

**University of New England**

**Jordanian-Australians' Perceptions and  
Practices of Compliments**

**A Dissertation submitted by**

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# CERTIFICATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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21<sup>st</sup> May 2019

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated perceptions and practices of compliments among twenty male Jordanian-Australians who have lived in Australia for a minimum of five years. Jordanian-Australians refer to Australians of Jordanian ancestry or Jordan-born individuals who live in Australia. The study focused on how compliments are given and received in social intercultural settings in both Arabic and English. The study also examined how languages, cultures and associated metadiscourse practices, which existed in these participants, influenced their perceptions and practices of compliments. Furthermore, the research explored male Jordanian-Australians' choice and use of compliment topics, syntactic structures, positive semantic carriers in compliments and compliment response strategies. The goal was to understand their intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness.

The study adopted an intercultural approach and targeted male Jordanian-Australians as its units of analysis. The theoretical framework for this study was built around Byram's (1997) theory of intercultural communicative competence. The theory consists of five elements (intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness), which were applied individually to test the hypotheses and suppositions of this study. Ethnographic methods that included semi-structured interviews and participant observation were used to collect rich sociolinguistic data. The study used thematic techniques of analysis to read and interpret the meanings of the data.

The study revealed that intercultural differences affect individuals' choice of strategies, topics and language. It also showed that the cultural specificity of complimenting as a social act is influenced by values such as politeness and sincerity. Furthermore, the study discovered the cultural dilemma participants face when complimenting in another language while simultaneously trying to retain their Jordanian cultural identity. Moreover, it highlighted the importance of explicit teaching of discourse functions, complimenting and intercultural awareness in migrant English language classrooms in order to develop intercultural communicative competence of students, migrants and refugees in Australia. In addition, the current study revealed intercultural gaps and opens doors for other research on complimenting, intercultural pragmatics and intercultural communication.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Introduction

This study examines male Jordanian-Australians' speech acts of complimenting from an intercultural perspective. Jordanian-Australians are Australians of Jordanian ancestry or Jordan-born individuals who live in Australia.

By focusing on how compliments are given and received in social intercultural settings, it investigates perceptions and practices of compliments among twenty male Jordanian-Australians who have lived in Australia for a minimum of five years. This research also examines how languages, cultures and associated metadiscourse practices of participants influence Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments. Furthermore, it explores male Jordanian-Australians' choice and use of compliment topics, syntactic structures and positive semantic carriers in compliments as well as their choice of compliment response strategies. The aim of the study is to understand male Jordanian-Australians' intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of interaction, and critical cultural awareness.

Byram's (1997) theory of intercultural communicative competence, which consists of five elements (intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness), forms the theoretical framework for the study. The study uses mixed qualitative methodologies including semi-structured interviews as well as participant observation to collect data. To read and interpret the meanings of the data, thematic techniques of analysis were used.

The study has both theoretical and pedagogical implications. Theoretically, it enhances our linguistic, pragmatic and cultural knowledge of the complimenting practices of participants in Australia. From a pedagogical perspective, it highlights the significance of providing pedagogical training for migrants and refugees to assist them develop cultural and pragmatic skills, which are necessary for successful settlement in Australia. The study is original since it is the first to study the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians. It brings together a study of male Jordanian-Australians' complimenting behaviours along with an analysis of the effects of social and cultural issues such as culture, language and communication on their language development, cultural awareness and first language and cultural pragmatic transfer. This study is also the first to adopt an intercultural approach in this area of research. Hence, it highlights the promises that an

intercultural approach holds for a better comprehension of the pragmatics of complimenting among participants.

Through recognition of intercultural, social, pragmatic and linguistic differences in complimenting, this study contributes to research on intercultural communication. Moreover, through exploration of sociopragmatic features of complimenting practices among participants, the research adds to knowledge in the field of interlanguage pragmatics as well as to knowledge of interactive linguistic teaching and learning of complimenting in migrant English language classrooms in Australia. It also makes a significant contribution to several subfields of linguistics such as speech act studies, linguistic politeness, and language and age studies, through its overlapping research interests. In this way, the study adds to knowledge and to the body of literature on how compliments are perceived and practised among participants in an immigrant context. Moreover, the study contributes new knowledge to intercultural perspectives on interlanguage pragmatics particularly to the development of intercultural communicative competence of migrants and refugees in Australia.

From an educational perspective, the current research provides insights into whether there is a need for further pedagogical training for immigrants and refugees to assist them to gain the necessary social, cultural and pragmatic skills to be able to successfully settle in Australia.

This research is an endeavour to contribute new theoretical and empirical ideas to the body of knowledge on intercultural and interlanguage pragmatics, especially with regard to complimenting. By investigating how male Jordanian-Australians perceive and practise intercultural compliments, this thesis contributes to knowledge of intercultural complimenting from a pragmatic perspective.

The focus of the study was on male participants only. While it was desirable to recruit participants from both genders, there were two impediments: (a) the traditional and cultural sensitivity that restricts a male researcher's access to female Jordanian-Australians, and (b) the limited availability of female participants of Jordanian origin in Australia.

This chapter introduces the present study, background and motivation for the study and significance of the study. It also spells out the research problem by identifying gaps in previous work on compliments, and thus it establishes the research questions to be addressed.

## 1.1 Background and Motivation for the Study

With today's globalisation and migration communication is "becoming more and more intercultural because it involves interactants who have different first languages, communicate in a common language and represent different cultures" (Kecskes, 2004, p. 2). Intercultural communication is a vibrant field of study that is based on widely circulating discourses about culture and cultural differences (Piller, 2011, 2017). Communicating competently in a new language is the main difficulty for most migrants, refugees and students because it requires not only linguistic, but also cultural and pragmatic competence. In order to avoid breakdown in communication, participants need to develop an awareness of nonlinguistic metadiscursive aspects of communication that are embedded in different cultures.

When communicating in any language, speakers are influenced by sociocultural norms and constraints that affect the way they communicate and the meaning they intend to convey (Al Falasi, 2007). According to Piller (2007), culture is ubiquitous, in that individuals may be influenced by it even if they do not mention it. Rizk (2003) emphasises the importance of culture and indicates that what is considered appropriate in one culture might be inappropriate in another. For example, praising a girl for being fat in a West African community is regarded as a compliment; however, it is perceived as an insult in most western communities (Al Falasi, 2007). All these cultural differences highlight the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence.

Another common factor that causes miscommunication is misunderstanding the speaker's intention. Thomas (1983) acknowledges that most of people's misunderstandings of each other are due to their inability to understand the other's intention. In order to avoid miscommunication, individuals need to learn how to use words and structures appropriately. As Austin (1962, p. 8) explains, "We do things with words". When individuals say "sorry", for example, they are not only uttering a word with four phonemes, but also apologising for something they did or said to someone else. Participants, therefore, need to learn how to use words and structures appropriately in order to achieve their intended goals. People face little or no difficulty in employing words in their first language since they unconsciously follow the customs and practices of their speech community. Participants, however, should learn and apply not only linguistic, but also pragmatic rules of their languages in intercultural communication encounters.

Pragmatics is defined as “the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms” (Yule, 1996, p. 4). Grice (1975) advises that pragmatics is concerned with the notion of implicature, which is the implied meaning, as opposed to the literal lexical meaning. Emphasising the importance of pragmatics in second language acquisition, Thomas (1983, p. 107) argues that “every instance of national or ethnic stereotyping should be seen as a reason for calling in the pragmatists and discourse analysts”. As Yule (1996, pp. 5–6) states, “nothing in the use of the linguistic forms is inaccurate, but getting the pragmatics wrong might be offensive”. Therefore, most of the barriers that participants face in intercultural communication are pragmatic. Consequently, pragmatic competence is necessary to minimise pragmatic failure.

Pragmatic competence is “the ability to use language effectively in order to understand language in context” (El Samaty, 2005, p. 341). It refers to the ability to understand and create utterances, which are appropriate to the social and cultural situations where the interaction occurs (Brown, H. D., 2000; Thomas, 1995). To achieve pragmatic competence, participants should appropriately use a variety of speech acts, including compliments. Hence, the speech act of complimenting is worth investigating.

Studying the speech act of complimenting is a beneficial contribution to the fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, particularly when looking at participants, such as male Jordanian-Australians, for three reasons. The first reason relates back to the researcher’s general observation in life. This study is, in a sense, a reflective exercise on my personal experience as an immigrant. I was born and raised in Jordan and then migrated to Australia at the mature age of 24 where I have been living for almost 13 years. I have multiple identities that stem from both my life history and my professional experiences. I am a linguist, an ESL Teacher, Translator, Vocational Trainer and Rehabilitation Therapist. Before migrating to Australia, I taught English as a Second Language in primary and secondary schools in Jordan. I also worked as a Translator for two years. In 2005, I moved to Australia to complete a Master’s degree in Applied Linguistics at the University of Technology, Sydney. After completing my degree, I worked as a Vocational Trainer and Educator where I taught language, literacy, general workplace preparation and courses connected with specific industries and areas of work to help people enter or re-enter the workforce. Most recently, I have been working as a Rehabilitation Therapist where I am assisting people (particularly participants) who are experiencing injury, disability, a health condition or social disadvantage to participate in training, education and employment, or to live independently and access services in the community.

It was from this wealth of professional and social experience with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds that I developed a keen interest in the pragmatics of complimenting. In my professional duties, I receive many compliments from people expressing gratitude for the services rendered to them. I have always been intrigued by the perceptions and practices of complimenting displayed by individuals who were born and raised in non-English speaking countries and have now lived in Australia for a significant amount of time. Studying and working in Australia, I noticed that migrants face various barriers, including learning the new language and culture. As a linguist, trainer and therapist, I observed that intercultural people face linguistic and sociopragmatic difficulties in intercultural interactions. This could be due to their limited pragmatic proficiency as well as their lack of understanding of the Australian cultural norms and traditions. Most migrants participate in English classes upon arriving in Australia; however, as reported by the study's participants, the focus of such classes is mainly on linguistic competence rather than pragmatic competence. As a former student of English in Australia, I noticed that English teachers tend to ignore pragmatic knowledge in classrooms, focusing instead on linguistic knowledge. As Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh, and Fatahi (2004) indicate, ignoring pragmatic knowledge leads to pragmatic failure, particularly in intercultural interactions.

Pragmatic knowledge, including knowledge about how to appropriately use speech acts in certain contexts is crucial to minimise intercultural miscommunication. A compliment is one type of speech act that often causes misunderstandings in intercultural interactions. In 2010, I attended a function where I met with an Australian friend who expressed admiration for a necklace that I was wearing. Being polite, I responded to this admiration with a common Jordanian Arabic response, “هو ملكك” (It is yours) and started to remove the necklace to give it to him. My friend took this response literally and accepted the necklace as a gift. He believed that I was sincere in my offer and did not understand that this was only a customary response in Jordanian Arabic culture and should not have been taken literally. It was only a sign of politeness, generosity and hospitality. The appropriate response for my friend would have been to say, “Thank you” and not to take the necklace.

Like most other speech acts, complimenting is determined by culturally specific social customs. Therefore, the lack of knowledge and understanding of the rules of communicating in a new language might have caused the miscommunication described above. It also can be argued that such misunderstanding probably occurred due to the lack

of understanding of each other's cultural norms and traditions. This instance remained with me for quite a long time, thus motivating me to carry out an intercultural study of compliments among male Jordanian-Australians as part of my doctoral studies. Anecdotal evidence from incidents similar to the one above suggests that many intercultural people who live in Australia face the same challenge. Thus, this project was motivated by the desire to investigate and understand intercultural complimenting more deeply through a systematic empirical study. It is hoped that the findings of the study will help participants in similar situations overcome cultural and pragmatic barriers and become pragmatically and culturally competent.

By conducting this study, as an intercultural researcher, I have had many opportunities to examine and study the speech act of complimenting with the expectation of better understanding the perceptions and practices of the pragmatics of compliments in an intercultural environment. I hope that the findings of this study and its recommendations will contribute toward developing intercultural communicative competences of participants in general and compliment practices specifically. For this reason, compliment use is a significant component of intercultural communicative competence that warrants study and teaching.

The second motivation for this study is related to the significance of compliments in communication. Compliments are utterances that include a positive evaluation by the speaker to the addressee (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). They are used to create connections, to foster solidarity and to establish and strengthen relationships. In addition to expressing admiration of positive qualities, compliments augment thanks, greetings or apologies and minimise face threatening acts such as criticism, scolding, or requests (Brown, P., & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1986; Wolfson, 1983, 1989). Moreover, compliments can be offered to express a range of diverse cultural customs and values (Manes, 1983; Manes & Wolfson, 1981), which means that what is highly appreciated in one culture, may not be valued as much in another culture.

Miscommunication often occurs when intercultural persons transfer customs and values of their culture and language to the new culture and language when offering compliments (Nguyen, 2007). As different cultures have diverse norms and rules of interaction in terms of pragmatic devices, including compliments (Sharifian, 2005), the compliment performance of male Jordanian-Australians shows significant differences from that of other Australians. This could possibly be due to differences in rules of speaking, cultural norms and social conventions between the Jordanian Arabic language

and the target language as well as differences between the Jordanian culture and the new culture.

Complimenting is also important because it reflects individuals' social and cultural values. Broadly speaking, people use different terms and linguistic constructions to express compliments and compliment responses. People differ in the frequency of their use of compliments and compliment responses (Golato, 2003). That frequency depends on age, gender, interpersonal relationships and social standing of the people involved. It also relies on the social context in which the compliments are produced (Cutting, 2002; Levinson, 1983). Because of traditional and cultural sensitivities that restrict a male researcher's access to female Jordanian-Australians, the study focused on male participants only.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Migrants and refugees continue to arrive in Australia hoping to start a new life. After landing in Australia, migrants and refugees face new experiences in learning the English language and adjusting to Australian society and culture. Originating from different cultural, social, racial, economic and linguistic backgrounds, migrants and refugees have different needs and objectives to achieve in Australia. For some migrants and refugees, learning the English language and adapting to the Australian culture are the main objectives. Most migrants and refugees face various challenges until some of them learn the English language and adapt to the Australian society and culture.

For most migrants and refugees, becoming multilingual and multicultural is a privilege; however, it poses other challenges. Having more than one language and culture, the ongoing influence of the first language(s) and culture(s) and the limited knowledge of the new language and culture are all difficulties that migrants and refugees continue to encounter in Australia.

Different cultures have diverse customs of communication with respect to pragmatic devices, including compliments (Sharifian, 2005). Therefore, the complimenting norms of male Jordanian-Australians may display major differences from that of other Australians due to dissimilarities in rules of speaking, cultural norms and social conventions between the Arabic language and the target language, as well as differences between the Jordanian culture and the new culture. Accordingly, miscommunication may occur when Jordanian-Australians compliment in intercultural situations. This study, therefore, documents and analyses experiences of male Jordanian-

Australians with regard to the pragmatics of compliments. It investigates whether linguistic, cultural or social rules of the first language and culture are among the sources of pragmatic failure that male Jordanian-Australians face in intercultural communications.

Having reviewed the literature (Please refer to Chapter Three), it can be stated that there is a tendency in previous research to focus on cross-cultural studies. Previous research on the pragmatics of compliments have predominantly targeted cross-cultural approaches where the main focus is on comparing and contrasting two cultural groups, two speech communities or two languages (Bait Jamil, 2016; Nelson, El Bakary, & Al Batal, 1993, 1996; Quran, 2012; Sorahi & Nazemi, 2013; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009; Tran, 2010). Although the term intercultural communication is, to a certain degree, comparable to the term cross-cultural communication as both terms include more than one culture (Li, 2015), the two terms can be different. The major difference between intercultural and cross-cultural approaches is that cross-cultural targets more than one culture without suggesting any interaction between the targeted cultures. The term intercultural, on the other hand covers interaction between cultures. From an intercultural view, it is possible to examine the life stories and experiences of individuals who move from one country or culture to another. It is also possible to investigate the interactions of individuals from diverse countries and cultures who live in one country such as Australia (Fries, 2006). There is a paucity of research conducted on the speech act of complimenting from an intercultural angle. Similarly, there is a lack of research targeting perceptions and practices of compliments and compliment responses among male Jordanian-Australians.

Consequently, this study is carried out (a) to investigate the perceptions and practices of compliments among male Jordanian-Australians by focusing on how the speech act of complimenting is given and received in social, educational and professional settings with a view to establishing practical application to the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Australia, (b) to examine how languages, cultures and associated metadiscourse practices influence participants' perceptions and practices of compliments, (c) to explore Jordanian-Australians' choice and use of compliment topics, syntactic structures and positive semantic carriers in compliments as well as their choice of compliment response strategies in order to understand their intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of interaction, and critical cultural awareness, (d) to shed light on the communicative strategies inherent in complimenting among male Jordanian-Australians and their wider implications for our understanding of this issue in other comparable intercultural and immigrant contexts and (e) to explain

theoretical ideas that are relevant in determining whether having an intercultural identity affects an individual's selection of strategies, topics and language in everyday social interactions.

This project fills the gap by departing from the lines of arguments advanced by previous scholars and diverging from their approaches. It adopts an intercultural approach, privileging participants (as opposed to two cultural groups or two speech communities) as units of its analysis. The present study investigates the phenomenon from an intercultural perspective, and thereby aims to fill the gap that is lacking in this research area.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

#### **Main objective:**

The main objective of the study is to investigate male Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments.

#### **Specific objectives:**

1. Identify the patterns of complimenting behaviours among male Jordanian-Australians.
2. Explore intercultural factors influencing compliments and compliment responses among male Jordanian-Australians.
3. Determine whether interculturalism affects an individual's choice of complimenting strategies.
4. Establish the pragmatic consequences of giving and responding to compliments among male Jordanian-Australians.
5. Provide new insights on the pragmatics of complimenting, which could inform the teaching of discourse functions in general and compliments particularly; with a view to assisting participants circumvent challenges of pragmatic failures.

A further motivation for this study was the desire to assist Jordanian migrants and students to adapt to their new social, academic and cultural environment. It also aimed at helping male Jordanian-Australians to overcome cultural and intercultural difficulties and acquire not only linguistic, but also relevant pragmatic and cultural knowledge about how to live successful and rewarding lives in Australia.

All these reasons motivated me to conduct an intercultural study on compliments and compliment responses. I hope that the study contributes to the field and fills gaps in previous research.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

The study investigates perceptions and practices of compliments among male Jordanian-Australians. It responds to three questions:

1. What does an intercultural approach say about the pragmatics of complimenting?
2. How does a focus on individual speakers (as opposed to groups or speech communities) and their experiences and life stories, help to understand the pragmatics of complimenting in immigrant contexts?
3. What can be learnt from the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians, and how can this knowledge contribute to understanding the dynamics of linguistic usage in immigrant contexts?

## **1.5 Gaps in Previous Research**

The communicative act of complimenting and responding to compliments have been studied from different languages perspectives. Although the complimenting behaviours has been researched for about two decades, there is a tendency in research to focus on cross-cultural studies. The literature on cross-cultural pragmatics research is well documented (Abdul Sattar & Lah, 2009; Al Falasi, 2007; Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1983; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; El Samaty, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Garcia, C., 1989; Ghawi, 1993; House, 1988; House & Kasper, 1987; Kim, 2003; Olshtain, 1983; Takahashi, T. & Beebe, 1987, 1993). The focus in most previous studies has been on compliments and compliment responses from a cross-cultural perspective. That is a study of behaviours and patterns in two or more cultures, which mainly refers to the comparative study of two cultures, treating cultures as different entities (Scollon & Scollon, 1995).

Although a cross-cultural study targets more than one culture, its main limitation lies in the fact that it does not suggest any interaction between individuals of the targeted cultures (Fries, 2006). Intercultural research, on the other hand, refers to characteristics of

communicative practices in a communicating environment (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). In other words, it is a situated interaction between individuals and groups from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which investigates the impact of culture on individuals and their actions, feelings, thoughts as well as their speaking and listening proficiency (Dodd, 1987, 1998). Hence, intercultural research is necessary as it covers interaction between or within cultures. From an intercultural view, it is possible to examine the life stories and experiences of individuals who move from one country or culture to another and to investigate the interactions of individuals from diverse countries and cultures who live in one country such as Australia (Fries, 2006).

Previous studies on the pragmatics of compliments have predominantly targeted cross-cultural approaches (Cedar, 2006; Chen, R., 1993; Golato, 2003; Herbert, 1989; Wen-Yi Hu, 1997; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Motaghi-Tabari & Beuzeville, 2012; Nelson et al. 1993, 1996; Nguyen, 2007; Peng & Zhao, 2014; Quran, 2012; Shabani & Zeinali, 2015; Sorahi & Nazemi, 2013; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009; Tran, 2010; Wolfson, 1981a). The focus of preceding studies was on comparing and contrasting two cultural groups or two speech communities studying groups or speech communities, ignoring the necessity and importance of investigating perceptions, experiences and life stories of individual speakers. Therefore, the findings of such studies were generalised to include all members of the targeted community or culture, disregarding differences between particular members of the same group or culture. Such generalisation is likely to make such results inadequate due to the overlooked and unstudied differences that still exist between different members of the same group.

Accordingly, no study, to the best of my knowledge, has ever focused on participants who have two languages and two cultures co-existing in them as a base for its analysis. Furthermore, no study, to the best of my knowledge, has ever been conducted on the pragmatics of compliments from an intercultural angle. Besides, no considerable research has been informed of current literature regarding intercultural compliments. Moreover, no research has ever targeted intercultural Jordanian-Australians as a basis for its analysis. Therefore, there is a paucity of research targeting perceptions and practices of compliments and compliment responses among Jordanian-Australians. In addition, no intercultural study, to the best of my knowledge, has ever adopted semi-structured interviews to collect intercultural data. Consequently, it is advantageous to examine the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians using such methods as they are

innovative in this area of study and they have a high validity, making the present project original and worth investigating.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study on male Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments is new and original insofar as it is the first attempt to examine the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians from an intercultural approach. In addition, it is original and innovative because it brings together a study of participants' complimenting behaviours along with an analysis of the effects of social and cultural issues such as family, cultural norms, traditions, language and communication on an individual's language development, cultural awareness and first language and cultural pragmatic transfer. This unique approach constitutes the originality and significance of this thesis in the sense that previous similar studies have largely focused on comparing and contrasting two cultures, groups or speech communities while overlooking the role and importance of individual speakers, which is at the heart of this work.

This research has potential benefits not only for male Jordanian-Australians, but also for language teachers, language schools' administrators, the Jordanian Department of Education, the Australian Department of Education and Training and the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Language teachers may refer to the research findings to develop effective strategies to assist migrants, refugees and students to overcome their language and cultural barriers. The Jordanian Department of Education may use the research findings to develop new policies in order to assist students to overcome their language difficulties and to communicate effectively in a second language. Furthermore, language school administrators, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Department of Education and Training may highlight the research outcomes to create new policies or amend existing ones in ways, which may benefit migrants and refugees in Australia.

## **1.7 Delimitations of the Study**

This research specifically relates to the people to whom the results can be generalised, namely male Jordanian-Australians. The members in the group investigated have been controlled with respect to age, gender and social status. Social class and other subcultural

dissimilarities were not studied in this research. Consequently, the generalisations and findings will be applicable only to participants who share similar features.

In this study, qualitative and ethnographic methods are used to examine spoken utterances in spoken situations. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews as well as participant observation. The study was based on a small sample of compliments and compliment responses derived from male Jordanian-Australians in social, academic and professional settings.

The focus of the study was on male participants only. While it was desirable to recruit participants from both genders, there were two impediments: (a) the traditional and cultural sensitivity that restricts a male researcher's access to female Jordanian-Australians, and (b) the limited availability of female participants of Jordanian origin in Australia.

These samples are enough to reflect male Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and methods of complimenting and responding to compliments as limiting the scope of the research assists in arriving at more accurate and comprehensive outcomes. However, the results are not expected to be generalised as individuals in similar social situations might respond differently at different times. Moreover, this research has not taken into consideration other participants and migrants in Australia. Henceforth, generalisations of the results to other settings can be difficult.

This study presents numerous subjects in pragmatic enquiry, such as overcoming pragmatic failures. It also offers a valuable tool for language and cultural researchers, teachers of pragmatics, intercultural communicators and relevant policy creators. Moreover, the results of the research contribute to knowledge on intercultural pragmatics research, intercultural communication and teaching and learning of English in intercultural and migrant classrooms in Australia.

## **1.8 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapter One introduced the thesis, its significance and its motivations. The chapter also identified gaps in the research on compliments, and thus established the research questions that this study aimed to address.

Chapter Two outlines previous empirical studies on pragmatics, pragmatic transfer, compliments and compliment responses as a background for the present study. It then recognises gaps in previous research on complimenting behaviours.

Chapter Three focuses on the theoretical framework upon which this research study is based: the theory of intercultural communicative competence. More specifically, it targets Byram's theory of intercultural communicative competence. This chapter then discusses the social act of communication, which refers to the use of language in context. The social act of communication underpins the study as a whole. In this chapter, the three major areas of inquiry, which are the most relevant to this study, are examined: the theory of intercultural communicative competence, speech act theory and the theory of linguistic politeness.

Chapter Four details the research methodology used to answer the research questions, summarises the overall strategy adopted and explains the research techniques employed to gather the necessary data. A detailed description of the participants is also provided. Furthermore, ethical issues, which were addressed in the research process, are discussed. The remaining sections of the chapter explain the data collection, data coding and data analysis procedures.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven are dedicated to the presentation of the findings of the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in Sydney, Australia. The analysis reveals participants' approaches towards and perceptions into giving compliments (Chapter Five), responding to compliments (Chapter Six) and intercultural complimenting together with teaching and learning complimenting (Chapter Seven). In discussing the findings from the data as a whole, Chapter Seven places special importance on the role and importance of complimenting in intercultural communication. Moreover, it highlights the significance of present and future teaching of complimenting to participants. Further, the results of participant observation are discussed and presented in Chapter Eight, which examines how compliments and compliment responses are practised in real-life social interactions.

The final chapter presents answers to the research questions. It also recaps the importance, benefits, originality, contributions and limitations of the study. In addition, it highlights the methodological and educational implications of the study and proposes suggestions for further research in this area of research.

# CHAPTER TWO: RELEVANT THEORIES

## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework upon which this research study is based: the theory of intercultural communicative competence (Byram's theory of intercultural competence), speech act theory and theories of linguistic politeness. According to De Vaus (2013, p. 11):

Concepts and theories developed by others seem like reasonable summaries or accounts of what we have observed then we will make use of them. Where our observations are new or different or are not adequately summarized by existing concepts and theories we may need to adapt or modify the existing ideas.

Following De Vaus' (2013) suggestion, the literature review of this thesis commenced with the aim of either embracing a current theoretical framework or adapting existing philosophies.

The use of language is not only a linguistic action, but also a vital part of social communication. Van Dijk (1977) indicates that rules of language systems have established under the influence of the structure of interaction in societies. Accordingly, compliments and compliment responses are social acts of communication because they act as "social lubricants" (Wolfson, 1983, p. 89), which aim to establish and maintain social interaction.

Since the aim of this study is to investigate perceptions and practices of compliments among intercultural individuals, it is related to the theory of intercultural communicative competence. Furthermore, because complimenting is one type of speech act, which serves multiple actions in discourse, it is associated with speech act theory. Additionally, as communication involves two or more individuals interacting with one another through language in certain settings, it can be partially linked to the theory of linguistic politeness. Compliments are generally offered for many reasons including showing politeness and maintaining harmony in communication, and hence it can be based on politeness theory (Please refer to Chapter Three).

The theory of intercultural communicative competence (Byram's theory of intercultural competence), speech act theory and theories of linguistic politeness offer the theoretical frame for this research study.

## **2.1 Theory of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

The present study is supported by the theory of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1998; Risager, 1998), a philosophical approach where lines between language and culture cross. More specifically, the theoretical framework for this study is built around Byram's (1997) theory of intercultural communicative competence. Byram's (1997) theory consists of five elements (intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of interaction, and critical cultural awareness), which are applied individually to examine the hypotheses and suppositions of this study, as explained in section 2.1.9 below.

The following sections discuss relevant theories and different aspects of language and culture. It also presents how these theories are used to inform arguments in the analysis of male Jordanian-Australians' pragmatic use of compliments in intercultural communication encounters.

### **2.1.1 Interculturality**

Globalisation increases interaction between people, which in turn increases collaboration between different cultures and cultural groups. With increased migration, intercultural contact zones, clashes and prospects are becoming more frequent and interrelated (Koegeler-Abdi & Parncutt, 2013).

Interculturality is defined as "an awareness and a respect of difference as well as the socioaffective capacity to see one through the eyes of others" (Kramsch, 2005, p. 553). It requires that one culture accepts different customs and norms of a foreign culture with its own. Yuan (2002, pp. 80–81) explains that interculturality "is linked to language use and explorations of similarities and differences between cultures. It covers recognition and reflection of the learner's own culture as well as the target culture, and concentrates on a point of critical observations and understanding of both home and target cultures". In general, interculturality involves transculturality (Koegeler-Abdi & Parncutt, 2013). Transculturality is described as spreading through other cultures and including features of more than one culture (Cuccioletta, 2002). Frequent contact between different cultural groups usually affects the cultures themselves. For example, the Jordanian Christian community in Sydney, Australia, is not the same as the Christian communities in Jordan because individuals in Sydney have adapted to their new situation in Sydney.

Knowledge and awareness of both home and foreign cultures leads to effective interculturality. Similarly, knowledge of both the target culture and target language facilitates objective intercultural communication (Paltridge et al., 2009). Hence, participants need to study and understand cultures.

Understanding cultures as practices through which people participate becomes centrally significant. To put it another way, participants need not only to develop knowledge about an additional culture, but also to perceive and understand themselves in relation to the new culture, that is, to become intercultural. Learning to become intercultural includes much more than knowledge of the target culture. It encompasses learning to understand how one's own culture shapes insights of oneself, of the whole world and of correlation with others (Liddicoat, 2005). According to Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, and Kohler (2003, p. 46), intercultural language learning involves:

Developing with learners an understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture. It is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognised, mediated, and accepted. Learners engaged in intercultural language learning develop a reflective stance towards language and culture, both specifically as instances of first, second, and additional languages and cultures, and generally as understandings of the variable ways in which language and culture exist in the world.

Furthermore, participants need to develop awareness of how they can individually engage with linguistic and cultural diversity.

In the present study, interculturality was crucial to assess male Jordanian-Australians' knowledge and awareness of both the Jordanian and Australian cultures and the Jordanian Arabic and Australian English languages. This knowledge in turn helped to investigate male Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments, and thus achieved the goals of this project.

### **2.1.2 Acculturation**

Acculturation refers to the process of integration and assimilation to the target cultural group both socially and psychologically. It is the process through which an individual or group from one culture adopts the practices and beliefs of another culture, while still maintaining their own distinct cultural values and practices (Schumann, 1978). According

to Gibson (2001), acculturation deals with changes that occur because of interaction with culturally divergent individuals, groups, cultural groups and social impacts.

Broadly speaking, an individual may assimilate to the target culture and language with dissimilar social and psychological distance. Therefore, people may need to acquire “the second language only to the degree that he acculturates” (Schumann, 1978, p. 29). Schumann (1978) explains that illustration of the numerous features of acculturation from one culture to another can be determined by five main factors. These five factors are social factors, affective factors, personality factors, cognitive factors and instructional factors. Social factors illustrate the social pressure participants’ face when living in a culture that may encourage them to accept its customs and norms. Affective factors explain the motivation and intention behind changing cultural and language behaviour. Personality factors refer to one’s motivation to achieve a more satisfactory self-presentation and self-image in the target culture. Cognitive factors clarify conscious or subconscious replication of what individuals from the other culture say or do by participants. Instructional factors show the impact of education and training obtained from the target culture and language on participants. Schumann’s (1978) study was a case study of the untutored acquisition of English by a 33 year old Costa Rican named Alberto. The study can be considered intercultural because it did not compare and contrast the participant with another individual from another culture or group, but rather investigated his linguistic development when living in any English speaking country.

Acculturation is most frequently investigated among people who live in countries and cultures other than their native country and culture, that is, among migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and students (Berry, J. W. 2006).

### **2.1.3 Intercultural Pragmatics**

The use of language in intercultural communication has been a significant, but frequently ignored topic in pragmatics studies. Intercultural pragmatics is a division of linguistic research, which includes pragmatics and intercultural communication (Li, 2015). In his book “Intercultural Pragmatics”, Kecskes (2004) addresses this subject from a bilingual, intercultural and sociocognitive perception. According to Kecskes (2004, p. 15), intercultural pragmatics is concerned with “the way the language system is put to use in social encounters between human beings who have different first languages, communicate in a common language, and usually, represent different cultures”. Moreover, intercultural

pragmatics examines problems arising in interactions among individuals from different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Wierzbicka, 2006).

Studies of linguistic pragmatics has mainly focused on monolingual speakers, which raises the question of how linguistic competence can be accomplished when individuals who have diverse native languages communicate with one another (Alvarez, 2014). Kecskes (2004) argues that as intercultural interactions increase, a lingua franca is used to establish shared meaning between participants. Supporting his viewpoint, Kecskes (2004) developed two predominant approaches. First, the sociocognitive approach, which combines the cognitive philosophical and sociocultural interactional methods. Second, the discourse segment method, which stresses the importance of analysing the “discourse” level instead of a single analysis of utterances. In Kecskes’ view (2004), understanding both the prearranged and developing sides of intention is crucial for comprehension of intercultural pragmatics.

Overall, intercultural pragmatics is crucial to this study of male Jordanian-Australians’ perceptions and practices of the pragmatics of compliments as it helps to examine how language systems are employed in social situations between individuals who have diverse native languages and cultures, but communicate in a mutual language, in this case Australian English.

#### **2.1.4 Intercultural Communication**

Cultures vary from one another, and as a result communication and interaction practices of individuals unavoidably differ due to their dissimilar perspectives on the world. Globalisation and immigration create conditions for increased contact and interaction between people from diverse cultures (Samovar & Porter, 1997). Such contact, which leads to “a transactional, symbolic process involving the attribution of meaning between people from different cultures” (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002, p. 165), is called intercultural communication. Along the same lines, Lustig and Koesters (1999, p. 49) defined intercultural communication as “a symbolic process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings”. Intercultural communication is described as the study of communication between individuals whose “cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough” (Samovar & Porter, 1997, p. 70) to modify their interaction.

Intercultural communication is not always easy, particularly if people lack understanding of the other’s language and culture. In their theory of intercultural

communication, Samovar and Porter (1997) explain the procedure of how the meaning of a certain communication varies when it is programmed by an individual in one culture and interpreted by another in a different culture. In certain circumstances, the meaning can be interpreted differently than was intended by the speaker. According to Porter and Samovar (1991), interaction practices and habits of individuals from diverse cultures diverge due to their dissimilar perspectives. Such differences may cause intercultural miscommunication, which happens “whenever a person from one culture sends a message to be processed by a person from a different culture” (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009, p. 7). The main source of difficulty in intercultural communication can be related to an individual’s limited knowledge and understanding of the other’s culture (Yuan, 2002). This difficulty can be overcome by enhancing a speaker’s cultural awareness of the target culture. Another source of difficulty in communication can be linked to an individual’s failure to comprehend a speaker’s intention (Miller, 1974), which can be minimised by placing more focus on the study of pragmatics.

Overall, understanding the target culture leads to intercultural communicative competence. Liaw (2006, p. 50) points out that learning a culture requires “gaining insights into how the culture of the target language interacts with one’s own cultural experience”. Yuan (2002) adds that when learning a new culture, it is crucial to consider individuals’ cultural perceptions, beliefs and values as this may facilitate successful intercultural communication. Communicative competence is described in the following section.

### **2.1.5 Communicative Competence**

Participants should acquire not only the grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology and phonology, but also social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately. The ability to give and reply to compliments appropriately in intercultural contexts is an instance of communicative competence.

The theory of communicative competence was grounded on the larger comprehension of the interconnection between linguistic form and social setting, which was initiated through the research of Malinowski (1923), Firth (1957) and Austin (1962). It was also grounded on the comprehensive perception of language use developed by Hymes (1966, 1972a, 1974) as “communicative competence”. The theory of communicative competence was proposed by Hymes (1966) as a reaction against

Chomsky's (1965) theory of linguistic competence. It attracted great discussion among scholars on what is considered competence in language.

According to Chomsky (1965), competence is an ideal speaker-hearer's knowledge of the rules of language, which is implicit and invisible. Chomsky (1965) states that the ideal speaker-hearer's competence dismisses performance variables such as memory limitations, shifts of attention, shift of interest, false starts, hesitations and pauses. Performance, on the other hand, refers to the use of language in tangible situations. It is affected by "grammatically irrelevant conditions" and is recognised by the principles of suitability in preference and grammaticality (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3).

Critics of Chomsky (1965) argue that he places a great emphasis on linguistic competence: the knowledge of linguistic forms (Brown, H. D., 1994; Hudson 1980; Hymes, 1972a). Hudson (1980) explains that Chomsky (1965) focuses on linguistic competence and ignores other variables such as speakers' capability to use that knowledge appropriately in different situations, speakers' motivation, significance of context and social variables. Similarly, Hymes (1972a) argues that Chomsky (1965) ignores sociolinguistic competence, which refers to the sociolinguistic factors that decide the suitability of a word in a certain context.

According to Hymes (1972a, p. 278), knowledge of the rules of grammar is not enough to allow a speaker to communicate effectively and that emphasis should be given to the "rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless". Hymes (1966, 1972a) opposed Chomsky's (1965) theory of competence and introduced the theory of communicative competence, which comprises the knowledge to constitute grammatically correct sentences and the aptitude to employ them in appropriate contexts. Hymes (1972a) states that linguistic theory needs to be combined with the theory of communicative competence, which "integrates linguistic competence in cultural knowledge that includes social and psychological principles governing the use of language, as well as abstract 'grammatical' rules pertaining to the linguistic code" (Nguyen, 2007, p. 31). Hymes' (1972a) theory of communicative competence has encouraged other researchers (Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980) to develop comprehensive theories of communicative competence. According to Canale and Swain (1980), the theory of communicative competence includes three competences: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Canale (1983) developed a fourth competence and called it discourse competence. Types of competence are presented in Table 2.1 below.

**Table 2.1: Types of competence**

<b>Competence type</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Grammatical competence	“Knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics and phonology” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 29).
Sociolinguistic competence	“The extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors, such as status of participants, purposes of interaction and the norms or conventions of interaction” (Canale, 1983, p. 7).
Discourse competence	The ability to use cohesive devices in order to achieve unity of thought and continuity in a text (Canale, 1983).
Strategic competence	The use of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to make up for gaps in linguistic knowledge or for communication breakdown (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Canale and Swain’s (1980) theory of communicative competence recognises that an individual’s competence in a language is recognised not only in terms of linguistic competence, but also in terms of pragmatic, discourse and strategic competence. This expansion has provided an enriching view of the knowledge and skills that individuals need to grasp in order to communicate appropriately and successfully in a new language (Young, 2003). The emphasis of Canale and Swain’s (1980) theory is on an individual person in a social setting. This framework assists to understand what each individual requires to learn and to do to effectively and successfully interact with others. Such focus on a single person’s involvement in interaction contradicts the insight of current literature that has supported the point that capabilities, activities and events do not belong to a single person but are equally created by all informants.

Various researchers have discussed this view of communication and competence. In earlier research, Kramsch (1986) referred to communicative competence as interactional competence. The theory of communicative competence has since been revised. Bachman (1990, p. 84) developed the theory of communicative language ability, which is the “knowledge, or competence and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualised communicative language use”. According to Bachman (1990), the theory of communicative language ability includes three components: language competence, strategic competence and psychophysiological

mechanisms. Table 2.2 summarises Bachman’s (1990) theory of communicative language ability.

