i>Gomen Kyouzi ga katteni utte</i> sorry, Kyouzi NOM freely to email	'Sorry, Kyouzi emailed without my permission'	VP
45	<i>Kedo ore attawa</i> but I have.PAST	'But I had experiences like that'	VP
46	<i>Minuita</i> see through.PAST	'I saw it through'	VP
47	<i>Burakku meeru tte sitteru</i> Black mail Q know	'I know what blackmailing is'	VP
48	<i>Rondon haatu tteiu bangumi ga atte</i> London heart Q TV programme NOM have	'There is a TV programme called random hearts'	VP

49	<i>Onna no ko no huri wo site otoko ni okuru</i> girl GEN child GEN disguise OM do man to send	'Pretending to like a girl and sending email to boys'	VP
50	<i>Sore ga itiziki, koukou guraini hayatteta no ne</i> that NOM while high school about trendy.PAST SFP SFP	'It was a trend in high schools'	VP
51	<i>tyuugakkou no tokini metya nakayokatta onna</i> junior high GEN when very close.PAST girl <i>no ko kara meeru ga kita wake desu yo</i> GEN child from mail NOM come.PAST reason COP SFP	'A girl who I was really close with in junior high emailed me'	VP
52	<i>Tomodati kara kimasita:</i> friend from come.PAST	'It came from my friend'	VP
53	<i>Hisabisani renraku ga kita kara</i> after a while contact NOM come.PAST because	'The contact came after a long time'	VP
54	<i>Dakara tyotto yokeini nanka henni keikai sitesimatte</i> therefore little even more like oddly cautious do.PAST	'So I became oddly cautious even more'	VP
55	<i>Ore ga nanka gyakuni gisinanki ni natta</i> I NOM like rather untrustworthy OM become.PAST	'I became untrustworthy, rather'	VP
56	<i>Nanka tyotto keikai suru</i> like little cautious do	'I did little cautiously'	VP
57	<i>Watasi tabun zettai kiduka nai</i> I maybe definitely realise NEG	'I wouldn't realise it definitely'	VP
58	<i>Zissai hikkakatta tomodati ga mizikani otta</i> really catch.PAST friend NOM close have.PAST	'I had a friend who really got caught'	VP
59	<i>Ore hikkakatta: mitai na</i> I catch.PAST like SFP	'I got caught'	VP
60	<i>Uti sonna ikken mo nakatta yo</i> I like that glance even NEG.PAST SFP	'I didn't even have a glance'	VP
61	<i>Hikkakatta</i> catch.PAST	'Got caught'	VP
62	<i>Ryouri wa saisyo tukutteta kedo.</i> cooking TOP firstly make.PAST but	'I did cooking at first but'	VP
63	<i>Aite wa zettai si nai desu ne</i> partner TOP definitely do NEG COP SFP	'I don't take it seriously'	VP
64	<i>Zettai si nai si</i> definitely do NEG and	'I definitely don't do that'	VP

65	<i>le ittara</i> house when go.PAST	'When I went to the house'	VP
66	<i>Sentaku souzi siteru</i> laundry cleaning do.PROG	'I am doing laundry and cleaning'	VP
67	<i>Hiromi ga itara.</i> Hitomi NOM COP.if	'If Hiromi was here'	VP
68	<i>Hiromi ga inaku temo si nai no</i> Hitomi NOM COP.NEG even if do NEG SFP	'Even if Hiromi wasn't here, I wouldn't do that'	VP
69	<i>Si nai</i> do NEG	'I don't do that'	VP
70	<i>Hiromi ga sitekureru</i> Hitomi NOM do	'Hiromi does it for me'	VP
71	<i>Dakara atasi ga teikitekini ika nai</i> so I NOM regularly go NEG	'So, I don't go regularly'	VP
72	<i>Souiu gohan tukuttari</i> like that meal make	'I make meals like that'	VP
73	<i>Atasi kyousi ni nari tai nde</i> I teacher OM become want because	'Because I want to be a teacher'	VP
74	<i>Soko buntan sitekure nai</i> that division do NEG	'He doesn't divide the chores'	VP
75	<i>Ryousin ga ryohoutomo kyousi siterun desu</i> parents NOM both teachers do.PROG COP	'My parents both do teaching'	VP
76	<i>Gohan wa okaasan ga tukuttete</i> meal TOP mother NOM make.PROG	'My mother makes meals'	VP
77	<i>Otousan mo dekirukagirino sentaku toka</i> father too as much as he can laundry e.g. <i>souzi toka no sapooto wa sitemasu</i> cleaning e.g. GEN support TOP do.PROG	'My father does as much laundry and cleaning as he can to support'	VP
78	<i>Okaasan ni sikarareru node</i> mother by scold.PASSIVE because	'My mother scolds me'	VP
79	<i>Watasi otoko kyoudai ni kakomareteta</i> I boy sibling OM surround.PASSIVE.PAST	'I was surrounded by brothers'	VP
80	<i>Boku toka ittemasita</i> I(male-preferred form) e.g. say.PAST.POL	'I used to say 'boku''	VP
81	<i>Boku wa tabun syougakkou hairu made tukatteta</i> I TOP maybe primary school enter till use.PROG.PAST	'I used 'boku' till I went to primary school'	VP

