

COMPLIMENTARY RESPONSES IN THE PLAYS "AN IDEAL HUSBAND" AND "IMPORTANCE OF BEING THE EARNEST."

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Annotation: *This article explores the categories of responses to the complimentary statements on the basis of Oscar Wilde's plays. Additionally, it also emphasizes the significance of compliments and the purpose of using them on literature works. Moreover, this article investigates the point of Oscar Wilde's usage of compliments in his plays.*

Key words: *compliments, categories, complimentary responses, comment, pragmatics, speech act*

КОМПЛИМЕНТАРНЫЕ ОТКЛИКИ В ПЬЕСАХ «ИДЕАЛЬНЫЙ МУЖ» И «КАК ВАЖНО БЫТЬ СЕРЬЁЗНЫМ».

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Аннотация: *В данной статье исследуются категории ответов на комплиментарные высказывания на основе пьес Оскара Уайльда. Кроме того, подчеркивается значение комплиментов и цель их использования в литературных произведениях. Кроме того, в данной статье исследуется смысл использования комплиментов Оскаром Уайльдом в его пьесах.*

Ключевые слова: *комплименты, категории, комплиментарные ответы, комментарий, прагматика, речевой акт.*

Introduction

We frequently have interactions in our regular contacts that are not just informational exchanges. In addition to providing information, language is an effective instrument for expressing feelings, forming bonds with others, and creating a sense of connection. The speech act of complimenting is one such language occurrence that has the power to improve mood, increase self-esteem, and fortify social relationships. The importance of compliments, their effects on people and relationships, and the skill of giving and receiving praises will all be discussed in this article. Giving someone a compliment is a pleasant speaking act that shows respect, gratitude, or acknowledgement. They operate as spoken validations of a person's abilities, skills, or deeds, emphasizing their advantages and accomplishments. Compliment may be given for a variety of things, such as one's physical attributes, character qualities, abilities, successes, or even little deeds of compassion. Sincere praises have the ability to uplift someone's mood and foster a happy environment.

Methodology

The first expert to discuss the compliment responses was Pomerantz (1978).

The compliment response was then condensed into various forms by Herbert to make it easier to understand. According to Herbert, the compliment response is designed to restore balance amongst speakers after a compliment. Appreciation token, comment acceptance, praise upgrade, comment history, reassignment, return, scale down, question, disagreement, qualification, no acknowledgement, and request interpretation are the 12 categories of compliment responses identified by Herbert.¹

Herbert's (1986) Taxonomy of Compliment Responses

Response Type	Description	Example
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¹ Herbert, R.K. (1990). Sex-based Differences in Compliments Behavior. *Language in Society*, 19, 201-224

Example		
A. Agreement		
I. Acceptances		
1. Appreciation Token	This refers to the acceptance of the compliment	Thanks; thank you; [smile]
2. Comment Acceptance	Here the addressee accepts the complimentary force and offers a comment related to the topic	Thanks, it's my favorite too.
3. Praise Upgrade	Here the addressee accepts the compliment, but states that the complimentary force is not adequate	Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn't it?
II. Comment History	Comment Acceptance. However, the difference is that the comments here are impersonal, shifting the force of the compliment from the addressee	I bought it for the trip to Arizona.
III. Transfers		
1. Reassignment	Here the addressee accepts the compliment but transfers the complimentary force to a third person	My brother gave it to me.
2. Return	The addressee here agrees with the compliment assertion, but returns the complimentary force to the speaker	So's yours
B. Nonagreement		
I. Scale Down	The addressee here doesn't agree with the compliment, pointing some flaw in the object complimented or stating that the	It's really quite old.

	praise is an overstatement	
II. Question	The addressee here questions the sincerity or the appropriateness of the compliment	Do you really think so?
III. Nonacceptance	The addressee here claims that the object is not worth complimenting	I hate it.
1. Disagreement		
2. Qualification	The addressee here also shows disagreement, but it is weaker in that the recipient qualifies the addressor's claim using though, but, well, etc.	It's all right, but Len's is nicer.
IV. No Acknowledgement	Here the addressee seems unaware of the compliment and responds by giving either an irrelevant response or no response.	[silence]
C. Other Interpretations	Here the addressee, deliberately or not, interprets the speech act not as a compliment but rather as a request	You want to borrow this one too?
I. Request Interpretation		

Results

In the analysis below we will look into the explanations of each compliment response category with examples on the basis of Oscar Wilde's works, namely, "Importance of being Earnest" and "An Ideal Husband".