**Table 2.2: Theory of communicative language ability**

<b>Competence type</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Language competence	Refers to a set of knowledge components that are used in communication.
Strategic competence	Is the mental ability that helps determine communicative goals, assess resources to convey a message, plan communication and execute the communication intention.
Psychophysiological competence	Is used to control the channels (auditory or visual), or modes (productive or receptive).

With regard to language competence, Bachman (1990) divided it into two components: organisational competence and pragmatic competence. Organisational competence is split into two subcomponents: grammatical and textual. Similarly, pragmatic competence is divided into two subcomponents: illocutionary and sociolinguistic. In addition, Bachman (1990) emphasises the importance of pragmatic competence in communication. According to Bachman (1990), illocutionary competence governs the variety of strategies that are required to express and understand language function whereas sociolinguistic competence determines the suitable choice of the strategies to suit a certain context. Language competence is presented in Table 2.3 below:

**Table 2.3: Language competence**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Subcomponent</b>
Organisational competence	Grammatical
	Textual
Pragmatic competence	Illocutionary
	Sociolinguistic

Likewise, Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) divided pragmatic competence into two components: pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence. Leech defines pragmalinguistics as the study of “the linguistic resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions” (1983, p. 11). Kasper (1997) added that these

linguistic resources refer to different pragmatic strategies that a speaker can employ (when interacting with others such as directness or indirectness) to understand a speech act such as complimenting and to understand the linguistic forms that can be used to intensify or soften communicative acts. Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, is defined as “the sociological interface of pragmatics” (Leech, 1983, p. 2). It is related to cultural values and expectations (Leech, 1983) and “the conventions governing interactions, including which registers and topics are appropriate under different circumstances” (Hurley, 1992, p. 261). Applying the distinction between sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistic to the speech act of complimenting, “speakers’ choices of overall pragmatic strategies to realise compliments (explicit, implicit, noncompliment or opt out strategies) and compliment responses (acceptance, rejection or deflection) are examples of sociopragmatics in action” (Nguyen, 2007, p. 35). However, their “choices of semantic formulas as conventions of means” and their “choices of specific wording as conventions of forms to realise a particular strategy fall under the pragmalinguistic aspect” (Nguyen, 2007, p. 35). Table 2.4 below presents types and definitions of each type of language competence.

**Table 2.4: Types and definitions of language competence**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Grammatical competence	Knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax and phonology.
Textual competence	Knowledge of how to achieve cohesion and coherence in a text.
Illocutionary competence	Knowledge to use language to express a wide range of functions.
Sociolinguistic competence	Knowledge that enables us to perform language functions in a contextually appropriate manner.

Overall, it can be stated that participants require not only knowledge of language forms, meanings and functions, but also how to apply this knowledge with a consideration of the social and cultural contexts (Gass & Selinker, 200; Lightbown & Spada, 1999) in order to appropriately convey their intended meaning, for example, to give and respond to compliments in an intercultural context.

### **2.1.6 Intercultural Communicative Competence**

Intercultural communicative competence refers to the skills and abilities required to accomplish effective communication in an intercultural context (Xiao & Petraki, 2007).

Guilherme (2002) states that intercultural communicative competence involves having a good awareness of the target language and culture, which enables individuals to efficiently communicate with its members. In addition, it includes having the skills required to successfully transfer between the target culture and their own culture. According to Byram, Nichols, and Stevens (2001), intercultural communicative competence refers to the ability of participants to reach a common understanding and to deal with diverse cultures positively. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence requires four skills: character strengths, interaction skills, psychological adjustment and cultural knowledge (Jandt, 1998, 2004).

Byram's (1997) theory was a unique and broadly acknowledged one (Deardorff, 2006a; Liaw, 2006). The theoretical framework for this study is built around Byram's theory of intercultural communicative competence, which addresses the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to communicate successfully in intercultural contexts. The theory consists of the following five elements, which were applied individually to test the hypotheses and suppositions of the study:

1. Intercultural attitudes: inquisitiveness and openness, willingness to cease incredulity about other cultures as well as beliefs about one's culture. Male Jordanian-Australians' intercultural attitudes and motivation including openness, respect of other cultures, tolerating, positive and negative perception, "anxiety, perceived social distance, attraction, ethnocentrism, prejudice" (Wiseman, 2002, p. 211), interest and willingness to learn about others' behaviours in intercultural communication are explained by applying this element.
2. Knowledge: of social cultural groups and their products, perceptions and practices in individuals' own country and in the other's country. It also involves knowledge of the overall process of individual and social communication of foreign individuals and cultures joining in one geographic location. In this regard, male Jordanian-Australians' knowledge of various cultural groups, cultural products, cultural characteristics such as norms, perceptions, practices, rules of interaction and language as well as their knowledge of the identity of the home culture and the target culture with regard to history, geography and social institutions (Byram, 1997) are illustrated. This knowledge provides a good comprehension of others' behaviour in intercultural interaction (Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989).
3. Skills of interpreting and relating: skills to understand a text or event from another culture and the ability to describe and relate it to a document or events from one's

own culture. In this case, behaviours that reflect the ability and skills of male Jordanian-Australians to effectively understand, receive and respond to a compliment given by an individual from another culture are explained through the element of skills of interpreting and relating.

4. Skills of discovery and interaction: skills to gain new knowledge and information of a foreign culture and the ability to utilise this knowledge and skills under the influence of intercultural interactions. The ability of male Jordanian-Australians to acquire information and knowledge about other cultural groups' perceptions and practices of compliments and their skills and ability to apply this knowledge competently in an intercultural context are investigated. In addition, male Jordanian-Australians' behaviours, which "reflect the ability to communicate in an adaptive, flexible and supportive manner" (Wiseman, 2002, p. 219) are enlightened by applying this element.
5. Critical cultural awareness: skills and the ability to assess critically and based on clear principles, viewpoints, products and practices in own culture and in other cultures (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, pp. 12–13). In the present study, male Jordanian-Australians' knowledge and awareness of other cultural groups and their products and practices with respect to the pragmatics of complimenting are clarified.

The five components of Byram's (1997) theory can operate together to accomplish intercultural communicative competence; however, they can also be evaluated individually (Deardorff, 2006a). The theory of intercultural communicative competence is significant for this present study as the level of intercultural communicative competence impacts participants' perceptions and practices of compliments in intercultural interactions.

Through the impact of communicative language in interaction, it has become broadly acknowledged that intercultural communicative competence is essential for successful intercultural communication. Similarly, through the impact of communicative language on education, it has become widely recognised that intercultural communicative competence is crucial to good classroom training, and thus it should be the main focus of language teaching (Savignon, 1997) of students, migrants and refugees.

The understanding of intercultural communicative competence has been impacted by the field of pragmatics; hence, the present study was grounded in the theory of intercultural communicative competence. Likewise, it has been affected by the philosophy

of language regarding speech acts; thus, the present study was also based on speech act theory. Speech act theory is explained in the next section.

## **2.2 Speech Act Theory**

Speech act theory has been one of the most significant philosophies in the field of pragmatics. Austin (1962) developed the principles of speech act theory, which hypothesises that countless utterances, named speech acts, not only provide information but also achieve certain actions. Following this development, Searle (1969) claimed all utterances, meanings and actions included in speech acts are perceived as one unit. In other words, Searle (1969) argued that all speech acts are expressive, rule administered and accomplished and form part of an individual's linguistic capability. Later on, P. Brown and Levinson (1978) presented the notion of indirect speech acts, advising that although some address the listener directly, the majority of speech acts are indirect.

### **2.2.1 Speech Acts**

People often use sentences to complete certain social actions or functions. When a person compliments a colleague on his or her new car, this sentence functions as a description of the car and as a way to maintain social harmony and relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Social actions performed by statements are called speech acts (Austin, 1962).

Speech acts are utterances that have performative functions in language and interaction (Austin, 1962). According to Bach (1998, p. 1):

Almost any speech act is really the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention: there is the act of saying something, what one does in saying it, such as requesting or promising, and how one is trying to affect one's audience.

The current use of the term "speech acts" is associated with Austin's (1962) creation of performative sentences and his concepts of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, which are explained in Section 2.2.2 below. There are various types of speech acts such as: order (Turn down the radio, please?), apology (I apologise for the faulty DVD

player.) or compliment (What a nice shirt.). Speech act theory is discussed in the following section.

### 2.2.2 Theory

Speech act theory is mainly concerned with the pragmatic topics of language such as the use of language rather than its forms. The purpose of this theory is to combine both speech and acts together to reveal that people can use words not only to say things, but also to do things (Austin, 1962). In his book “How to do Things with Words”, Austin (1962, p. 61) states that there is a group of verbs called “performatives” (*bet, declare, announce, promise*), which can be employed to express intentions. Austin (1962) recognised three different levels of function beyond the act of the sentence itself:

- Locutionary act: saying a sentence with a specific sense and reference, roughly equivalent to “meaning” in the traditional sense.
- Illocutionary act: making a statement, offer, promise, etc. when saying a sentence by virtue of the conventional “force” associated with it.
- Perlocutionary act: all of the “effects” on the audience, whether intended or unintended, brought about by means of saying the sentence, such effects being special to the circumstances of utterance.

According to Austin (1962, p. 108) the locutionary feature of an utterance should be differentiated from its illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects:

*/performing/ a locutionary act ... is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which is again equivalent to meaning in the traditional sense. Second, we said that we also perform illocutionary acts such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, etc., i.e. utterances which have a certain conventional force. Thirdly, we may also perform perlocutionary acts: what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring and even, say, surprising or misleading. (Austin, 1962, p. 108)*

Nguyen (2007) argues that Austin (1962) ignored the speaker’s intention and listener’s implication, as he claimed an illocutionary act can be successfully performed by linguistic convention and not intention.

In certain circumstances, the illocutionary force of a statement and its perlocutionary act may not match, which leads to misunderstandings in communication. An Australian man, for example, might compliment his Jordanian friend on losing weight, with “Hi, Ali! You have lost weight. You look amazing now!” – the locutionary act. The Australian man might have sincerely intended to compliment his Jordanian friend on his appearance – the illocutionary act. The perlocutionary act, however, is understood in how the Jordanian man reacted to this locutionary act. The Jordanian man might smile, say “Thank you” and feel pleased, or he might misinterpret the intention of the Australian man, perceive the compliment as sarcastic or insincere and say “Really? I try to exercise and eat healthy but I can’t lose any weight”. In the latter case, the intention of the Australian man was misinterpreted, causing misunderstanding in communication.

The illocutionary act is essential to speech act theory as well as to this study of compliments. Since there are numerous illocutionary acts based on the speaker’s perception, Searle (1975) constructed a taxonomy of speech acts, which acknowledged five basic types of speech acts:

- Representatives: which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (*believe, affirm, report*).
- Directives: which express the speaker’s attitude towards some prospective action by the hearer (*ask, challenge, command, insist, request*).
- Commissives: which commit the speaker to a certain future course of action (*guarantee, promise, swear, vow*).
- Expressives: which express feelings and attitudes about a state of affairs (*apologise, compliment, thank, welcome*).
- Declaratives: which alter the external status or condition of an object or situation by making the utterance (*announce, declare, name, resign*).

In addition, other researchers formulated their own classifications with some modification (Bach & Harnish, 1979; Fraser, 1975; Hancher, 1979; Tsui, 1994); however, their taxonomies are principally similar to Searle’s (1975) taxonomy. For example, Bach and Harnish (1979) established a comprehensive taxonomy in which each type of illocutionary act is categorised by the nature of attitude communicated. The authors adopted the terms “constative” and “commissive” from Austin (1962) and the term “directive” from Searle (1975). They also preferred the word “acknowledgement” to Austin’s “behabitive” and Searle’s “expressive”, for greetings, congratulations and

apologies. Hancher (1979) agreed with Searle's taxonomy. He called speech acts, such as "invitations" and "offerings", as "hybrid speech acts", since they fundamentally hold elements of both "commissive" and "directive illocutionary forces". Tsui (1994, p. 135) describes "informatives", which are a class of speech acts presented by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, p. 41) as "a more general category which covers not only utterances which provide information, but also those which report events or states of affairs, recount personal experience and express beliefs, evaluative judgements, feelings and thought". Although Searle (1975) argues that compliments fit into the "expressive" type, Tsui (1994) claims that compliments belong to the category of "informatives", which includes both "declaratives" and "expressives". Compliments, therefore, belong to the positive-indicating subgroup of "expressives", with the aim to convey the speaker's approval, judgement or viewpoint towards the addressee.

Speech acts can be direct or indirect. Direct speech acts have a clear connection between form and function (This is a beautiful house). On the other hand, indirect speech acts possess no such relationship (You must spend a lot of time in the gym) and "are performed by means of another" (Searle, 1969, p. 60). In these two examples, the speaker indirectly compliments the listener on their appearance and possession. There is no connection between the surface form of these two utterances and their apparent illocutionary force, which as a result causes confusion to participants.

Since speech acts are greatly multifaceted in form and in meaning, participants often face difficulty communicating in the target language. According to Leech (1983, p. 23), "analyzing illocutionary verbs, we are dealing with grammar, whereas when we are analyzing the illocutionary force of utterances, we are dealing with pragmatics". Consequently, in order to be successful in understanding speech acts in the target language, participants must be linguistically competent, socially, culturally and pragmatically knowledgeable.

### **2.2.3 Criticisms of Speech Act Theory**

Many researchers criticised speech act theory (Bach, 1998; Fraser, 1983; Hancher, 1979; Levinson, 1983; Schmidt, 1983; Tsui, 1994) claiming that it is inadequate as a basic theory for the pragmatics of verbal communication. Gajaseni (1994, p. 9) claims that speech act theory has the following limitations:

- The taxonomy of categories of speech acts are mainly delivered from performative verbs, which are restricted in number, and thus cannot reveal all the interactional functions of a statement.
- Communicative acts occur successively in communication and rarely in isolation. Speech act analysis, however, is mostly grounded in isolated sentences. As a result, speech act theory fails to clarify how an utterance like “Good work” can be understood either as a compliment or as an ironic statement.
- Interaction is a cooperative practice between the speaker and the listener. Hence, certain speech acts, such as promising and inviting, cannot be understood by one person. Speech act theory seems to take into consideration only the speaker’s intention.
- Speech act theory presumes a one to one connection between a statement and its illocutionary force. In other words, it allocates a single act to each utterance, for example, the act is categorised as a compliment, apology, order, request, promise, invitation, etc. In reality, a statement does not generally decide the type of illocutionary act being completed, and in communication, a single utterance can achieve more than one speech act. Consider the following example:

A: Would you like another Coffee?

B: Please. You make nice coffee, but make it a small one this time.

Certain utterances may include more than one speech act in diverse ways, which highlights the concern that listeners can specify the intended force. B’s response above includes a compliment (nice coffee) and a request (make it small one).

Despite the abovementioned critique, Austin (1962) offers a systematic framework that regards language not as a referential rule, but rather as a series of acts. According to Masaki (2004, p. 31), it was Austin (1962) who “went beyond the referential theory and that considered the context in which language was actually used”. Through the classification of locution, illocution and perlocution acts, Austin (1962) endeavoured to disregard such a referential theory, which is rationally created without contexts.

#### **2.2.4 Speech Acts and Intercultural Pragmatics**

Speech acts are an essential part of social communication (Labov & Fanshel, 1977). Wierzbicka (1985) clarifies that each society has its own method of conveying its cultural

conventions, norms and belief systems, resulting in diverse cooperative agreements. Taking politeness as an example, each culture or society approaches and perceives politeness differently, which leads to diverse perspectives of politeness. This diversity results in different linguistic politeness strategies to reflect the culturally validated perceived roles of the speaker and listener (Allan, 1994).

According to Nguyen (2007), every culture has distinctive speech acts that match its norms and beliefs. Wierzbicka (1991, p. 131) argues that “different cultures and subcultures have different conversational routines and that it is important that those different systems should be carefully studied, analysed and described”. As people cannot isolate a certain language from its culture, nor can they isolate themselves from native cultural rules of communicating, participants have to adjust to new cultural norms and rules in order to become linguistically and pragmatically competent.

Through today’s globalisation, communication between people from diverse cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds is becoming more common and challenging. Accordingly, participants need not only linguistic knowledge, but also pragmatic knowledge to avoid a breakdown in communication. Lack of intercultural pragmatic competency leads to bias, stereotyping and possibly estrangement while a good understanding of these differences opens doors, not only for intercultural people, but also for all citizens of the globe (Boxer, 2002).

### **2.2.5 Speech Acts in Interaction**

People frequently use speech acts in their interactions. Nguyen (2007) argues that there are certain practices in communication that indicate beginnings and endings of topics and changes of topics. Interaction practices differ widely across cultures and societies. When a conversation occurs, participants contribute something to it and take something from it; thus, it is a collaborative approach between the speaker and the listener.

According to H. D. Brown (1994), when a person speaks a language, his or her discourse is marked by certain exchanges with another person, or a group of people, in which one person’s statement is followed, discussed and built upon by another person’s utterance. H. D. Brown (1994) points out that each speaker usually has a plan and in order for it to be accomplished efficiently, the statements and their illocutionary force are ordered with regard to one another. Conversations involve turn taking, which is the process whereby one person stops speaking and then another commences. Turn taking is a

cooperative process in any interaction (Stivers et al., 2009). Effective and polite participants know when and how to turn take reducing the likelihood of overlapping. Overlapping in turn taking can sometimes be problematic for speakers particularly when a mismatch of communicative styles is involved (Schegloff, 2000; Tannen, 2005).

Speech involves not only the lexicogrammatical forms recruited by speakers in an utterance, but also the intention of the speaker to achieve a particular communicative purpose (Nguyen, 2007). Participants should be taught appropriate conversational styles to be able to employ polite conversational rules in intercultural conversations. Politeness, as a vital element of successful communication, is described via politeness theory in the next section.

## **2.3 Politeness Theory**

Politeness is the expression of the speaker's intention to alleviate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts (FTA) toward the hearer (Mills, 2003). It requires a series of social skills that aim to guarantee that every participant feels avowed in a social conversation (Foley, 1997). Interaction runs appropriately when participants communicate with one another in a polite manner (Wardaugh, 1985).

As a theory, politeness has been studied greatly by many researchers over the past few decades (Brown, P., & Levinson, 1987; Chen, R., 2001; Fraser, 1990; Gu, 1990; Kasper, 2000; Lakoff, 1973, 1975; Leech, 1983; Okamoto, 1999; Spencer-Oatey, 1996). Previous researchers approached politeness differently, and thus their definitions of politeness reflect diverse perspectives on its universality and language specificity. Politeness theory was initially created by P. Brown and Levinson (1987). It accounts for the restoring of the attacks to face posed by face threatening acts to hearers (Foley, 1997).

While it is broadly recognised in the literature, P. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory has created considerable disagreement and attracted significant criticism (Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988). Although politeness is a universal phenomenon (Brown, P., & Levinson, 1987), it is culturally defined (Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988), and therefore what is considered polite in one society or culture can sometimes be regarded as rude or simply eccentric in another culture (See Waters, 2012). Moreover, different cultures have widely different views of politeness and different expectations of how polite people should behave (Huang, 2008).

### **2.3.1 Views of Politeness**

Politeness has been widely studied by several researchers who not only developed theories of politeness and claimed universal legitimacy across different languages, societies and cultures, but also examined politeness in specific societies, cultural groups and cultures. Relevant literature on politeness, however, lacks a consistency of definitions of politeness. Various scholars provide different definitions of politeness according to their diverse perspectives. Fraser (1990) identifies four major views of politeness: the social-norm view, the conversational-maxim view, the face-saving view and the conversational-contract view. Fraser (1990) argues that following these views allows researchers to approach the term politeness more methodically and to conduct their research adapting the theory they prefer.

#### **2.3.1.1 Politeness as a Social-Norm View**

The social-norm view of politeness states that “each society has a particular set of social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe a certain behaviour, a state of affairs, or a way of thinking in a context” (Fraser, 1990, p. 219). Nwoye (1992) also states that politeness is perceived as changing from an awareness of an individual’s social responsibilities to the other members of the group to which one has prime loyalty. Therefore, politeness is understood as a set of social rules of behaviour that each member of a certain community is expected to perceive in particular situations. When individuals obey these rules of behaviour, they are seen as being polite. However, failure to follow these rules makes them impolite.

The social-norm view of politeness derives from some research of non-western politeness (Gu, 1990; Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, & Ogino, 1986; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1989; Nwoye, 1992). Investigating Chinese politeness, for example, Gu (1990, p. 245) indicates that “politeness is a sanctioned belief that an individual’s social behaviour ought to live up to the expectations of respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth and refinement”. In the non-western cultures investigated (Chinese, Japanese and Nigerian), politeness was viewed as an individual’s consciousness of social obligations to other members of the community, rather than a matter of one’s public self-image, as in P. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory.

Politeness as a social-norm view has attracted some criticism and support. Critics argue that the social-norm view has few supporters in modern studies of politeness (Fraser, 1990). Sharing a similar opinion, Thomas (1995, p. 150), claims that “politeness

interpreted as a genuine desire to be pleasant to others has no place in pragmatics”. Thomas (1995) indicates that politeness is vital to pragmatics; however, register and deference are mainly sociolinguistic phenomena.

On the other hand, supporters of this view (Gu, 1990; Hill et al., 1986; Ide, 1989; Nwoye, 1992) consider politeness through the historical viewpoint that associates formality and deference with politeness and regard politeness as a social standard with respect to a social context. Their view was grounded on linguistic and ethnographic evidence from non-western cultures such as Arabic, Japanese, Chinese and Korean. For instance, Ide (1989) indicates that there is a distinct component of politeness, particularly in the Japanese culture called “discernment”, which is based on the Japanese use of honorific forms. In Ide’s (1989) opinion, the use of honorifics in Japanese is essential as it is linked to the sociostructural characteristics of the speaker and listeners.

Sociocultural conventions have also been regarded as one of the bases that shape politeness as social-norm view (Janney & Arndt 1992). Politeness as a social-norm view is determined by social factors rather than separate intents. It is a crucial part of language through which sociostructural harmony is attained.

Coulmas (1992) argues that the social-norm view refers to politeness within the context of a given society, cultural group, culture or language. Hence, politeness follows the characteristics of that society, culture and language. The social-norm view of politeness also ignores the role of individuals in social interactions; therefore, it exposes itself to criticism.

### **2.3.1.2 Politeness as a Conversational-Maxim View**

The conversational-maxim view regard politeness as distinct strategies used by speakers in order to avoid clashes and maintain harmony in social communication. Grice (1975) was one of the first advocates of the conversational-maxim view of politeness. Grice first gave his lecture on logic and conversation in 1967; however, it was not published until 1975. In his book “Logic and Conversation”, Grice (1975, p. 45) introduced the conversational-maxim view, arguing that all speakers should make their “conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged”. Grice’s (1975) conversational-maxim view involves four maxims, namely, (1) Quantity Maxim: be as instructive as possible, (2) Quality Maxim: be as truthful as possible, (3) Relation Maxim: be as relevant

as possible, and (4) Manner Maxim: be visible and methodical, avoiding anonymity and ambiguity.

According to Grice (1975), participants in conversations are rational, goal-oriented and pass on their messages competently so that these maxims are perceived. However, in casual conversation one or more maxims can be flouted predominantly when individuals from diverse cultural and language backgrounds are involved in conversations. Consider the following example:<sup>1</sup>

Mark: Oh, John! I wish I could have iPhone 7 like yours.

John: They are on sale at Apple stores now. You can have one, Mark.

In this example, Grice's (1975) Maxims, namely Quantity, Quality and Manner were ignored. Mark implicitly compliments John on his iPhone 7 to avoid being misinterpreted as clearly desiring one himself (flouting Quantity Maxim: be as instructive as possible, Quality Maxim: be as truthful as possible and Manner Maxim: avoid ambiguity). In reply, John proposes to Mark that the iPhone 7 is available at the Apple store and that it is not too expensive for Mark to afford.

Another advocate of the conversational-maxim view of politeness was Lakoff (1973), who reviewed Grice's conversational-maxim view and developed it into a theory of politeness. Looking at politeness as a method to avoid conflict in social conversation, Lakoff (1973) proposed two rules of pragmatic competence: be clear and be polite. According to Lakoff (1973), if the main purpose of the conversation is to deliver the message directly, participants need to be as clear as possible. On the other hand, if the key goal is to make listeners feel good about themselves, then speakers may try to express themselves in an ambiguous manner. In Lakoff's (1973) view, politeness consists of the following three rules: (1) do not enforce (is used in formal contexts), (2) give options (is used when informal politeness is required), and (3) make others feel good or be friendly (is used among intimate participants). These rules apply to all individuals' interactions. Which one emerges though, is dependent on cultural differences. It also is subject to speakers' evaluation of the context of the conversation as well as interpersonal relationships between participants. Rule one (do not enforce) is recognised once a sense of distance is created between the speaker and addressee by the speaker. The use of title + last name as a form of communication, the preference of the passive to the active and the

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<sup>1</sup> The example was provided by the researcher.

use of technical terms to avoid offence are all examples of the application of this rule. As for rule two (give options), the speaker offers the addressee options to express uncertainty over the speech act that is performed by the addressee. The use of *please, well, er, ah, in a way* and *loosely speaking* are some examples of the realisations of rule two. Rule three (make the addressee feel good) states that although the speaker is superior or equal in status to addressee, the speaker suggests that he or she and the addressee are equal to make the addressee feel good. The use of first names or nicknames, which gives the impression of an informal relationship between speaker and addressee as well as the use of particles such as *I mean, like* and *you know* that enable the speaker to express feelings, all exemplify the application of this rule (Lakoff, 1973, 1977; Shahrokhi & Bidabadi, 2013).

Arguing that the conversational-maxim view of politeness fails by itself to clarify why individuals attempt to convey meaning indirectly, Leech (1983) established his politeness principle as an essential accompaniment to the conversational-maxim view. Leech (1983, p. 132) indicates that the politeness principle is brought into play to minimise “(other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs” and to maximise “(other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs”. According to Leech (1983, p. 132), the politeness principle consists of six associated interpersonal maxims as explained below:

1. Tact Maxim (in impositives and commissives)
  - a. Minimize cost to other
  - b. Maximize benefit to other
2. Generosity Maxim (in impositives and commissives)
  - a. Minimize benefit to self
  - b. Maximize cost to self
3. Approbation Maxim (in expressives and assertives)
  - a. Minimize dispraise of other
  - b. Maximize praise of other
4. Modesty Maxim (in expressives and assertives)
  - a. Minimize praise of self
  - b. Maximize dispraise of self
5. Agreement Maxim (in assertives)
  - a. Minimize disagreement between self and other
  - b. Maximize agreement between self and other
6. Sympathy Maxim (in assertives)

- a. Minimize antipathy between self and other
- b. Maximize sympathy between self and other

Leech's (1983) framework has been criticised by a few researchers (Fraser, 1990; Gu, 1990; Spencer-Oatey, 2002; Thomas, 1995), disagreeing that it involves several maxims that cannot be limited to a minimal number. For example, Spencer-Oatey (2002) explains that since a range could accommodate diverse societies, cultures and speech contexts, Leech's (1983) politeness maxims would be better hypothesised as a continuum rather than in oppositions (modesty – pride, agreement – disagreement). Despite the criticisms, Leech's (1983) framework can still be applied to investigate “cultural differences in the perception of politeness and the use of politeness strategies” (Thomas, 1995, p. 168). In addition, it is the theory mostly used in non-western studies of politeness such as Chinese (Gu, 1990), Japanese (Matsumoto, 1988) and Arabic (Nelson, et al., 1993, 1996).

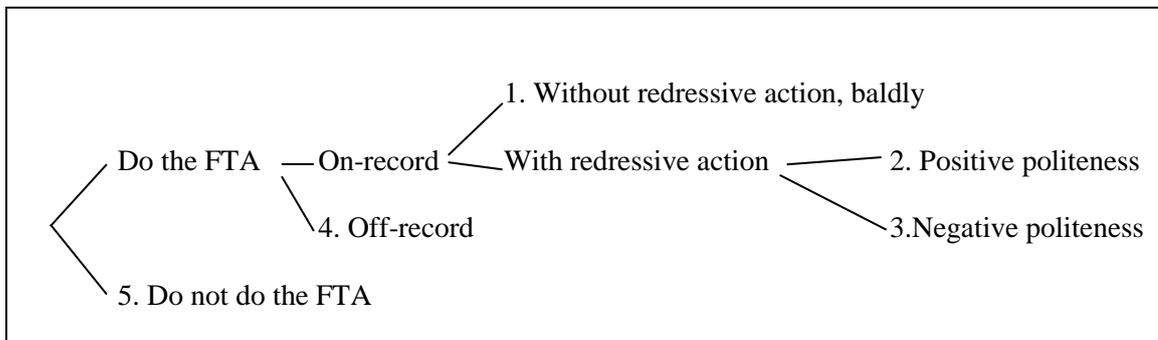
### **2.3.1.3 Politeness as a Face-Saving View**

For modern scholars in the field, it is difficult to discuss politeness without referring to P. Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory of politeness (Kerbrat-Orrecchioni, 1997). P. Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory of politeness was drawn heavily from face theory. The scholars investigated and expanded on the ideas of face put forth by Goffman (1967), particularly with relation to politeness. In Goffman's (1967, p. 5) interpretation, the view of face was defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”. The theory of face consists of two features: negative face and positive face. Negative face refers to the desire to have an individual's autonomy appreciated and respected while positive face refers to a person's desire to be liked and accepted by another person.

According to P. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 65–68), face as a sociopsychological view can be misplaced, maintained or improved; thus, it must continually be considered during communication. Interpersonal interactions involve a sequence of both verbal and nonverbal acts that threaten face. These are called face threatening acts and are divided into four main types (1) acts that threaten the speaker's negative face such as thanking or accepting an offer, (2) acts that threaten the speaker's positive face such as confessing or apologising, (3) acts that threaten the listener's negative face such as ordering, inviting or complimenting and (4) acts that threaten the listener's

positive face such as denying or criticising. These face threatening acts can be minimised by using five strategies, which are arranged in order of increased politeness as summarised in Table 2.5 below:

**Table 2.5: Possible strategies for doing face threatening acts ( FTAs)**



Once the strategy has been selected, the speaker may choose the most suitable linguistic method to employ the chosen strategy. For example:

1. Bald on-record strategy: no strategy is implemented when the speaker observes slight threat to face. Doing an act baldly and without redress includes performing it in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible, such as saying, for example, “Give me the book?” In this example, the speaker has directly, clearly, unambiguously and concisely requested the return of the book. Doing an act baldly requires the use of imperative verbs. Imperative verbs create imperative sentences, which give orders and commands. Imperative verbs do not provide opportunities for questions or discussions, even if the sentence has a polite tone.

2. Positive politeness: is concerned with the positive face of the speaker or the hearer as well as the positive self-image that he or she claims for himself or herself. For example, when requesting a book, the speaker might say “Hey, Alison! Could I get that book?” In this case, the addressee is treated as an individual whose needs and personality qualities are recognised and respected. Therefore, positive politeness leads to warmth, harmony and solidarity.

3. Negative politeness: minimises the burden on the listener’s territory by employing questions or hedges, such as saying, for example, “I wonder if you might be able to give me that book?” In this example, there is a natural tension between (a) the need to go on record as a prerequisite to being perceived to give face and (b) the desire to go off record to avoid imposing. A compromise was reached through indirectness.

4. The off-record strategy: to provide a suggestion or hint to the listener, such as saying, for example, “Having the book back would be helpful!” In this example, the speaker goes off record and there is more than one unambiguously attributable intent. Hence, the speaker cannot be held to have dedicated himself to one particular intention.

5. Don't do the FTA.

#### **2.3.1.4 Politeness as a Conversational-Contract View**

The conversational-contract view of politeness is grounded on the expectancies of the participants involved in an interaction and is determined by the members themselves. Conventional terms, social institutions terms and historical terms usually form the expectations that individuals bring to a communication. Anything within this conversational contract is regarded as polite whereas anything outside of the conversational contract is considered impolite (Fraser, 1990).

Adopting this view, Fraser (1990) is not pragmatically but rather sociolinguistically inclined (Thomas, 1995). According to Fraser (1990), politeness is a continuing practice within the terms and conditions of the conversational-contract view. Hence, it is apparent that Fraser's (1990) opinion of politeness is discourse based rather than speech act based. Comparing Fraser's (1990) theory with the theories of Leech (1983) and P. Brown and Levinson (1987), Thomas (1995) comments that Fraser's (1990) theory is unique as it includes the rights and expectations of participants of a conversation. However, it is very unclear and challenging to assess how it might function in practice. Table 2.6 provides a description of conversational-contract terms.

**Table 2.6: Conversational-contract terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Conventional terms	Involve turn taking and speaking loud enough for the other person to hear.
Institutional terms	Refers to the rights and responsibilities placed by society such as expectation that a person would whisper when he/she is in a library.
Historical terms	Highlight the fact that speakers usually ground their expectations for an interaction on previous communications with the same, or similar, individual, including ideas about the role or power of other contributors.

The next two subsections discuss the shortcomings and strengths of the politeness theory.

### **2.3.2 Shortcomings of Politeness Theory**

P. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is still the focus of some criticism. Kasper (1990), for example, questioned the universality of P. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, claiming that it is not universal, but rather it focuses on individualism in the western culture. Kasper (1990) argues that P. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is not appropriate in non-western cultures such as Japanese, Chinese and Korean where a sense of belonging to a community is highly regarded. Supporting Kasper (1990), Matsumoto (1988, p. 405) states that "what is of paramount concern to a Japanese is not his/her own territory, but the position in relation to the others in the group and his/her acceptance by those others". In addition, Gu (1990), Meier (1995) and Nwoye (1992) question the notion of face threatening acts arguing that many acts can be perceived to threaten both the speaker's and the listener's face concurrently (compliment, apology etc.). This is contrary to P. Brown and Levinson's (1987) view of face threatening acts, which suggests that an act can threaten either the speaker's or the listener's face.

Supporting his argument, Gu (1990), investigates the speech acts of promising, offering and inviting in Chinese and concludes that P. Brown and Levinson's (1987) view of negative face cannot be applied in Chinese culture. For example, while insistently inviting the listener to dinner might threaten the listener's negative face in a western context, it does not threaten the hearer's negative face in a Chinese context.

### **2.3.3 Strengths of Politeness Theory**

Despite some limitations in the theory, it can be argued that politeness theory is very applicable and helpful in guiding people to improve their speech and actions (Goldsmith, 2006). P. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory has two important strengths. First, good empirical value: this theory has motivated many researchers to investigate and develop more studies into grasping new philosophies and discovering other options to this method of thinking. Second, comprehensive possibility: this theory refers to factors that play a part in the field of communication such as social power, distance and culture (Goldsmith, 2006). Consequently, P. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory can be a powerful method to investigate politeness phenomena in both western and non-

western interactions. Their list of politeness strategies can also be expanded to include other strategies such as method and sequence of intercultural interactions. According to P. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 48)

Social interaction is remarkable for its emergent properties, which transcend the characteristics of the individuals that jointly produce it; this emergent character is not something for which our current theoretical models are well equipped. Workers in artificial intelligence have already detected a paradigm clash between ‘cognitivism’ and ‘interactionism’, and noted the failure of the former paradigm to account for interactional organization (see ... Suchman, [1987]); our own account suffers from the same dose of ‘cognitivism’. Work on interaction as a system thus remains a fundamental research priority, and the area from which improved conceptualizations of politeness are most likely to emerge.

P. Brown and Levinson’s (1978) theory of politeness is still the best known and widely used in the study of pragmatics.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the theoretical foundations of social communication upon which this study is grounded: the theory of communicative competence, speech act theory and politeness theory. The review of the theory of communicative competence highlighted its significance and position in intercultural communication. Moreover, speech act theory was considered a basis for linguistic analysis in this research; however, it was discovered to be inadequate on its own to investigate complimenting as a social act of communication. The politeness theory was studied and found to be essential to the present study of compliments since individuals’ knowledge of politeness conventions enable them to avoid conflicts or confrontations and to maintain harmony with others.

In the next chapter, empirical sociolinguistic studies on pragmatics, pragmatic transfer, compliments and compliment responses are reviewed in order to provide a rational and logical frame for the present study.

## CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and examines empirical pragmatic studies on compliments and compliment responses, which mainly focus on aspects of compliments, semantic methods, syntactic structures, topics of compliment, styles of compliment responses and social variables that impact on male Jordanian-Australians' complimenting behaviours.

As explained in the previous chapter, the field of intercultural pragmatics is a complex area of research that targets issues of pragmatic transfer and issues of modification in language use in intercultural situations. Moving from a general to a particular research setting, male Jordanian-Australians were chosen as subjects for investigating the complimenting behaviours of migrants and refugees in Australia. In order to explore how male Jordanian-Australians compliment and respond to compliments in intercultural contexts, literature covering topics such as pragmatics, pragmatic transfer, compliments and compliment responses is considered as very relevant to this research study.

The development of pragmatic rules is very important for students, migrants and refugees. People need to acquire the correct forms and sounds of the target language and the knowledge of how the new language is pragmatically used in the target culture. It is important to develop individuals' pragmatic competence in order to increase their intercultural communicative competence (Lee, 2009).

Becoming interculturally and pragmatically competent requires learning various speech acts such as requests, refusals, apologies and compliments "to achieve their communicative goals in real life" (Abdul Sattar, 2009, p. 170). A speech act is an utterance that conveys a function in communication (compliment, apology, invitation, request or greeting). It is a basic unit of language that is used to express meaning or an intention. A speech act is usually a sentence, but it can be a word, phrase or a clause as long as it follows the rules necessary to accomplish the intention (Searle, 1969, 1975, 1976), such as "I'm sorry" (Apology), "We are having some friends over tomorrow. Would you like to join us for dinner?" (Invitation), "Could you pass the salt please?" (Request), "Hi Rami, how are things going?" (Greeting) and "That is a nice shirt" (Compliment).

A compliment is one type of speech act, which according to Olshtain and Cohen (1991) is used to express solidarity and maintain social harmony. Pomerantz (1978) claims

that responding to a compliment poses a problem for people because they need to balance two completely conflicting conversational principles: to agree with the compliment and to avoid self-praise (Herbert, 1989).

Numerous studies have examined the pragmatics of complimenting. Some of these studies have targeted various Englishes, such as American English (Herbert, 1986; Herbert & Straight, 1989; Holmes, 1986, 1988a; Knapp, Hopper, & Bell, 1984; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Pomerantz, 1978; Wolfson, 1983), Australian English (Davis, 2008; Milinkovic, 2010), British English (Creese, 1991; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989; Ylänne-McEwen, 1993), New Zealand English (Holmes, 1986; Holmes & Brown, 1987), South African English (Herbert, 1989) and English of African Americans (Henderson, 1996).

Further studies have cross-culturally compared and contrasted two cultures, cultural groups or two languages, such as American English and Egyptian Arabic (Nelson et al., 1993), American English and Syrian Arabic (Nelson, et al., 1996), American English and Mexican Spanish (Nelson, Alcantar, Ferrante, & Holy, 1997), American English and Taiwanese Chinese (Yu, 1999, 2003), American English and Jordanian Arabic (Quran, 2012), Australian English and Spanish (Cordella, Large, & Pardo, 1995), Australian English and Vietnamese (Nguyen, 2007; Tran, 2010), Australian English and Mandarin Chinese (Li, 2015; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009), Australians and Persians (Motaghi-Tabari & Beuzeville, 2012), English and Japanese (Baba, 1996; Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Daikuhara, 1986), English and Korean (Han, 1992; Jeon, 1996) and English and Mainland Chinese (Chen, R., 1993).

Other studies have investigated compliments in specific languages such as Chinese (Ye, 1995; Yuan, 1998), Finnish (Ylänne-McEwen, 1993), French (Wieland, 1995), German (Golato, 2002), Greek (Sifianou, 2001), Jordanian Arabic (Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Migdadi, 2003; Migdadi & Jarbou, 2007), Mexican Spanish (Nelson & Hall, 1999), Philippino (Moijica, 2002), Polish (Jaworski, 1995; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989) and Thai (Gajaseni, 1994).