82	<i>Otouto ga imasu</i> brother TOP have	'I have a brother'	VP
83	<i>Ie ni kaeruno wa osoku naruna</i> house OM return NOP late become.NEG <i>to wa iwareta</i> Q TOP say.PASSIVE	'I was told not to come home late'	VP
84	<i>Mongen wa watasi mo kubetusarete</i> curfew TOP I too separate.PASSIVE	'I had a different time curfew (from my brother)'	VP
85	<i>Nande otouto no toki wa nanimo iwa nai</i> why brother GEN when TOP nothing say NEG	'(I wonder) why she doesn't say anything when it comes to my brother'	VP
86	<i>Sinayakana hito ni onnarasisa wo kanziruru</i> pliable person GEN womanly OM feel	'I feel womanly towards a pliable person'	VP
87	<i>Zyosei no hinkaku tteiu hon sittemasu</i> women GEN class Q book know	'You know a book called 'woman's class''	VP
88	<i>Iroiro manaa toka wo kaiteatte</i> many manner e.g. OM write.PROG	'Lots of manners are written'	VP
89	<i>Sositara manaa wo siri taku natte</i> then manner OM know want become	'Then I wanted to know more about manners'	VP
90	<i>Manaa no hon wo kattandesu yo</i> mannar GEN book OM buy.PAST.POL SFP	'I bought more books on manners'	VP
91	<i>Watasi mo densya no naka de kesyou site tari</i> I too train GEN inside at make up do e.g.	'I put on make-up trains for example'	VP
92	<i>Souiu hito wa medatteta ki ga suru</i> Like that person TOP stand out feeling NOM do	'Person like that stood out, I think'	VP
93	<i>Akogareteta</i> admire.PAST	'I admired them'	VP
94	<i>Otoko no hito nohou ga karada no tyousi wo</i> man GEN person rather NOM body GEN condition OM <i>kudusinikui imeezi wa aru</i> difficult to mess image TOP have	'I have the impression that men don't get sick so easily'	VP
95	<i>Iu toko kiitoke yo</i> say things listen SFP	'Listen to what I'm saying'	VP
96	<i>Souiuono otokorasii to omou</i> like that manly Q think	'I think things like that are manly'	VP
97	<i>Tabun suru</i> maybe do	'I do that maybe'	VP

98	<i>Minna to sinaitoikenai tokini tukattemasu</i> everyone with must do when use.PROG	'I use that when everyone must do it'	VP
99	<i>Dakara tyotto motte kita</i> so little bring come.PAST	'So I brought a little here'	VP
100	<i>Teryouri tabe tai</i> home cooking eat want	'I want to eat homemade food'	VP

### Appendix 5: Number of participation in each style made by individuals

<b>Males</b>	Sociolinguistic Interviews	Lunchtime Recordings
Akira	2	7
Asahi	1	0
Daisuke	2	3
Eizi	2	1
Gen- goro	0	1
Goro	2	1
Hideo	2	1
Hiro	2	0
Hirosi	2	1
Hisasi	2	1
Itiro	2	2
Kaname	0	1
Katu	2	0
Kenzi	2	4
Kyoiti	1	0
Masaru	1	0
Motoo	1	0
Nori	1	0
Ryoya	1	0
Syotaro	2	1
Syun	2	1
Takeo	2	1
Takeru	1	0
Takesi	0	4
Taro	0	2
Tetu	0	1
Tomo	0	1
Tosiro	1	0
Yosuke	1	0
Total participation	37	34

<b>Females</b>	Sociolinguistic Interviews	Lunchtime Recordings
Aiko	0	2
Akiko	2	1
Arata	0	1
Ayumi	2	3
Ei	0	1
Emi	1	0
Eri	2	0
Hanako	2	0
Hitomi	1	0
Kanako	0	1
Kanari	0	2
Kaori	2	0
Konomi	1	0
Kyoko	0	2
Maho	0	4
Mako	2	0
Mami	1	0
Manami	0	2
Mayo	0	1
Mie	0	2
Miho	2	2
Miki	2	1
Momoko	1	4
Motoko	2	0
Moyo	1	0
Nanako	0	2
Nao	2	2
Noriko	2	0
Nozomi	2	1
R	31	9
Rie	0	3
Saki	2	0
Taeko	0	1
Tieko	0	1
Tika	2	1
Tomoko	1	0
Yoko	1	0
Yoriko	0	2
Yosiko	0	4
Total participation	67	55