Whereby:

C= compliment

R= Response

1. Appreciation token

The appreciation token is the first sort of compliment response outlined by Herbert. Appreciation token is a compliment response in which the hearer accepts the compliment by saying thanks or thank you in response to the compliment. The speaker's compliment will elicit a verbal or nonverbal response from the listener. The acceptance of compliments is usually expressed through tokens such as *thank you*, *thanks*, *thank you so much*, *well*, and *thank you*, or non-verbal ones like *smiles* and *nods*.² For example:

C: *"Dear, you look weeks younger than that."*

R: *"How sweet of you to say so!"*

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: *"You are a very charming young lady!"*

R: *"How sweet of you to say that, Lord Caversham."*

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: *"You will always be as pretty as possible. That is the best fashion there is, and the only fashion that England succeeds in setting."*

C: *"Thank you so much, Lady Markby, for England . . . and myself."*

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

2. Comment acceptance-single

This is a compliment response in which the listener acknowledges the compliment given by the speaker. As a gesture of appreciation to the speaker, the hearer responds to the compliment with comments that are relevant to the theme of compliments. As an example, consider the following.

C: *"Wonderful man, wasn't he?"*

² Pomerantz, A. (1978). Compliment Responses: Notes on the Co-operation of Multiple Constraints. Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction, 79-112, New York: Academic Press.

R: "He was very remarkable, in many ways."

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: "What a tedious, practical subject for you to talk about, Mrs. Cheveley!"

R: "Oh, I like tedious, practical subjects. What I don't like are tedious, practical people. There is a wide difference."

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: "Ah! that is morbid of you, Mrs. Marchmont!"

R: "I am so glad to hear you say that. Marchmont and I have been married for seven years, and he has never once told me that I was morbid. Men are so painfully unobservant!"

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

In the first example, the compliment is given to a third person and they both agree that he is a wonderful man. In the second example the given compliment by a speaker has a negative connotation, however, the addressee accepts it as a positive statement and comments by some clarification.

3. Praise upgrade

Praise upgrade is compliment response which hearer receives a compliment and hearer responds the compliment. This compliment response emphasizes that the strength of the compliment given is not enough so that hearer will give statement/question to make sure the compliment is appropriate. The example can be seen below.

C: "What a horrid combination! So very unnatural!"

R: "I like looking at geniuses, and listening to beautiful people."

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: "Dear me, you are smart!"

R: "I am always smart! Am I not, Mr. Worthing?"

(Oscar Wilde, "Importance of being Earnest")

C: *“I see that after all these years you have not changed a bit, Gertrude.”*

R: *“I never change.”*

(Oscar Wilde, “An Ideal Husband”)

C: *“I see you are quite as wilful as you used to be.”*

R: *“Far more! I have greatly improved. I have had more experience.”*

(Oscar Wilde, “An Ideal Husband”)

C: *“And you are younger and more beautiful than ever. How do you manage it?”*

R: *“By making it a rule only to talk to perfectly charming people like yourself.”*

(Oscar Wilde, “An Ideal Husband”)

In this example we can see two categories of complimenting, the first is “praise upgrade” in the phrase *“by making it a rule only to talk to perfectly charming people”* and the second is “return” by saying next *“charming people like yourself”*

4. Comment history

Comment history is a compliment response where the hearer responds to the compliment given to him by giving a series of comments on the object being complimented. The type of compliment response is given by explaining the history of how the object that was complimented was obtained. This compliment category wasn't found in the provided works.

5. Reassignment

Reassignment is the compliment response which hearer receives the compliment given but hearer responds to the compliment by directing the third person or object itself.

C: "I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?"

R: "Yes, darling, with a little help from others." (Oscar Wilde, "Importance of being Earnest")

6. Return

Return is a type of compliment response in which the hearer accepts the compliment and responds to the compliment by giving the compliment back to the speaker as a form of appreciation to the speaker for the compliment given. The example can be seen below.

C: "And you are younger and more beautiful than ever. How do you manage it?"

R: "By making it a rule only to talk to perfectly charming people like yourself."

R: "Ah! you flatter me. You butter me, as they say here."

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: "What a perfect angel you are, Cecily."

R: "You dear romantic boy."

(Oscar Wilde, "Importance of being Earnest")

C: "I have always said, dear Margaret, that you were the most morbid person in London."

R: "Ah! but you are always sympathetic, Olivia!" (Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: "Well, I delight in your bad qualities. I wouldn't have you part with one of them."

R: *“How very nice of you! But then you are always nice.”*

(Oscar Wilde, “An Ideal Husband”)

C: *“Oh, I hope Mrs. Cheveley will stay here a little. I should like to have a few minutes’ conversation with her.”*

R: *“How very kind of you, Lady Chiltern! Believe me, nothing would give me greater pleasure.”* (Oscar Wilde, “An Ideal Husband”)

7. Scale down

Scale down is a compliment response in which the hearer does not agree with the compliment given to the object being complimented because the compliment

given is considered excessive by the hearer, then the hearer responds to the compliment by pointing out the weakness of the object being complimented.