While all of these studies have targeted compliments in spoken discourse, a few scholars (Johnson, D. M., 1992; Johnson, D., & Roen, 1992) have examined complimenting behaviours in written discourse. Although the literature covers a wide variety of such studies, the present literature review focuses on four themes, which emerged repeatedly throughout the reviewed literature. These themes, which are pragmatics, pragmatic transfer, compliments and compliment responses, are discussed in the following sections.

### 3.1 Pragmatics

The foundation of the term pragmatics can be related back to 1938 when Charles Morris identified pragmatics as “the study of the relation of signs to interpreters” (Levinson, 1983, p. 1). Since then, several researchers have defined pragmatics. For example, Yule (1996, p. 4) describes pragmatics as “the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms”. In addition, Levinson (1983, pp. 7–24), refers to pragmatics as “the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate” or the “study of language from a functional perspective”, which “attempts to explain facets of linguistic structure by reference to nonlinguistic pressures and causes”. Broadly speaking, pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that was developed in the late 1970s. It examines how people produce and comprehend a speech act in a speech situation, which is usually a conversation. Moreover, pragmatics distinguishes two intents or meanings in each utterance or communicative act of a verbal communication. One meaning is the informative intent or the sentence meaning and the other meaning is the communicative intent or the speaker’s meaning (Leech, 1983; Li, 2015; Sperber & Wilson, 1986).

According to Kecskes (2014, p. 22), the three main components of pragmatics are “the linguistic code that is the means of interaction, the producer-interpreters of the code and the sociocultural context (frame) in which interaction takes place”. Although syntax is the study of how linguistic forms are arranged in sequence and semantics examines the relationship between linguistic forms and entities of the world, pragmatics is concerned with implicature or the implied meaning (Grice, 1975).

### 3.2 Intercultural and Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

Intercultural pragmatics is a division of linguistic research that involves pragmatics and intercultural communication (Li, 2015). It is concerned with “the way the language system is put to use in social encounters between human beings who have different first languages, communicate in a common language, and usually, represent different cultures” (Kecskes, 2004, p. 15). According to Kramsch (1998, p. 81):

Cross-cultural or intercultural usually refers to the meeting of two cultures or two languages across the political boundaries of nation-states. They are predicated on the

equivalence of one-nation one-culture one-language, and on the expectation that a ‘culture shock’ may take place upon crossing national boundaries. In foreign language teaching, a cross-cultural approach seeks ways to understand the other on the other side of the border by learning his/her national language.

Although the term intercultural communication is, to a certain degree, comparable to the term cross-cultural communication as both terms include more than one culture (Li, 2015), the two terms can be different. The major difference between intercultural and cross-cultural approaches is that cross-cultural targets more than one culture without suggesting any interaction between the targeted cultures. For example, a cross-cultural study of compliments in West Africa would be a comparison of compliments in various countries in West Africa by covering each country individually and without implying any interaction between the countries of West Africa.

The term intercultural, on the other hand covers interaction between cultures. From an intercultural view, it is possible to examine the life stories and experiences of individuals who move from one country or culture to another. It is also possible to investigate the interactions of individuals from diverse countries and cultures who live in one country such as Australia (Fries, 2006).

Some scholars have shown a preference for using the term cross-cultural communication to highlight the comparative investigation of two cultures or cultural groups where cultures are treated as separate entities. However, they prefer to use the term intercultural communication to refer to characteristics of communicative practices in a communicating environment (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Other researchers prefer to apply the term intercultural communication in a way that regards culture as a presentation, allocating the communicators the role of creating cultural dissimilarities (Piller, 2011, 2017). Therefore, it is arguable that “pragmatics research focusing on an interactive context” belongs to intercultural pragmatics; whereas “pragmatics research focusing on a comparative perspective of two or more cultures” refers to cross-cultural pragmatics (Li, 2015, p. 13).

Overall, cross-cultural pragmatics compares and contrasts different cultures, based on the examination of certain aspects of language use, such as speech acts and language behaviour, whereas intercultural pragmatics investigates intercultural interactions and the nature of the communicative practices among individuals from dissimilar cultural backgrounds who speak diverse native languages (Kecskes, 2004).

### 3.3 Pragmatic Transfer

Transfer is an enveloping term that has varied interpretations. To pragmatists, transfer means using language differently due to first language influence. Rizk (2003, p. 404) defines pragmatic transfer as “the influence of learners’ pragmatic knowledge of language and culture other than the target language on their comprehension, production and acquisition of second language pragmatic information”. Pragmatic transfer often occurs when participants rely on their first language’s sociocultural rules to comprehend a speech act in a second language (Kasper 1992, 1995, 1998; Rizk, 2003).

According to Richard (1980), transfer of features of first language conversational competence into a second language may have much more serious consequences than errors at the levels of syntax or pronunciation. Intercultural communicative competence is closely related to the presentation of self, which is communicating an image of oneself to others. Similarly, Thomas (1983) calls attention to the seriousness of violation of sociolinguistic rules and argues that pragmatic failure is more damaging than linguistic errors. While linguistic mistakes indicate that speakers are less proficient in a language, pragmatic errors may result in misjudgement of a person as being rude, unfriendly or dishonest.

Pragmatic transfer can be either positive or negative. Positive pragmatic transfer is an indication of sociocultural and pragmatic universality among languages. Negative pragmatic transfer, on the other hand, is an inappropriate transfer of first language sociolinguistic norms into a second language (Liu, 1995; Qu & Wang, 2005). Beebe and Giles (1984) argue that the more comparable the structures and pragmatic characteristics between cultures and languages, the more probable positive transfer would happen.

Conversely, the more diverse the structures and pragmatic facets among cultures and languages, the more likely negative transfer would happen. According to Rizk (2003, p. 405), negative transfer takes the form of translating some “formulaic expressions/phrases”, which function to express different speech acts in a first language to express the equivalent speech act in a second language.

Pragmatic transfer may lead to pragmatic failure, which is being unable to understand the meaning of an utterance in the target language. People face various difficulties in intercultural interactions. Some participants face pragmatic failure in intercultural communication encounters. The knowledge of the target language and cultural is crucial to overcome such difficulties.

### **3.4 Compliments**

Complimenting is an interesting phenomenon. It is “a complex social activity that requires sensitivity to the concrete social environment and the participants inhabiting it” (Gathman, Maynard, & Schaeffer, 2008, p. 292). Several researchers have defined compliments. For example, Holmes (1988, p. 446) defines a compliment as “a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually that person addressed, for some ‘good’ (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.), which is positively valued by the speaker and hearer”. According to Kodama (1996, p. 59), a compliment is an “intricate combination of positive evaluation, displayed good feelings, implicit friendliness and half-admitted desire to please”. Moreover, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) argue that a compliment is a sentence that involves a positive assessment by the speaker to the addressee. In addition, Herbert (1991) refers to a compliment as an expression of admiration on the part of the speaker and the object complimented is about a possession, accomplishment or personal quality of the hearer.

In order to be perceived as a compliment, a word or sentence must refer to something that is positively appreciated by the speaker and credited to the addressee (Holmes, 1986). Broadly speaking, a compliment is one type of speech act through which a speaker expresses a positive comment or attitude towards an addressee. Compliments can be indirect or implicit, (Boyle, 2005; Rodriguez, Ryave, & Tracewell, 1998). Moreover, compliments are affected by many factors such as age, gender, social distance, social status and culture (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986, 1988; Li, 2015; Miles, 1994).

#### **3.4.1 The Neurological Effects of Compliments**

As explained in Section 3.4 above, compliments are words or sentences that are planned to make the other feel good about himself or herself (Newton & Burgoon, 1990). People generally feel happy when they are complimented. In addition, compliments encourage people who are struggling, help people learn new tasks, strengthen and soften relationships, charm others and help people to become less pessimistic. Feeling good, happy and positive and becoming confident are all natural consequences of being complimented.

Scientific evidence confirms that being complimented activates the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that regulates the reward and pleasure centres of the brain (Watson, 2008). In addition to making people feel good and happy, dopamine can develop creative thinking skills and innovative problem solving abilities (Watson, 2008). As well as releasing dopamine, compliments trigger the production of oxytocin, which is a feel good hormone that improves one's ability to cooperate, trust and interact with others (Glaser & Glaser, 2014).

### **3.4.2 Functions of Compliments**

Compliments are used for various purposes and their significance “lies in their multiple functions” in interactions (Li, 2015, p. 33). Most cultures predominantly regard compliments as positive speech acts, which not only establish friendships and relationships, but also create and maintain harmony in conversations (Johnson, D., & Roen, 1992; Sifianou, 1992; Válková, 2013). In this regard, compliments are generally given in order to fulfil other people's positive face needs. On the other hand, compliments can sometimes be offered to achieve evaluative or judgemental goals (Holmes, 1995). Using positive semantic carriers (*good, nice, fantastic, great, wonderful*) and intensifiers (*really, poorly, pleasantly*) (Labov, 1972), compliments can be used to convey judgement, endorsement and criticism. Furthermore, compliments can be offered to lead and structure other speech acts such as invitations, requests, apologies and suggestions. This was evident in the data from semi-structured interviews and participant observations (Please refer to Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight).

Herbert (1986, p. 76) argues that compliments can be employed to “negotiate solidarity with the addressee”, make the addressee feel good and make the speaker feel close to the addressee. People generally exchange compliments in an effort to keep relationships solid and build good rapport with others (Tannen, 1996). According to Boyle (2005, p. 356), an individual may use compliments “to avoid hurting other peoples' feelings, to give people some hope and encouragement, to protect oneself from more powerful people as well as the desire to be complimented by others”. In Wolfson's (1989) view, one of the main functions of compliments is to encourage and reinforce desired behaviour.

Compliments are also given to express admiration, appreciation or feeling (Herbert, 1990). Table 3.1 below presents the main functions of compliments together with definitions and examples of each function:

**Table 3.1: Functions of compliments**

Compliment	Definition	Example
Admiration expression	An expression that involves a delighted approval or liking and includes a positive evaluation, either explicitly or implicitly.	Explicit: You are “handsome”.  Implicit: I wish I could know what people do to look “so smart”.
Appreciation expression	An expression that reveals appreciation towards others.	Oh. Thank you. I am “really proud” of what you have done.
Feeling expression	An expression of feelings towards others such as happiness, kindness, anger, complaints and hope.	You are “kind”.

Although many researchers agree that complimenting creates and strengthens social unity and relationship between the speaker and the addressee (Alinezhad, 2015; Golato, 2005; Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1986; Jaworski, 1995; Li, 2015; Migdadi, 2003; Petit, 2005; Yu, 2003), compliments may function as patronising devices, in that a compliment is given to assert superiority. This type of compliment is usually directed downward from superior to subordinate. A compliment may also be directed upwards from subordinate to superordinate. This type of compliment lacks sincerity or is given to obtain benefits (Tannen, 1990a).

In certain cultures such as the Arabic culture, an expression of admiration for an object imposes an obligation on the addressee to offer it to the speaker (Abdul Sattar & Lah, 2009; Al Falasi, 2007; El Samaty, 2005; Nelson et al., 1996). Consider the following example in Jordanian Arabic:

A: هذه ساعه غير عاديه. انها جميله.

B: ارجوك خذها

A: ‘What an unusual watch. It is beautiful.’

B: ‘Please take it.’

As stated by P. Brown and Levinson (1987), a compliment is regarded as a face threatening act when the compliment implies an element of envy and desire to have what the addressee possesses.

Complimenting is a multifunctional speech act, which plays an essential role in many other aspects of interaction (Jaworski, 1995; Johnson, D. M., 1992). According to Holmes (1988, p. 464), functions of compliments can be summarised as “solidarity signals, cementing friendships, attenuating demands, smoothing ruffled feathers and bridging gaps created by possible offences”. Likewise, Golato (2005, p. 204) argues that “compliments can be said to be face-saving or face-maintaining, or to have a social-solidarity-building function”. Compliments not only have a status and function of their own, but they can also strengthen and replace other speech acts such as apologies, thanks and greetings. Furthermore, compliments can function as conversation openers (Wolfson, 1981b; Yu, 2003), sarcasm expressives (Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004), off record warning (Brown, P., & Levinson, 1987) and as an envy (Agyekum, 2010). In addition, compliments can reduce the force of face threatening acts such as criticism, reproaches and orders of various types (Li, 2015; Wolfson, 1983).

Broadly speaking, compliments are used for various reasons. Whatever the immediate discourse function of complimenting, it has the fundamental function of creating or reinforcing harmony between the speaker and the addressee.

### **3.4.3 Topics of Compliments**

Topics of compliments are various, and thus there are differences in the classifications of compliment topics among researchers (Herbert, 1991; Knapp et al., 1984; Lai, 2015; Lee, 2009; Manes, 1983; Parisi & Wogan, 2006; Ralarala, 2007; Wieland, 1995; Yang 1987).

Some studies classify compliment topics into three main types: ability or performance, appearance and possession (Ralarala, 2007; Yu, 1999). Other studies categorise four main types of compliments: appearance, achievement, clothes and possession (Lai, 2015).

However, a closer look at the compliment topics categorised by Lai (2015) indicates that the topics of appearance and clothes or attire are very similar to each other. In addition, other scholars state that the object being complimented is usually an appearance, possession, accomplishment or personal quality of the addressee (Herbert, 1991, p. 383).

In this study, the four main compliment topics: appearance, performance, possession and personality are considered.

### **3.4.4 Positions of Compliments in Speech**

One aspect of compliments that has not received enough consideration is their placement in discourse. According to Manes and Wolfson, (1981, pp. 125–126), compliments not only “occur in a wide range of speech situations, but they are frequently independent of the speech event which precedes them, it is perfectly appropriate for any of the participants to interrupt the conversation to give a compliment”. In interactions, compliments can occur at the beginning, middle or end of conversations.

Knapp et al. (1984) studied the position of compliments in discourse and reported a strong tendency for most compliments on appearance to occur at the beginning of the conversation; however, most compliments on personality tend to appear at the start or the end of the communication. In contrast, Cordella et al. (1995) stated that compliments have no specific position in discourse, and therefore they can appear at the beginning, middle or end of the conversation.

In her study of compliments and compliment responses in New Zealand English, Holmes (1986, p. 498) states that compliments “tend to occur most often around transition points in a speech situation”. However, Holmes (1986, p. 499) admits that although “there is some evidence ... of restrictions on where compliments may appropriately occur” and that more studies are needed.

With regard to written communication, D. Johnson and Roen (1992) claimed that as compliments assist to address the reader’s positive face and hence create a harmony background for communication, they tend to appear at the beginning of the conversation. The positions of compliments in speech warrant further research.

### **3.4.5 Modification Devices**

Modification devices are words or phrases that strengthen the complimentary force or add more detail to compliments. As indicated in Table 3.2 below, modification devices can be classified into four categories, namely intensifiers, expansions, rejection minimisers and emotional expressions (Herbert, 1989; Nelson et al., 1996).

Examples of modification devices include the use of adverbs, proverbs, promises, invitations, swearing, negations, imperatives, tokens of appreciation, joking, hedging, interjections, invocations, exclamations and endearments. Table 3.2 provides a detailed description and examples of modification devices from the current study.

**Table 3.2: Modification devices**

<b>Modification device</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
Intensifier	A word, usually an adverb that has little meaning in itself but provides intensity or emphasis to a compliment or compliment response.	A: That is a very nice shirt. B: Thank you.
Expansion	Expressed by proverb, promise, invitation, swearing, negation or use of imperatives.	A: Play soccer to stay fit and healthy. B: That is so true.
Minimising rejection	Expressed by a token of appreciation, joking or hedging.	Thanks, I appreciate it. Hehe. I am superman. As far as I know, they are divorced.
Emotional	Expressed by interjections, invocations, exclamation and endearment.	Oh, um, ah. My lord, God. Oi, wow. My dear, dear.

### 3.5 Compliment Responses

Compliment giving is particularly fascinating because they pose a politeness predicament for the receiver who must breach either the maxim of agreement or the maxim of modesty. Compliment responses are also interesting and can be categorised into three strategies: agreement, nonagreement and evasion. In other words, when receiving a compliment in English, some people might agree with the compliment and thus thank the complimenter, while some might disagree and argue that the speaker is insincere. Others might avoid the compliment entirely and remain silent (Herbert, 1986, 1989; Holmes, 1988; Nelson et al., 1996).

The study of compliment responses was pioneered by Pomerantz (1978). In Pomerantz's view, responding to compliments includes selecting from two constraints systems: agreements or disagreements toward compliments and accepting or rejecting compliments. Pomerantz (1978) argues that people face two dilemmas when responding to compliments: (a) they have to agree with the speaker and (b) they have to avoid self-praise.

Urano (1998) explains this dilemma by indicating that when a complimentee responds by agreeing with the complimenter, it enforces self-praise as this response goes against the sociolinguistic expectations of the speaker. On the other hand, if the complimentee rejects the compliment to avoid self-praise, the response is seen as face threatening since the complimentee disagrees with the complimenter. Therefore, complimenters have three solutions: (1) acceptance, (2) rejection and (3) self-praise avoidance.

Other researchers have attempted to categorise compliment responses with different terms. According to Herbert (1986, 1989), Holmes (1986) and Nelson et al. (1996), compliment responses in English can be classified into three main strategies: agreement, nonagreement and evasion. Compliment response strategies and substrategies are summarised in Table 3.3 below:

**Table 3.3: Compliment response strategies**

<b>Compliment response strategies</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Substrategy</b>
Agreement	A response in which the addressee agrees with the speaker.	Appreciation token Comment agreement Praise upgrade Comment history Praise downgrade Return
Nonagreement	A response in which the addressee clearly rejects the compliment. The addressee changes the topic, for instance or responds to some other aspect of the speaker's utterance.	Scale down Question Disagreement Qualification Nonacknowledgement
Evasion	A response in which the addressee avoids the compliment.	Shift credit Informative comment Ignore Request assurance

In addition, each compliment response strategy is split into several substrategies. According to Pomerantz (1978), Herbert (1989), R. Chen (1993), Nelson et al. (1996) and Lorenzo-Dus (2001), the agreement strategy is divided into six substrategies, namely appreciation token, comment agreement, praise upgrade, comment history, praise downgrade and return. Table 3.4 below provides a detailed presentation of the agreement strategy, including compliment response substrategies, definitions and examples.

**Table 3.4: Agreement**

<b>Agreement</b>		
<b>Response type</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
Appreciation token	“A response that recognises the status of a previous utterance as a compliment without being semantically fitted to the specifics of that compliment” (Nelson et al., 1996, p. 418). The acceptance of compliments is usually expressed through tokens such as “thank you”, “thanks”, “thank you so much” and “thank you”, or nonverbal tokens like “smiles” and “nods” (Pomerantz, 1978).	A: What a nice shirt! B: Thank you.
Comment agreement	A response in which the addressee accepts the complimentary force of the speaker’s utterance by a response which is “semantically fitted to the compliment” (Herbert, 1989, p. 12).	A: You look really nice! B: Oh, thank you. It is because I’m dancing.
Praise upgrade	A response in which the addressee not only accepts the compliment but also considers it insufficient, and thus he or she raises the praise assertion. “It includes the incorporation of stronger second evaluation terms” (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001, p. 114).	A: You look very nice today, John. B: Of course!
Comment history	A response in which the addressee, although agreeing with the praise of the speaker, does not accept the compliment personally. In this case, the addressee impersonalises the compliment by giving irrelevant impersonal information. The addressee usually agrees with the speaker’s original assertion and adds a history comment (Herbert, 1989).	A: The colour of this dish is fantastic. Good choice. B: I know. I have one already and all my friends like it, so I am buying one for all of them. I always get compliments on it.
Praise downgrade	A response in which the addressee shows an awareness of the dilemma of accepting a compliment and avoiding self-praise at the same time. The addressee agrees with prior praise assessment but reduces its complimentary force by replacing strong-positive evaluative terms offered by the speaker with more moderate-positive terms (Pomerantz, 1978).	A: I think this is the best chocolate cake in Perth. B: Yes. It is very good, isn’t it? We make it ourselves.
Return	A response in which the addressee returns the compliment to the speaker. Returning a compliment is a direct result of the “indebting nature of the compliment”. It helps the addressee to escape the debt by returning the verbal gift to the speaker (Chen, R., 1993, p. 58).	A: You have a good heart. B: So have you.

Similarly, the nonagreement strategy consists of five substrategies, namely scale down, question, disagreement, qualification and nonacknowledgement (Pomerantz, 1978; Valdes & Pino, 1981; Herbert, 1989; Nelson et al., 1996; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). Table 3.5 below provides a summary of the nonagreement strategy.

**Table 3.5: Nonagreement**

<b>Nonagreement</b>		
<b>Response type</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
Scale down	A response in which the addressee “does not disagree in an outright manner with the complimentary force” (Herbert, 1989, p. 15).	A: I like your hat. B: It is really quite old.
Question	A response in which the addressee asks for repetition, clarification, or expansion of the compliment assertion. According to Valdes and Pino (1981, p. 61), this type of compliment response permits the addressee “to seem modest by displaying uncertainty about the subject of the compliment”. It also obliges the speaker “to repeat the compliment and, with such a repetition, ends the compliment sequence”.	A: You look really good today. B: Oh, do I?
Disagreement	A response in which the addressee disagrees with the speaker (Herbert, 1989; Nelson et al., 1996).	A: Michael, you are a very good person. B: No, I’m not.
Qualification	A response in which the addressee shows disagreement with qualifications of prior evaluative terms. It usually contains markers like “though”, “yet” and “but” (Pomerantz, 1978).	A: Nice haircut, Mary. B: Oh, thanks, but it is a bit short.
Nonacknowledgement	A response in which the addressee “doesn’t acknowledge the compliment at all. The addressee employs the conversational turn to do something other than responding to the compliment” (Herbert, 1989, p. 17).	A: Those are great paintings. B: (silence)

As presented in Table 3.3, the third compliment response strategy is evasion, which consists of four substrategies: shift credit, informative comment, ignore and request

assurance (Pomerantz, 1978; Valdes & Pino, 1981; Herbert, 1989; Nelson et al., 1993, 1996; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). The evasion strategy is presented in Table 3.6 below.

**Table 3.6: Evasion**

<b>Evasion</b>		
<b>Response type</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
Shift credit	A response in which the addressee transfers the praise to a third party.	A: This is a lovely jumper. B: My wife knitted it.
Informative comment	A response in which the addressee provides additional information about the admired quality and impersonalises the complimentary force by giving impersonal details.	A: You look great. B: I can hardly believe I am going to be 60. It sounds very old. I can actually remember when I was going to be 30.
Ignore	A response in which the addressee does not provide a response to the compliment; rather, he or she attempts to change the topic of the compliment to something else.	A: You have beautiful eyes. B: We should get back to work.
Request reassurance	A response in which the addressee requests additional reassurance that the compliment is genuine.	A: Nice shirt. B: Do you really like it?

### 3.6 Studies on Compliments and Compliment Responses

Historically, the speech act of complimenting has attracted a considerable amount of research. It has been studied in specific language communities such as Arabic, English, Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese (Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Golato, 2002; Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1986, 1988, 1995; Jaworski, 1995; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989; Migdadi, 2003; Migdadi & Jarbou, 2007; Moijica, 2002; Sifianou, 2001; Pomerantz, 1978; Wieland, 1995; Ylänne-McEwen, 1993). It has also been compared across different languages and cultures, such as American English and Egyptian Arabic, American English and Jordanian Arabic, American English and Chinese, Australian English and Chinese and Australian English and Vietnamese (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Baba, 1996; Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Chen, R., 1993; Cordella et al., 1995; Daikuhara, 1986; Han, 1992; Jeon, 1996; Li, 2015; Motaghi-Tabari & Beuzeville, 2012; Nelson et al., 1993, 1996; Nguyen, 2007; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009; Tran, 2010).

This section reviews literature on compliments and compliment responses from four different perspectives: Jordanian Arabic perspective, English perspective, Australian English perspective and a cross-cultural perspective.

### **3.6.1 Studies on Jordanian Arabic**

A few studies have examined the speech act of complimenting in Jordanian Arabic. For example, Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001) provided a preliminary analysis of compliment responses in Jordanian Arabic as used by Jordanian college students. The study focused upon the relation of the individual's gender to his or her compliment behaviour and the attitudes and values attached to it. It scrutinised 268 compliment responses and investigated a number of conventions governing the use of compliment responses as a sociolinguistic and pragmatic phenomenon in Jordan. The study revealed that although complex compliment responses such as thanking + offering, denying + thanking or thanking + questioning accounted for only 27.04%, simple responses containing one expression such as thanking, denying or offering were frequently employed (72.94%). Further, it was discovered that simple compliment responses were more frequently used than complex ones to females (72% vs. 28%). Simple compliment responses were used by male speakers, particularly to males rather than to females (83.33% vs. 72%). Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001, p. 1492) claimed that such a tendency may relate to traditional gender discrimination in Jordanian society, which may explain why some men make some phatic comments to women. The authors indicated that compliment responses play an important role in the management of face in Jordanian communication.

Another study that examined complimenting in Jordanian Arabic was conducted by Migdadi (2003) who linked features of compliments and compliment responses in Jordanian Arabic with social variables including gender, age and traditionalism. The study collected naturally occurring examples of compliments and compliment responses from ten researchers in Irbid, Jordan. Topics studied included: syntactic patterns, positive semantic carriers, format of compliments and types of compliment responses. While the complimenting behaviours of Jordanians were similar to a certain degree, the social variables correlated with some systematic differences. Individuals who shared the same gender, age, or level of traditionalism complimented each other more than people who differed in any of these categories. Females and young people primarily used the following complimenting categories: compliments on appearance, explicit compliments, exclamatory syntactic patterns and compliment plus explanation. In addition, the results

indicated that women and men differ in using compliment responses. While women preferred questions and accounts, men employed more blessings and disagreements.

Likewise, in an attempt to investigate the effect of social status of the complimenter on the choice of the compliment response strategies by Jordanians, Al-Ahmad (2006) collected 1120 compliment responses from seventy college students. The study showed that compliments offered by individuals of high social status (ministers, professors, tribe leaders...etc) were more likely to be accepted than those offered by status equals. Compliments exchanged between people of equal status, however, were more likely to meet with nonagreement responses. Al-Ahmad (2006) argued that the status of the complimenter was a good predictor of the likelihood of agreement and nonagreement responses.

In addition, Migdadi and Jarbou (2007) studied the speech act of complimenting in Fellahi (farmers) Jordanian Arabic. Specifically, the study targeted topics of compliments, structures of compliments, positive semantic carriers and strategies of compliments. The connection between compliments and gender was also investigated. A total of 570 compliments were gathered ethnographically in small villages in the north of Jordan. The results confirmed that compliments used in Fellahi Jordanian Arabic are generally formulaic and that compliments used involve a small set of lexical items and syntactic structures. Similarly, compliment topics were found to be restricted in number. In addition, the study revealed that Fellahi Jordanians offer compliments to create solidarity with others as well as to admire the feature being complimented. Gender differences were evidenced in the complimenting behaviours of Fellahi Jordanians. The data revealed that compliments happen more frequently in same-sex communications than in cross-sex interactions. Furthermore, females were found to prefer explicit compliments and compliments on appearance whereas males were inclined to favour compliments on appearance and skills.

Compliments and compliment responses in Facebook posts of Jordanian users was also investigated by Sahawneh (2010). A corpus that included 200 compliments and compliment responses was collected from a network of twenty-nine Jordanian Facebook users. The Facebook posts enclosed in the corpus were status updates, photos and timeline comments. The data analysis procedure focused on organisational structure, compliment topics, compliment strategies, compliment response strategies and emoticons used. The findings of the study revealed that there is a slight inclination towards offering compliments without a response rather than compliments with a reply (53% vs. 47%). This

tendency emphasised the influence of the Facebook mode of communication on the linguistic behaviour of its users. Because Facebook posts are regarded as asynchronous where communicators are online at different times and places, there is no pressure or obligation to respond to compliments. In addition, it was discovered that compliments by Jordanian Facebook users are mostly focused on children and appearance, which highlights the importance of having children in Jordanian society. Furthermore, Jordanian Facebook users were inclined to choose more explicit compliment strategies than implied ones (98.5% vs. 1.5%) in an attempt to emphasise the solidarity function of compliments since interaction is completed online and not face to face. With regard to the emoticons employed, the results of the study indicated that Jordanian Facebook users used more emoticons in compliments than in compliment responses (75% vs. 25%) in order to reinforce the function of the compliment as a positive politeness strategy.

Most recently, Al-Rousan and Awal (2016) examined compliment responses among Jordanian university students with respect to gender. A corpus of 611 compliment responses was collected from 36 participants using an ethnographic note-taking method. Adopting Herbert's (1990) taxonomy of compliment response strategies, the study showed that participants used the agreement strategies more frequently than the other strategies. In addition, the results revealed that although both males and females preferred to use agreement strategies more than nonagreement strategies, females employed agreement strategies more often than males. The study revealed differences in compliment responses with regard to gender.

### **3.6.2 Studies on English**

Pomerantz (1978) was the first researcher to study compliments. The author investigated compliment responses of Americans from a pragmatic perspective. Pomerantz (1978) classified compliment responses into two categories: acceptance and rejection. He also introduced new categories such as upgrade, downgrade, acceptance, rejection, supportive action, contrastive opposites and returns. Pomerantz (1978) revealed that when responding to compliments, Americans face two dilemmas: agreeing with the speaker and avoiding self-praise.

Herbert (1986) later revised Pomerantz's taxonomy by analysing compliment responses of American English speakers. The study used observation to collect naturally occurring data. Approximately one thousand samples of compliment responses from American college students were collected over a three-year project period. The study stated

that only 36.35% of compliment responses were accounted for by acceptance. Herbert (1986), thus, developed a three-category, twelve-type taxonomy of compliment responses, as explained in Table 3.7 below:

**Table 3.7: Herbert’s Taxonomy of compliment responses**

<b>Response Type</b>	<b>Example</b>
A. Agreement	
I. Acceptances	
1. Appreciation Token	Thanks; thank you; (smile)
2. Comment Acceptance	Thanks; it’s my favourite too.
3. Praise Upgrade	Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn’t it?
II. Comment History	I bought it for the trip to Arizona.
III. Transfers	
1. Reassignment	My brother gave it to me.
2. Return	So’s yours.
B. Nonagreement	
I. Scale Down	It’s really quite old.
II. Question	Do you really think so?
III. Nonacceptances	
1. Disagreement	I hate it.
2. Qualification	It’s alright, but Len’s is nicer.
IV. No Acknowledgement(silence)	
C. Other Interpretations	
I. Request	You wanna borrow this one too?

Afterwards, Holmes (1993) examined compliments in New Zealand from both genders. Investigating approximately 500 compliments, Holmes (1993) concluded that women produced and received more compliments than men. The higher frequency of compliment behaviours by women, as suggested by Holmes (1993), was contradicted by Wolfson (1984), who argued that men generally use other linguistic and nonlinguistic strategies to show and maintain harmony. The study indicated that females were more sensitive to males’ feelings when complimenting. According to Holmes (1993), this was reflected in the low frequency of compliments from men to women. Acceptance was the most frequent of compliment response strategies with no significant differences between both sexes. Men, however, avoided giving compliments or responding to compliments by changing the topic if a compliment was experienced as embarrassing.

In the following section, studies of the speech act of compliments among speakers of Australian English are presented and analysed.

### **3.6.3 Studies on Australian English**

Few studies have investigated compliments in Australian English. In order to examine the effects of gender on complimenting and reveal whether Australians perceive a compliment as flirtatious, Davis (2008) investigated compliment responses across genders within Australia. The data were collected by approaching strangers on the basis of needing directions and then complimenting them on appearance. A total of 20 strangers were approached, ten males and ten females. The participants were then asked to complete a survey, which included four 7-point Likert-type scales, one precisely relating to the innocence or flirtatious nature of the compliment. Davis (2008) concluded that Australians were found to use acceptance tokens in all cases when responding to nonintimate compliments. The majority of men surveyed were found to perceive the compliment as neither flirtatious nor innocent.

In addition, Milinkovic (2010) explored compliments in Australian English. The focus of the study was on analysing components and characteristics of complimenting possessions. A scene from an Australian drama, “Packed to the Rafters” was analysed and then used as a basis for interviews that were conducted with four Australians. The results revealed that compliments on possessions in Australian English are usually short and formulaic in nature. They consist of the compliment head act and are rarely followed by any other supporting information. Likewise, complimenters were likely to offer a brief compliment on personal possessions regardless of whether receivers like the possession and irrespective of the power distance and types of relationships with them. Overall, the study concluded that compliments on possessions are inherently polite speech acts, which consist of only the main head act in most cases without additional information in support of the compliments. Milinkovic (2010) suggested that compliments should be expressed with clearly positive adjectives to achieve successful transmission and to avoid ambiguities.

### **3.6.4 Cross-Cultural Studies**

Cross-cultural studies of compliments have attracted much research since the early 1980s. In a cross-cultural study, Wolfson (1981a) examined the semantic and syntactic structure of compliments among American and Japanese learners’ of English. The study established that 80% of compliments depend on positive semantic values. Among the 72 adjectives

that were employed in the corpus, the most frequent adjectives were *nice*, *good*, *beautiful*, *pretty* and *great*. The results discovered much similarity in the patterns of American and Japanese compliments.

Herbert (1989) later conducted a quantitative study to examine compliment and compliment responses in American English and South African English. The diary method was used to collect required data. The results showed that Americans exhibit a high frequency of compliment expression, but low frequency of compliment acceptance. South Africans, on the other hand, exhibit a low frequency of compliment expression and high frequency of compliment acceptance. The author explained this distinction in terms of ideological differences between Americans and South Africans. In Herbert's (1989) view, the high frequency of compliments and the low rate of acceptance in American data reflect American notions of equality and democratic idealism, whereas the low frequency of compliments and the high rate of acceptance are related to elitism in South Africa.

Polish and British compliments were also compared by Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989). Syntactic, illocutionary and linguistic structure of compliments were investigated in the study. The study discovered similarities between the two languages, in that compliments can be used as a pre-act depending on the goal intended by the speaker. Moreover, participants of the study used more than one strategy in one pattern such as acceptance, agreement and upgrade pattern, which occurred with relatively high frequency among peers in a humorous context. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989) pointed out that there was a variety of attitudes and perceptions towards compliments in both languages. While some participants perceived complimenting as a positive act and frequently produced compliments, others regarded complimenting as an excessively obvious attempt to maintain solidarity and thus avoided giving compliments.

Likewise, R. Chen (1993) compared American and Chinese speakers' compliment response strategies. The results revealed that the two groups used totally different politeness strategies. The compliment response strategies used by Americans were: acceptance – thanking, agreement, expressing gladness and joking; returning – returning compliment, offering object of compliment and encouraging; deflecting – explaining and doubting, and rejecting and denigrating. On the other hand, the compliment response strategies used by Chinese were disagreeing and denigrating, expressing embarrassment and explaining, thanking and denigrating, and accepting by thanking only. R. Chen (1993) stated that this difference is associated with dissimilarities in social values between the two cultures, predominantly in their respective beliefs about what creates self-image.

In their study “Egyptian and American Compliments”, Nelson et al. (1993) discovered differences in the use of compliments. The study described two key conceptions in understanding compliments in Arabic: the belief in the evil eye and the process of offering the object of the compliment to the person who complimented. The results revealed that Egyptian and American compliments were similar in their form, which was primarily adjectival; however, they differed in the use of comparatives. Unlike American compliments, Egyptian compliments took the form of proverbs and other pre-coded ritualised phrases. With regard to attributes praised, the data explained that personal appearance was praised frequently in both cultures. The type of compliment given in both Egyptian and American compliments appeared to depend on the gender of the giver and recipient of the compliment. American recipients were much more likely than Egyptian recipients to use appreciation tokens. Egyptians’ preferred responses (acceptance + formula) did not appear in the American data at all. Nelson et al. (1993) conclude that Americans give compliments more frequently than Egyptians.

Wen-Yi Hu (1997) compared and contrasted compliment responses among Taiwanese, Taiwanese Australians and Anglo-Australians. In her study, P. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, Leech’s (1983) politeness theory and Gu’s (1990) politeness theory were applied to examine strategies used by the three groups. Two methods of data collection were used: natural observations to collect real-life examples of compliment responses and discourse completion tests to elicit compliment responses. The ethnographic data showed that although both Taiwanese and Taiwanese Australians preferred indirect strategy types, Australians preferred an acceptance strategy type. There were differences in responding to compliments according to the three variables of gender, status and distance. Discourse completion tests data found that there were significant cultural differences in responding to compliments. The gender effect was not significant; however, the distance and status variables were substantial.

Another contrastive study among British and Spanish university students was completed by Lorenzo-Dus (2001) who examined both sexes using Herbert’s (1989) taxonomy of compliment responses. The results highlighted the existence of cross-cultural and cross-gender similarities and differences between English speakers and Spanish speakers. British participants were found to question the sincerity of the complimenter whereas the Spanish participants requested repetition as an expansion of the compliment. Although British respondents of both genders combined humour with various types of agreeing to compliment, the Spanish male participants opted for humorous upgrades.

German and American compliment responses among families and friends, were also compared by Golato (2002). The data included 50 compliment exchanges obtained from 25 hours of unprovoked videotaped dinner-table communication and 6 hours of audiotaped telephone communication between 27 close friends and family members. The participants were from middle and upper middle-class backgrounds, aged between 23 and 70. The findings showed that whilst rejections and turns containing certain agreement and disagreement features were constructed similarly in German and American English, the two languages differed in agreement sequences. Golato (2002) advised that, in such sequences, cross-cultural communication can become problematic.

With regard to perceptions of compliments, Kim (2003) explored how Korean and Japanese learners of English transferred compliments from their native cultures when interacting with native speakers of English. Kim (2003) analysed 30 examples of compliments and 60 examples of compliment responses. The findings of the study confirmed the existence of vital pragmatic transfer from Korean and Japanese sociolinguistic rules into the speech act of complimenting in English, with clear evidence in the areas of syntactic structures, compliment topics and compliment responses. The study concluded that there were possibilities of miscommunication when native speakers of Korean and Japanese engage in a conversation with native speakers of English. For instance, the typical Korean and Japanese response to a compliment, such as, no response or no acknowledgement may lead to misunderstanding for native speakers of English since they may feel that their good intentions are unappreciated.

Equally, El Samaty (2005) investigated how Saudi learners of English transferred compliments from their native language when communicating with native speakers of American English. Data were collected from three groups (10 native speakers of American English, 10 Saudi advanced learners of English and 10 Saudi low-intermediate learners of English) using a discourse completion test. The study showed that there were no differences in compliments between Saudi learners of English and native speakers of English; however, differences arose when responding to compliments. In addition, the study revealed that Saudi learners of English did not produce target-like compliment responses. With respect to language proficiency, El Samaty (2005) stated that language proficiency did not play a major role in pragmatic competence. El Samaty (2005) supported Eslami-Rasekh's et al. (2004) argument that learners of English as a second language are likely to transfer their first language's pragmatic rules into their production of the second language despite being linguistically proficient in a second language.

Using transcriptions from recorded interviews and participant observations, Cedar (2006) investigated American and Thai compliment response strategies. The researcher examined similarities and differences between 74 compliment responses given by 12 native speakers of American English (6 males and 6 females) enrolled in graduate programs at an American university and 68 compliment responses given by 12 Thai adult students (6 males and 6 females) enrolled in an intensive English program at an American university. The findings revealed that Thai participants responded differently from native speakers of American English. Four-fifths of the American responses were found in the categories of acceptance and positive elaboration. Although eight out of ten Americans responded positively to the compliments, only half of the Thai participants did so. Thirty percent of the American responses fell into the category of positive elaboration compared to only five percent of the Thai responses.