**Appendix 6: Distributional results of response types across social and linguistic factors**

Social/ Linguistic factors	Sub- categories	Accept	Reject	Evade	Combin ation	No response	Total
Style	SIV	22 (18%)	9 (7%)	41 (34%)	1 (1%)	48 (40%)	121 (100%)
	LR	50 (20%)	17 (7%)	67 (27%)	2 (1%)	112 (45%)	248 (100)
Status	Low-High	25 (28%)	11 (12%)	17 (19%)	2 (2%)	35 (39%)	90 (100)
	Equals	32 (14%)	9 (4%)	75 (33%)	1 (0)	108 (49%)	225 (100)
	High-Low	15 (27%)	6 (11%)	16 (29%)	1 (2%)	17 (31%)	54 (100)
Topics	Possessions	5 (26%)	0	6 (32%)	0	8 (42%)	19 (100)
	Appearance	7 (16%)	4 (9%)	15 (33%)	0	19 (42%)	45 (100)
	Ability / perf ormance	45 (21%)	16 (7%)	61 (29%)	1 (0)	91 (43%)	214 (100)
	Extension of self	7 (16%)	2 (5%)	15 (35%)	1 (2%)	18 (42%)	43 (100)
	Personality	8 (17%)	4 (8%)	11 (23%)	1 (2%)	24 (50%)	48 (100)
Gender	female- female	40 (23%)	11 (6%)	49 (28%)	2 (1%)	70 (42%)	172 (100)
	female-male	10 (15%)	4 (6%)	25 (38%)	0	27 (41%)	66 (100)
	male- female	18 (22%)	9 (11%)	23 (28%)	1 (1%)	32 (38%)	83 (100)
	male- male	4 (8%)	2 (4%)	11 (23%)	0	31 (65%)	48 (100)
Syntactic pattern	Minimal	17 (13%)	8 (6%)	39 (30%)	1 (1%)	63 (50%)	128 (100)
	Complex	13 (19%)	3 (4%)	17 (25%)	0	35 (52%)	68 (100)
	Complex plus	42 (24%)	15 (9%)	52 (30%)	2 (1%)	62 (36%)	173 (100)
Hedges	Yes	15 (20%)	6 (8%)	23 (31%)	0	31 (41%)	75 (100)
	No	57 (19%)	20 (7%)	85 (29%)	3 (1%)	129 (44%)	294 (100)
Boosters	Yes	33 (18%)	18 (10%)	56 (31%)	2 (1%)	74 (40%)	183 (100)
	No	39 (21%)	8 (4%)	52 (28%)	1 (1%)	86 (46%)	186 (100)

**Appendix 7: Multivariate analysis of the contribution of features selected as significant to the probability of compliments being accepted (excluding non-responses)**

Input probability	0.027		
Log Likelihood	-132.44		
Total N	206		
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor weight</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Gender of addressees (p=0.0419)			
Female	0.59	73	150
Male	0.41	27	56
Range	18		

Factor groups not selected as significant are:  
 Speaker-gender, syntactic pattern, (in)directness, booster, hedge, status, topics, style.

**Appendix 8: Multivariate analysis of the contribution of features selected as significant to the probability of compliments being rejected (excluding non-responses)**

Input probability	0.065		
Log Likelihood	-72.58		
Total N	206		
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor weight</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Status (p=0.0283)			
Low to High	0.63	26	53
High to Low	0.55	18	37
Equals	0.32	56	116
Range	31		

Factor groups not selected as significant are:

Speaker-gender, recipient-gender, syntactic pattern, (in)directness, booster, hedge, topics, style.

**Appendix 9: Multivariate analysis of the contribution of features selected as significant to the probability of compliments being evaded (excluding non-responses)**

Input probability	0.135		
Log Likelihood	-131.68		
Total N	206		
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor weight</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Status (p=0.000292)			
Equals	0.69	56	116
High to Low	0.41	26	37
Low to High	0.39	18	53
Range	30		
Gender of addressees (p= 0.0177)			
Male	0.64	27	56
Female	0.47	73	150
Range	17		

Factor groups not selected as significant are:  
 Speaker-gender, syntactic pattern, (in)directness, booster, hedge, status, topics, style.

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