The

example can be seen below.

C: *“You’re quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.”*

R: *“Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions.”* (Oscar Wilde, “Importance of being Earnest”)

C: *“It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.”*

R: *“Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.”*

(Oscar Wilde, “Importance of being Earnest”)

C: *“How very romantic!”*

R: *“Oh! I am not at all romantic. I am not old enough. I leave romance to my seniors.”* (Oscar Wilde, “An Ideal Husband”)

C: *“You have been a good friend to me, Arthur, a thoroughly good friend.”*

R: *“I don’t know that I have been able to do much for you, Robert, as yet.”*
(Oscar Wilde, “An Ideal Husband”)

8. Question

Question is a type of compliment response in which the hearer responds to the compliment by asking the speaker questions about the object being complimented.

The purpose of the question is to ask whether the compliment given to the object is sincere or appropriate, for example as follows.

C: *“I thought your frock so charming last night, Miss Chiltern. So simple and . . . suitable.”*

R: *“. Really? I must tell my dressmaker.”*
(Oscar Wilde, “An Ideal Husband”)

9. Disagreement

Disagreement is a type of compliment response in which in response to compliment, the hearer gives a statement that expresses disapproval of the compliment given by the speaker on the object being complimented. Hearer gives the statement that expresses disapproval because the compliment given by the speaker was considered wrong or inappropriate, for example as follows.

C: *“Oh! a genius in the daytime and a beauty at night!”*

R: *“I dislike her already.”*

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: *"Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly."*

R: *"I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?"*

(Oscar Wilde, "Importance of being Earnest")

C: *"How beautiful you look to-night, Gertrude!"*

R: *"Robert, it is not true, is it? You are not going to lend your support to this Argentine speculation? You couldn't!"* (Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: *"He has got more than pluck, sir, he has got genius."*

R: *"Ah! I prefer pluck. It is not so common, nowadays, as genius is."*

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: *"Handsome woman, Mrs. Cheveley!"*

R: *"Please don't praise other women in our presence. You might wait for us to do that!"* (Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

10. Qualification

Qualification is a type of compliment response where in response to a compliment usually the hearer responds to a compliment by accepting it. In this type of compliment response, the hearer usually responds to compliment by comparing the object being complimented with other better ones, usually using the words though, but, well, etc.

C: *"No; he was a man of a most subtle and refined intellect. A man of culture, charm, and distinction. One of the most intellectual men I ever met."*

R: *"Ah! I prefer a gentlemanly fool any day. There is more to be said for stupidity than people imagine. Personally I have a great admiration for stupidity."*

(Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

11. No acknowledgement

This is a compliment response in which the hearer responds to the compliment by indicating that hearer does not hear the compliment the speaker gives him. In this type of compliment response, usually the hearer responds to compliment by providing irrelevant comments or a topic shift to avoid the compliment given by the speaker to the hearer. Even in this type, the hearer can also not give any response in response to the compliment, for example as follows.

C: "You are Robert's greatest friend. You are our greatest friend, Lord Goring. No one, except myself, knows Robert better than you do. He has no secrets from me, and I don't think he has any from you."

R: "He certainly has no secrets from me. At least I don't think so." (Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: "You are my best friend. Perhaps by to-morrow you will be my only friend. My wife has discovered everything."

R: "Ah! I guessed as much!" (Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband")

C: "What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!"

R: (no response)

(Oscar Wilde, "Importance of being Earnest")

C: "What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary."

R: (no response) (Oscar Wilde, "Importance of being Earnest")

C: "Because you are like a pink rose, Cousin Cecily."

R: "I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me."

(Oscar Wilde, “Importance of being Earnest”)

12. Request interpretation

The last type of compliment response by Herbert (1990) is request interpretation. Request interpretation is a compliment response that consciously or not, the hearer interprets the compliment given by the speaker to him as a request.

Hearer thinks it is not a simple compliment. In this type of compliment response, the hearer interprets that the compliment given to him is not just a compliment but there is another desire. This type of compliment wasn't found in the provided works.

Discussion

Analysis of these two works showed that most compliments were given by men and addressees were mostly women. The majority of compliments were left without any responses or the hearer changed the topic of conversation. In order to be polite addressees who were complimented reacted the same by complimenting the speakers in return. It also showed that the characters being complimented used “praise upgrade” in order to show that complimentary statements were not satisfactory for them.

Complimentary comments are frequently employed in Wilde's plays to evince charm, wit, and societal insights. They bring out the distinct characteristics of the characters, accentuate the dialogue's humorous aspects, and shed information on the social dynamics of the era. Wilde's plays have endured in popularity because of his deft word choice and ability to write sentences that compliment one another.

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