Al Falasi (2007) studied whether female Emirati learners of English produced target-like compliment responses in English and whether pragmatic transfer can occur. She argued that Arabic expressions and strategies of female Emirate learners of English were sometimes transferred to English. The study explained that female Emirate learners of English transferred some of the pragmatic norms of their first language into the second language. Findings of the study revealed that female Emirati learners of English strived to produce target-like responses to compliments. Al Falasi (2007) highlighted the significance of developing English learners' sociocultural knowledge, which will help improve their understanding of frames of interaction and rules of politeness within the target culture.

In his study "Giving and Receiving Compliments: A Cross-cultural Study in Australian English and Vietnamese", Nguyen (2007) compared and contrasted Australian and Vietnamese complimenting behaviours in educational settings. The study involved three groups: native speakers of Australian English, native speakers of Vietnamese and Vietnamese learners of English. Study of the first two groups revealed differences between native speakers of Australian English and Vietnamese in their choice and use of topics, syntactic structures, positive semantic carriers in compliments and the participants' choice of compliment response strategies. Study of the third group of participants discovered the cultural problem they faced in approaching target language competence when complimenting in English, while trying to maintain their Vietnamese cultural identity. The findings showed sharp differences in employing opt out strategies in situations where compliments were socially expected. Australians showed less favour for noncompliment

and opt out strategies (13%) whereas these were more favoured in the other two groups, accounting for 24 % and 19% respectively. Nguyen (2007) concluded that gender and social status can influence compliments and compliment responses and that explicit teaching of the speech act of complimenting can enhance cross-cultural awareness. The author also indicated that the speech act of complimenting can be influenced by values such as politeness and sincerity.

C. H. Tang and Zhang (2009) conducted another cross-cultural study that investigated compliment responses among Australian English and Mandarin Chinese speakers. The data were collected using a discourse completion test with four situational settings: appearance, character, ability and possession. The results demonstrated a consistent tendency across Chinese participants to use fewer accept strategies and more evade and reject strategies than their Australian counterparts. Chinese participants expressed appreciation for a compliment less and degraded themselves more. Furthermore, they preferred implicit approaches as compliment response, which was in line with modesty and communism, which are pillars of Chinese culture. In contrast, Australian participants preferred using explicit compliment responses. C. H. Tang and Zhang (2009) claimed that any universal compliment responses theory will fail since different cultures have different sets of protocols.

Tran (2010) compared and contrasted compliment responses in Australian English and Vietnamese. The study applied a new methodology called “the naturalised role-play” where participants divided into role-play informants and role-play conductors. Role-play informants were university students, ranging in age from eighteen to thirty-one years, thus, they showed homogeneity in terms of age, education and profession. Role-play conductors included six native speakers of Australian English (3 men and 3 women) and four native speakers of Vietnamese (2 men and 2 women). The data showed similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese compliment responses in terms of strategy use and strategy combination. According to Tran (2010), these differences between English and Vietnamese compliment responses can cause pragmatic and discourse transfer in cross-cultural communication.

In the same vein, Motaghi-Tabari and Beuzeville (2012) explored compliment responses among Persians in Iran, Persians in Australia and Anglo-Australians. The data were collected through a discourse completion test from five males and five females in each of three groups. Herbert’s (1986) taxonomy was used to categorise the collected data. The results indicated that although there were similarities in the choice of compliment

response strategies by Persians, Persian-Australians and Anglo-Australians, there were still some differences that cause breakdown in communication. Comparing Persians in Iran with Persian-Australians, the study revealed that although both groups preferred agreement than any other strategies, Persians in Iran favoured disagreement strategies more than Persian-Australians. Within the agreement strategy, Persians in Iran returned the compliment to the speaker more frequently than Persian-Australians. Persian-Australians, on the other hand, used more comment acceptances than Persians in Iran. Moreover, the study discovered that Persians in Iran employed a request strategy (offering the object of the compliment to the speaker); however, Persian-Australians did not do so. Comparing Persians-Australians with Anglo-Australians, the study discovered that patterns of agreement were similar for both Persian-Australians and Anglo-Australians. Both groups commented on the history of the complimented object frequently and returned a compliment less often. With regard to differences between the two groups, both Persian-Australians and Anglo-Australians did not acknowledge compliments and used questioning as a response to compliments.

Quran (2012) investigated compliments as used by native speakers of Jordanian Arabic and native speakers of American English in academic settings. The study comprised two groups: Jordanians (85 males and 58 females) and Americans (36 males and 80 females). A discourse completion test that consisted of 12 situations was used to collect required data. The data were analysed through a chi-square test (value= 0.05) to verify whether differences of culture, gender and topics played a significant role in the choice of certain compliment expressions. The findings revealed that there were significant differences in the perception of compliments in both Jordanian Arabic and American English. Some expressions were totally missing from the American English data such as prayers and common social expressions. Complimentary expressions used by females were longer than those used by males in both American and Jordanian participants. Moreover, female language employed more intensifiers ('I really like your car'), interjections ('Wow, what a nice garden') and used adjectives that imply stronger emotions toward each other ('You are such a talented person').<sup>2</sup> The study also discovered that there were more cases of refraining from giving compliments in the American data than in the Jordanian one, with statistically significant differences, particularly between males.

Using qualitative methodologies, Maíz-Arévalo (2012) studied implicit compliments in Peninsular Spanish and English. In her study, "Was that a Compliment?"

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<sup>2</sup> Examples were provided by the researcher.

Implicit Compliments in English and Spanish”, the author investigated pragmatic inspirations underlying the selection of compliments. The findings of the study showed that evading face threat, displaying genuineness and establishing a relationship were the main motivations of participants. In addition, it was revealed that implicit compliments were favoured when valuing somebody’s qualities, accomplishments or personal appearance in order to escape face-threat, particularly when the rapport between speakers is still detached. Maíz-Arévalo (2012) claimed that not all implicit compliments share the same degree of indirectness and that some implicit compliments display regular linguistic patterns of explicitness in both Spanish and English.

Another contrastive analysis between Australians and Iranian Persians about compliment responses was conducted by Sorahi and Nazemi (2013). The study investigated compliment response strategies among Australians and Persians within the framework developed by C. H. Tang and Zhang (2009) in order to investigate similarities and differences between the two cultures. The data were collected using a discourse completion test, which contained four situational settings (appearance, character, ability and possession) and analysed using Holmes’ theory of compliment responses (Holmes, 1986). Sorahi and Nazemi (2013) stated that Iranian Persian speakers used fewer accept strategies and more reject and evade strategies than their Australian counterparts. The study reemphasises the fact that cultural differences should be taken into account in second language acquisition classrooms.

Peng and Zhao (2014) conducted a pilot project to study compliments from a cross-cultural perspective. Based on the studies on compliments pioneered by P. Brown and Levinson, and Leech and Holmes, the authors designed a questionnaire for three main groups: native speakers of Chinese, native speakers of English and Chinese interlanguage speakers. Peng and Zhao (2014) stated that the three subject groups had diverse perceptions of the speech act of complimenting. The results also revealed that gender, power and social status had a major impact on participants’ complimenting behaviours.

Similarly, in a comparative study on the use of compliment response strategies, Shabani and Zeinali (2015) examined compliment response strategies as a subcategory of politeness strategies as employed by Persian and native speakers of Canadian English. Participants were thirty Iranian native speakers (15 females and 15 males) in Iran and 26 Canadian English native speakers (13 females and 13 males) in Canada who were aged between 17 and 30. Using a discourse completion task, the study found that there is a significant difference between Persian native speakers and Canadian English speakers with

regard to the compliment response strategies examined in the study namely, acceptance, evasion and rejection. Furthermore, it was revealed that acceptance was the most extensively employed compliment response strategy among both Canadian and Iranian subjects. The impact of gender on the use of strategies to reply to compliments was also investigated in the research study; however, the findings showed no substantial difference between the two cultural groups.

In their study “The Effects of Explicit and Implicit Pragmatic Instruction on the Development of Compliments and Compliment Responses”, Ebadi and Pourzandi (2015) examined the significance of explicit and implicit instructions in the development of students’ compliments and compliment responses. The participants in this study were 56 intermediate learners of English who were divided into three main groups: control, explicit instruction and implicit instruction. The subjects were requested to respond to an open-ended discourse completion test, which consisted of 12 situations that were designed to evaluate the participants’ knowledge of compliments and compliment responses as well as their pragmatic competence. The findings of the study emphasised the importance of both implicit and explicit instructions in developing the students’ speech act of complimenting. Ebadi and Pourzandi (2015) stated that pragmatic instruction promotes the process of learning through awareness rising. The authors claimed that this method should be adopted by language educators as one of the ways to develop students’ pragmatic competence.

Boroujeni, Domakani, and Sheykhi (2016) compared compliment responses of native Persian speakers with those of native speakers of American English in television series to find similarities and differences in the use of compliment responses in both languages. The data were taken from two television series broadcasted in 1994 and 2013. For analysing the data, the study used Herbert’s (1986) three main strategies including agreement, nonagreement, and other interpretation to identify the sociopragmatic realisations of compliment responses and the role of gender in this respect. The findings of this study revealed that in each language, the use of compliment responses strategies are culturally dependent and gender cannot be an issue in determining the compliment response strategies in each language. The study highlighted the importance of understanding of the cultural boundaries in designing activities of the books, which highly focus on the pragmatic function of language, and avoiding communicational breakdown for English learners.

In the same vein, Bait Jamil (2016) investigated how Omani and Australian lecturers and students respond to compliments in higher educational contexts when

interacting with people of their own cultures. The study explored how compliments are understood, and took into account the role of compliment topics, gender, relationship, hierarchical status and setting in shaping compliment responses. Two qualitative methods, namely interviews and observation records, were adopted to collect data. A total of 17 Omani lecturers and students in Oman, and 18 Australian lecturers and students in Australia were interviewed in their own language. They were invited to put themselves in hypothetical situations, wherein they imagined themselves being complimented on five topics by other lecturers and students in different settings. Their imagined responses to the compliments, including their reported thoughts and feelings, and their understanding of the situations were noted. After the interviews, they were invited to record real-life examples of compliment exchanges using an observation record in which they provided their assessment about the observed situations. Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data obtained from the interviews and observation records, and statistical description was used to analyse the quantitative data from the interviews. The findings of the study showed that some compliment responses were offered by members of both cultures, while others were culture-bound. Thanking was the most common shared compliment response, along with other responses such as downgrading and joking. However, responses such as remaining silent, invocation request, invocation and unreflective reasoning were only offered by Omani lecturers and students. By contrast, appreciation, and laughing were only provided by Australian lecturers and students. The study showed that while expressed compliment responses are commonly congruent with the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of Omani and Australian lecturers and students, this is not always the case: when the compliment triggers negative thoughts and feelings, they offer seemingly approving or evasive responses while silently disapproving of the compliments. Furthermore, the study revealed that politeness, modesty and generosity are the main underlying principles that guide the appropriateness of compliment responses among Omani and Australian lecturers and students.

Most recently, Yuliyani (2016) explored the similarities and differences between Australians and Indonesians on giving compliments. Participants were 50 university students: 25 Indonesians and 25 Australians. A written discourse completion task that contained eight situational scenarios was used to collect required data. The findings revealed some similarities between Australians and Indonesians about giving compliments. Both Australians and Indonesians were inclined to offer explicit compliments. Compliments on ability were the most commonly used by both Australians

and Indonesians. Moreover, compliments happened frequently from males to females. Differences between the two groups were also apparent in the study. Australians employed implicit compliments as the second favourite while the Indonesians used the no response type as their second choice. Although Australian females offered more explicit compliments than Australian males, Indonesian females and males paid approximately equivalent amounts of explicit compliments. In addition, the results confirmed that Indonesians' second most recurrent positive semantic carriers were adverbs, while Australians' second most common positive semantic carriers were verbs.

Previous studies on the speech act of complimenting have evidenced its formulaic nature, along with its most frequently used syntactic structures and linguistic units (Manes & Wolfson, 1981). Other studies compared the use of compliments in feature films with those in natural contexts (Rose, 2001). Others compared compliments across different varieties of English, gender and culture (Creese, 1991; Herbert, 1989; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1988), whereas others compared English with other languages such as Arabic (Nelson et al., 1996; Quran 2012), Chinese (Chen, R., 1993; Li, 2015; Ye, 1995), German (Golato, 2002), Japanese (Daikuhara, 1986; Ueda, 2003), Korean (Chung-hye, 1992), Spanish (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001), Cantonese (Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001) and Indonesian (Ibrahim & Riyanto, 2000; Yuliyani, 2016). While cross-language studies very often produce interesting results, comprehensive studies focusing on individual intercultural speakers are still lacking. Comprehensive studies targeting individual intercultural speakers are also meaningful for a better understanding of the complimenting behaviours in a particular language or among a particular society, cultural group or culture. In this respect, studies of compliments among male Jordanian-Australians are scarce and a study using original participants' data in the context of Australia is yet to appear. It was the purpose of this study to focus on the complimenting norms of intercultural male Jordanian-Australians.

### **3.7 Summary of Literature**

The literature reviewed highlighted its usefulness to the present study. It provided an overview of how other scholars approached and studies the speech of complimenting. It also helped to place the relevance of the study in the larger context of what others researchers have already done on the speech act of complimenting. By comparing and contrasting what other researchers have done as well as how this study is different or original helped to rationalise the need to complete this research. Moreover, literature

provided an overview of the findings of other researchers, which is essential in shaping and guiding the study in the right direction by obtaining insights and different perspectives from other researchers.

Having reviewed the literature, it can be indicated that compliments are culture specific and sociologically conditioned. Compliments that are appropriate in one language or culture might not be appropriate in another language or culture (Pomerantz, 1978). It is apparent that most of the reviewed studies confirmed that there was a tendency to accept compliments rather than reject them. Moreover, there was a tendency to avoid or minimise self-praise. Arabic people were found to prefer accepting compliments rather than rejecting them (Nelson et al., 1996), speakers of Western origin were found to prefer accepting compliments and appreciating them, whereas, speakers of Asian languages, Japanese (Urano, 1998), Chinese (Chen, R., 1993) and Thai (Cedar, 2006) were likely to reject compliments.

With regard to compliment responses, there was a variation in the taxonomy of compliment response strategies. Herbert (1989) classified compliment response strategies into agreement, nonagreement and request interpretation. Nelson et al. (1996), on the other hand, categorised compliment response strategies into accept, mitigate, reject and no response. With respect to categorising compliment response strategies, there appears to be a variation in the use of the terminology. Holmes (1993) used “Informative Comment”, Nelson et al. (1996) employed “Deflecting or Qualifying Comment”, while Herbert (1989) used “Comment History” in order to refer to the same category. Therefore, it appears that there are three different names for the one category.

There were two popular methods for collecting data: natural methods such as observations and interviews (Wolfson, 1981a) and simulated methods such as discourse completion tests or tasks (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). There was no consensus among scholars on the universality of politeness. There was variation in terms of compliment strategies, their frequencies and attributes complimented. However, there was agreement among researchers on the purpose of compliments, which is to establish and maintain solidarity and harmony between people (Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986; Li, 2015). Several studies investigated compliment strategies semantically. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989) was the only researcher to examine the illocutionary and linguistic structure of compliments.

Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989) claimed that the motivation behind complimenting is to satisfy the addressee’s expectation rather than expressing a positive judgement of positive assessment sequences. This claim highlights the significance of

sincerity in complimenting since some individuals might act sincerely and might refuse to compliment their friends or colleagues.

According to Pomerantz (1978), tokens of appreciation (*thanks, thank you, it is nice of you to say this*) can be used to imply acceptance and negate appreciation. Further, it can be used to minimise participants' refusal of compliments. With respect to reasons for rejection of a compliment, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989) argued that the speaker may compliment an attribute, which may not be valued by the recipient or not noticed at all, resulting in disagreement or downgrading the response to the compliment. Some participants, for example, might thank the speaker while others might perceive the compliment as degrading. According to Pomerantz (1978), the discrepancy in responding to a compliment indicates that people act differently even if they belong to the same community.

Interference, overgeneralisation or simplification are all reasons for miscommunication, particularly when the second language is not used in its natural environment (James, 1981; Nelson et al., 1996; Wolfson, 1989). Another reason for breakdown in communication is misinterpretation, which may occur when individuals use norms of the first language and culture due to their inability to interpret the speaker's intention (Thomas, 1983) or due to their lack of understanding of the rules of interpreting words and structures (Wolfson, 1981a).

Overall, it is apparent that there was an emphasis that languages in general differ greatly from one culture to another in norms and patterns of communications. Therefore, sociolinguistic information and rules of speaking are required in the English classrooms in order to explain and overcome difficulties of migrants and refugees (Wolfson, 1981a).

### **3.8 Gaps in Research on Compliments**

As explained in previous sections, the communicative acts of complimenting and responding to compliments have been studied in different languages, cultural groups and cultures. The literature on cross-cultural pragmatics research has also been well documented (Abdul Sattar & Lah, 2009; Al Falasi, 2007; Bait Jamil, 2016; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Blum-Kulka, 1982; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; El Samaty, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Garcia, C., 1989; Ghawi, 1993; House, 1988; House & Kasper, 1987; Kim, 2003; Li, 2015; Olshtain, 1983; Takahashi, T., & Beebe,

1987; Yuliyani, 2016) with studies of compliments and compliment responses in various pairs of societies, cultures and languages.

Having reviewed the literature, it can be stated that there is a tendency in previous research to focus on cross-cultural studies. Preceding research on the pragmatics of compliments has predominantly targeted cross-cultural approaches where the main focus is on comparing and contrasting two cultural groups, two speech communities or two languages (Cedar, 2006; Chen, R., 1993; Golato, 2002; Herbert, 1989; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Motaghi-Tabari & Beuzeville, 2012; Nelson et al., 1993, 1996; Nguyen, 2007; Quran, 2012; Sorahi & Nazemi, 2013; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009; Tran, 2010; Wolfson, 1981a).

No study, to the best of my knowledge, has ever been conducted on the pragmatics of compliments among individuals who have an intercultural identity. Moreover, no research has ever targeted intercultural male Jordanian-Australians as a basis for its analysis. Therefore, there is a paucity of research targeting perceptions and practices of compliments and compliment responses among male Jordanian-Australians. The choice of the participants forms the strength of the thesis, which makes it original and innovative in this area of research.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, empirical research on compliments and compliment responses was presented and explored as a background for the present study. The reviewed studies revealed gaps in research on the speech act of complimenting. More specifically, the reviewed literature showed a gap in intercultural complimenting research, namely on Jordanian-Australians. Hence, the present study is designed to address this lack of research. The next chapter describes the methodology designed to answer the research questions identified in chapter One of this thesis.

# CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

## 4.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces and comprises a discussion of the methodological approach and research design used to investigate the research questions. The methodology of the present study is qualitative. This research utilised an ethnographic approach, which falls within the qualitative research paradigm, to answer questions of the study. The subsequent sections include an overview of the methods of data collection procedure, followed by an illustration of the selection of the research participants.

## 4.1 Research Design

### 4.1.1 Ethnographic Approach

Ethnography “literally means ‘a portrait of a people’. An ethnography is a written description of a particular culture – the customs, beliefs and behaviours – based on information collected through fieldwork” (Harris & Johnson, O., 2000, p. 4). The ethnographic design emerged from the field of anthropology which evolved during the colonial period of the British Empire and primarily from the contributions of Bronislaw Malinowski, Robert Park and Franz Boas (Fielding, 1993). In the present study, the ethnographic approach was used since the major intent was to gain a holistic picture of all people under study with an emphasis on depicting the daily activities and experiences of participants by observing and interviewing them. The study combines such methods as interviewing and observation, which is referred to as an inquisitive combination of methodological techniques (Creswell, 2003, 2009, 2012).

As Denscombe (1998) states, ethnographic research refers to the study or description of various groups, societies or cultures, and focuses on the study of people and their lifestyles, understandings, beliefs and norms. It emphasises the significance of understanding things from the perspective of people involved in the study rather than from the outsiders’ perspective, that is, to see things as people being studied see these things and to accept participants’ perspectives. In addition, ethnographic research requires that the researcher spends a significant time in the field among people whose lifestyles and cultures are being studied, to share in an individual’s lifestyle and cultures rather than observe from

a distance and to give special attention to the way people being studied understand things, the meanings they attach to these things and the way they perceive the world (Sangasubana, 2011).

Ethnographic research has the ability to integrate description with theory. In other words, it is seen as a descriptive approach of particular situations, which emphasises the holistic nature of ethnography as well as the features of the information covered (Flick, 2018; Flick, von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). Ethnographic research is perceived as a generalised and theoretical approach that can be used to test theories or hypotheses. It is also strong in terms of its environmental validity to the extent that the acts of researching will have relatively little impact on all participants (Creswell, 2012).

Ethnography was the best approach to answer questions of the present study since it is holistic, field-based and individualised (Creswell, 2012; Denscombe, 1998; Fielding, 1993; Sangasubana, 2011). As Wolfson and Manes (1980, p. 393) indicate, “ethnographic fieldwork is the only reliable method for collecting data about the way complimenting, or indeed, any other speech act functions in everyday interactions”. Besides, ethnography has been the exclusive method used to study how culture affects the giving and receiving of compliments in intercultural interactions.

The use of ethnographic methods assisted to construct a naturalistic and holistic investigation of male Jordanian-Australians’ perceptions and practices of compliments in intercultural encounters. What made the ethnographic approach privileged in this case is that it assisted to collect, analyse and interpret data by not only interviewing participants, but also observing their daily natural interactions (Nunan, 1992).

#### **4.1.2 The Foundations of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research covers a wide range of approaches, which are related to different beliefs about the social world and what to know and how to find out about it. Although definitions diverge, the objectives of qualitative research are generally focused on providing an in-depth and interpreted comprehension of the social world, by studying and learning about people’s social situations, beliefs, experiences, perceptions and histories (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013).

The history of qualitative research must be comprehended in the context of broader developments in research methods generally and social research methods in particular. The development of qualitative research was strongly impacted by philosophies about the significance of understanding and studying human behaviours in their social and material

circumstances. In addition, the development of qualitative research was intensely influenced by the necessity to comprehend the meanings that people attach to their own experiences. ‘Interpretivism’, which is essential to the qualitative research tradition, was developed in response to some of the perceived delimitations that are related to ‘positivism’. ‘Positivism’ is the approach that is traditionally concerned with statistical social science (Blaikie, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Hughes & Sharrock, 1997).

Over the course of the twentieth century, qualitative research has seen many developments. A large number of different approaches have also appeared. Those that have been most influential include ethnography, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and grounded theory, and constructionism and critical theory. Moreover, there has been an increase in the use of qualitative methods in disciplines that previously depended on quantitative approaches and experimental methods. This is part of a wider acknowledgement that researchers may need to adopt a more pragmatic position in their research and rely on diverse resources available to them to address research questions (Blaikie, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Hughes & Sharrock, 1997).

## **4.2 Methods**

In order to investigate male Jordanian-Australians’ perceptions and practices of compliments, the study employed ethnographic methodology to collect data, which included the utilisation of semi-structured interviews and ethnographic covert observation of participants’ daily interactions.

### **4.2.1 Interviews**

Qualitative interviewing has become a noticeable research method in the social sciences (King, Horrocks, & Brooks, 2018; Wengraf, 2004). Interviewing as a qualitative methodology is a cooperative learning procedure in which the subjectivities of the study participants affect the data collection process, or the process of “making sense” as Shah (2004, p. 552) puts it.

Interviews are described as pipelines for exploring information and knowledge since they assist to discover participants’ perceptions and insights on certain research topics (Holstein & Gubrium, 1988, 2001). Besides, interviews are beneficial to investigate certain phenomena that cannot be directly observed (Punch, 1998). The procedure of

interviewing someone can be transformative (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) and even therapeutic (Stuhlmiller, 2001).

Interviews focus on explaining and understanding people's behaviours from the viewpoints of the individuals being investigated (Shepard, Jensen, Schmoll, Hack, & Gwyer, 1993). Interviews are crucial and beneficial sources in data collection. If selected in a holistic way, they can obtain meaningful data on participants' beliefs, opinions, practices and attitudes towards the subject being investigated. In addition, interviews can provide a control over the line of questioning (Al-Harashseh, 2012).

Combined with observations, interviews can help in understanding the meanings participants hold for their everyday activities and practices (Creswell, 2003; Denscombe, 1998, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1989, 1995). There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Williamson, 2002). In the present study, semi-structured interviews enhanced by narratives were used to collect the data.

#### **4.2.1.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interview questions were asked in order to acquire more explicit information about preferred compliment topics, compliment sequences, reasons for complimenting and compliment response strategies. The questions of the semi-structured interviews were adapted to suit the sampled participants. Interview discussions were directed closely through an interview guide (Please refer to Appendix H), which provided adequate flexibility in stimulating data from interviewees, and thus covered the area of study in a chosen direction.

Semi-structured interviews were effective in obtaining in-depth information about participants' perceptions, thoughts and beliefs of compliments. In addition, semi-structured interviews assisted to capture how participants perceive the speech act of complimenting, and as a result helped to clarify their perceptions and insights of compliments. Furthermore, through one on one semi-structured interviews with participants, the impact of social and cultural aspects on interviewees' complimenting practices and preferences was also easily explored.

Hence, semi-structured interviews were not only a good tool for gaining rich information from a small number of participants within a realistic period of time, but also an effective method of supplementing the observation data as a form of testing and triangulation (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi 2016; Mertens, 1998, 2003).

#### **4.2.2 Ethnographic Covert Observation**

In the current research study, the data was not only semi-structured interview transcriptions, but also the results of field notes collected through ethnographic covert observation of participants' daily interactions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Although interviews provided rich and authentic data, participant observation was also implemented to offer another essential supplement to data from the semi-structured interviews.

Participant observation, whereby the researcher interacts with individuals in their life activities while collecting data, is an exceptional method for studying rich and diverse experiences, thoughts, feelings, and activities of people and the meanings of their existence (Jorgensen, 2015). Participant observation is "the systematic description of events, behaviors and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 79). It is "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (Schensul, Schensul, & Lecompte, 1999, p. 91). In the present study, participant observation provided a powerful tool for presenting information that can be used to confirm participants' perceptions of compliments (Spradley, 1980). Participant observation was a good method to reveal how frequently participants complimented others, to show their insights of paying and responding to compliments, to illuminate their perspectives on the linguistic, social and cultural factors that might affect their complimenting behaviours and to observe the difficulties that they face when complimenting in intercultural contexts. In addition, participant observation supplied another essential element to complement semi-structured interviews by providing an overview of the way male Jordanian-Australians naturally practise compliments in everyday social interactions. In other words, participant observation assisted to investigate the complimenting practices of male Jordanian-Australians in natural situations by not only observing their social activities, but also taking part in those activities (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002), which supplemented the data from semi-structured interviews. I participated in some activities during which I was not able to take any notes. However, after each activity ended, I remembered as much information as possible and then recorded my memories in detail in my field notes.

Participant observation was necessary to draw a whole picture about the context to be investigated. Participants were observed to investigate how they practise compliments in real-life social interactions. Participant observation was conducted in Sydney, Australia and included observation of social events such as dinner functions, picnic functions, parties, sports activities, community activities, friends' gatherings and wedding

celebrations. In general, participant observation increased my awareness of unanticipated events that might require the refocusing of one or more evaluative questions. Besides, participant observation not only provided a complete image of the interview approach stage, but also offered extra opportunities to understand participants' perceptions of compliments in intercultural encounters. During participant observation, information was recorded as revealed and unusual aspects were noticed. Similarly, participant observation was useful for participants who felt uncomfortable discussing their linguistic or pragmatic difficulties during semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2012). By directly observing participants' social conversations, I was better able to understand the whole situation in order to draw a holistic perspective, see things that may routinely escape conscious awareness among participants, discover things that no one else has ever paid attention to, learn about perceptions that participants were unwilling to show or talk about, move beyond the selective perceptions of others and access personal knowledge and direct experience as resources to aid in understanding and interpreting participants' perception, beliefs and values of compliments in intercultural communication (Patton, 1990, 2002).

#### **4.2.3 Justification of Methodology**

The methods chosen to carry out this study were semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were selected as they focused on naturally occurring behaviours of participants under study. Furthermore, they reflected the aim of the study to investigate participants' perceptions of compliments (semi-structured interview) and practices of compliments (participant observation). They also reflected the aim of the study to obtain natural data rather than simulated data in a reasonable period of time. By using a combination of semi-structured interviews and participant observation, I was able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings. As each type and source of data has strengths and limitations, using a combination of data types assisted to increase validity since the strength of one method compensated for the weakness of the other. In other words, I was able to build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimising the weaknesses of any single approach – also known as triangulation. For example, participant observation decreased the incidence of reactivity or participants acting in a certain way during interviews. In addition, participant observation provided a check on what was reported in interviews and offered an opportunity to go beyond external behaviours to explore the internal states of participants (Patton, 2002). Interviews, on the other hand, complemented the limitations of participant

observation by covering not only hidden meaning that is expressed by the participants, but also their feeling and emotion (Boje, 2001).

### **4.3 Data Collection Procedure**

In this study, semi-structured interviews as well as ethnographic covert observations are used to gain insight into male Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of the speech act of complimenting. In this section, the data collection process of this study is discussed. First, the participants; male Jordanian-Australians, are described followed by the instruments and then the procedures for data collection.

#### **4.3.1 Participants**

Participants were twenty male Jordanian-Australians who had lived in Australia for a minimum of five years at the time of the study. The sampled participants were interviewed in order to obtain a strong and rich understanding of their perceptions of compliments. The sampled interviewees were invited to join the study with the assistance of the Jordanian-Australian Association and the Jordanian-Australian Friendship Association. The invitation included information on the study's aims, selection criteria and practical information including potential time and location for interview and interview options.

The sampled interviewees were fully informed about the nature, purposes and processes of the interviews. They agreed in writing to take part and to be documented. Moreover, the sampled interviewees were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without prejudice. Participants were also covertly observed in order to obtain a strong and rich understanding of their practices of compliments. The purpose of the study was not explained to participants in order to warrant smoothness and comfort in observations, to avoid overcomplimenting during interactions and to keep to ordinary natural communication happening.

The observed participants were recruited with the assistance of the Jordanian-Australian Association and the Jordanian-Australian Friendship Association, which organised indoor and outdoor functions for the Jordanian community in Australia. They were also recruited through indoor and outdoor functions, which are organised by friends and friends of friends. Table 4.1 provides a summary of participants' characteristics:

**Table 4.1: Participants' characteristics**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Length of stay in Australia</b>	<b>City in Jordan</b>
JA <sup>3</sup> 1	34	Master	General Practitioner	Married	21 years	Irbid
JA 2	38	Bachelor	Human Resources Officer	Widowed	24 years	Amman
JA 3	27	Master	Student	Single	8 years	Amman
JA 4	39	Year 12	Kitchen Hand	Single	17 years	Zarqa
JA 5	30	Bachelor	Nurse	Single	18 years	Irbid
JA 6	27	Bachelor	Engineer	Single	6 years	Ma'an
JA 7	40	Bachelor	Translator	Married	27 years	Karak
JA 8	38	Bachelor	Finance Officer	Married	15 years	Mafraq
JA 9	29	Diploma	Student	Single	7 years	Ramtha
JA 10	32	Bachelor	Engineer	Single	23 years	Salt
JA 11	36	Bachelor	Dentist	Married	13 years	Amman
JA 12	43	Year 10	Technician	Married	25 years	Irbid
JA 13	44	Master	Teacher	Married	19 years	Aqaba
JA 14	25	Bachelor	Student	Single	7 years	Irbid
JA 15	27	Bachelor	Cashier	Single	9 years	Madaba
JA 16	41	Master	Accountant	Married	17 years	Mafraq
JA 17	40	Doctorate	Psychologist	Married	18 years	Ma'an
JA 18	33	Masters	Shop Owner	Married	7 years	Amman
JA 19	43	Year 12	Taxi Driver	Married	35 years	Karak
JA 20	45	Diploma	Taxi Driver	Divorced	30 years	Salt

The participants ranged in age from 18 to 65. All participants had studied English after migrating to Australia; however, their reported English proficiency varied. Although some participants reported excellent English skills, others disclosed intermediate proficiency. In general, those who were born in Australia, or had migrated to Australia at a young age revealed a stronger and more systematic knowledge of the English language.

<sup>3</sup> JA: Jordanian-Australian.

Similarly, those who completed a degree in Australia reported a stronger and more efficient knowledge of the English language than those who had not. Others had developed spoken proficiency in English because of their daily communication with others; however, they revealed limited reading and writing skills. All participants were migrants of Jordanian heritage. Of these participants, some were students of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Australia, some were migrants who did not complete any degrees in Australia and some were professionals who previously completed various degrees in Australia.

The research only focused on male participants. While it was desirable to recruit participants of both genders, there was one major impediment, which was related to the traditional and cultural sensitivity that restricts a male researcher's access to female participants.

### **4.3.2 Interviews**

This study used semi-structured interviews. All interviews were completed in the 10-month period between December 2016 and October 2017. The interviews were conducted in Arabic and English and investigated participants' comprehensive knowledge, perception and experience of complimenting behaviours in intercultural situations.

The questions asked during interviews were similar for all interviewees. In the interviews, spontaneous questions were raised in order to obtain additional information. For example, questions about participants' experiences with regard to complimenting behaviours in intercultural situations were asked not only to acquire an understanding of the main difficulties faced by participants when complimenting in intercultural communication, but also to understand the role that social and cultural factors play to determine people's complimenting behaviours. Moreover, questions regarding the teaching of compliments to migrants in English classrooms were occasionally asked in order to obtain a more comprehensive interpretation of how participants developed their complimenting skills as well as to discuss their suggestions on teaching English compliments in English classrooms in Australia. Semi-structured interview questions were asked to obtain specific information and interpretations about compliment topics, compliment sequences, reasons for complimenting and compliment response strategies.

An interview guide was sent to each participant one week prior to the conversation in order to assist participants to prepare for the interview (Please refer to Appendix H). The interview guide was developed to discover how frequently participants complimented

others, their insights of paying and responding to compliments in intercultural encounters, difficulties that they face when complimenting in an intercultural situation, their perspectives on the linguistic, social and cultural factors that might impact their complimenting behaviours, memorable experiences with compliments in intercultural situations and whether they realised it was appropriate or inappropriate to give a compliment.

Interviews were conducted in a meeting room at a local library, a community centre and at the University of New England, Parramatta Campus. Interviews were approximately 60 – 90 minutes in duration. The sampled interviewees were permitted to choose more than one answer, and were encouraged to chat as much as possible about their life experiences with respect to the complimenting behaviours in intercultural encounters.

### **4.3.3 Participant Observation**

Participants were also observed covertly, and thus were not informed about the nature, purpose and process of observations. The purpose of the study was not explained to participants in order to warrant smoothness and comfort in observations, to avoid overcomplimenting during interactions and to keep to ordinary natural communication happening.

Similar to semi-structured interviews, participant observation was a good method to discover how frequently participants complimented others, their insights of paying and responding to compliments, their perspectives on the linguistic, social and cultural factors that might impact on their complimenting behaviours, observe difficulties that they face when complimenting in an intercultural contexts and whether they realised it was appropriate or inappropriate to give a compliment.

Participant observation included observing participants giving and responding to compliments in intercultural situations in both Arabic and English. The observed events or functions included not only Jordanian-Australians but also other mainstream Australians and other ethnic Australians. Participant observation was conducted in various locations in Sydney, Australia and included observation of social events such as dinner functions, picnic functions, parties, birthday parties, sports activities, community activities, friends' gatherings and wedding functions. Participant observation was necessary to understand how male Jordanian-Australia naturally practise compliments in real-life interactions. It provided another essential complement to semi-structured interviews.

## 4.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process of investigating qualitative data to derive an explanation for a particular phenomenon. It also provides an understanding of the research objective by showing themes and patterns in the data (Boeije, 2010). Data analysis in this thesis is through interpretation of interview answers and field notes. A thematic approach is employed whereby data presentation is structured in terms of pattern of response by theme. Although qualitative methods of data analysis have been employed and the presentation design in this thesis is profoundly thematic, part of the findings are presented in the form of tables. According to Northey, Teperman, and Albanese, (2012, p. 8), both statistics and stories are compatible; they are “just two sides of the coin, the forest and the trees respectively. And, just as statistics have a mathematical logic, so too do stories. Stories have logical structures in the same sense that sonatas and symphonies do”. Statistical information can assist to pay close attention to interviewees’ perceptions and responses to interview questions, and therefore reveal the similarities and convergences in their answers.

As Creswell (2003, p. 190) explains, “the process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data”. Data obtained from semi-structured interviews were transcribed in their entirety for analysis. Interviews were approximately 60 – 90 minutes in duration. Interviews were conducted in Arabic and English. Words or sentences said by participants in Arabic were transcribed and sections that were used in the thesis were translated into English. Observation data included field notes that collected through ethnographic covert observation of participants’ daily interactions.

During the process of data analysis, the following analytical steps, which are adopted from Creswell (2012), were followed:

- Step 1: The data was organised and prepared for analysis. This involved transcribing interviews, typing up field notes and arranging data into different types depending on sources of information.
- Step 2: A general reading through the data was conducted to acquire a general sense of information and reflect on its overall meaning.

- Step 3: A detailed analysis with a coding process was conducted. Coding is a process of organising the materials into parts before bringing meaning into these parts. It involves dividing data into categories and labelling categories with a term based in the actual language of the participants.
- Step 4: The coding process was used to generate descriptions of participants, setting and categories and themes for analysis.
- Step 5: Description or themes was represented into tables, graphs and figures in order to provide detailed discussions.
- Step 6: The final step involved making an interpretation and meaning of data by comparing the findings with past literature and theories and raising new questions if necessary.

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 163), the “first step in any analysis is to read materials from beginning to end. The idea behind the first reading is to enter vicariously into the life of participants, feel what they are experiencing and listen to what they are telling us”. In this study, this approach was followed by initially reading interview transcripts and field notes from beginning to end in order to obtain a general idea about participants’ perceptions of compliments.

A thorough analysis of interview transcripts and field notes was then completed in order to identify and examine patterns or themes within the data. In this regard, a thematic coding procedure was employed, which involved pinpointing and investigating passages of text that are related by a mutual idea or theme. Thematic coding assisted to index the text into categories and thus form a framework of thematic ideas about it (Gibbs, 2007).

#### **4.4.1 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was crucial for the present study as it is a very useful process to capture the intricacies of meaning within the collected data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Thematic analysis is the process of identifying themes or patterns within qualitative data (Maguire, & Delahunt, 2017).

In Braun and Clarke’s (2006, p. 79) view, thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic”. Thematic

analysis highlights the importance of investigating, analysing and recording themes within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It also emphasises the significance of categorising explicit and implicit concepts in the data (Guest et al., 2012).

The goal of a thematic analysis is to “identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. This is much more than simply summarising the data; a good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of it” (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3353). Themes are patterns through the data that are significant to the explanation of a certain phenomenon and are connected to a particular study question (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) a “theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set”. In qualitative research, themes come to be the centre and classification for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

In this study, data was thematically analysed to capture personal interpretations and perceptions and practices of compliments. Thematic analysis was completed through coding, which is the main procedure for creating themes within the raw data by distinguishing significant moments in the data and encoding them before commencing analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). The analysis of such codes consisted of linking theme occurrences, recognising theme co-occurrence and vividly presenting relations between different themes (Guest et al., 2012).

Analysis was completed in six stages in order to build recognised and expressive patterns or themes. These stages were familiarisation with data, creating preliminary codes, looking for themes among codes, revising themes, defining and identifying themes and generating or writing up the final description (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are various ways in which thematic analysis can be approached (Boyatzis, 1998; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Crabtree, 1999):

- An inductive way: coding and theme development reflects the content of the data.
- A deductive way: coding and theme development reports existing ideas and notions.
- A semantic way: coding and theme development represents the explicit content of the data.
- A latent way: coding and theme development reflects ideas and expectations supporting the data.

In particular, when conducting a thematic analysis of the data, coding was often completed in regard to significant participants' utterances linking to particular themes and stories about particular perceptions and practices (Ezzy, 2002).

Overall, thematic analysis was used to analyse collected data. Thematic analysis was a very effective analytical method in catching the details of meaning within the data (Guest et al., 2012). It suited the research questions, which relate to peoples' experiences, views and perceptions. It also provided an inclusive picture and delivered rich information about male Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments in intercultural exchanges.

## **4.5. Coding Scheme**

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the perceptions and practices of compliments among one group of participants: male Jordanian-Australians. It also aimed to provide a practical application to learning and teaching of compliments to migrants and refugees in English classrooms in Australia.

Having reviewed the literature to examine how other scholars coded the complimenting behaviours (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Bait Jamil, 2016; Chen, R., 1993; Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989; Li, 2015; Nguyen, 2007; Pomerantz, 1978; Ye, 1995; Yu, 1999; Yuan, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2002), the data were analysed using the coding methods for complimenting utilised by Ye (1995) for semantic strategies and by Wolfson (1981b) for topics, syntactic structures and lexical choice. Furthermore, the study adopted the coding method designed by Holmes (1986) for analysing compliment responses.

The coding methods were selected since they have been widely employed in previous research studies, and therefore are reliable. Furthermore, these coding methods are uncomplicated to apply in education practices.

### **4.5.1 Coding Interview Transcripts**

In the semi-structured interviews, compliments were coded with regard to compliment giving strategies, compliment topics and syntactic structures. Compliment responses were coded for semantic strategies (acceptance, rejection and/or deflection/evasion) and their substrategies.

### **4.5.2 Coding Participant Observation**

Observations of natural conversations were coded for complimenting strategies and substrategies as well as for alerter, head and supportive moves (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989).

## **4.6 Triangulation**

Triangulation was also used to increase validity of the data. Triangulation means using two or more methods in a research project in order to check the findings of the same topic (Rothbauer, 2008). It refers to the application and implementation of a number of research methods in the investigation of the same phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). While methods triangulation includes examining the validity of results by using diverse data gathering methods, sources triangulation involves cross checking for constancy of the data, which was obtained at different times and from different participants and locations.

Triangulation is useful to make conclusions more dependable since it assists to take benefit of the strengths and compensate for the limitation of each method (Williamson, 2002). Triangulation was integrated into this study through the utilisation of various methods: literature review, in-depth interviews and participant observation; multiple sources: transcripts, observations; and from different sites of data collection: Parramatta, NSW, Bankstown NSW, Newcastle NSW, Wollongong NSW.

## **4.7 Record Keeping, Archiving and Disposing**

The data collected are confidential and are kept in a separate locked filing cabinet in the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New England for a minimum period of five years. Access to computer files is available by password only.

The data will be disposed of after receiving authorisation to do so from the University Archivist as delegate of the Vice-Chancellor. Digital data will be deleted using software such as Hard Wipe, File Shredder, Cyber Shredder or ArchiCrypt Shredder, which permanently erase data. The appropriate software will be used after consulting with the university archivist. Non-digital data will be physically destroyed using appropriate methods that are as secure and environmentally friendly as possible such as shredding.

## 4.8 Ethical Considerations

Conducting research must be ethical as well as practical. Some people consider it unethical to conduct any research that deprives participants of the right to refuse to be studied. Others argue that any study that does not damage the reputation of participants is ethically justified (Fielding, 1993). As human beings were involved in the study, ethical issues had to be considered in conducting this research project. Ethical issues such as obtaining every interviewee's written consent, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality as well as appropriate acknowledgements and gratitude of the participants' contribution were all considered (Nguyen, 2007).

In this study, every effort was taken before, during and after the study in order to make it ethical. All interviewees were informed of the purpose of the research in advance, were fully aware of their roles in the study and had sufficient preparation for the study. The research objectives were explained to all interviewees. Formal approvals were obtained in advance from all participants who took part in the interviews (Denscombe, 1998, 2003). The rights, needs, values and desires of interviewees were respected (Creswell, 1994, 2003). Interviewees' identities were kept confidential by protecting them from public exposure and the effects of the research findings on others was considered in advance (Genzuk, 1999). To ensure that interviewees' privacy and confidentiality are maintained, pseudonyms are utilised in this study. Therefore, participants were referred to as JA 1, JA 2...etc, which stands for Jordanian-Australian participant one, Jordanian-Australian participant two...etc.

No interviewee was forced into the study and every interviewee had the right to withdraw from the research at any time and without consequences. In addition, interviewees were also advised that they could contact the study's chief investigator, if any concerns or needs for counselling support arose while participating in the study.

With respect to participant observation, the purpose of the study was not explained to participants in order to warrant smoothness and comfort in observations, to avoid overcomplimenting during interactions and to keep to ordinary natural communication happening. The experiment of being observed is likely to affect the behaviour of the person being observed (Spicker, 2011). It has been argued, for example, that:

“in participant observation studies it is virtually impossible to obtain consent from all observed individuals. ... Obtaining consent would interfere with the strength of the

‘naturalist’ approach of ethnography. Seeking consent from participants in these situations may lead to behavioural changes that would invalidate the research.” (Australian NHMRC, 2001, p. 130)

The aim of a study calls for observation of people’s behaviour in social contexts, and thus the research has to minimise the effect of the process of observation on the way that participants behave. Limiting disclosure by the researcher was the obvious way to counter that problem (Calvey, 2017; Spicker, 2011).

To avoid interrupting the flow of the argument and distracting readers, all anomalies of grammar in participants’ responses, which have been used in the thesis, have been corrected.

The present study has met all ethical requirements and was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England. The research was conducted after approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of New England.

## **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the methods that were used to collect required data: an ethnographic methods research for which the data were collected via semi-structured interviews as well as participant observation. Each method together with its strengths and weaknesses as well as the approach it was carried out to guarantee the legitimacy of the data and analysis was explained. Furthermore, the way each method was created and used with different participants was discussed. Finally, the analysis procedures, including thematic analysis methods were illustrated along with the ethical procedures. The results of data analysis are comprehensively explained in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven of this thesis.

# CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS – GIVING COMPLIMENTS

## 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of semi-structured interviews with twenty participants in Sydney, Australia. It presents the interviewee's perceptions of and attitudes to giving compliments, and particularly regarding the following analytical themes: (a) definitions of compliments, (b) functions of compliments, (c) topics of compliments, (d) frequency of compliments, (e) timing of compliments, (f) the influence of social variables such as age, social status and interpersonal relationship on compliments, (g) compliments versus flatteries and (h) the relationship between compliments and politeness, sincerity and insincerity.

The sampled participants were allowed to choose more than one answer in their responses. They also expressed a wide range of opinions around complimenting in relation to gender. In particular, most of them talked about how in the Jordanian culture men and women find it inappropriate to compliment members of the opposite gender. However, participants' opinions about complimenting along gender lines do not form part of the discussion and analysis in this thesis. This is mainly because the sampled interviewees were all males and it would have been ideal to also have female participants if this line of analytical enquiry was to be followed. Although it was desirable to recruit participants of both genders, there were two impediments: (a) the traditional, religious and cultural sensitivity that restricts a male researcher's access to female Jordanian-Australians, and (b) the limited availability of female participants of Jordanian origin in Australia. When talking about compliment giving, the sample participants referred to mainstream Australians from both genders as recipients of the compliments.

This chapter follows a thematic approach whereby data presentation is structured in terms of pattern of response by theme. As pointed out in Chapter Three, qualitative methods of data analysis have been adopted, and henceforth the presentation layout in this chapter is fundamentally narrative. Suffice to state that in order to pay attention to statistical information about participants' attributes and responses to interview questions, part of the study results are presented in the form of tables, revealing the differences and convergences in answers elicited from the participants. Section 5.1 presents the identified research themes and subthemes. In Section 5.2, definitions of compliments are explained.

Section 5.3 focuses on pattern of response by function of compliment. Topics of compliments are discussed in Section 5.4. Section 5.5 covers frequency of compliments used by male Jordanian-Australians. In Section 5.6, the appropriate timing to offer compliments is illuminated. The influence of social variables such as age, social status and interpersonal relationship on compliments is discussed in Sections 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 respectively. Section 5.10 discusses the difference between genuine compliments and flatteries. In Section 5.11, perceptions of politeness, sincerity and insincerity in relation to compliments are clarified. The major findings of the study with respect to giving compliments are presented in Section 5.12.

## **5.1 Semi-Structured Interview Results**

This section is a thematic presentation of data produced through semi-structured interviews. A total of ten themes and their relevant subthemes were abstracted from interview transcripts of twenty participants who took part in the research. All ten themes were reached through following a rigorous data review process involving a repetitive and continuous critical reading of interview transcripts.

The research themes listed in Table 5.1 below relate to different indicators of male Jordanian-Australians' opinions of compliments. Themes 1–5 were derived from direct responses to questions that sought the participants' views on compliment giving (Please see list of questions in Appendix H). Themes 6–8 were generated from questions that were intended to discover the impact of social variables such as age, social status and interpersonal relationships/friendships on compliment giving. Theme 9 came out of direct responses to questions that sought participants' opinions on the difference between genuine compliments and flatteries. The concepts of politeness, sincerity and insincerity are also other important points of analysis; therefore, theme 10 targeted interviewees' observations on the relationship between compliments and politeness, sincerity and insincerity.

The discussion in this chapter is a thematic interpretation and analysis of what the participants have perceived as compliment giving. The analysis intertwines semi-structured interview data together with the conceptual framework of the theory of intercultural communicative competence, speech act theory and politeness theory, positioning them within the scope of existing debates on the speech act of complimenting. The recognised themes and their relevant subthemes, which recurred across participants, are presented in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1: Identified research themes and subthemes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>
1. Definitions of compliments	Kind, positive and polite words
2. Functions of compliments	Feeling good and showing politeness Initiating and easing interaction Strengthening relationships Replacing other speech acts Achieving personal benefits
3. Topics of compliments	Personality Appearance Performance Possessions
4. Frequency of compliments	High frequency Low frequency
5. Timing of compliments	Context based Anytime At particular times When deserved/needed Social lubricant
6. The influence of age on compliments	Complimenting elders Complimenting children
7. The influence of social status on compliments	Complimenting high status people Complimenting low status people
8. The influence of interpersonal relationships on compliments	The importance of good relationships The influence of relationships on functions of compliment
9. Compliments versus flatteries	The different between compliments and flatteries Signs of flatteries.
10. Politeness, sincerity, insincerity and compliments	Complimenting for politeness purposes Complimenting for sincerity purposes Insincerity in compliments

## **5.2 Definitions of Compliments**

The interviewees were asked the question “What are compliments, in your opinion?” The data confirm that there was a consistent view among the majority of participants that

compliments are generally kind, positive, and polite words and expressions, which people exchange with each other. The following quotations extracted from interview transcripts illustrate the foregoing observation:

في رأيي المجامله هي وسيله لإظهار اللطف والمداراة وتكون لطيف مع الآخرين. أنت تخبرهم بشيء لطيف عنهم وهذا يجعلهم يشعرون بالسعادة ويحسن من ثقتهم أيضًا. (JA 7)

‘In my opinion a compliment is a way to show kindness and politeness, and being gentle to others. You tell them something nice about them that makes them feel happy and also improves their confidence.’ (JA 7)

JA 3 also echoed the above sentiments:

أعتقد أن المجامله هي كلمات جيدة وإيجابية. إنها استخدام كلمات ودوده ورائعه بطريقه مهذبه عندما نتعامل مع بعضنا البعض بطريقه محترمه. (JA 3)

‘I think compliments are nice and positive words. It is the use of friendly and wonderful words in a polite way while we are dealing with each other in a respectful manner.’ (JA 3)

Along the same vein, JA 1 indicated that compliments are:

بعض الكلمات اللطيفه التي نستخدمها عندما نتواصل مع الناس. (JA1)

‘Some nice and kind words we use when we communicate with people’. (JA 1)

The data indicate that male Jordanian-Australians’ definitions of compliments are similar to the extent that a compliment is defined as a positive and polite word or expression, which is usually given to make people feel happy and positive, to express politeness, admiration and respect, to improve people’s confidence and to initiate and facilitate social interactions. Consequently, male Jordanian-Australians’ descriptions of compliments concur with most previous scholars’ definitions of compliments. For example, Kodama, (1996, p. 59), states that a compliment is an “intricate combination of positive evaluation, displayed good feelings, implicit friendliness, and half-admitted desire to please”. Similarly, Newton and Burgoon (1990, p. 509) refers to compliments as “statements that are intended to make the other feel good about himself/herself”. Along

the same line, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) argue that a compliment is an utterance that contains positive evaluation or assessment by the speaker to the addressee. Bait Jamil (2016, p. 24) suggests that compliments are positive words that can be “paid to the addressee to increase or intensify solidarity between the addresser and the addressee; thus operating as social lubricants to create or maintain rapport among the speakers”. Including participants’ definitions in line with those in the literature provides an opportunity to show any similarities or differences between participants’ definitions and those of previous scholars. Definitions are critical since they make participants’ points of view stronger and shorter. Moreover, definitions can be a reflection of the way the sampled Jordanian-Australians perceive compliments, and hence they were included in the analysis.

Having participants’ definitions concur with those in the literature highlights the universality of compliments (Alinezhad, 2015; Ebadi & Pourzandi, 2015; Li, 2015; Nguyen, 2007; Wolfson, 1983; Yuan, 2001). People generally like to compliment and be complimented. While the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were regarded as having different rules of speaking and social norms of complimenting, they supported previous research with regard to the universality of compliments. The similarity between participants’ definitions of compliments and those in the literature also means that compliments are recognised by many people as an important speech act that can either lead to successful or unsuccessful communication. In addition, it supports the findings of the study, which acknowledge that many participants still experience difficulties with complimenting and that focus on developing individuals’ complimenting skills is still needed.

Overall, complimenting is part of our daily interaction, “which has become embedded in our daily life; it plays an important communicative function to establish solidarity in the interpersonal relationships” (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016, p. 19). Therefore, complimenting is the focus of the next section with regard to form and function.

### **5.3 Functions of Compliments**

As indicated in Table 5.1 above, the data from semi-structured interviews show that compliment giving is a norm, which is intended to achieve one or all of the following functions: (a) to make people feel happy and show politeness (b) to strengthen human relationships, (c) to initiate, assist and facilitate social communication, (d) to replace other

speech acts such as thanks, requests or apologies and (e) to achieve personal benefits. The pattern of response by function of compliment is presented in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2: Pattern of response by function of compliment**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 26</b>
1. Feeling good and showing politeness	53.86% (14)
2. Initiating and easing interaction	15.38% (4)
3. Strengthening relationships	7.69% (2)
4. Replacing other speech acts	15.38% (4)
5. Achieving personal benefits	7.69% (2)

The data in Table 5.2 present an overall picture of the pattern of response by function of compliment. Function 1 (53.86%) had the highest response rate. Functions 2 and 4 had a similar rate of 15.38%. The lowest response rate was recorded in functions 3 and 5, which both had 7.69% of the total number of participants. Consequently, the data in Table 5.2 suggest that for the majority of male Jordanian-Australians, the main functions of compliments are to make others feel happy/positive/confident and to show politeness.

One interpretation of this observation could possibly be because of the influence of participants' religious and cultural beliefs on their complimenting behaviours. Originating from Islamic and Christian backgrounds, interviewees were frequently encouraged to show appreciation and care for others. The sampled male Jordanian-Australians, which consisted of 18 followers of the Islamic faith and 2 members of the Christian faith were repeatedly inclined to be caring and accommodating – an act which is usually demonstrated by giving compliments to others.

Another interpretation of this observation could be related to how male Jordanian-Australians perceive a compliment itself. In the view of male Jordanian-Australians, a compliment is a routine, customary or a social method that needs to be shared with others. According to Saville-Troike (1982, p. 44), “the most important characteristic of routines and rituals is that truth value is largely irrelevant. Their meaning is dependent on shared beliefs and values of the speech community coded into communicative patterns, and they cannot be interpreted from social and cultural context”. In the opinion of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians, a compliment is a social phenomenon that can be used to make

other people feel happy and failure to offer compliments when socially interacting with others can be considered disrespectful.

In general, language is used to accomplish certain objectives in social interaction. According to Nguyen (2007), such goals can be interactional goals to establish friendships and relationships with others, or they can be transactional goals to achieve further details and information from other people. As one type of speech act, compliments can be used to achieve various purposes. Compliments are used to grease the social wheels, and therefore to function as social lubricants which build and maintain rapport (Bait Jamil, 2016; Ebadi & Pourzandi, 2015; Hatch, E., 1994). Herbert (1986, p. 76) argues that compliments can be used to “negotiate solidarity with the addressee”, make the addressee feel good and make the speaker feel close to the addressee.

People generally exchange compliments as an effort to keep relationships solid and to build good rapport with others (Alinezhad, 2015; Tannen, 1996). Boyle (2005, p. 356) claims that people often use compliments “to avoid hurting other peoples’ feelings, to give people some hope and encouragement, to protect oneself from more powerful people as well as the desire to be complimented by others”. Likewise, compliments are offered to express admiration, appreciation or feeling as well as to reveal solidarity, understanding or harmony (Herbert, 1990; Li, 2015; Yuliyani, 2016).

From previous research on the functions of compliments, it is apparent that there is consensus among scholars that complimenting initiates and strengthens social solidarity and rapport between the speaker and the addressee (Golato, 2005; Petit, 2005; Li, 2015; Yu, 2003). Yet, for the sampled participants, compliments are predominantly intended to please the addressee by politely amplifying his or her qualities.

The data from semi-structured interviews show that interviewees’ perceptions of the functions of compliments were similar. Compliments were perceived by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians to serve multiple purposes:

- To make people feel happy and positive.
- To improve individuals’ confidence, self-esteem and motivation.
- To show politeness and kindness.
- To strengthen humans’ relationships.
- To assist to initiate and facilitate social communication.
- To replace other speech acts such as thanks, requests or apologies.
- To achieve personal benefits.

Table 5.3 below provides examples for each function of compliments as evidenced in the data.

**Table 5.3: Functions of compliments**

Function	Example	Translation
Feeling good and showing politeness.	وتتمثل المهمة الرئيسية في جعل المستمع يشعر بالراحة والسعادة والثقة. (JA 1)	‘The main function is to make the listener feel good, happy and confident.’ (JA 1)
	المجامله هي طريقه لإظهار اللطف والتأدب واللفظ تجاه الآخرين. أنت تخبرهم بشيء لطيف عنهم وهذا يجعلهم يشعرون بالسعادة ويحسن من ثقتهم أيضاً. (JA 7)	‘A compliment is a way to show kindness and politeness and being gentle to others. You tell them something nice about them that makes them feel happy and also improves their confidence.’ (JA 7)
Initiating and easing interaction	أنت تقول ذلك في بعض الأحيان للتواصل الاجتماعي مع الناس، لبدء الحديث عن شيء ما أو للحفاظ على استمرار الحديث. وظيفة المجاملة هي [...] لبدء التحدث إلى الغرباء. (JA 4)	‘You say it sometimes to socialise with people, to start talking about something or to keep the talk going. The compliment function is [...] to start talking to strangers.’ (JA 4)
Strengthening relationships	تستخدم المجاملات للفوز بقلوب الناس وتقليل المسافه بينهم. إذا أعطيتك مجامله وأحببت ذلك، فقد نصبح قريبين من بعضنا البعض وقد نصبح أصدقاء. (JA 8)	‘Compliments are used to win hearts of people and reduce distance between them. If I give you a compliment and you like it, we might become close to each other and we might become friends.’ (JA 8)
Replacing other speech acts	قد يثني علي صديقي إذا قام بشيء سيء ويريد الاعتذار بشكل غير مباشر. (JA 11)	‘My friend may compliment me if he did something bad and wants to indirectly apologise.’ (JA 11)
Achieving personal benefits	أيضاً، قد أقول مجامله لطيفه لمديري للحصول على ترقية. (JA 11)	‘Also, I might say a nice compliment to my manager to get a promotion.’ (JA 11)

Accordingly, on the surface, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians’ views on functions of compliments are similar to previous scholars’ views; however, it is important to explore the underlying interpretations. In male Jordanian-Australians’ opinions, a compliment is seen as routine or customary that needs to be offered to others regardless of its sincerity and failure to do so can be labelled impolite.

This customary function of compliments, which is a unique and original feature of the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians, encourages participants to

stress politeness rather than sincerity when complimenting, leading to difficulties in intercultural communication particularly when recipients of compliments (mainstream Australians) question the sincerity of compliments (Please refer to Section 5.11 below).

The sampled male Jordanian-Australians were found to place a boundless emphasis on politeness in their social interactions. The significance of politeness by male Jordanian-Australians is consistent with the features of the collectivistic culture that they originally belong to (Jordanian culture) in which the other's feelings are highly considered and appreciated. Collectivistic cultures highlight the desires and aims of the group as a whole over the wishes and demands of every individual. In such cultures, relationships with other members of the society and the connections between individuals play a vital part in each individual's character. Cultures in Asia, Central America, Middle East, South America and Africa seem to be more collectivistic (Hofstede, 1991; Triandis, 1988).

The substantial emphasis on politeness by the sampled participants is also consistent with characteristics of the individualistic culture they currently reside in (Australian culture), where individuals pay compliments freely and regularly. Individualistic cultures emphasise the needs and desires of the person over the needs of the group or society as a whole. In such cultures, individuals are seen as autonomous and their social behaviour is likely to be dictated by their own assertiveness and preferences. Cultures in Australia, North America and Western Europe are categorised as individualistic (Barnlund & Araki, 1985).

This propensity to focus on either personal autonomy or unity and selflessness is a universal part of a culture that can have a profound influence on how a compliment functions. For example, persons in individualist cultures are more likely to offer sincere and well-deserved compliments. Compare this with a collectivist culture where persons might compliment merely for politeness or for the greater good of others. Such cultural differences can influence nearly every aspect of individuals' complimenting behaviours.

## **5.4 Topics of Compliments**

Compliments exchanged by male Jordanian-Australians in their interviews focused mainly on four compliment topics: personal traits, appearance and clothing, performance and ability, as well as personal possessions. The pattern of response by topic of compliment is summarised in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4: Pattern of response by topic of compliment**

<b>Topic of compliment</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 55</b>
1. Personal character/personality	34.55% (19)
2. Appearance/Attire	30.91% (17)
3. Performance/ Ability	18.18% (10)
4. Possessions	16.36% (9)

The data in Table 5.4 above show an overall picture of the pattern of response by topic of compliment. Topic 1 (34.55%) had the highest response rate, followed by topic 2 (30.91%) and then topic 3 (18.18%). The lowest response rate was recorded in topic 4, which had 16.36% of the total number of responses.

Previous studies on this subject suggest that appearance, attire, performance, ability, possessions, achievements and personal character/personality are the primary topics of compliment (Abdul Sattar & Lah 2009; Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1998; Shaari & Maros, 2017; Sorahi & Nazemi, 2013; Li, 2015). However, the data presented and analysed in this thesis reveal that there is another dimension to topics of compliments, which is about the rate of recurrence of each compliment topic. In this regard, the findings of the study diverge from results of former research, which indicate that compliments on appearance are the most frequent topics of compliments. In addition, the present study departs from findings of preceding studies, which argue that compliments on personality happen less frequently than those on appearance, skills/abilities and possessions (Holmes, 1986; Nguyen, 2007; Li, 2015). Contradicting results of previous research, the data from the semi-structured interviews suggest that compliments on personality were ranked first by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians followed by appearance or attire and then performance or ability. Moreover, compliments on possessions were found to be participants' less favoured category.

Compliments on someone's personality and appearance are frequently given when the subject of conversation is informal, which was the case in male Jordanian-Australians conversations. In that situation, these topics of compliments are offered more to praise someone on their personality or appearance (Tiono & Nova, 2007). Appearance was regarded as the most common topic between colleagues, close friends and family members (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Holmes, 1986; Li, 2015). Although, semi-structured interviews were completed among individuals with equal status, appearance was not the most

common topic of compliments among the sampled male Jordanians-Australians. In Table 5.5 below, each topic of compliment is illustrated and examples extracted from data are provided.

**Table 5.5: Topics of compliments**

Topic	Definition	Example	Translation
Personality	Praises and comments on the addressee's personality traits such as honesty, reliability and loyalty. (Behnam & Amizadeh, 2004; Li, 2015)	شخصياً، أعطي مجاملات لأصدقائي أو زملائي أو أقاربي على شخصيتهم [...] أو أي شيء أراه يستحق المجاملات. (JA1)	'Personally, I give compliments to my friends, colleagues or relatives on their [...] personality or anything I see worth complimenting.' (JA 1)
Appearance/ Clothing	Praises offered on someone's appearance such as their clothes, body or hair.	أعطي مجاملات لأصدقائي على مظهرهم وملابسهم. (JA 17)	'I compliment my friends on their appearance and clothes.' (JA 17)
Performance/ Ability	A "compliment given as the quality of something produced through the addressee's skill or effort like a well done job, a skilfully played game, a good meal, etcetera". (Tiono & Nova, 2007, p. 79)	عادة ما أعطي مجاملات على [...] الأداء الجيد و الشخصيه الجيده. (JA 3)	'I usually give compliments on [...] good performance and good personality.' (JA 3)
Possession	Praising and commenting on someone's possessions such as a house, a car or a bike. (Herbert, 1989; Tiono & Nova, 2007)	أنا أيضا أثنى على الناس على ممتلكاتهم مثل دراجه جميله أو منزل جميل، شيء مثل هيك. (JA 8)	'I also compliment people on what they have, nice bike or house, something like that.' (JA 8)

The results of the present study can imply that male Jordanian-Australians tend to place more emphasis on individuals' personal traits rather than on their appearance, clothing and possessions, demonstrating that they value the person more than his or her appearance. Furthermore, it can be suggested that male Jordanian-Australians value people more than materialistic things such as personal possessions. Hence, the present results provide new insights of how male Jordanian-Australians view humans and possessions. In male Jordanian-Australians' observation, belongings are replaceable; however, people are irreplaceable. Although possessions can provide a certain amount of fulfillment and gratification, people themselves can offer the true and ultimate satisfaction. Therefore,

things should never surpass the value people place on others. By focusing on personality rather than possessions, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians are seen to be intentional and thoughtful in how they relate to other people.

The focus on participants who have two cultures co-existing within them is believed to have made the sampled male Jordanian-Australians different to participants of previous studies. Members of the current study were able to take advantage of their native cultural norms and the target cultural customs simultaneously. Therefore, the context of this study is different to previous studies. Unlike previous studies on compliments, which either targeted students of tertiary education in Australia or compared and contrasted two societies, cultures or cultural groups, the present research focused mainly on migrants of Jordanian origin in Australia, making it unique and innovative. Henceforth, this thesis adds features of intercultural complimenting to our knowledge, particularly participants' perceptions about topics of compliments.

## 5.5 Frequency of Compliments

Twelve (60%) male Jordanian-Australian interviewees illustrated how they perceive frequency of compliments. The pattern of response by frequency of compliments is summarised in Table 5.6.

**Table 5.6: Pattern of response by frequency of compliments**

Pattern of response by frequency of compliments	Pattern of response N = 12
High frequency	83.33% (10)
Low frequency	16.67% (2)

Table 5.6 shows that 83.33% of participants agreed that male Jordanian-Australians are well-known to be uneconomical with compliments. This observation is attributable to their native social and cultural norms and practices, which associate compliments with politeness and respect, resulting in offering an infinite number of compliments to others. The following four citations extracted from interview transcripts prove the above opinion:

لدى الأردنيين عادة إعطاء الكثير من المجاملات. أعتقد أنه من تقاليدنا أننا نشعر بأننا ملزمون بإعطاء  
المجاملات. (JA 6)

‘Jordanians have the habit of giving too many compliments. I think it is our tradition that we feel obliged to give compliments.’ (JA 6)

في الأردن، أود أن أقول إن الجميع تقريباً يتعامل مع المجاملات ويقبلهم. يعطيك الناس الكثير من المجاملات وليس كلهم حقيقيون. أعني البعض صحيح، ولكن الغالبية هي مجرد عادات، لتكون لطيف أو مهذب أو لبدء التحدث مع شخص ما. (JA1)

‘In Jordan, I would say that nearly everybody deals with compliments and accepts them. People give you too many compliments and not all of them are true. I mean some are true, but the majority are just customs, to be nice or polite or simply to begin talking to someone.’ (JA 1)

في ثقافتي أحيي الآخرين على أي شيء تقريباً. ثقافتي تشجع على المجاملات والناس عموماً يقبلون المجاملات بقلب مفتوح. (JA 9)

‘In my culture, I compliment other people on almost anything. My culture encourages compliments and people generally accept compliments with an open heart.’ (JA 9)

أعتقد أحياناً أن الكثير من المجاملات تجعل الآخرين يعتقدون أنك مغازل أو لديك نوايا سيئة. أعني، كما تعلم، نحن الأردنيون نميل إلى المجامله كثيراً وفي بعض الأحيان على أشياء سخيفة. لا أعتقد أن هذا أمر جيد لأن الآخرين يعتقدون أننا كاذبين. شخصياً، أنا لا أفعل هذا، لكنني أراه في كل مره أزر فيها الأردن. (JA 19)

‘I think sometimes too many compliments make others think you are flattering or you have bad intentions. I mean, you know we Jordanians tend to compliment a lot and sometimes on silly things. I do not think this is good because others think we are dishonest. Personally, I do not do this anymore, but I see it every time I visit Jordan.’ (JA 19)

The high frequency of compliments given by male Jordanian-Australians has potential to cause cultural outsiders to query their sincerity and genuineness. Another two members of the study reported similar experiences, as illustrated in the following comments:

في ثقافتنا نعطي مجاملات في كل وقت تقريبا، ولأكون صادق في بعض الأحيان أكثر من اللازم. (JA )  
(3)

‘In our culture we give compliments approximately all the time, and to be honest sometimes too much. Yeah, we compliment right, left and centre.’ (JA 3)

في الأردن، الناس يقدمون مجاملات كثيرة. إنها عادة ونصف هذه المجاملات غير صحيحة [...] وهم يمدحون على كل شيء تقريبا. (JA 11)

‘Back in Jordan, people give compliments a lot. It is a custom and half of these compliments are untrue [...] and they compliment on almost everything.’ (JA 11)

In short, all interviewees consistently agreed that male Jordanian-Australians’ frequency of compliments is high. The results of the present study support findings of previous studies on the complimenting behaviours of Jordanians, which showed that their frequency of compliments is high (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Migdadi, 2003; Migdadi & Jarbou, 2007; Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001). However, the findings of the current research contradict results of previous research on intercultural complimenting (Li, 2015; Shahidi Pour & Zarei, 2016a; Sucuoglu & Bahçelerli, 2015), which suggested that participants are ungenerous in their compliments. As participants, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians are, in fact, very generous in their compliments. This implies that although they reside in a new country and culture, male Jordanian-Australians are still influenced by their native social and cultural norms when exchanging compliments. The native social and cultural norms place responsibility on individuals to offer more compliments as a sign of politeness and respect.

Correspondingly, the high frequency of compliments by male Jordanian-Australians supports the fact that compliments are acknowledged to be culturally specific (Abdul Sattar & Lah, 2009; Ebadi & Pourzandi, 2015; Li, 2015; Manes, 1983; Mursy & Wilson, 2001; Shaari & Maros, 2017; Sorahi & Nazemi, 2013; Wierzbicka, 1985) and that what is deemed to be an appropriate frequency in one culture might be inappropriate in another one.

The situation or context in which the compliment is given impacts both frequency and timing of compliments. Data on timing of compliments are presented and discussed in the following section.

## 5.6 Timing of Compliments

As expressive acts (Searle 1979) that fulfil social prospects, compliments are believed to be culturally specific. This is sufficiently confirmed by the growing research on compliments within and across cultures (Alinezhad, 2015; Bait Jamil, 2016; Ebadi & Pourzandi, 2015; Shaari & Maros, 2017; Sorahi & Nazemi, 2013). Intercultural differences have been established to refer to various features including the appropriate timing of offering compliments. In their interviews, participants' responses in relation to timing fall into five subthemes that constitute the basis of analysis in this section. Table 5.7 presents the pattern of response by the appropriate timing for complimenting.

**Table 5.7: Pattern of response by appropriate timing for complimenting**

<b>Timing for complimenting</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 20</b>
1. Context based	30% (6)
2. Anytime	25% (5)
3. At particular times	20% (4)
4. When deserved or needed	20% (4)
5. Social lubricant	5% (1)

In the interviews, participants' opinions of the suitable time to pass compliments were investigated. The results revealed that most interviewees agreed that compliments can be offered at any time in social situations; however, the most appropriate time to give a compliment, importantly, depends on the circumstances in which the compliment is delivered. Table 5.7 above shows that timing 1 had the highest response rate of 30%. Timing 2 (25%) ranked second followed by timing 3 and 4, which both accounted for 20% of the total response rate. The lowest response rate was recorded in timing 5, which had only 5% of the total number of participants.

### 5.6.1 Context Based

There was consistent consensus across participants that the context or situation is crucial to determine if a compliment is needed. Table 5.7 indicates that 30% of participants

thought that the most appropriate situation to give a compliment varies depending on the situation itself. The following three quotations extracted from interview transcripts across the participants illustrate the foregoing observation:

أعتقد أن ذلك يعتمد على حاله نفسها وكذلك على الشخص الذي تعطي المديح له، وربما أيضا على الشيء الممدوح. ربما عندما تجد أن أحدهم مظلوم أو مكسور، فبال تأكيد سيحتاج إلى دعم كلماتك. (JA3)

'I think it will depend on the situation itself and also on the person you give compliment to, and also on the thing complimented. Maybe when you find that someone is very oppressed and broken down, surly he or she will need the support of your words.' (JA 3)

تعتمد على الوقت والسياق، ولكن بالنسبة لي عندما أقابل صديقاً جديداً أو لأحسن ثقة أصدقائي أو زملائي. في بعض الأحيان عندما يشعر صديقي بأنه محبط، أعطي له مجامله ليشعر بالارتياح. وأيضاً عندما ألتقي بشخص جديد وأريد أن أكون مهذباً ولطيفاً، أعطي له مجامله. (JA 8)

'It depends on the time and context, but for me when I meet a new friend or to improve confidence of my friends or colleagues. Sometimes when my friend is feeling down, I give him a compliment to make him feel good. And also when I meet a new person and I want to be polite and nice, I give him a compliment.' (JA 8)

يجب أن تعطى فقط في الوقت المناسب. لا أستطيع أن أخبرك متى الوقت المناسب، ولكن عندما يكون شخص حزين، فإنك تمدحه ويصبح سعيداً. عندما يقوم شخص بشيء جيد، فإنك تمدحه وهو يقدر ذلك. عندما يكون شخص ما في حاله مزاجيه جيده، فسيحب المجامله. عندما يكون مشغولاً، أعتقد أنه سوف يتجاهلك. (JA 4)

'It should be given only in the right time. I cannot tell you when the right time is, but when someone is sad, you praise him and he becomes happy. When someone does something good, you praise him and he appreciates it. When someone is in a good mood, he loves the compliment. When he is busy, um, I think he will ignore you.' (JA 4)

It is apparent from the comment above that JA 4 suggested that compliments need to always be suitably planned, in that, they have to be applicable to the situation in which they are offered.

Indeed, selecting the right time is crucial not only for compliments to be effective, but also to achieve intercultural communicative competence in intercultural communication.

### 5.6.2 Anytime

The data presented in Table 5.7 reveal that 25% of participants suggested that there is no ideal situation to offer compliments and that compliments can be given at any time. This opinion is supported by JA 9, JA 19 and JA 11 who established that:

في رأيي، لا يوجد وقت محدد لإعطاء المجاملة. أحب أن أكون لطيف و أجامل الناس عندما أحصل على فرصه. (JA 9)

‘In my opinion, there is no specific time to give compliments. I like to be polite and compliment people when I get a chance.’ (JA 9)

شخصياً، أعتقد أنه بإمكانك إعطاء المجاملات في أي وقت، ولا يوجد موقف محدد في رأيي. ولكن ربما بمناسبة حفل الزفاف والتخرج والخطوبة أو عندما يقوم شخص بإرتداء ملابس لطيفة، فإنك تمدحه لتجعله يشعر بالسعادة. (JA 19)

‘Personally, I think you can give compliments any time, no specific situation is needed in my opinion. But possibly in the occasion of wedding, graduation and engagement parties or when someone is dressing nicely, you compliment him to make him feel good.’ (JA 19)

يمكن أن أقول في أي وقت وفي أي مكان، ولكن لكي أكون محددًا في حفلات الزفاف، الحفلات، عشاء العمل، تجمع العائلات، تجمع الأصدقاء أو أي مواقف أخرى يتواصل فيها الناس. (JA 11)

‘I would say anytime and anywhere, but to be specific perhaps in weddings, parties, work-dinner, family-gathering, friends’ gathering or any other situations where people are around and socialising.’ (JA 11)

Although both JA 19 and JA 11 agreed that compliments can be given at any time, they provided specific examples of some other events where compliments can be offered.

According to JA 19 and JA 11, weddings, graduations, friends' gathering and engagement parties are the perfect occasions to exchange compliments with others.

### 5.6.3 At Particular Times

The view that compliments can be given any time was contradicted by 20% of interviewees. Four participants suggested that compliments should only be offered at particular times such as motivating and encouraging others, improving their confidence and offering thanks. For example, JA 6 not only highlighted the significance of choosing an appropriate time to compliment, but also emphasised the motivational and inspirational functions of compliments. In JA 6's opinion:

يجب تقديم المجاملات في مناسبات محددة. على سبيل المثال، عند مناقشة البحث أو في الفصل لتحفيز الطلاب أو في الحفلة لجعل الناس يشعرون بالسعادة. أيضاً، عندما يكون الشخص حزيناً أو مكتئباً، تساعد المجاملة على تحسين حالته النفسية وتعطيه إحساساً بالفرح. (JA 6)

'Compliments should be given in specific occasions. For example, when discussing research, in class to motivate students or in a party to make people feel happy. Also, when a person is sad or depressed, a compliment helps improve their psychological status and gives them a feeling of joy.' (JA 6)

Other interviewees supported JA 6's view. The following sentiments raised by JA 20, JA 13 and JA 17 illustrate this observation:

يجب تقديم المجاملات في الوقت المناسب. عندما يقوم شخص ما بعمل شاق أو صعب من أجل تشجيعهم وتحفيزهم أو عندما يشعر شخص ما بأنه محبط من أجل تشجيعهم قليلاً. (JA 20)

'Compliments should be said in the right time. When someone is doing a hard or difficult work in order to encourage and motivate them or when someone feels bad in order to lift their spirit up a little bit.' (JA 20)

أعتقد أنه عند التحدث إلى شخص سلبي، من المهم إعطاء المدح لجعله يشعر بالرضا عن نفسه. في رأيي، يمكن للمجاملات رفع معنويات الناس وجعلهم يشعرون بالتحسن. (JA 13)

‘I think when talking to a negative person, it is important to give a compliment to make him feel good about himself. In my opinion, compliments can lift people up and make them feel better.’ (JA 13)

نحتاج إلى اختيار الوقت والمكان والوضع المناسبين لتقديم المجاملات. ربما عندما أريد أن أشكر شخص ما لمساعدتي، مثل شكر مشرفي على مساعدته في بحثي. (JA 17)

‘We need to choose the appropriate time, place and situation to deliver compliments. Maybe when I want to thank someone for helping me, such as thanking my supervisor for his help in my research.’ (JA 17)

Considering JA 17’s response above, it can be agreed that he expressed the thanking function of compliments, which is offering a compliment to gracefully thank someone and acknowledge their assistance, support or effort.

#### **5.6.4 When Deserved or Needed**

Whether compliments should be given when deserved or not is another subject that was raised by participants. As shown in Table 5.7, 20% of male Jordanian-Australians contended that compliments should only be given when needed or deserved such as recognising an achievement or supporting someone. In the words of JA 14:

يجب تقديم المجاملات عندما يحقق شخص ما شيئاً يستحق المجامله. عندما ينجح شخص في العمل أو عندما يتخرج شخص من الجامعه. أي حالة تستحق المجامله، ولكن ليس فقط إعطاء مجاملات مزيفه في كل وقت من أجل المجاملات أو لمجرد أن تكون لطيفاً للناس. أعني أن تكون لطيف إنه شيء جيد، ولكن يجب أن تكون المجاملات صحيحه. (JA 14)

‘Compliments should be given when someone achieves something that deserves to be complimented. When someone succeeds in business or when someone graduates from university. Any situation that is deserved to be praised is ok, but not just giving fake compliments all the time for the sake of compliments or simply to be polite to people. I mean being polite is good, but compliments should be true.’ (JA 14)

JA 18 and JA 15 also echoed this opinion where they say:

عندما يحقق شخص شيئاً أو فعل شيئاً يستحق مجامله حقيقه. أيضاً، لدعم شخص يحتاج الدعم. أنا لا أحب عندما يعطي الناس مجاملات أكثر من اللازم لأنها تصبح مزيفه. (JA 18)

‘When someone has achieved something or has done something that deserves a compliment for real. Also, to support someone who needs support. I don’t like it when people give compliments too much as they become fake.’ (JA 18)

أعتقد أنه عندما يستحق الشخص الآخر ذلك بالفعل ويحتاج إليه حقاً. أيضاً، إنه شيء جيد أن تقدم المجامله عندما ترى حقاً شيئاً جيداً ويستحق المجامله في الشخص الآخر. ليس من الجيد إعطاء المجامله للأشخاص الذين لا يستحقون ذلك. عندما يدرس الطالب اختباراً صعباً و ينجح، يمكنك قول ”أحسنت يا صديقي، لقد عملت بجد وحققت علامة عاليه“. (JA 15)

‘I think when the other person really deserves it and really needs it. Also, it is a good thing to offer it when you really see something good and worth praising in the other person. It is no good to give a compliment to people who do not deserve it. Like when a student study hard and pass an exam, you can say “well done my friend, you have worked hard and you have achieved a high mark”.’ (JA 15)

JA 15 highlighted the importance of only offering compliments when merited or required. If given in such situations, compliments not only stimulate and increase productivity and commitment, but also generate a positive energy and ease the atmosphere between people. Therefore, compliments facilitate social interactions and assist people to better communicate with one another, and thus act as a social lubricant.

### 5.6.5 Social Lubricant

When discussing the most suitable occasion to offer a compliment, only one (5%) interviewee admitted that compliments could sometimes be employed as a social lubricant to initiate conversations with others. In this regard, JA 2 provided the following example:

أنا أثنى على الناس عندما أراهم لأول مرة لبدء الحديث، مثلاً أقول ”صديقي لم أراك لفترة من الوقت، تبدو بخير“. (JA 2)

‘I compliment people when I first see them to start talking, like I say “my friend, I have not seen you for a while, you look good”.’ (JA 2)

Compliments can undoubtedly increase the flow of positivity and become social lubricants, which develop the flow of discussion and improve interaction by increasing receptiveness. Previous studies established that compliments are one of the best tools for developing socialising capabilities since they create and maintain rapport (Li, 2015; Shabani & Zeinali, 2015; Sucuoglu & Bahçelerli, 2015; Válková, 2012). Although compliments can function to “grease the social wheels”, and therefore serve as “social lubricants” (Wolfson, 1983, p. 89), the findings of the study indicate that using compliments as a social tool or lubricant is not a feature of male Jordanian-Australians’ complimenting behaviours. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the majority of participants indicated that there is no single appropriate time to exchange compliments and that the most suitable timing is, in general, based on the situation in which compliments are used. Such situations are generally influenced by factors such as gender, age, social status and relationship status. The performance of speech acts including compliments requires not only sociolinguistic, but also sociocultural knowledge. Sociolinguistic knowledge refers to the skills and ability to select appropriate linguistic forms and patterns to express speech acts. Sociocultural knowledge relates to the ability to select appropriate speech act strategies with reference to various social variables such as gender, age, social status as well as interpersonal relationships (Bait Jamil, 2016; Li, 2015). As the present study had only male participants, the gender variable was excluded from the analysis.

## 5.7 The Influence of Age on Compliments

Age is considered a dynamic social variable in giving and receiving compliments (Shahidi Pour & Zarei, 2016b). The influence of age on the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians was apparent in the data. The pattern of response by the influence of age on compliments is summarised in Table 5.8 below.

**Table 5.8: Pattern of response by influence of age on compliments**

<b>Influence of age</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 10</b>
Preference to compliment elders	70% (7)
Preference to compliment children	30% (3)

As presented in Table 5.8, 50% of interviewees agreed that their frequency of compliments is mostly affected by age of the complimentee. Specifically, 70% of these participants expressed a tendency to give more compliments to elders than to other age groups. In addition, complimenting infants and children was regarded as a preferred and appropriate complimenting practice by 30% of participants.

Participants acknowledged that their complimenting is affected by age in that their complimenting preferences and topics vary depending on the age of the addressee. The following remarks from three interviewees illuminate this perception:

أعتقد أن العمر مهم لأنك لا تستطيع أن تقول شيئاً لمراهق، على سبيل المثال، وأن تقوله لرجل عجوز لأن اهتمامهم وفهمهم مختلفان. (JA 18)

‘I think age is important because you cannot say something to a teenager and say it to an old man because their interests and understanding are different.’ (JA 18)

السن مهم لأن المجاملة التي تقدمها لشخص ما في عمرك تختلف عن المجاملة التي تعطيها لشخص يبلغ من العمر 80 عامًا. (JA1)

‘Age is important because a compliment you give to someone your age is different to a compliment you give to an 80 years old person.’ (JA 1)

أيضاً، يحدد العمر [...] نوع المجاملة التي تمنحها للآخرين. مثلاً، يمكنك أن تقول “يا حلوي” لطفل ولكن ليس لرجل يبلغ من العمر 70 عاماً. (JA 5)

‘Also, age [...] determines what type of compliment you give to others. Like, you can say “hey sweetie” to a child but not to a 70 years old man.’ (JA 5)

As there were no significant age differences among participants (with all interviewees aged between 25–45 years old), their age and its possible impact on compliment choices was not considered in the analysis. Although “the overwhelming majority of all compliments are given to people of the same age [...] as the speaker” (Wolfson, 1983, p. 91), complimenting elders was a preference for some male Jordanian-Australians. In the following subsection, interviewees’ opinion on complimenting elders is illuminated.

### 5.7.1 Complimenting Elders

As indicated in Table 5.8, 70% of participants expressed their preference to give compliments to older persons arguing that elders are more receptive to and appreciative of compliments. Besides, it was reported that elders are greatly encouraged and motivated by compliments than other age groups. The following three quotations taken from interview transcripts reiterate this view:

لدي رغبة أكبر في تقديم المجاملات لكبار السن. أعتقد أن كبار السن أكثر تقبلاً للمجاملات ويشعرون بالسعادة عندما تجاملهم. انهم يقدرون المجاملات. (JA 6)

‘I have more desire to provide compliments to elders. I think elders are more receptive to compliments and they feel happy when you compliment them. They do appreciate it.’ (JA 6)

أجد كبار السن أكثر قبولا للمجامله وعندما تجاملهم فهذا أمر مشجع لهم. عادة ما أعطيهم الثناء على صحتهم ومظهرهم وهم يحبون ذلك. (JA 4)

‘I find older people more accepting of compliment and when you compliment them it is encouraging. I usually give them compliments on their health and look and they love them.’ (JA 4)

في رأيي، عندما يزداد عمرك تحتاج إلى سماع مجاملات حول الأشياء التي تبدأ في خسارتها. أيضا، كبار السن لديهم تجارب في الحياة تحتاج فعلا إلى مجامله. (JA 2)

‘In my opinion, when your age increased, you need to hear compliments on things you start to lose. Also, older people have life experiences that really need to be complimented on.’ (JA 2)

In the same way, another interviewee pointed out that unlike other age groups, elders are sincere in their compliments. Please see JA 12’s observation below:

أعتقد أن العمر مهم للغاية لأن كبار السن يخبرونك بالحقيقه عندما يجاملون. لا يكذبون. (JA 12)

‘I think age is important too because older people tell you the truth when they compliment. They do not lie.’ (JA 12)

Along the same lines, another three interviewees shared the same opinion. With reference to the encouraging nature of compliments, JA 10 and JA 2 stated that:

أود أيضا أن أجامل كبار السن لأن هذا يشجعهم. قلت مرة لجاري البالغ من العمر 79 عامًا إنه يبدو 55  
وكان سعيدًا جدًا. (JA 10)

‘I also like to compliment old people because this encourages them. I said once to my 79 year old neighbour that he looks 55 and he was so happy.’ (JA 10)

بالنسبة لي، أعتقد أن العمر مهم. ربما بسبب ديني وثقافتي علينا أن نحترم كبار السن، كما تعلم. (JA 2)

‘For me I think age is important. Maybe it is because of my religion and culture that we have to respect older people, as you know.’ (JA 2)

Despite the fact that compliments assist in boosting people’s confidence and improving their motivation (Shaari & Maros, 2017), previous studies on the relationship between compliments and older people reveal that, sadly, older people, are less likely to receive compliments compared to other age groups (Armstrong & McKechnie, 2003; Furnham & Pendleton, 1983). Older people particularly those in institutional care settings are perceived to be nonsexual, unproductive, unbending, anxious about death and cognitively impaired (Butler, 1974, 1975; Butler & Lewis, 1982; Vincent, 2003).

On the contrary, the findings of the present study ascertain that offering compliments to older people is found to be a complimenting preference for male Jordanian-Australians. This could possibly be due to the impact of the Jordanian social and cultural norms on compliments. In the Jordanian society, people are generally encouraged to offer more compliments to older people as a sign of respect of their age as well as an appreciation of their life experiences. Therefore, it can be agreed that the Jordanian culture still has influence on male Jordanian-Australians complimenting practices. The following are some examples provided by participants in their responses:

أنا مهتم جدا أن أسمع عن تجربتك العظيمة في الحياة.

‘I am so interested to hear about your great life experience.’

تبدو صغيرا جدا لعمرك.

‘You look so young to your age.’

لديك خبرة كبيره في الحياة.

‘You have great experience in life.’

لقد عملت بجد طوال حياتك، أنت تستحق الاستمتاع بالحياة الآن.

‘You have worked hard all your life; you deserve to enjoy life now.’

أنت رجل حكيم.

‘You are a wise man.’

With reference to topics of compliments, the data reveal that when complimenting elders, male Jordanian-Australians’ preferred topics of compliments are achievement followed by personality and then appearance. Topic 1 (achievement) had the highest response rate of 45%, followed by Topic 2 (personality), which accounted for 35% of the overall data. The lowest response rate was recorded in Topic 3 (appearance), which had 20% of the total number of responses. Table 5.9 presents the pattern response by topic of compliment to elders.

**Table 5.9: Pattern of response by topic of compliment to elders**

Topic of compliment	Pattern of response N = 20
1. Achievement	45% (9)
2. Personality	35% (7)
3. Appearance	20% (4)
4. Possessions	0% (0)

It terms of a general social understanding of perceptions and practices of complimenting in this community, it can be argued that male Jordanian Australians think highly of older people. In particular, male Jordanian-Australians admire elders’ achievements and personality characters. As people age their appearance changes, however, their achievements and personality skills are unchangeable. This explains the higher frequency of compliments offered on elders’ life achievements and personality than on their appearance or possessions.

Influenced by the Jordanian social and cultural norms, which encourage people to show respect to older persons, complimenting elders on their achievements is seen an indication of appreciation of their contributions and life accomplishments. Similarly, complimenting elders on their personality is understood as a sign of gratefulness and respect. For the sampled male Jordanian-Australians, validation can assist elders to feel not only good, but also appreciative of their own accomplishments in life. Thus, male Jordanian-Australians recognise older peoples' achievements and personality characteristics as worthy of acknowledgement.

### 5.7.2 Complimenting Children

As well as complimenting elders, complimenting children was regarded as an appropriate practice by two male Jordanian-Australians. Table 5.8 indicates that 30% of participants expressed a propensity to offer compliments to children. JA 18 established that:

انا احب أن أجامل أطفال أصدقائي أيضًا لأن هذا سيحفزهم كثيرًا. (JA 18)

'I like to give compliments to my children and my friends' children as well because this will motivates them a lot.' (JA 18)

The above sentiment was also echoed by JA 10 who observed that:

انا احب أيضًا أن أقدم مجاملات للأطفال لأن هذا يشجعهم. (JA 10)

'I also like to compliment children because this gives them encouragement.' (JA 10)

The above two examples show that compliments can act as motivational devices that can be provided to motivate and encourage children. Compliments and encouragements help children to feel good about themselves and nurture their confidence, self-esteem and sense of self. They can also assist to engage children in their education and improve their learning abilities (Berg, I. K., & De Jong, 2005). Compliments were provided to both male and female children. The fear of the evil eye did not seem to affect how children are complimented; however, both Christian and Muslim participants indicated that they would usually ward off the evil eye using formulaic word choice in Arabic such as "Mashallah"

(ما شاء الله) while complimenting children. This usually involves code switching into Arabic when speaking in English.

In short, the data from the semi-structured interviewees mostly suggest that age impacts on the way participants give and reply to compliments. Hence, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians preferred complimenting certain age groups such as elders or children.

## 5.8 The Influence of Social Status on Compliments

Similar to age, the social status or class of the speaker and addressee affects individuals' complimenting behaviours (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Herbert, 1989; Jucker, 2009; Li, 2015; Nguyen, 2007). According to Nguyen, (2007, p. 192) "the extent to which social status affects complimenting practices varies from culture to culture, and within cultures depending on where the compliments take place". Social status refers to the position one holds in the community such as political positions, religious positions, career positions and social roles. Status can be either achieved, which is based on an individuals' choices and merit such as working hard to become a neurosurgeon, or ascribed, which is attained unwillingly or by birth such as being born to a rich family (Roger, 2002; Marmot, 2004).

In their interviews, participants referred to certain indicators of social status such as religious positions, political positions, level of wealth or affluence and level of education when they spoke of social status. The pattern of response by indicators of social status is outlined in Table 5.10 below.

**Table 5.10: Pattern of response by indicators of social status**

<b>Indicator of social status</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 4</b>
Social positions	50% (2)
Political positions	25% (1)
Level of wealth	25% (1)

As shown in Table 5.10 above, the findings of the semi-structured interviews indicate that measures of social status (religious positions, political positions, level of wealth or affluence, level of education and level of social roles in the community) were not considered essential factors that influence participants' complimenting practices. To be

specific, only 20% of interviewees admitted that their complimenting behaviours are usually impacted by the social position of the addressee. Of these, Table 5.10 shows that the social role of complimentees such as tribal leaders or community elders has an impact on the complimenting practices of 50% of participants. One's political position and level of wealth, which accounted for 25% of the total number of participants, are also seen as influencing factors. For instance, JA 3 argued that compliments are generally offered downward from individuals with high social roles in the community to people with low social roles. In JA 3's perception:

الوضع الاجتماعي مهم لأن الناس بشكل عام يترددون في إعطاء مجاملات لأشخاص آخرين أعلى مرتبه. أشعر براحه أكبر عند مجاملة الآخرين الذين هم في نفس الوضع أو أقل، ولكن ليس الأعلى لأن لدي أحياناً مخاوف من أن مجاملتي قد يساء فهمها. (JA 3)

'Social status is important because people in general are hesitant to give compliments to other people who are higher in status. I feel more comfortable to compliment others who are in the same status or lower, but not higher status because sometimes I fear that my compliment might be misunderstood.' (JA 3)

Likewise, another interviewee shared a similar view. Highlighting the impact of political positions on his complimenting practices, JA 14 claims:

تختلف الطريقة التي أجامل فيها شخص عادي عن الطريقة التي أجامل فيها الوزير أو رئيس الوزراء. (JA 14)

'The way and what I compliment an average person on is different to the way I compliment a minister or the prime minister on.' (JA 14)

In the Jordanian society, hierarchy or classes including religious positions, political positions, level of wealth or affluence, level of education and level of social roles are still present. Therefore, more compliments are offered from lower status to higher status individuals. The foregoing observation was presented by JA 2 where he said:

الوضع الاجتماعي يمكن أن يكون عاملاً لأنه في الأردن أنا متأكد من أن الكثير من الناس يقدمون مجاملات كثيرة للآخرين الذين هم في وضع أفضل. أعتقد أنه بسبب كل هذه الطبقات الاجتماعيه التي تراها هناك. لا أعتقد أن هذه مشكلة في أستراليا، ولكنها موجوده في الأردن. (JA 2)

‘Social status can be a factor because in Jordan I am sure many people give many compliments to others who are higher in status. I think it is because of all these social hierarchies you see there. I don’t think this is a problem in Australia, but it exists in Jordan.’ (JA 2)

It is reasonable to state that, in Jordan, social status continues to exercise influence, and thus compliments are often given upwards by low status people to high status persons. This tendency to give compliments upwards could be related to the fact that, in Jordan, hierarchical and class relationships are not only well-recognised but also well-honoured, which consequently impact on individuals’ complimenting practices. In Australia, on the other hand, social status is not deemed an important social variable and thus its impact on individuals’ complimenting habits is perceived to be slight. The following quotation extracted from interview transcripts illustrate the abovementioned observation:

لا أعتقد أن الحالة الاجتماعيّة تؤثر على مجاملاتي. أنا لا أهتم. أنا أعامل الناس على قدم المساواة بغض النظر عن وضعهم الاجتماعيّ وأجامل أي شخص يستحقّ المجامله. لكن يجب أن أقول أنه في الأردنّ الناس يقدمون المزيد من المجاملات إلى الأشخاص ذوي المكانة الأعلى. أعتقد أنك توافق على ذلك لأنّ بعض الناس يحترمون المكانة الاجتماعيّة المرتفعة أكثر والبعض الآخر يفعل ذلك من أجل الفوائد. لا أحد يهتم بهذا هنا. (JA 15)

‘I don’t think social status influences my compliments. I seriously do not care. I treat people equally regardless of their social status and I compliment anyone who deserves a compliment. However, I have to say in Jordan people give more compliments to higher status people. I think you would agree because some people respect high status people more and some just do it for benefits. No one cares about this here.’ (JA 15)

Equally, another interviewee who commented on social status in his interview agreed. Consider the following response:

الوضع الاجتماعيّ لا يؤثر على مجاملاتي على الإطلاق. إذا سألتني عندما كنت في الأردنّ، سأقول نعم لأنّ كل شخص تقريباً يحاول الاقتراب من شخص ثري أو سياسي من خلال تقديم المجاملات، لكن في أستراليا لا غير موجود. (JA 6)

‘Social status does not affect my compliments at all. If you ask me when I was in Jordan, I will say yes because nearly everyone tries to get close to a wealthy person or politician by giving compliments, but in Australia not at all.’ (JA 6)

From previous research on compliments, researchers noted that for individuals with unequal status, compliments are more likely to refer to work performance and achievement than to appearance, whereas for persons with equal status, compliments are more likely to target appearance than performance or achievement (Alinezhad, 2015; Chung & Chen, S., 2010; Holmes, 1986; Wolfson, 1983; Li, 2015). In contrast, the findings of the present study reveal that personality, followed by achievement, are participants’ preferred compliment topics when exchanging compliments with high, equal and low status people. In this regard, JA 5 argued:

في الاردن، يجمال الناس الآخرين ذوي المكانه الرفيعه على شخصيتهم الجيده وإنجازاتهم من أجل الحصول على الفوائد. هذا أمر سيء، ولكن لحسن الحظ لا يحدث في أستراليا. (JA 5)

‘Back home, people compliment higher status people on their good personality and achievements in order to get benefits. Um, this is bad, but luckily it does not happen in Australia.’ (JA 5)

In summary, it can be argued that social status is perceived to have minimal impact on the way male Jordanian-Australians give and respond to compliments in intercultural situations. Moreover, compliments are said to be more enjoyable when exchanged between people of the same social status.

## **5.9 The Influence of Interpersonal Relationships on Compliments**

Interpersonal relationships or friendships play a crucial part in giving and responding to compliments. This section discusses how members of the study observe the impact of interpersonal relationships and friendships on the speech act of complimenting.

The data presented in Table 5.11 below indicate that 50% of interviewees believed that having an amicable relationship between the complimenter and the complimentee is crucial not only for compliments to be given, but also to be accepted and appreciated. As

indicated in Table 5.11 below, friendship was considered a vital aspect that determined the complimenting behaviours of 80% of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians. In other words, interviewees enjoyed exchanging more compliments with their friends than with less intimate relationships or complete strangers. In addition, giving compliments to relatives and those with whom one has a professional relationship covered 10% of the total number of participants. For the remaining 10 participants, relationships were not considered a factor that influences people's complimenting behaviours. The pattern of response by relationship is presented in Table 5.11 below:

**Table 5.11: Pattern of response by relationship**

Pattern of response by relationship	Pattern of response N = 10
Friendship	80% (8)
Relative	10% (1)
Professional relationship	10% (1)

In order for compliments to be effective, people should have harmonious relationships with one another. Consider the following two examples, which explain this view:

أعتقد أن ما هو مهم بالنسبة لي هو الصداقه لأنني ببساطه أشعر براحه أكبر على مجاملة أصدقائي المقربين بدلاً من الأشخاص الذين أعرفهم بالكاد. (JA 16)

'I think what is important to me is friendship because simply I feel more comfortable and keen to give compliments to my close friends rather than to people I barely know.'  
(JA 16)

يشعر الناس بالارتياح لمجاملة أصدقائهم. أعني الناس الذين يعرفون جيداً ويثقون بهم. لا أشعر بالارتياح لمجاملة للغرباء. (JA 3)

'People feel comfortable giving compliments to their friends. I mean to people they know well and trust. I don't feel comfortable giving compliments to strangers.'  
(JA 3)

The same observation was echoed by another participant. JA 10 states that:

العلاقات مهمة جدا. أجد صعوبة في مجاملة الغرباء لأنني لا أعرفهم، ولأنني لا أعرفهم، لا أشعر بالارتياح لإعطاء المجاملة. قد لا يقبلون المجاملة ومن ثم سأكون محرجًا. (JA 10)

‘Relationships are very important. I find it hard to compliment strangers because I do not know them and because I do not know them, I do not feel relaxed to give compliments, you understand? Maybe they might not accept the compliment and then it is embarrassing.’ (JA 10)

Offering compliments to close friends or relatives can be a guarantee that the compliment is accepted. Supporting this opinion, JA 17 claims:

لا أشعر بالراحة شخصيًا لإعطاء مجاملات لأشخاص لا أعرفهم جيدًا. أنا أثنى على أصدقائي المقربين أو أقاربي في كل شيء تقريبًا وأنا أفعل ذلك بسعاده لأنني أعرف أنهم سيقبلون مجاملتي. (JA 17)

‘I do not personally feel comfortable giving compliments to people I do not know very well. I compliment my close friends or relatives on nearly everything and I do it with happiness because I know they will accept my compliment.’ (JA 17)

In addition, good relationships provide comfort, ease and reduce social miscommunication. In this regard, JA 5 indicates:

العلاقة الجيده تجعل المجامله أسهل وأكثر راحه وتقلل من سوء الفهم. (JA 5)

‘Good relationships makes compliments easier and comfortable and it minimises misunderstanding.’ (JA 5)

Similarly, reinforcing the importance of having an amicable relationship when complimenting, one member of the study argued that offering compliments to strangers can be considered bizarre and jokey. This view is presented by JA 8 where he states:

نعم بالطبع، يجب أن تكون صديقًا للشخص أو لديك علاقه جيده لتجامله. أجد مجاملة للغرباء شيء غريب حقًا. أعني، كيف ستشعر إذا بدأ شخص غريب بمجاملتك على قصتك أو ملابسك أو مظهرك. هذا غريب جدا. بالنسبة لي، لم أكن لأفعل ذلك ما لم يكن لدي علاقه جيده معهم. (JA 8)

‘And yes of course, you need to be a friend with the person or have some sort of good relationship to compliment him or her. I find giving compliments to strangers jokey. I mean, how you would feel if a total stranger started complimenting you on your hair cut or clothes or look. Um this is very strange and weird. For me, I would not do it unless I have good relationship with them.’ (JA 8)

Another participant shared a similar observation. Consider JA 4’s response below:

أنا أجامل فقط أصدقائي. لا أعطي مجاملات كثيرة للغرباء. عندما أجامل أصدقائي المقربين، عادةً ما أجامل أي شيء. ملابسهم، مظهرهم، شخصيتهم، ما يمتلكونه، أطفالهم... إلخ. عندما أضطر إلى إعطاء مجاملات للغرباء، فأنا حريص، لكنني عموماً أعطي مجاملاتهم بشكل رسمي على شخصيتهم الجيدة. (JA 4)

‘I only compliment my friends. I do not give compliments to foreigners a lot. When I compliment my close friends, I usually compliment on anything; clothes, look, personality, possessions, children...etc. Um, when I have to give compliments to strangers, I am careful, but generally I give compliments formally for all of them on their good personality.’ (JA 4)

Indeed, since compliments are not anticipated to be formal, a good relationship or friendship is significant to avoid potential miscommunication. JA 18 maintains that:

العلاقة الجيدة أو الصداقه هي أيضا حيويه هنا. نعم، يجب أن يكون لدى الناس نوع من العلاقة المريحه أو الصداقه مع الشخص الآخر لإعطائهم مجاملات. لا أعطي مجاملات للغرباء لأنني لا أعرف أي شيء عنهم. لا أعتقد أن المجاملات من المفترض أن تكون رسميه، لذلك نعم إن العلاقة الجيده مهمه. (JA 18)

‘Good relationship or friendship is also vital here. Yeah, people must have some sort of comfortable relationship or friendship with the other person to give them compliments. I do not give compliments to strangers because I do not know anything about them. I do not think compliments are meant to be formal, so yeah good relationship is important.’ (JA 18)

The relationship between the complimenter and complimentee is a dynamic factor that also impacts functions of compliments. The data from semi-structured interviews verify that human relationships can determine functions of compliments. For example, a compliment can be offered by a manager to an employee in order to motivate him or her. Moreover, a compliment can be given by a teacher to a student in order to improve his or

her confidence and self-esteem. Consider the following responses from two male Jordanian-Australians' interviewees, which support this view:

أنا مدرس وأتعامل دائماً مع أطفال المدارس الابتدائية. أعطي دائماً لطلابي مجاملات حتى لو كانوا يفعلون أشياء صغيرة لذلك يشعرون بالسعادة ويحبون المدرسه وكل نشاط أعطيهم لهم. أقدم لهم مجاملات عندما يكملون واجباتهم المدرسيه، عندما يستمعون إلى تعليماتي، عندما يستمعون إلى والديهم أو عندما يبذلون مجهوداً أو يرتدون شيئاً جديداً. هذه المجاملات هي أساساً لتشجيعهم وتحفيزهم. (JA 1)

'I am a teacher and I always deal with primary school children. I always give my students compliments even if they do small things so they feel happy and like the school and every activity I give to them. I give them compliments when they complete their homework, when they listen to my instructions, when they listen to their parents or when they look different or wear something new. These compliments are basically to encourage and motivate them.' (JA 1)

في بعض الأحيان يكون من الجيد جداً استخدام المجاملات لبناء ثقة الشخص الآخر. من المفيد أيضاً تشجيع الشخص على الإقرار بما لديه بالفعل. أحياناً يستخدم المعلمون كلمات جيدة لتحفيز الطلاب. نعم، وأحياناً يستخدمه المشرفون لتحسين أداء الموظفين. (JA 4)

'Sometimes it is very good to use compliments to build up confidence of the other person. It is also useful to encourage the person to acknowledge and use what he or she really has. Sometimes teachers use good words to improve students' motivations. Yeah and sometimes managers use it to improve employees' performance.' (JA 4)

Overall, the findings of the semi-structured interviews demonstrate that interpersonal relationships and friendships play a fundamental part in male Jordanian-Australians' complimenting behaviours. Particularly, compliments were viewed as suitable and tolerable in close friendships, which endorses Wolfson's Bulge Theory, (1988). When explaining the theory, Wolfson, (1989, p. 11) stated that: "although compliments [...] are exchanged between intimates and between total strangers, the great majority (the bulge) takes place within interactions between speakers who are neither intimates nor strangers". To remind the readers, the bulge theory is a theory of speech behaviour and social distance, which represents individuals' speech behaviour that serves to negotiate the social distance between their interactional associates (Wolfson, 1986).

Although previous studies established that compliments are exchanged more often in close relationships and less in less friendly ones (Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Golato, 2005; Li, 2015; Nelson, et al., 1993; Shaari & Maros, 2017), the results of the present study recognised that male Jordanian-Australians enjoyed offering more compliments to their friends than to their relatives and those with whom they have professional relationships. Hence, it can be surmised that comfortable friendship can be a prerequisite to successful complimenting.

In the next subsections, the difference between a genuine compliment and a flattery compliment in the perception of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians is illustrated.

## **5.10 Compliments versus Flatteries**

In addition to the explicit motives of complimenting, compliments may have some embedded reasons concealed by flattery. Eylon and Heyd (2008, p. 685) give the following detailed description of flattery:

Flattery is an ‘ordinary vice’ in a double sense. It is common in its cross-cultural prevalence, and modern theoreticians do not usually consider it among the worst moral vices. The term is etymologically derived from the act of ‘flattening down,’ or smoothing, that is to say, the attempt to ease personal relations in some way. Flattery also appears to be flat in the sense of lack of moral or psychological depth. This apparent flatness of flattery may be responsible for the scant philosophical attention given to the concept.

The difference between compliments and flatteries is not easily identifiable. By definition, a compliment involves a favourable judgement or opinion by saying something nice to another individual (Shaari & Maros, 2017; Manes & Wolfson, 1981). In contrast, a flattery consists of an explicit communicative act that is essentially judgemental. According to Eylon and Heyd (2008, p. 686):

An act of flattery typically makes use of excessive commendatory language in describing the qualities or record of another person for the purpose of creating a favorable attitude in that person towards the flatterer. It contains an explicit assertion of alleged merit.

In the semi-structured interviews, participants' insights on what constitutes compliments and flatteries were investigated. The pattern of response by compliment and flattery is presented in Table 5.12 below.

**Table 5.12: Pattern of response by compliment and flattery**

Pattern of response by compliment and flattery	Pattern of response N = 20
Compliment and flattery are different	95% (19)
Compliment and flattery are the same	5% (1)

The data in Table 5.12 indicate that 95% of interviewees perceived compliments and flatteries as two separate comments. Supporters of this view argue that generally the speaker offers a compliment in order to commend oneself to the addressee who is unaware of its phony nature (Eylon & Heyd, 2008). Conversely, the data in Table 5.12 show that 5% of participants regarded compliments and flatteries as one thing, claiming that they share the same linguistic and semantic features. For example, JA 4 who maintained that compliments and flatteries serve similar linguistic and semantic purposes, making them undistinguishable, proposed this observation:

كل المجاملات يمكن أن تكون غزل لأنه في الأساس لديهم نفس الهدف وأيضا نفس الهدف اللغوي، إذا استطعت وضعه بهذه الطريقة. أنا أعتبر المجاملات غزل عندما يمدح الذكور الإناث فقط لجذب انتباههم أو قد يكون العكس. ولكن بصفه عامه، المجامله هي غزل. (JA 4)

'All compliments can be flatteries because they have the same purpose and also the same linguistic goal, if I can put it this way. I consider a compliment as a flattery when males compliment females only to attract their attention or it could be the other way around. But, in general a compliment is flattery by itself.' (JA 4)

According to JA 4, all compliments can be flatteries since compliments and flatteries possess similar syntactic structures. This perceived similarity between compliments and flatteries may sometimes lead to misunderstanding between the complimenter and complimentee. Holmes (1987, p. 109) provided a list of syntactic structures, which can be applied to compliments. They can also be applied to flatteries, as summarised in Table 5.13 below:

**Table 5.13: Syntactic structures**

Syntactic structure	Example
NP <sup>4</sup> Look/Be (Int) <sup>5</sup> Adj <sup>6</sup>	That coat is really great.
I (Int) like NP	I simply love that skirt.
Pro <sup>7</sup> Be (Int) Adj NP	That is a very nice coat.
What (a) (Int) Adj NP	What lovely children!
(Int) Adj NP	Really cool ear-rings.
Isn't NP ADJ!	Isn't this food wonderful!

Along the same lines, another interviewee claimed that the difference between compliments and flatteries is generally unclear, and therefore some individuals might be judged as dishonest while their intention is sincere. The following statement clarifies this opinion:

أعتقد أن هناك خط رفيع بين الاثنين. سوف تكون غزل إذا كان مجرد تكرار للكلمات طوال الوقت من قلبك دون أي عواطف فعالة. (JA 3)

'I think there is a thin line between both of them. Compliment will be flattering if you just repeat the words all the time out of your heart without any effective emotions.' (JA 3)

Broadly speaking, complimentees can differentiate between compliments and flatteries through body language, facial expression and eye contact of the complimenter as well as through the way in which the compliment is delivered.

Although complimentees may perhaps be able to recognise whether a statement is a compliment or flattery, the basic dissimilarity between compliments and flatteries is based on the genuineness and emotion within which the compliment is offered. Genuine compliments reveal sincerity and naturalness; however, flatteries show insincerity and dishonesty. Even though a flattery is normally polite, it can also be employed as a tool to

4 NP: Noun phrase.  
5 INT: Intensifier.  
6 ADJ: Adjective.  
7 PRO: Pronoun.

obtain personal benefits from the complimentee. JA 7 correlates flattery to insincerity as expressed in the following statement:

يمكن للمجاملات أن تكون غزلا عندما تكون غير صادق ولديك نوايا سيئه. كثير من الناس يقولون شيئا لكنهم يعنون العكس. هذا غير صادق. (JA 7)

‘Compliments can be flatteries when you are dishonest and you have bad intentions. Many people say something, but they mean the opposite. This is dishonest.’ (JA 7)

Along the same vein, another interviewee explained what he considered the difference between compliments and flatteries, as follows:

ستكون المجاملات غزل إذا كنت تكرر الكلمات دائما دون أي عواطف فعليه. أنت فقط تقول لهم وأنت غير صادق. المجامله صحيحه، لكن الغزل يمكن أن يكون مزيقا ويتم إعطاؤه عادة للحصول على شيء ما. (JA 3)

‘Compliments will be flattering if you just repeat the words all the time without any effective emotions. You just say them and you are not genuine. A compliment is true, but a flattery can be fake and is usually given to obtain something.’ (JA 3)

Likewise, another interviewee believed that:

أعتقد أنه من السهل معرفة ما إذا كان هناك شخص يغازل من وجهه وعينه وربما من الكيفيه التي يقولون بها المجامله. (JA 15)

‘I think it is easy to tell if someone is flattering from their face and eyes and perhaps from how they say the compliment.’ (JA 15)

Flatteries are untrustworthy since a flatterer would not have offered the compliment unless he or she needed to obtain something from the addressee. The flatterer’s unreliability leads to giving false compliments particularly if such compliments were deemed beneficial and obtainable. As Adler (1997, p. 442) states, “having found out that I was victim to deception or fraud makes me feel stupid or angry; but realizing that I was impressed by flattery makes me feel embarrassed and ashamed”. Henceforth, the fact that

an individual is flattering invalidates the value of the compliment as a compliment (Eylon & Heyd, 2008).

### 5.10.1 Signs of Flatteries

There are several signs that can assist to distinguish between compliments and flatteries. According to the sampled participants, signs of flatteries involve one or any of the following: (a) bad intentions of complimenters, (b) exaggerating the content of compliments, (c) high frequency of compliments, (d) compliments targeting members of the opposite gender, (e) compliments on appearance, and (f) love compliments. The pattern of response by sign of flattery is summarised in Table 5.14.

**Table 5.14: Pattern of response by sign of flattery**

<b>Sign of flattery</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 28</b>
1. Bad intentions of complimenters	17.86% (5)
2. Exaggerating the content of compliment	21.43% (6)
3. Frequency of compliment	10.71% (3)
4. Complimenting members of the opposite gender	14.29% (4)
5. Compliments on appearance	10.71% (3)
6. Love compliments	25% (7)

As indicated in Table 5.14, the highest response rate was recorded in sign 6 (Love compliments), which had 25% of the entire data. In other words, seven members of the study considered flattery an indication of romance. Sign 2 (Exaggerating the content of compliment), which rated 21.43%, came second, followed by signs 1 (Bad intentions of complimenters) and 4 (Complimenting members of the opposite gender) that rated 17.86% and 14.29% respectively. The lowest response rate was verified in sign 3 (Frequency of compliment) and 5 (Compliments on appearance), which both had 10.71% of the total number of responses.

In their responses, the the sampled male Jordanian-Australians provided samples of each sign of flattery. Table 5.15 below presents examples of each sign of flattery as appeared in the data.

**Table 5.15: Signs of flattery**

Signs of flattery	Example	Translation
Bad intentions	في رأيي، يمكن أن تكون المجاملة مغازله عندما يقدمها شخص ولكن لديه نوايا أخرى غير مجامله لشخص ما. أم، مثلاً عندما يحب رجل امرأة وبالتالي يحاول مدحها على مظهرها أو شخصيتها. ما يقوله قد يكون غير صحيح على الإطلاق، لكنه يقول ذلك فقط لأنه يحبها. (JA 18)	‘In my opinion, a compliment can be flattery when someone offers it but he or she has other intentions aside from complimenting someone. Um, a good example when a man likes a woman and therefore he tries to compliment her on her appearance or personality. What he says might be completely untrue, but he is only saying that because he likes her.’ (JA 18)
Exaggerating the content of compliment	عندما يبالغ الناس في تقديم المجاملات. ما أعنيه، عندما تتحدث وتتحدث عن كل الأشياء الجيده في شخص ما. هذا يعني أنك تغازل هذا الشخص. (JA 13)	‘It is when people exaggerate in offering compliments. What I mean, when you talk and talk about all the good things in someone. This means you are flattering with this person.’ (JA 13)
Frequency of compliment	أعتقد أحياناً أن الكثير من المجاملات تجعل الآخرين يعتقدون أنك تملق أو لديك نوايا سيئه، كما تعلمون؟ أعني الأردنيون يميلون إلى المجاملات كثيراً وأحياناً في أمور سخيئه، نعم. لا أعتقد أن هذا أمر جيد لأن الآخرين يعتقدون أننا غير أمناء. حسناً، شخصياً، لم أعد أفعل هذا، لكنني أراه كل مرة أزور فيها الأردن. (JA 19)	‘I think sometimes too many compliments make others think you are flattering or you have bad intentions, you know? Um, I mean, you know we Jordanians tend to compliment a lot and sometimes on silly things, yeah. I do not think this is good because others think we are dishonest. Well, personally, I don’t do this anymore, but I see every time I visit Jordan.’ (JA 19)
Complimenting members of the opposite gender	أنا أعتبر المجامله مغازله عندما يجامل الذكور الإناث فقط لجذب انتباههم أو قد يكون العكس وهذا يحدث سوء الفهم. (JA 4)	‘I consider a compliment flattery when males compliment females only to attract their attention or it could be the other way around and that is when misunderstanding happens.’ (JA 4)
Compliments on appearance	أعتقد أنه عندما تصف المجامله الناس أنفسهم أو شيء متعلق مثل مظهرهم أو ملابسهم أو جسددهم. في رأيي، هذا مغازله. (JA 14)	‘I think when the compliment describes the people themselves or something related like their look, appearance, clothes, or body. In my opinion, this is flattery.’ (JA 14)
Love compliments	أعتقد أن المجامله هي مغازله عندما نستخدم كلمات خاصة تصف شيئاً موجوداً في الشخص وأنت تحب هذا الشخص، أنت تعرف ماذا أقصد؟ أم، أعتقد أنه يمكن استخدام المجامله للتعبير عن حبك و مغازلك لهذا الشخص خاصه. (JA 10)	‘I believe a compliment is flattery when we use special words that describe something found in the person and you love that person, you know what I mean? Um, I think compliments can be used to express your love and flattery of that person especially if she is a female.’ (JA 10)

The difference between flattery and compliments lies in the intent of the person offering such compliments and whether he expects anything in return. Even though almost all participants consider both compliments and flatteries polite, compliments were viewed as unpretentious and sincere; however, flatteries were regarded as insincere. Hence, it can be argued that other features of social interactions such as politeness, impoliteness, sincerity and insincerity are frequently reflected in the speech act of complimenting. In other words, compliments can contain certain degrees of politeness, sincerity or insincerity. In the following subsections, the discussion turns to how politeness and sincerity in compliment giving are perceived by the sampled participants.

### 5.11 Politeness, Sincerity, Insincerity and Compliments

Compliments and both politeness and sincerity are correlated. Compliments generally have certain degrees of politeness and sincerity, in that, they can be either polite or sincere, or both polite and sincere (Nguyen, 2007; Li, 2015). In addition, compliments can sometimes be insincere. When giving compliments for personal gain, one's lack of sincerity may make the complimentee feel unimpressed by the compliment. The pattern of response by politeness, sincerity and insincerity is presented in Table 5.16.

**Table 5.16: Pattern of response by politeness, sincerity and insincerity**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 20</b>
Politeness	60% (12)
Sincerity	30% (6)
Insincerity	10% (2)

The data in Table 5.16 show that twelve interviewees reflected on politeness in their interviews. In other words, 60% of participants observed that compliments are solely given for politeness purposes. In contrast, 30% of interviewees argued that the basis of a compliment is not its politeness, but rather its sincerity. Insincerity was also viewed as an appropriate complimenting practice by 10% of participants. In the following subsections,

male Jordanian-Australians opinions on politeness, sincerity and insincerity are illuminated.

### 5.11.1 Complimenting for Politeness Purposes

Politeness plays a great role in social interaction. Table 5.16 shows that a total of 60% of interviewees established that the heart of the speech act of complimenting is its politeness. In other words, compliments are merely offered to express politeness and show respect for others. The following statement taken from interview transcripts clarify this view:

أعتقد أن المجامله عباره عن كلمه جميله وجميله للقلب. حسناً، قد لا تكون المجامله حقيقه أو دقيقه أو لا تتوافق مع الواقع، لا يهم. لا يجب أن تكون المجامله صحيحه بنسبة 100٪، ولكن طالما أن المجامله مهذبه يمكن أن يكون له تأثير إيجابي على الشخص الذي يستلمها. (JA 6)

'I think a compliment is a lovely and nice word to the heart. Well, it might not be genuine, accurate or does not correspond to reality, it does not matter. It does not have to be 100% true, but as long as it is polite it can be a positive impact on the person receiving it.' (JA 6)

Compliments may sometimes be given for the sake of politeness rather than a sincere comment on the complimentee's appearance, personality, possessions, ability or achievement. This opinion is supported by 60% of participants as the following three quotations explicate:

إنه تعليق لطيف ومهذب تقوله لشخص ما لجعله يشعر بالارتياح [...] أم، أيضاً، أحيانا أعطي مجاملات للآخرين لأكون مهذب ودون حتى التفكير في الأمر. أعني أنني لا أكون متأكد إذا كانت المجامله صحيحه أم لا. (JA 10)

'It is a kind and polite comment you say to someone to make him or her feel good [...] Um, also, sometimes I give compliments to others just to be polite and without even thinking about it. I mean I would not be sure if my compliment is fully true or not.' (JA 10)

المجامله هي طريقه لإظهار اللطف والأدب والرفق مع الآخرين. أنت تخبرهم بشيء لطيف عنهم، وهذا يجعلهم يشعرون بالسعاده ويحسن من ثقتهم. من المهم أن تكون مهذباً وأن تقول أشياء تجعل الناس يشعرون بالسعاده والتقدير. أفضل أن أكون مؤدب أكثر من أكون 100٪ صادق. (JA 7)

‘A compliment is a way to show kindness, politeness and being gentle to others. You tell them something nice about them and this makes them feel happy and improves their confidence. It is important to be polite and say things that make people feel happy and appreciated. I would rather be polite than 100% honest.’ (JA 7)

في رأبي، المجامله هي كلمه تحيي ذكرًا للأخرين بطريقه مهذبه وإيجابيه حتى لو لم يكن ما تقوله صحيحًا  
تمامًا. (JA 15)

‘In my opinion a compliment is a word that provides tribute to other people in a polite and positive way even if what you say is not entirely true.’ (JA 15)

Indeed, politeness does not necessary involve sincerity (Xie, He, & Lin, 2005). From previous research on compliments, scholars noted that compliments could sometimes be offered for politeness purposes (Brown, P., & Levinson, 1987; Chen, R., 1993; Gu, 1990; Ebadi & Pourzandi, 2015; Johnson, D. M., 1992; Johnson, D., & Roen, 1992; Li, 2015; Ruhi, 2006; Shaari & Maros, 2017). While these findings are supported by results of the present study, the outcomes of this research confirm that for the sampled male Jordanian-Australians, the concept of politeness is extremely emphasised. In other words, a compliment is purely exchanged for politeness purposes regardless of its sincerity.

In intercultural situations, complimenting for politeness purposes may lead to distrust between interlocutors, and thus to a breakdown in communication. Some complimentees may think that the complimenter is manipulating them in order to sway them to his or her way of thinking or in order to obtain a desired result. Although manipulation has negative implications, it is not always damaging as people may just attempt to get to know each other or bond with one another through positive and polite compliments.

### **5.11.2 Complimenting for Sincerity Purposes**

The importance of sincerity when complimenting was also emphasised in the data. As presented in Table 5.16, a total of 30% of interviewees observed that the foundation of a compliment is not its politeness, but rather its sincerity. Furthermore, participants claimed that the vast majority of people dislike insincere compliments. Consider the following responses:

لا يعجبني عندما يعطى الناس مجاملات أكثر من اللازم لأنهم يصبحون مزيفين. أم، بالنسبة لي من المهم أن يكون ما تمدحني عليه صحيحًا، وإلا فسأفترض أنك كاذب. (JA 18)

‘I don’t like it when people give compliments too much because they become fake. Um, for me it is important that what you compliment me on is true, otherwise I will assume you are a liar.’ (JA 18)

بعض المجاملات مفيدة لجعل الناس قريبين من بعضهم البعض وجعل العلاقات الاجتماعية بين الناس قوية. ولكنها عادة سيئة للغاية عندما يكذب الناس و يظنوا أن هذا سيجعل علاقه أقوى. بالنسبة لي شخصياً، هذا يجعلني أكره هذا الشخص. (JA 14)

‘Some compliments are useful to make people close to each other and make social relationships between people strong. However, it is a very bad habit when people lie thinking that this will make relationship stronger. For me personally, this makes me hate that person.’ (JA 14)

The above sentiments were also echoed by JA 12 and JA 1 who observed that:

في بعض الأحيان تكون المجامله مجرد كذبه ونفاق. أنا لا أحب الأكاذيب لأنها تؤثر على ثقة الناس بشده. (JA 12)

‘Sometimes the compliment is only a lie and hypocrisy. I don’t like lies as they badly affect people’s confidence.’ (JA 12)

أنا فقط أعطي مجاملات حقيقيه. باستثناء الطلاب، أمدحهم على أي شيء، ولكن هذا فقط لتحفيزهم. (JA1)

‘I only give true compliments. Except with my students, I compliment them on anything, but this is just to motivate them.’ (JA 1)

As for JA 4, the issue of sincerity has more to do with “intention of other people”. JA 4 contends:

يعجبني عندما يمنحني الناس مجاملات لكنني لا أحب عندما يكذبون. أم، أنا أحب أن تكون المجامله صحيحه، لكن في بعض الأحيان تكون نية الأشخاص الآخرين غير معروفه ولا تعرف ما يريدون. (JA 4)

‘I like it when people give me compliments, but I do not like when they lie. Um, I like the compliment to be true, but sometimes the intention of other people is unknown and you don’t know what they want.’ (JA 4)

Notwithstanding the importance of the complimenter’s intention in offering compliments, people generally anticipate compliments to comprise some degree of sincerity. Lack of sincerity in compliments may lead to mistrust and as a consequence to a collapse in communication (Please see Section 5.11.3 below). Different societies and cultures have diverse views on how sincerity in compliments is perceived. Just how compliments operate in Jordanian society (with reference to politeness and sincerity) was verified in the data. The findings of the study reveal that the emphasis on politeness rather than sincerity when offering compliments is a main feature of the Jordanian culture (Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Migdadi, 2003; Quran, 2012). The way compliments operate in Jordanian society was illustrated by three interviewees as the following quotations elucidate:

في الأردن، أود أن أقول إن الجميع تقريباً يتعامل مع المجاملات ويقبلهم. سيعطيك الناس الكثير من المجاملات وليس كلهم حقيقيون. أعني بعض صحيح، ولكن الغالبية هي مجرد عادات ليكون لطيف أو مهذب أو لبدء التحدث مع شخص ما. (JA1)

‘In Jordan, I would say that nearly everybody deals with compliments and accepts them. People will give you too many compliments and not all of them are true. I mean some are true, but the majority are just customs to be nice or polite or simply to begin talking to someone.’ (JA 1)

يجب أن أقول إن الأردنيين لديهم عادة إعطاء الكثير من المجاملات. أعتقد أنه من تقاليدنا أن نشعر بأننا مجبرون على تقديم مجاملات. (JA 6)

‘I have to say that Jordanians have the habit of giving too many compliments. Um, I think it is our tradition that we feel obliged to give compliments.’ (JA 6)

في ثقافتنا، نعطي مجاملات طوال الوقت تقريباً وفي بعض الأحيان أكثر من اللازم. (JA 3)

'In our culture, we give compliments approximately all the time and to be honest sometimes too much. Yeah, we compliment right, left and centre.' (JA 3)

Based on the findings of the interviews, it is reasonable to state that when complimenting, male Jordanian-Australians place a great emphasis on politeness rather than on sincerity of their compliments. In intercultural interactions, their complimenting practices, which are greatly influenced by their native Jordanian social and cultural norms, leads to miscommunication since politeness targeted compliments are sometimes observed as insincere by members of the other society and culture.

### 5.11.3 Insincerity in Compliments

Compliments are pleasing; however, they can create misperception or lead to speculation about their sincerity. According to Knapp et al. (1984, p. 26), "the difficulties and contradictions associated with compliments make them peculiarly fascinating" to us. In addition to politeness and sincerity, compliments can have some degree of insincerity. As presented in Table 5.16, only 10% of interviewees viewed insincerity in compliments as an appropriate practice, particularly among close friends. According to JA 4 and JA 17, compliments can be exchanged among close friends merely as a joke or for entertainment. JA 4 and JA 17 commented on the jokey and humorous nature of compliments between close friends and family members where they said:

أعطي مجاملات لأصدقائي أكثر وأكثر من الآخرين لأننا نعرف بعضنا البعض. نعم، وأحياناً تكون  
المجاملات من أجل المتعة فقط. أعني أنها ليست صحيحة لأننا نمزح مع بعضنا البعض. لا أفعل هذا مع  
أشخاص آخرين لأنهم سيظنون أنني كاذب. (JA 4)

'I give compliments to my friends a lot and more than other people because we know each other. Yeah and sometimes the compliments are just for fun. I mean they are not true because we are just joking with each other. I would not do this with other people simply because they will think I am dishonest.' (JA 4)

إذا كانت من صديق قديم، فقد يكون فقط يمزح. أصدقائي يعطوا مجاملات للمرح أحياناً. (JA 17)

'If it is from an old friend, he might be only joking. Sometimes my friends compliment for fun.' (JA 17)

In addition, the data from the semi-structured interviews highlights two occasions where compliments are considered insincere: flattery and exaggeration. The pattern of response by sign of insincere compliment is summarised in Table 5.17.

**Table 5.17: Pattern of response by sign of insincere compliment**

<b>Sign of insincere compliment</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 7</b>
Flattery	71.43% (5)
Exaggeration	28.57% (2)

Table 5.17 above indicates that 35% of participants commented on what is believed to be a sign of an insincere compliment. Specifically, the present study reveals that 71.43% of these participants regarded flatteries as insincere. Supporters of this view argue that all compliments aiming to flatter are insincere due to the unknown intentions and motives of the complimenter. Consider the following responses of JA 4 and JA 19:

أنا أحب عندما يعطيني الناس مجامله، لكني لا أحب عندما يكذبون. أم، أنا أحب أن يكون المجامله صحيحه، ولكن في بعض الأحيان نية الآخرين غير معروفه. (JA 4)

‘I like it when people give me a compliment, but I don’t like when they lie. Um, I like the compliment to be true, but sometimes the intention of other people is unknown.’ (JA 4)

أعتقد أنه عندما يكون لديك نوايا سيئه أو عندما تحاول المغازله بشكل غير مباشر مع شخص ما باستخدام المجاملات لكن قصدك هو المغازله. هذا سيئ. (JA 19)

‘I think when you have bad intentions or when you try to indirectly flatter with someone by using compliments but your intention is to flatter. This is bad.’ (JA 19)

Since it places the complimenter’s genuineness in question, exaggerated compliments were also considered insincere by 28.57% of participants. In this regard, JA 3 observes:

يمكن أن تكون المجاملات مغالته إذا تكررت الكلمات طوال الوقت بدون أي عواطف فعليه. أنت فقط تقولها لهم وأنت لست صادقاً. (JA 3)

‘Compliments can be flattering if you just repeat the words all the time without any effective emotions. You just say it them and you are not genuine.’ (JA 3)

Along the same lines, JA 19 argues:

أعتقد أحياناً أن الكثير من المجاملات تجعل الآخرين يعتقدون أنك تغازل أو لديك نوايا سيئه، كما تعلمون؟ أعني نحن الأردنيون نميل إلى أن المدح كثيراً و في أمور سخيئه. لا أعتقد أن هذا أمر جيد لأن الآخرين يعتقدون أننا غير صادقين. (JA 19)

‘I think sometimes too many compliments make others think you are flattering or you have bad intentions, you know. Um, I mean we Jordanians tend to compliment a lot and on silly things. I don’t think this is good because others think we are dishonest.’ (JA 19)

Taking into consideration JA 19’s statement above, it can be claimed that repeatedly giving compliments can be viewed as targeting to please the complimentee, and as a result may lead to the complimenter’s honesty being interrogated. Furthermore, the interviewee referred to a tradition of the Jordanian culture, which is the tendency to offer numerous compliments regardless if they are well-deserved or not, which again may place the speakers’ genuineness in question.

Insincerity is regarded as an unacceptable practice in social communication. Most participants described insincerity as an undesirable behaviour as it damages the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. According to JA 19, most people dislike insincerity:

من المهم أن تكون المجامله صادقه. أنا لا أحب أولئك الغير صادقين وأفترض الآخرين لا يحبون الكذب كذلك. (JA 19)

‘It is important that the compliment is true. I don’t like those who are dishonest and I assume other people don’t like dishonesty as well.’ (JA 19)

Another interviewee agreed:

الشيء الأكثر أهمية عند المجامله هو أن نكون صادقين. لا أحد يحب الكذب. أيضا، سوف تنخفض ثقة الناس في النفس إذا كنت فقط تعطي المجامله لخداعهم. (JA 12)

‘The most important thing when complimenting is to be honest. Nobody likes lying and dishonesty. Also, people’s self-confidence will decrease if you are only giving compliments to fool them.’ (JA 12)

To summarise, it can be concluded that compliments can be difficult to interpret, since such interpretation is usually based on the complimenter’s intention and motivation as well as on the context in which compliments are given. This difficulty and variation explains why a certain compliment is accepted when given in one context (or in a certain way) and declined when delivered in another.

## **5.12 Major Findings**

### **5.12.1 Giving Compliments**

The findings discussed and presented in in this chapter confirmed that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians behaved in a noticeable way when giving compliments. The data showed that the sampled participants offered more compliments to people from their own speech community and culture than to other individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data, the study concludes that among the reasons for this pattern of complimenting are the following: (1) the need to feel comfortable when offering compliments to others. The majority of participants reported feeling relaxed when giving compliments to those who share the same social and cultural background; (2) the belief that having an amicable relationship between the complimenter and the complimentee is crucial not only for compliments to be given, but also to be accepted and appreciated; (3) the fear that compliments might be rejected if offered to people from other cultures; (4) the view that compliments are anticipated to be informal, and thus a good relationship or friendship is significant to avoid being formal; and (5) the attempt to reduce social intercultural miscommunication, stating that complimenting individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds may lead to misunderstanding.

In addition, the sampled participants were perceived to prefer giving more compliments people with whom they have friendly relationships than to complete

strangers. The data also revealed that young participants were found to favour offering compliments to elders than to other age groups. Hence, the results confirm that giving compliments is greatly impacted by various factors such as interpersonal relationships, age and social status.

With respect to topics of compliments, the data presented and analysed in this study showed that compliments selected by male Jordanian-Australians seemed to focus on five general topics: personality, appearance, attire, ability/performance and possessions. However, differences occurred in the frequency of occurrence of every topic, which appeared to be socially and culturally related. As the data revealed, aspects of personality were male Jordanian-Australians' preferred topics of complimenting. This suggests that the sampled participants value personal traits more than look, possessions and performance.

In general, compliments reflect people's social and cultural philosophies. In other words, they are likely to refer to social and cultural beliefs of individuals' norms, practices and behaviours. Consequently, the two-sided aspects of compliments are support and evaluation (Karimnia & Afghari, 2010, 2011; Pomerantz, 1978). Holmes (1995) adds that the purpose of compliments in social conversations diverges according to the complimenter's sincerity and the speaker's relationship, and thus compliments can sometimes be misinterpreted. For instance, compliments offered from a low status person to someone of high status seem to be regarded as flattery whereas compliments given from someone of high status to someone of low status are understood as appraisal (Nguyen, 2007).

### **5.12.2 Politeness and Sincerity**

When giving compliments, complimenters may have the choice of being either polite or sincere, in that, a compliment may be offered for the sake of either politeness or sincerity (Holmes, 1995; Pallotti, 1999; Pomerantz, 1978; Válková, 2008). For politeness purposes, a compliment is likely to express respect, establish harmony and create a bond between the complimenter and complimentee. In this case, a compliment may only contain a small degree of sincerity. If intended for sincerity purposes, on the other hand, a compliment is likely to express the complimenter's genuine endorsement, gratitude and appreciation of the complimentee, and therefore it involves a greater degree of sincerity (Nguyen, 2007). The influence of politeness and sincerity on compliments fluctuates depending on both the complimenting context and speaker's intention and motivation. The data indicate that in

some situations, particularly when interacting with pessimistic or gloomy individuals, a compliment is intended to provide hope and encouragement and improve one's confidence and self-esteem, regardless of whether it is sincere or not.

As positive speech acts, compliments can be viewed as having two illocutionary principles: (a) assertions, with the goal of proclaiming something true and (b) verbal gifts, with the intention of pleasing the addressee (Holmes, 1995; Pallotti, 1999; Pomerantz, 1978). The sincerity of compliments is also affected by these two values. Subsequently, complimenters need to assess politeness and sincerity in line with how these values are perceived and appreciated in their societies and cultures. This may explain the high frequency of compliments given for politeness purposes by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians in this study.

Politeness and sincerity are perceived differently in diverse societies and cultures. Therefore, compliments are seen to accomplish different communicative purposes for people including the sampled male Jordanian-Australians. The frequency of compliments offered by the sampled participants may indicate that in the view of male Jordanian-Australians, a compliment is a routine, ritual or a social method shared with others to commence and ease interaction. According to Saville-Troike (1982, p. 44), "the most important characteristic of routines and rituals is that truth value is largely irrelevant. Their meaning is dependent on shared beliefs and values of the speech community coded into communicative patterns, and they cannot be interpreted from social and cultural context". Hence, the sampled participants observed compliments as a social phenomenon and failure to offer compliments when socially interacting with others could be considered impolite and disrespectful.

The act of giving compliments by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians concurs with Leech's (1983) *Approbation Maxim* (minimise dispraise of other, maximise praise of other), and thus it is generally intended to develop bonds and improve smoothness of relationships with one another. The importance of politeness highlighted by the sampled participants is consistent with the features of the collectivistic culture that they originally belong to in which the other's feelings are highly considered and appreciated (Hofstede, 1991; Triandis, 1988). Additionally, it is in line with characteristics of the individualistic culture of their new society where individuals provide compliments freely and regularly (Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Scott, Ciarrochi, & Deane, 2004).

The data support the fact that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were inclined to frequently offer compliments to merely express politeness. Moreover, the

sampled male Jordanian-Australians were seen to place more emphasis on politeness than sincerity when complimenting. To male Jordanian-Australians, compliments are positive speech acts that should not be performed correctly, in that, they do not need to be entirely true to be offered to others. According to the sampled participants, compliments do not need to be very accurate and should be too generously offered. This cultural view of compliments resulted in giving more compliments, mainly in socially anticipated encounters. Relating the findings of this study to Grice's (1975) Maxim of Quality (be as truthful as possible), it can be argued that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were observed to ignore Grice's (1975) Maxim of Quality when complimenting since their focus was primarily on politeness rather than on sincerity.

The lack of emphasis on sincerity when complimenting causes misunderstandings in intercultural communications as narrated by some male Jordanian-Australians who stated that their sincerity was sometimes questioned due to the high frequency of compliments. Frequent compliments may have a counter impact on the complimentees who become doubtful of the intentions and motivations of those who offer too many compliments (Chaika, 1982). In addition, trust is important in social interactions in order to ensure smoothness of conversation. Trust between individuals relies to a certain degree on some common knowledge of one another (Nguyen, 2007). Similarly, shared knowledge is important when giving compliments because it helps to develop understanding, to create trust and to guarantee that a compliment is suitable in a certain context (Habermas, 1979). Although sincerity can lead to trust, it should be authenticated merely by the succeeding practices of the complimenter (Montgomery, 1999). A good example of the importance of trust and mutual knowledge is a compliment that is given by a teacher to motivate students (Bowman, R. F., 2007). A teacher's compliment might not be entirely sincere, but its purpose is to inspire and encourage students. Having trust and mutual knowledge helps minimise miscommunication, which explains why the sampled male Jordanian-Australians did not seem to encounter any difficulties when complimenting their friends or family members as trust and mutual knowledge was already present.

Politeness is a social stipulation (Alaoui, 2011); however, it is better to be insincere than impolite or aggressive (Kerbrat-Orrechioni, 1997). Since politeness is a "sociolinguistic phenomenon that connects language and its users to the social world that surrounds them", it can "provide insights into the very structure of social reality and the process by which it is established and maintained" (Eelen, 2001, p. 4). According to Conlan (2005), politeness is an action of mutual understanding regarding the suitability of certain

speech strategies. Hence, politeness breakdown between the sampled male Jordanian-Australians and others in intercultural contexts could well be decided by conflicting opinions of appropriateness of politeness strategies such as complimenting in certain speech contexts.

Whether a selection of compliments is politeness driven or sincerity driven is society and culture-specific (Mills & Kádár, 2011; Nguyen, 2007). Influenced by the Jordanian social and cultural norms, male Jordanian-Australians were regarded to be more politeness driven than sincerity driven when complimenting.

### **5.13 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the data from the semi-structured interviews with twenty male Jordanian-Australians in Sydney, Australia. In general, the findings of the interviews recognise the difficulties of intercultural social communication and the complexities that participants face in intercultural encounters in which compliments are offered. It is apparent from the data that the implication of complimenting in social intercultural communication is determined by some habits and rules of certain societies, cultural groups or cultures. It is also evident from the data that for individuals who use compliments interculturally more frequently, perceiving how a compliment functions is crucial to achieve positive and effective communication with others and successfully integrate in the target community and culture.

In addition, the data ascertain that the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians are still influenced by their native social traditions and native cultural beliefs and values. As Cameron (2001) argues, humans are social beings and people's insights of compliments reflect not only specific opinions, but also universal social concepts. The next chapter presents and analyses the data obtained from semi-structured interviews with respect to responding to compliments.

# **CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS – RESPONDING TO COMPLIMENTS**

## **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter extends and builds on the analysis in Chapter Five. It presents and analyses the interviewees' perceptions of and attitudes to responding to compliments, and particularly regarding the following analytical themes: (a) how does receiving compliments make people feel? and (b) compliment responses.

This chapter follows a thematic approach whereby data presentation is structured in terms of pattern of response by theme. As pointed out in Chapter Three, qualitative methods of data analysis have been adopted, and henceforth the presentation layout in this chapter is fundamentally descriptive. Suffice to state that in order to pay attention to statistical information about participants' attributes and responses to interview questions, part of the study results are presented in the form of tables, revealing the differences and convergences in answers elicited from the participants.

In this chapter, section 6.1 presents the identified research themes and subthemes. In Section 6.2, feelings of being complimented are explained. Compliment responses are discussed in Section 6.3. Section 6.4. discussed the major findings of the study with respect to compliment responses. It also discussed the concepts of modesty and self-assertiveness in relation to compliment responses.

## **6.1 Semi-Structured Interview Results**

This section is a thematic presentation of data from semi-structured interviews. Two themes and their relevant subthemes were taken from the interview transcripts of twenty participants who participated in the study. Themes were reached through following a rigorous data review process, which included a repetitive critical analysis of interview transcripts. The research themes listed in Table 6.1 below relate to different indicators of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians' opinions of compliments. Theme 1 was generated from questions that were intended to find out how participants feel when receiving a compliment. Similarly, theme 2 came out of direct answers to questions that investigated interviewees' opinions on compliment responses (Please see list of questions in Appendix

H). The recognised themes that frequently recurred across participants are presented in Table 6.1 below.

**Table 6.1: Identified research themes and subthemes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>
1. Feeling of being complimented	Happiness
	Mixed feelings
	Hate compliments
2. Compliment responses	Acceptance
	Appreciation
	Thanks
	Return
	Offer
	Smiles
	Downplay
	Evasion
Rejection	

The next discussion is a thematic interpretation and analysis of what the participants have perceived about responding to compliments. The analysis entwines semi-structured interview data in conjunction with the theoretical frameworks of intercultural communicative competence, speech act theory and politeness theory, positioning them within the scope of existing discussions on the speech act of complimenting.

## **6.2 Feeling of being Complimented**

Twenty interviewees described their feelings on being complimented. Table 6.2 presents the pattern of response by each feeling.

**Table 6.2: Pattern of response by feeling of being complimented**

<b>Feeling</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 20</b>
Happiness	80% (16)
Mixed feelings	15% (3)
Hate compliments	5% (1)

Although 80% of participants reported happiness and comfort when receiving a compliment, 15% recounted mixed feelings such as shyness, nervousness and embarrassment. Moreover, 5% of interviewees disclosed that they hate to receive compliments, arguing that all compliments are fake.

Indeed, receiving a compliment instils happiness in people's hearts. The data presented in Table 6.2 show that 16 participants expressed happiness and joyfulness when receiving a compliment. The following quotations extracted from interview transcripts explain this sentiment:

أشعر بالسعادة. أحب أن أسمع كلمات جيدة من الآخرين. وأعتقد أيضًا أن الكلمات الطيبة تجعلنا نشعر بالرضا عندما نكون حزينين كما تجعلنا متحفزين أكثر للقيام بالأشياء. لذا أنا أحب أن يقول الناس أشياء لطيفة لي. (JA 7)

'I feel happy. I like to hear good words from others. I also think that good words make us feel good when we are sad and make us more motivated to do things. So yeah I like people to say nice stuff to me.' (JA 7)

إنه شعور جيد ويجعلني أشعر بالسعادة والثقة والفخر. أعني عندما يثنى علي، يعني هذا أن شخصًا ما لاحظ شيئًا فيّ يستحق أن يُثنى. أشعر بالارتياح. (JA 10)

'It is a good feeling and it makes me feel happy, confident and proud. I mean when I receive a compliment, this means someone has noticed something that deserves to be complimented on me. I feel good' (JA 10)

هذا يجعلني أشعر بأنني مميز. أشعر بالسعادة والثقة من الداخل كذلك. أعتقد أن المجاملات عبارته عن مجموعة من الكلمات اللطيفة. أنا أحب استخدامها والاستماع لها. (JA 1)

'It makes me feel special. I feel happy and confident from the inside as well. I think compliments are a group of nice words. I love to use them and hear them.' (JA 1)

However, being complimented does not always bring joy to addressees of compliments. In certain circumstances, compliments may lead to discomfort, nervousness or embarrassment. The preceding view was acknowledged by three male Jordanian-Australian interviewees. For example, JA 3 argues:

لا أستطيع أن أقول أنني سأكون سعيدًا جدًا لسماع [...] المجاملات. أم، يجب أن أعتزف بأنني شخص متواضع ولا أحب أن أكون مركز المحادثة خاصة أمام مجموعة من الأشخاص. لكن بالنسبة لي يعتمد الأمر على الشخص الذي يعطيها. إذا كنت أعرف أن الشخص غير صادق أشعر بالتوتر وعدم السعادة و لا أقول أي شيء. فقط أبتسم. (JA 3)

‘I cannot say that I will be very pleased to hear [...] compliments. Um, I have to admit that I am a humble person and I do not like to be the centre of the conversation especially in front of group of people. But for me it depends on the person who gives it to you. If I know that the person is dishonest, I feel nervous and unhappy and I would not say anything.’ (JA 3)

This opinion was echoed by JA 13 who stated that:

قد أشعر بعدم الارتياح إذا عرفت أن شخصًا ما يجاملني فقط لأشعر أنني بحالة جيدة. (JA 13)

‘I might feel uncomfortable if I know someone is only complimenting me to make me feel good.’ (JA 13)

Along the same lines, JA 19 explained that:

سأكون سعيدا، ولكن ليس دائما. أنا لا آخذ المجاملات بشكل جيد. أعني أحيانا بعض الناس يعطيك مجاملات و تعني العكس. أتجاهلهم لتجنب المشاكل. قدمت عرضًا في الجامعة، وكنت خجول جدًا. أعتقد أنه بسبب اللغة الإنجليزية الضعيفة في ذلك الوقت، وقال أحدهم إنني قدمت عرضًا رائعًا. لم أكن أعتقد أنه كان جادا، كانت سخرية. قلت “شكرا لك”، لكنني كنت أعلم أنه كان يعني العكس. أعتقد بسبب هذه التجربة وما شابهها، أميل إلى الشك بالمجاملات. (JA 19)

‘I will be happy, but not always. I do not take compliments well. I mean sometimes some people give you compliments and they mean the opposite. I ignore them to avoid problems. I gave a presentation once at university and I was very shy. I think because of my broken English at that time, and one person said that I gave a wonderful presentation. I did not think he was serious. He was ironic. I just said “thank you”, but I knew he was meaning the opposite. I think because of this experience and similar ones, I tend to question compliments.’ (JA 19)

Surprisingly, one interviewee admitted that he dislikes receiving compliments, asserting that generally most compliments are deceptive. JA 13 indicated that:

أنا أكره عندما يعطيني الناس مجاملات. قد تعتقد أنني غريب، لكنني لا أحب المجاملات. في رأيي، كلها كذب. (JA 14)

'I hate it when people give me compliments. You might think I am weird, but seriously, I do not like compliments. In my opinion, all of them are just fake.' (JA 14)

Overall, the findings of the study confirm that receiving compliments makes the majority of the sampled Jordanian-Australians (80%) feel happy because they feel noticed and important. Receiving compliments triggers the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that assists in regulating the reward and pleasure centres of the brain, making people feel good and happy. In addition, being complimented activates the production of oxytocin, a feel good hormone, which develops one's ability to trust and communicate with others (Glaser & Glaser, 2014; Watson, 2008).

In the following section, the sampled participants' perceptions on compliment responses are discussed.

### **6.3 Compliment Responses**

Similar to compliment giving, compliment responses are socially and culturally bound (Rizk, 2003; Shaari & Maros, 2017; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009). Compliment responses are not only culture-specific (Al Falasi, 2007; Holmes, 1995; Tran, 2010) but also context-specific.

How people respond to compliments varies from one society to another and from one culture to another. In addition, how individuals react when receiving compliments relies largely on social factors such as age, gender and social status. It also depends on interpersonal feelings and social relationships between complimenters and complimentees.

Previous research indicates that compliment responses can be classified into three main categories: agreement, nonagreement and evasion (Alinezhad, 2015; Herbert, 1989; Nelson et al., 1996). As summarised in table 6.3 below, each compliment response category is also subdivided into several subcategories. Herbert (1986) and Holmes (1988) provided a summary of compliment response strategies and substrategies, as presented in Table 6.3 below:

**Table 6.3: Compliment response strategies and substrategies**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Substrategy</b>
Agreement	Appreciation token Comment agreement Praise upgrade Comment history Praise downgrade Return
Nonagreement	Scale down Question Disagreement Qualification Nonacknowledgement
Evasion	Shift credit Informative comment Ignore Request assurance

In their responses, the sampled participants acknowledged eight compliment response strategies namely, acceptance, appreciation, return, offer, smiles, downplay, evasion and rejection. The findings of the study revealed that the most frequent response strategy to compliment was acceptance followed by appreciation tokens such as thanks, indicating that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were inclined to accept compliments rather than reject them. The pattern of response by each compliment response strategy is summarised in Table 6.4 below:

**Table 6.4: Pattern of response by compliment response strategy**

<b>Compliment response strategy</b>	<b>Pattern of response N = 20</b>
Acceptance	70% (14)
Downplay	10% (2)
Evasion	15% (3)
Rejection	5% (1)

In the following subsections, the main compliment response strategies acknowledged by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians in their interviews are discussed.

### 6.3.1 Acceptance

Acceptance of compliments, which is a response in which the addressee accepts the compliment and agrees with the speaker (Bait Jamil, 2016; Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986), was one of the main response chosen by the majority of male Jordanian-Australian participants.

As presented in Table 6.4, the data from the semi-structured interviews demonstrate that 70% of interviewees indicated that their preferred response to compliments is acceptance. Acceptance also includes appreciation, thanking, returning, offering and smiling. The pattern of response by acceptance strategy is presented in Table 6.5 below:

**Table 6.5: Pattern of response by acceptance strategy**

Acceptance	Pattern of response N = 14
Appreciation	92% (13)
Thanks	100% (14)
Return	64% (9)
Offer	21% (3)
Smiles	78% (11)

The following quotations extracted from interview transcripts explain the foregoing observation:

أعتقد أننا نستخدم الكثير من المجاملات في محادثاتنا اليومية لأن الناس يحبونها كثيراً. عندما يجاملني شخص ما، يجب أن أكون لطيفاً وأقبل المجاملة. (JA 7)

‘I believe that we use compliments a lot in our daily conversation because people like them so much. When someone compliments me, I have to be nice and accept the compliment.’ (JA 7)

أحياناً عندما أجب على مجامله أستخدم لغة جسدي، أبتسم. لكنني أقبل دائما المجاملة. (JA 8)

‘Sometimes when I answer a compliment, I use my body language like I smile. But I always accept the compliment.’ (JA 8)

وعندما يجاملني شخص، أوافق ببساطة على المجاملة. (JA 15)

‘And when someone compliments me, I simply accept the compliment.’ (JA 15)

Some interviewees not only emphasised the importance of sincere compliments in their daily interactions, but also indicated that genuine compliments are frequently accepted. According to JA 6:

عندما يتعلق الأمر بالرد على المجاملات، يجب أن أقول إنني شخص من الصعب إرضاءه. إذا كان المتحدث صادقًا، فأنا أوافق وأقدر التقدير. ولكن إذا كنت أعرف أنه / أنها غير صادق، فأنا أتجاهله فقط. (JA 6)

‘When it comes to replying to compliments, I have to say that I am very picky. If the speaker is honest, I accept and appreciate the compliment. But if I know he/she is dishonest, I just ignore it.’ (JA 6)

On the contrary, one interviewee stated that all compliments are usually acknowledged and accepted as long as they are not offered to obtain personal benefits. In this regard, JA 16 argued that:

أجيب بسعاده. أشكر المتكلم وأنا أبتسم. أوافق دائمًا على المجاملة إلا إذا حاول أحدهم الحصول على شيء من خلال المجاملة. حتى لو لم تكن صحيحة تمامًا، أعتزف بالمجامله. (JA 16)

‘I respond with happiness. I thank the speaker and I smile. I always accept compliments unless someone is trying to get something by saying it. Even if it is not perfectly true, I still acknowledge it.’ (JA 16)

There is an excessive tendency to accept all compliments in the Jordanian society. This perception was emphasised by JA 9 where he said:

ثقافتي تشجع على المجاملات والناس عموما تقبل المجاملات بقلب مفتوح. (JA 9)

‘My culture encourages compliments and people generally accept compliments with an open heart.’ (JA 9)

To sum up, the data show that 70% of interviewees are prepared to accept compliments. According to the sampled male Jordanian Australians, this inclination is related to the influence of the native culture, which encourages people to accept compliments in order to avoid hurting others’ feelings.

### 6.3.1.1 Appreciation

Table 6.5 show that 92% of participants regarded appreciation as one of their main strategies when responding to compliments. Appreciation is a “response that recognises the status of a previous utterance as a compliment without being semantically fitted to the specifics of that compliment” (Nelson et al., 1996, p. 418). It is an acceptance of a compliment (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016), which is usually expressed through verbal tokens such as “thank you”, “thanks”, or “thank you so much”, or even nonverbal tokens, like “smiles” and “nods” (Li, 2015; Ebadi & Pourzandi, 2015; Pomerantz, 1978). The following remarks from JA 10, JA 1 and JA 20 illuminate this view:

أنا دائما ممتن عندما أورد على المجاملات. (JA 10)

‘And when I respond to compliments, I am always nice and appreciative.’ (JA 10)

عندما أقوم بالرد على المجاملات، أبتسم دائماً وأظهر أنني أقدر المجامله. أنا دائما أقول ”شكرا لك أقدر ذلك كثيرا“. (JA 1)

‘When I respond to compliments, I always smile and show that I appreciate the compliment. I always say “thank you very much appreciate it”.’ (JA 1)

أقدر المجامله وأشكر مانح المجامله، وأتني عليه مرة أخرى. (JA 20)

‘I appreciate the compliment and thank the compliment giver, and compliment him back on something nice on him.’ (JA 20)

Different degrees of appreciation rely on the situation in which the compliment is delivered. It also depends on the relationship between the complimenter and complimentee. In this regard, JA 18 contends:

تعتمد مجاملتي على الشخص المتلقي، ومدى قربنا من بعضنا البعض. من الجيد أن نقدر دائماً المجاملات.  
(JA 18)

‘My compliment depends on the receiver and how close we are to each other. It is good to always appreciate compliments.’ (JA 18)

There are numerous ways of expressing appreciation of compliments. Some ways include thanking the complimenter, using direct eye contact to engage the compliment giver, smiling and acknowledging the compliment (Golato, 2005; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009; Yuliyani, 2016). However, thanking was the most frequently declared by the majority of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians.

There is a difference between showing appreciation and thanking someone. Appreciation is a profounder and more thoughtful way of thanking someone and is frequently shown (Sansone & Sansone, 2010). For example, to show your appreciation for your wife, you buy her flowers. Thanking, on the other hand, refers to essentially expressing one’s appreciation verbally (Saber, 2012). For example, you thank your wife by saying “thanks” or “thank you”. Although the difference is slight, the main difference is in the depth or the way in which appreciation is conversed. Using appreciation often suggests a deeper implication than just saying “thanks”, or “thank you”. Thanking as compliment response substrategy is discussed in the next subsection.

### 6.3.1.2 Thanking

Thanking as a response to a compliment was evident in the data. The data presented in Table 6.5 indicate that 100% of interviewees use thanking as a way to accept a compliment. The sampled participants admitted that they consider شكرا (thanks) or شكرا لك (thank you) an appropriate response to compliments. This opinion was put forth by JA 2 where he stated:

عندما أتلقى مجاملته، أشعر بالسعادة وأشكر الشخص الآخر لمجاملتي. أقبل دائماً على المجامله حتى لو لم يكن صحيحاً. نعم، أحاول أن أكون لطيف مع الناس. (JA 2)

‘When I receive a compliment, I feel happy and I thank the other person for complimenting me. I always accept compliments even if it is not true. Yeah, I try to be nice to people.’ (JA 2)

Thanking the complimenter is a sign that the compliment is accepted. As Jautz (2008, p. 142) indicates, gratitude and thanking expressions are used “when a speaker wants the addressee to know that s/he is grateful for what the addressee has said or done”. This perception was emphasised by JA 15 where he said:

نعم، إنها أفضل إجابة لأنها تظهر قبولك وامتنانك للمجامله. لذا يشعر المتحدث بالسعادة ولا يشعر بالخجل.  
أنا دائما أقول ”شكرا عزيزي“. (JA 5)

‘Yes, it is the best answer because it shows your acceptance and gratitude of the compliment. Therefore, the speaker feels happy and does not feel embarrassed. I always say, “thank you my dear”.’ (JA 5)

However, the data indicate that there was a discrepancy between the sampled interviewees on whether شكرا (thanks) or شكرا لك (thank you) by itself is an adequate response to compliments. The data showed that for 25% of participants, شكرا (thanks) or شكرا لك (thank you) were considered a necessary and sufficient response to compliments, whereas for 75% of participants they were deemed an insufficient response to compliments. The pattern of response by whether thanking by itself is a sufficient response to compliments is summarised in Table 6.6.

**Table 6.6: Pattern of response by thanking substrategy**

Is thanking a sufficient response to compliments	Pattern of response N = 20
Yes	25% (5)
No	75% (15)

According to D. Johnson (1979) and Jones (1983), “thanks” or “thank you” is considered a necessary and sufficient response to compliments. This view is reinforced by only 25% of participants as illustrated in the following responses:

نعم أعتقد ذلك. ”شكرا لك“ بسيطه ومختصره. ماذا سأقول؟ أنا فقط أشكر الناس على مجاملتهم. (JA 14)

‘Yes, I believe so. “Thank you” is simple and brief. What else shall I say? I just thank people on their compliment.’ (JA 14)

نعم، أعتقد أنها أفضل كلمة يمكن قولها. إنها سهلة وقصيره وتقوم بهذه المهمة. يجب ألا يكون الناس وقحين ويتجاهلون المجاملات. ينبغي على الأقل أن يقولوا شكرا لك. (JA 4)

‘Yes, I think it is the most suitable word to say. It is easy, short and does the job. People should not be rude and ignore compliments. They should at least say thank you.’ (JA 4)

أنا استخدمها في كل مرة. إنها علامة تقدير على المجاملات وأعتقد أن هذا هو ما يريد الشخص الآخر سماعه. انهم يريدون أن يعرفوا أن مجاملتهم موضع تقدير ولم يتم تجاهلها. (JA).

‘I use it every time. It is a sign of appreciation of the compliment and I think that is what the other person wants to hear. They want to know that their compliment is appreciated and not ignored.’ (JA 1)

Conversely, for 75% of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians, شكرا (thanks) or شكرا لك (thank you) alone is deemed an insufficient response to compliments because it sounds unappreciative. In this regard, several participants explained their perceptions as follows:

بالطبع لا. “شكراً لك” رد جيد، ولكن هناك اجابات جسديه أخرى، مثل يجب أن تُظهر للمتحدث أنك تقدر المجامله باستخدام لغة جسديك مثل الابتسام أو تحريك رأسك أو السلام يدويًا كعلامه على شكرك. (JA 9)

‘Of course not. “Thank you” is good, but there are other physical responses, like you should show the speaker that you appreciate the compliment by using your body language like smiling, moving your head or giving them a hand shake as a sign of thank you.’ (JA 9)

انظر، إنه رد جيد، لكن ليس في كل المواقف. في بعض المواقف سيكون من الأفضل الرد مره أخرى من خلال مجامله أخرى لإظهار المتحدث أنك سعيد بمجاملته. (JA 16)

‘Look, it is a good response, but not in all situations. In some situations it will be better to respond back by another compliment to show the speaker that you are happy with their compliment.’ (JA 16)

نعم، إنه رد جيد، ولكن ليس كافياً عندما يمدحك صديقك المقرب إليك. أعتقد أنك بحاجة إلى قول المزيد، مثل "هذا لطيف منك، أقدره"، شيء مثل هيك لجعله يشعر بأنك تحب حقاً المجامله. أقول "شكراً لك"، وأحياناً أقول "أنت أيضاً"، إذا قال لي أحدهم على سبيل المثال "أنت تبدو جيداً". (JA 10)

'Yes, it is a good response, but not enough when your close a friend compliments you. I think you need to say more, like "that is nice of you, appreciate it", something like that to make him feel that you really like the compliment. I say "thank you mate" and sometimes I say "you too", if someone says to me for example "you look good mate".' (JA 10)

The above opinions were also echoed by JA 6 who observed that:

نعم، إنها طريقه جيده إلى حد ما، لكنني لا أعتقد أن هذا يكفي خاصة إذا كان الشخص الآخر صادقاً [...]. أعتقد أنك بحاجة إلى قول أكثر من "شكراً لك". أنا دائماً الرد على مجامله من خلال التعبير عن السعاده والفرح. (JA 6)

'Yes, it is a good way to some extent, but I do not think it is enough particularly if the other person is honest [...]. I think you need to say more than "thank you". I always respond to compliment by expressing wishes of happiness and joy.' (JA 6)

Along the same vein, JA 19 argued:

أنا عادة أقول "شكراً"، لكنني أقول أيضاً أشياء أخرى. لا أعتقد أن "شكراً" كافية لأكون صادقاً. أنا دائماً أقول "شكراً"، ثم أقول شيئاً مثل "هذا جميل منك" أو "أنت تبدو لطيف جداً"، أو "شكراً لك"، أنت صديق عظيم، شكراً على مجاملتك". (JA 19)

'I usually say, "thank you", but I also say other things. I do not think "thank you" is enough to be honest. I always say "thank you" and then I say something like "this is nice of you saying this" or "you look nice too", or "thank you, you are great friend, thanks for your compliment".' (JA 19)

Considering these observations, it is evident that for the majority of the sampled interviewees شكراً (thanks) or شكراً لك (thank you) alone is considered an insufficient response to compliments. This contradicts findings of previous research, which claim that "thanks" or "thank you" can be an adequate response to compliments (Cheng, 2011; Johnson, D., 1979; Li, 2015; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009). In addition to saying "thank

you” or “thanks”, the sampled participants were inclined to return compliments to the complimenter. Returning compliments is explained in the next subsection.

### 6.3.1.3 Returning

In interaction, complimenting is frequently perceived as demanding a reciprocal response (Turner & Edgley, 1974). Returning compliments by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians was demonstrated in the data of the semi-structured interviews. As indicated in Table 6.5, 64% of interviewees admitted that when complimented, they do not only accept the compliment, but also return a compliment to the complimenter as a sign of acceptance and appreciation. The return response is one type of compliment response where the addressee returns the compliment to the complimenter (Golato, 2003; Herbert, 1989; Li, 2015) such as saying أنت تبدو لطيفاً أيضاً (you look nice too). Returning a compliment covertly suggests that the receiver agrees with the compliment (Holmes, 1986). As Pomerantz (1978, p. 105) argues “returns are constructed as agreements (i.e., and you too)”. Consider the following quotations extracted from interview transcripts:

أجيب على المجامله بابتسامه وأقول أيضاً “شكراً”. وأجامل أيضاً الشخص الآخر بالقول على سبيل المثال  
”أنت شخص جيد أيضاً”. (JA 3)

‘I respond to compliments with a smile and I also say “thank you”. I also compliment the other person back by saying for example “you are a good person too”.’ (JA 3)

عندما أحصل على مجامله حقيقه، أقول أكثر من “شكراً”. أقول “هذا جميل منك، شكراً على مجاملتك”.  
أنا أيضاً أقدم لهم مجامله. (JA 13)

‘When I get a genuine compliment, I say more than “thank you”. I say “this is nice of you, thanks for your compliment”. I also offer them a compliment.’ (JA 13)

أما بالنسبه للرد، فأنا أقدر المجامله وأشكر مانح المجامله، وأجامله مرة أخرى. (JA 20)

‘As for responding, I appreciate the compliment and thank the compliment giver, and compliment him back on something nice on him.’ (JA 20)

Along the same lines, JA 19 shared a similar experience:

أنا دائما أقول "شكراً"، ثم أقول شيئاً مثل "هذا جميل منك يقول هذا" أو "أنت تبدو لطيف جداً"، أو "شكراً لك، أنت صديق عظيم، شكراً على مجاملتك . (JA 19)

'I always say "thank you" and then I say something like "this is nice of you saying this" or "you look nice too", or "thank you, you are great friend, thanks for your compliment".'  
(JA 19)

The felt obligation to return a compliment to the complimenter is a common feature of the Jordanian culture. In this regard, JA 11 contends:

تجبر الثقافة الناس على المجاملة كثيراً وعند الإجابة تجبرهم على المجاملة أو إعطاء الشيء للمتحدث.  
(JA 11)

'The culture forces people to compliment a lot and when responding it forces them to compliment back or offer the thing praised to the speaker.' (JA 11)

In his statement, JA 11 also referred to another aspect of the Jordanian culture, which is offering the object of the compliment to the complimenter. In conjunction with returning compliments, some male Jordanian-Australians were found to employ the offer response strategy when responding to compliments – a complimenting practice in which the addressee insists on offering the object of the compliment to the complimenter (Al Falasi, 2007). This complimenting practice often results in miscommunication in intercultural communication settings.

#### **6.3.1.4 Offering**

One important feature of Arabic complimenting, in general, and the Jordanian complimenting, in particular, is offering the object of the compliment to the complimenter (Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Migdadi, 2003; Nelson, et al., 1993,1996), such as saying هو ملكك (It is yours) or تستطيع الحصول عليه (You can have it). In the Arabic culture, an expression of admiration for an object imposes an obligation on the addressee to offer it to the complimenter (Ebadi & Salman, 2015). In the Jordanian society, it is a routine to offer the object of the compliment to the complimenter; however, such offering is only customary and should not be taken literally (Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Migdadi, 2003; Quran, 2012). According to Nelson, et al. (1993, p. 113), this practice of:

offering the object of the compliment to the giver of the compliment seems, however, to be problematic to nonnative Arabic speakers, than to native Arabic speakers. Arabic speakers recognize this offering as a ritual and do not take it literally, whereas nonnative Arabic speakers or English speakers frequently accept the literal meaning and thus are either reluctant to compliment, or embarrassed when the Arabic speaker offers them the object of the compliment.

In Holmes' (1988, p. 448) view, "compliments can be regarded as face threatening to the extent that they imply the complimenter envies the addressee in some way or would like to have something belonging to the addressee". Although the complimenting practice of offering the object complimented to the compliment giver is highly employed in the Jordanian society, the data from semi-structured interviews reveal that only 21% of interviewees indicated they frequently employ the offer compliment strategy when responding to compliments. The next three quotations taken from interview transcriptions elucidate the former opinion:

إعتدت على تقديم أشياء للناس في كل مره أحصل على مجامله. أعني إذا كان أحدهم يمدحي على خاتم أرتديه، أقول "هو ملكك"، وهو ما يعني أنه لك. تسببت هذه العادة لي الكثير من الحرج. (JA 13)

'I used to offer things to people every time I get a compliment. I mean if someone compliments me on a ring I am wearing, I would say, "it is yours". This habit caused me lots of embarrassments.' (JA 13)

لقد حدث معي في سنتي الأولى في أستراليا عندما أشاد زميل في الكليه بساعتي وعرضتها عليه. نظر إلي بدهشه. (JA 16)

'It happened with me in my first year in Australia when a colleague at college complimented my nice watch and I took it off and offered it to him. He looked at me very surprised.' (JA 16)

تجبر الثقافه الناس على المجامله كثيرًا وعند الإجابه تجبرهم على المجامله أو إعطاء الشيء للمتحدث. (JA 11)

'The culture forces people to compliment a lot and when responding, it forces them to compliment back or offer the thing praised to the speaker.' (JA 11)

In addition, the data from semi-structured interviews show that most participants were fully aware of the problematic nature of the complimenting practice of offering the object of the compliment to the compliment giver, particularly when responding to compliments in intercultural encounters. The sampled participants confessed that they were able to set themselves free from their native cultural norms, which place an obligation upon them to offer the objects of the compliment to the complimenter and instead respond to compliments by using verbal tokens such as شكرا (thanks) or شكرا لك (thank you) or nonverbal signs, like “smiles”.

### 6.3.1.5 Smiling

The sampled male Jordanian-Australian interviewees frequently declared smiles as a common response to compliments. Participants suggested that smiles can commonly be used to either convey acceptance and appreciation of compliments, or conceal shyness, embarrassment or even disagreement. The data in Table 6.5 show that 78% of participants use smiles as an indication of accepting and appreciating compliments. In such cases, smiles are utilised as a substitute for verbally accepting a compliment, or simply as a supplement to شكرا (thanks) or شكرا لك (thank you). The following responses from two interviewees support this observation:

عندما أقوم بالرد على المجامله، أبتسم دائما وأظهر أنني أقدر المجامله. (JA1)

‘When I respond to compliments, I always smile and show that I appreciate the compliment.’ (JA 1)

عندما أقوم بالرد، أود أن أقول “شكرا لك هذا جميل منك”. في بعض الأحيان أعبر بلغة الجسد مثل تحريك رأسي، أو أقوم بالاتصال بالعين والابتسام. أحب أن أكون لطيفا مع الجميع. (JA 19)

‘When I am complimented, I like to say “thank you that is nice from you”. Sometimes I make some body language expression like nodding my head, or I make eye contact and smile. I like to be nice to everyone.’ (JA 19)

As well as showing admiration, smiles can be employed to hide shyness or nervousness. One participant acknowledged that he is a shy person, and hence he smiles when he is given a compliment in order to conceal his shyness.

بالنسبه لي أشعر بالخجل وأبتسم. في بعض الأحيان أحاول تغيير الموضوع. لا أحب المجامله كثيرًا لأنني شخص خجول. (JA 18)

‘As for me I feel shy and smile. Sometimes I try to change the subject. I do not like to be complimented a lot because I am a shy person.’ (JA 18)

Another participant who perceived smiling as a tool to mask embarrassment and discomfort indicated:

إذا كانت المجامله ستحرجني لا أقول شيئًا. أنا فقط أبتسم. (JA 2)

‘If the compliment is going to embarrass me I say nothing. I just smile.’ (JA 2)

However, smiling should not always be viewed as an equivalent to acceptance and appreciation of compliments. Smiling might be a warning that the compliment is rejected. One member of the study indicated that he frequently smiles when he disagrees with compliments. In this regard, JA 15 argued:

عندما لا أوافق على المجامله، مثل عندما أعتقد أن المجامله ليس صحيحه، فأنا أبتسم فقط. أعني يمكنني أن أختلف مع الشخص الآخر، لكنني أفضل أن أكون مهذباً وأن أبتسم فقط. (JA 15)

‘When I do not agree with the compliment, for example when I think the compliment is not true, I just smile. I mean I can clearly disagree with the other person, but I prefer to be polite and only smile.’ (JA 15)

The function of smiling in this case is to hide rejection and reduce embarrassment between interlocutors. JA 15 might have regarded the compliments put forth to him as insincere, or he might have felt embarrassed. Therefore, instead of refusing the compliment, JA 15 simply smiled to the complimenter without any linguistic elaboration (Cedar, 2006).

In brief, smiling was found to be regularly used by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians in their responses to compliments. Although smiles accompanied شكرا (thanks), they were also used as a substitute for the verbal approval of compliments: شكرا لك (thank you). While smiles may express an agreement with the compliment, they can also be

employed to hide shyness, embarrassment, disagreement or downplaying. Downplaying compliments is elucidated in the following subsection.

### 6.3.2 Downplay

Downplaying a compliment is a response in which the addressee expresses an awareness of the dilemma of accepting a compliment and avoiding self-praise at the same time. The addressee agrees with the prior praise assessment, but reduces its complimentary force by replacing strong-positive evaluative terms offered by the speaker with more moderate-positive terms (Herbert, 1989; Li, 2015; Nelson et al., 1996).

Downplaying compliments was not remarkably present in the data. As revealed in Table 6.4, only 10% of the participants referred to downplaying compliments in their responses. For example, one interviewee argued that due to his native cultural values and beliefs that encourage him to remain humble, he is always inclined to downplay compliments. In the words of JA 7:

عندما يمدحني شخص ما، يجب أن أكون لطيفاً وأقبل المجامله. أنا أيضا أشكرهم على المجامله. لكنك تعلم أن قيمنا الثقافيه يجب أن أكون متواضع ولا أتكبر بسبب المجاملات. لذلك أعتقد أنني أميل إلى التقليل من المجاملات. (JA 7)

‘When someone compliments me, I have to be nice and accept the compliment. I also thank them for the compliment. However, you know as per our cultural values, I have to be humble and not be arrogant because of compliments. So I think I tend to downplay compliments a lot.’ (JA 7)

Along the same vein, another interviewee associated the pattern of downplaying compliments with shyness. JA 18 stated:

أشعر بالخجل وأبتسم. في بعض الأحيان أحاول تغيير الموضوع. لا أحب أن يمدحني كثيرا لأنني شخص خجول. أيضا بسبب خجلي أميل إلى التقليل من المجاملات. لأكون صريحا، لا أعتقد أن هذا جيد لأنه يجعل المتكلم يشعر بالسوء ويتثبه عن إعطائك المزيد من المجاملات. (JA 18)

‘I feel shy and smile. Sometimes I try to change the subject. I do not like to be complimented a lot because I am a shy person. Also, because of my shyness, I always

downplay compliments. To be honest, I do not think this is good because it makes the speaker feel bad and discourages him from giving you more compliments.’ (JA 18)

The results of the study support the observation that male Jordanian-Australians are more likely to accept compliments rather than downplay them. For the sampled interviewees, downplaying compliments is believed to be an inappropriate complimenting practice since it makes the complimenter feel insulted and discourages him or her from offering compliments to someone else. It is also perceived as being impolite particularly when the complimenter’s intention is plainly sincere. Avoiding compliments is discussed in the following subsection.

### 6.3.3 Evasion

Evasion, which is a response in which the addressee avoids the compliment (Herbert, 1989; Nelson et al., 1996; Shahidi Pour & Zarei, 2016a), was marginally present in the data. As indicated in Table 6.4, 15% of the interviewees referred to evasion in their responses. For example, JA 8 stated that he generally avoids insincere compliments.

عندما أقوم بالرد، أقول دائماً “شكراً”. لكن لكي أكون صادقاً إذا كنت أعرف أن شخصاً يكذب أتجاهله. لا أرد على مجاملته. (JA 8)

‘When I am complimented, I always say, “thank you”. But to be honest if I know someone is lying, I ignore him. I do not respond to his compliment.’ (JA 8)

The above sentiment was also echoed by JA 6 who observed that:

عندما يتعلق الأمر بالرد على المجاملات، يجب أن أقول إنني من الصعب إرضاءه. إذا كان المتحدث صادقاً، فأنا أقبل وأنتي على المجامله وأقول “شكراً لك”. ولكن إذا كنت أعرف أنه غير صادق، أنا فقط أتجاهله. (JA 6)

‘When it comes to responding to compliments, I have to say that I am very picky. If the other speaker is honest, I accept and appreciate the compliment by saying “thank you”. But If I know he is dishonest, I just ignore them.’ (JA 6)

Along the same lines, another member of the study declared that compliments, which are given for personal benefits are often evaded. JA 16 indicated that:

إذا كنت أعرف أن أحدهم يعطيني مجامله للحصول على الفوائد، أتجاهل المجامله. لأن هذا السلوك يجعلني غاضبًا، لذلك أحاول ألا أكون وقحًا ولا أقول شيئًا. (JA 16)

‘If I know someone is giving me compliment for benefits, I ignore the compliment. Because this behaviour makes me angry, so I try not to be rude and I say nothing.’ (JA 16)

Knowing whether a compliment is sincere or not is not a simple task. Compliments can be difficult to interpret since such interpretation is usually based on the complimenter’s intention and motivation as well as on the context in which compliments are given. According to the sampled participants, one can know if a compliment is insincere from the way it is offered. Sincere complimenters make eye contact, smile genuinely and compliment authentically. Moreover, giving compliments repetitively is a sign of insincerity as it may be viewed as targeting to please the complimentee, and as a result may lead to the complimenter’s honesty being questioned.

Overall, evading compliments was not a common complimenting norm of the sampled male Jordanian-Australian. Similar to compliment downplaying, evasion of compliments is seen as an unacceptable and impolite complimenting behaviour because it devalues the complimenter.

### 6.3.4 Rejection

Rejection of compliments is a compliment response strategy in which the addressee clearly rejects the compliment (Herbert, 1989; Li, 2015; Nguyen, 2007). Similar to compliment evasion, rejection of compliments was said not to be an ideal compliment response strategy by the majority of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians. Table 6.4 shows that out of twenty interviewees, only 5% stated that they reject compliments if deemed to be insincere. For example, JA 6 contends:

وعندما أقوم بالرد على المجامله، فإن الأمر يعتمد على ما إذا كان المتحدث صادقًا أم لا. إذا كان صادقًا، أشكره، ولكن إذا كان غير صادق، فأنا ببساطه أرفض المجامله. (JA 6)

‘And when I respond to compliment, um, it depends if the speaker is honest. If he is honest, I thank him, but if he is dishonest, I simply reject it.’ (JA 6)

For the majority of participants, rejecting compliments is a sign of impoliteness. Therefore, in order to avoid being labelled impolite, rejecting compliments is usually avoided. This view is presented by JA 1 where he says:

عندما أتلقى مجامله، أنا ببساطه أقبلها وأشكر المتحدث. شخصياً، لا أرفض المجاملات لأنني أعتقد أن هذا قلة أدب. (JA1)

‘When I receive a compliment, I simply accept it and thank the speaker. Personally, I do not reject compliments because I think this is rude.’ (JA 1)

The above opinions were also repeated by JA 19 who observed that:

أنا لست وقحاً، لذلك عندما يجاملني أحدهم، أعتزف بالمجامله. أنا لا أرفض المجامله. أعتقد أن هذا وقاحه. حتى لو لم أتفق تماماً مع المجامله، لن أؤذي شعور الشخص الآخر. (JA 19)

‘I am not rude, so when someone compliments me, I acknowledge the compliment. I never reject a compliment. I think this is impolite. Even if I do not fully agree with the compliment, I still would not hurt the other person’s feeling.’ (JA 19)

Overall, rejection of compliments was not a preferred compliment response strategy among the sampled male Jordanian-Australians. On one hand, the findings of the study support previous studies on Jordanian complimenting, which confirm that rejection of compliments is not a favoured response strategy in the Jordanian society (Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Migdadi, 2003; Migdadi & Jarbou, 2007). On the other hand, the results of the study contradict previous research on intercultural complimenting (Ebadi & Pourzandi, 2015; Lin, 2015), which claim that participants are more likely to reject compliments than accept them. Such complimenting behaviours by male Jordanian-Australians seem to originate from the Jordanian social and cultural beliefs, which encourage individuals to accept compliments in order to be polite because rejecting compliments in the Jordanian perspective can be judged as being ill-mannered and impolite. Therefore, it can be stated that the influence of the Jordanian culture on the complimenting behaviour of male Jordanian-Australians is still significant. The tendency to accept compliments by male

Jordanian-Australians is similar to the complimenting practices of individuals from most Western cultures (Herbert, 1986, 1989; Holmes, 1986; Ibrahim & Theophilus, 2000; Kim, 2003; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Motaghi-Tabari & Beuzeville, 2012) who also tend to prefer accepting compliments rather than rejecting them. Accordingly, the development of individuals' intercultural awareness of how intercultural interaction functions should contain not only increasing their awareness of the similarities and differences between their native culture and the target culture, but also the necessity for tolerance and acceptance of the other (Garcia, P., 2004; Fitzgerald, 2002; Ronowicz & Yallop, 1999).

## **6.4 Major Findings**

### **6.4.1 Responding to Compliments**

Responding to compliments is usually impacted by individuals' social and cultural beliefs and values. When responding to compliments, the sampled participants behaved in a noticeable way. The findings of the study indicated that male Jordanian-Australians perceive acceptance or agreement as the correct and most appropriate response to compliments. In general, male Jordanian-Australians were inclined to accept the majority of compliments offered to them. The results contradict previous studies such as those on Asian cultures (Chen, R., & Yang, 2010; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009; Yu, 2005; Yuan, 2002), which confirm that acceptance of compliments is not people's preferred response strategy. However, the tendency to accept compliments by male Jordanian-Australians is consistent with previous studies of compliments on Arabic cultures (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2002; Nelson et al., 1993; Mursy & Wilson, 2001), as well as preceding research on western cultures (Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1986; Karimnia & Afghari, 2010, 2011; Li, 2015; Pomerantz, 1978). Studies on this topic in both Arabic and Western contexts suggest that people usually regard acceptance as the best and true response to compliments.

Acceptance of a compliment can also be understood as appreciation. The data of the semi-structured interviews show that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians accepted and appreciated compliments offered to them. Once a compliment is offered, the complimenter usually expects an expression of gratitude for the compliment. This anticipation can be viewed as a necessity in interpersonal relationships in order to establish relationships, maintain friendships and to build rapport with the complimenter (Nguyen, 2007). Supporting this view, Herbert (1986) states that if the purpose of a compliment is,

on some level, to make the listener feel good, the purpose of a compliment response will be similar.

The speech act of thanking can also be a response to compliments (Al-Khateeb, 2009). In speech act theory, the speech act of thanking is defined as “an expression of gratitude and appreciation in response to compliments” (Searle, 1969, p. 203). Although شكرًا لك (thank you) was a common response to compliments, the findings of this study indicated that male Jordanian-Australians viewed شكرًا لك (thank you) by itself as an inadequate response to a compliment. Furthermore, the data indicated that male Jordanian-Australians were inclined to frequently supplement their response with more exchanging practices in order to prove their genuineness. Because of its brevity, from a Jordanian perspective شكرًا لك (thank you) alone may indicate a lack of interest in the interaction and as a result lack of genuineness in the compliment. For the sampled male Jordanian-Australians شكرًا (thanks) is even less suitable. It certainly sounds fake and formal, and hence generates a distance between the speaker and the addressee. Such findings contradict results of previous studies, which confirmed that شكرًا لك (thank you) is an adequate response to compliments (Herbert, 1990; Spencer-Oatey, Patrick, & Dong, 2008).

The sampled male Jordanian-Australians generally used شكرًا لك (thank you) as a compliment response; however, they were reluctant to use it, particularly when interacting with close friends. Rather, they preferred to expand on it and combine it with other Arabic forms such as جميل منك قول هذا، شكرًا لك، (Thank you, this is nice of you saying this) or شكرًا شكرًا حقًا (Thank you very much, I really appreciate it), which was perceived to be more appropriate insofar as it expresses a sense of genuineness and authenticity in compliments. The results of the present study are consistent with findings of previous research, which state that “among intimates, the canonical “thank you” (or any Appreciation Token) is often indicative of suspicion on the part of the complimentee” (Herbert, 1986, p. 82). The disinclination to use شكرًا لك (thank you) by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians as an appreciation of compliments given by close friends or family members can be understood as indicative of intercultural difference, which results from differing social and cultural norms and customs.

Another compliment response strategy, which was used by the sampled participants, was downgrading utterances. Selection of downgrading utterances by some male Jordanian-Australians suggests an agreement with the compliment to a certain degree. It is also attributed to the social and cultural pressure not to provide face threatening acts by rejecting compliments or by “saying less than required” (Brown, P., & Levinson,

1987, p. 217). By using downgrading or qualifying sentences, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians pointed out that they prefer not to obviously reject compliments in social contexts.

In addition to downgrading, rejection of compliments was slightly evident in the data. The results of the study suggested that male Jordanian-Australians were disinclined to reject compliments. This inclination not to directly decline compliments could be related to the Jordanian social and cultural norms, which put an obligation on people to accept compliments instead of rejecting them. Indeed, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were conscious of the reason compliments should be refused and how rejecting compliments is understood by complimenters. Rejecting compliments can reveal a sense of diffidence and group fitting. Precisely, the sampled participants were observed to stress the significance of modesty as a way to accomplish connection with others, which was extremely valued by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians. Consequently, downplay was a response used by some male Jordanian-Australians to avoid directly rejecting compliments and hurting the speaker's feeling.

The data also indicated that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians used a greater proportion of return compliments when being complimented by others. This choice reflects another feature of the Jordanian cultural approach in responding to compliments, which is the obligation to return the compliment to the complimenter. Because compliments are regarded as verbal gifts (Jaworski, 1995; Kerbrat-Orrechioni, 1997; Li, 2015; Wieland, 1995), the complimentee feels that they owe a favour to the complimenter and as a result feel an obligation to provide a return compliment to the complimenter. In the Jordanian culture, it is expected that when individuals take something from one another, they are obliged to offer something in return. Therefore, returning compliments was widely used by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians in order to make the complimenter feel pleased about themselves.

Disagreeing with compliments was also infrequent in the data. According to Holmes (1995), being humble in respect of social force can lead to disagreement with the speaker. Such disagreement is considered a polite response to a compliment. Although it did not feature frequently in the data, some male Jordanian-Australians opted to select the disagreeing compliment substrategy as a substitute to refuse compliments. Declining compliments is not a commonly used strategy in the Jordanian society. The social and cultural customs encourage everybody to accept and agree with compliments in order to be polite since refusing compliments from the Jordanian perspective, and similarly in the

Jordanian culture, can be perceived as being rude and disrespectful (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Migdadi & Jarbou, 2007). This perception is in line with social and cultural values in some Western cultures, which tend to accept compliments rather than rejecting them (Brown, P., & Levinson, 1987). For example, English speakers face distress and uneasiness when their compliments are refused because they feel that their genuine intent is being questioned or disrespected (Brown, P., & Levinson, 1987).

The use of nonverbal communication as a compliment response was also apparent in the data. In certain circumstances, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were perceived not to give direct responses to compliments, but rather preferred to smile, indicating that a smile is less likely to upset the complimenter's feelings. Similarly, smiles were used to indicate that the complimentee has diverse feelings, predominantly when compliments are offered by foreigners or individuals from diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds (Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler, & Smallwood, 2002). Consequently, male Jordanian-Australians also employed smiles as a replacement for شكرًا (thank you) and to represent a desire or to reflect discomfort (Andersen, et al., 2002; Ruhi, 2006). Due to this vagueness in meaning, smiles can be mysterious and difficult to comprehend for participants. Such ambiguity often causes misunderstanding in intercultural communication, as smiles are sometimes perceived as being impolite, disrespectful or reluctant to accept or appreciate the compliment.

In summary, the Jordanian social and cultural values encourage a subtlety-oriented interaction, which is considerate of the feelings of others. The results of the present study show that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians greatly value friendships, interpersonal relations as well as the importance of modesty in communication. In order to maintain harmony with others, to avoid offending others' feelings and to be modest, the sampled participants chose acceptance as their preferred response to compliments. Indeed, cultural values of both the complimenter and complimentee are usually reflected in their complimenting behaviours. In the following subsections, the discussion turns to how modesty and self-assertiveness in compliment responses are perceived by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians.

#### **6.4.2 Modesty and Self-Assertiveness**

The findings of the study indicated that responses to compliments by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were not random, but rather were ruled by "the cultural norms reflected in speech acts, which differ from one language to another" (Wierzbicka, 1985, p.

146) and from one culture to another. The sampled participants were found to “draw upon the community’s basic verbal ‘stock’ and demonstrate recognisable familiarity with and loyalty to the community’s code and implicitly also to its values, since the petrified forms relate and refer to a special, historically given social system to which they belong” (Loveday, 1983, p. 176). Influenced by their native social and cultural values, which encourage individuals to express modesty and humility, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were highly inclined to be modest. By being modest, male Jordanian-Australians may be regarded by many others as lacking in confidence, self-presentation and self-assertiveness (Lim, 2002; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Conversely, in the view of male Jordanian-Australians, modesty and lack of self-assertiveness are considered a sign of maturity. For example, when male Jordanian-Australians are complimented, particularly by an individual who is senior in age or status, they are likely to be very modest in order to evade being regarded as rude or arrogant.

This inclination towards modesty accords with the customs and traditions of the Jordanian society and culture, in which humility and modesty are vastly encouraged and appreciated as qualities of educated and mature individuals. Since the Arabic cultures, including in the Jordanian society, are generally collectivistic in nature, in which group solidarity and agreement is highly valued above individualistic accomplishments (Hofstede, 1984, 1999), male Jordanian-Australians were found not to highly admire people who are very self-assertive. Accordingly, on every occasion that male Jordanian-Australians were complimented, perceiving the Modesty Maxim (Leech, 1983) obliged them to attempt to escape self-assertion by reducing admiration of self. In certain contexts, this places an obligation upon them not to recognise their personal qualities or achievements for which they are complimented and as a substitute display humility by increasing dispraise of self, such as saying for instance; لا لست جيد (No, I’m not that good), or لديك شخصية عظيمة كذلك (You have a great personality as well). By following this approach, the complimentee agrees with the common code of communicative behaviour, which according to Kim, Kim, Kam, and Shin (2003) provides comfort, modesty and harmony.

In this vein, the display of modesty by male Jordanian-Australians means that “the complimentees deny the proposition but accept the complimenting force, thus emphasizing the value of modesty” (Ye, 1995, p. 272). This may explain the use of the downplay strategy when responding to compliments by some male Jordanian-Australians. Yet, it is reasonable to say that in conveying modesty, male Jordanian-Australians seem to think highly of themselves, in that, they perceive themselves as confident and self-assertive.

By considering Leech's (1983) Agreement Maxim, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were highly inclined to establish social relationship and friendship with others by maximising approval between themselves and others. In fact, the sampled participants belong to a collectivistic society (Jordan); however, they reside in an individualist one (Australia) where individuals are regarded as independent human beings (Hofstede, 1984) who are anticipated to interact with one another in a direct and straightforward way.

In individualistic cultures like Australia, individuals are more self-centred and are likely to highlight their personal traits and accomplishments, which are part of their liberated life in order to not only highlight their strengths, but also emphasise their differences from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Additionally, members of individualist cultures are expected to be self-assertive since lack of self-assertiveness is considered a weakness (Gudykunst, 1998; Kim, et al., 2003). According to Kim, et al. (2003), people value others positively when they plainly and unswervingly express their own individual thoughts and achievements. Hence, some male Jordanian-Australians attempted to set themselves free from their native collectivistic culture and become more self-assertive by clearly and directly expressing their accomplishments. On the contrary, in collectivistic cultures like Jordan, humility is one of the most imperative elements of both self-image and public images. As a result, when responding to compliments, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were perceived to underestimate themselves or their personal qualities and achievements as a sign of being modest. Expressing modesty through self-downgrading in which people direct achievements to other external reasons was considered by the sampled participants an effective approach to uphold and improve their face, self-image and public image (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Unlike individualist cultures, like the Australian culture, where maintaining self-esteem is crucial, maintaining face is fundamental for members of collectivist societies (Heine, 2001, 2003), like the Jordanian society.

Relating the findings of this thesis to Leech's (1983) Maxim of Agreement (minimise the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximise the expression of agreement between self and other) and Maxim of Modesty (minimise the expression of praise of self; maximise the expression of dispraise of self), it can be argued that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were observed to adhere to Leech's (1983) Maxims of Agreement and Modesty when complimenting since their focus was primarily on modesty rather than on self-assertiveness.

Understanding social and cultural differences between one's own culture and the target culture is crucial not only to establish successful intercultural interaction, but also to create harmony in multicultural societies such as Australia. While some degree of modesty is valued, the excessive humbleness in the Jordanian society can be realised by individuals from other cultures as being insincere and then be perceived as manipulative (Spencer-Oatey, et al., 2008). Likewise, overconfidence in the self can be regarded as arrogant in most cultures (Nguyen, 2007).

In summary, whether the selection of a compliment response is modesty driven or self-assertiveness driven is society and culture-specific. Influenced by the Jordanian social and cultural norms, male Jordanian-Australians were found to be more modesty driven than self-assertiveness driven when responding to compliments.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the data from the semi-structured interviews with twenty Jordanian-Australian interviewees in Sydney, Australia. In general, the results ascertain that the complimenting customs of male Jordanian-Australians are still influenced, to a certain degree, by their native social traditions as well as their instinctive cultural beliefs and values. Influenced by the Jordanian social and cultural norms, male Jordanian-Australians were found to be more modesty driven than self-assertiveness driven when responding to compliments.

The next chapter presents and analyses the data obtained from semi-structured interviews with respect to intercultural complimenting and teaching and learning compliments.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS – INTERCULTURAL COMPLIMENTING AND TEACHING COMPLIMENTS

## 7.0 Introduction

This chapter extends and builds on the analysis in Chapters Five and Six. It presents and analyses the interviewees' perceptions regarding the following analytical themes: (a) intercultural complimenting, and (b) teaching and learning compliments for students, migrants and refugees in Australia.

## 7.1 Semi-Structured Interview Results

This section is a thematic presentation of data from semi-structured interviews. Two themes and their relevant subthemes were taken from the interview transcripts of twenty participants who participated in the study. Themes were reached through following a rigorous data review process, which included a repetitive critical analysis of interview transcripts. The recognised themes that frequently recurred across participants are presented in Table 7.1 below.

**Table 7.1: Identified research themes and subthemes**

Theme	Subtheme
1. Intercultural complimenting	Perceived causes of intercultural miscommunication
2. Teaching and learning of compliments	The role of English language classrooms/textbooks
	The importance of practice
	The importance of role-plays
	The importance of real-life communication
	The importance of online communication
	The importance of cultural awareness

The research themes listed in Table 7.1 relate to different indicators of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians' opinions of compliments. Theme 1 came out of direct answers to

questions that investigated interviewees' perceptions on intercultural complimenting. The role of English classrooms in teaching and learning complimenting for migrants in Australia is another important point of analysis. Hence, theme 2 targeted participants' views on teaching and learning complimenting and on what were considered possible teaching strategies that could be adopted in English classrooms to develop the complimenting norms of participants.

The next discussion is a thematic interpretation of what the participants have perceived intercultural complimenting. Furthermore, teaching compliments and how difficulties of intercultural complimenting can be tackled in social intercultural encounters are presented and thematically analysed. The analysis entwines semi-structured interview data in conjunction with the theoretical frameworks of intercultural communicative competence, speech act theory and politeness theory, positioning them within the scope of existing discussions on the speech act of complimenting.

## 7.2 Intercultural Complimenting

Communication is becoming more and more intercultural because “it involves interactants who have different first languages, communicate in a common language and represent different cultures” (Kecskes, 2004, p. 2). Intercultural communication is not an easy task for many participants. According to Yuan (2002), one of the major obstacles in achieving effective communication is people's limited understanding of pragmatics, including their inadequate knowledge of appropriate complimenting practices. A breakdown of responses by whether the sampled male Jordanian-Australians encounter complications with intercultural complimenting is presented in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2: Pattern of response by difficulties with intercultural complimenting**

<b>Difficulties with intercultural Complimenting</b>		<b>Pattern of response N = 20</b>
Yes	Giving compliment	75% (15)
	Responding to compliment	10% (2)
	Total	Total: 85% (17)
No		15% (3)

The data in Table 7.2 show that 85% of interviewees encounter intercultural difficulties, in that their complimenting practices lead to misunderstanding in intercultural communication situations. In particular, 75% of participants declared facing issues when giving compliments. Consider the following example:

في بعض الأحيان نجامل شخص من ثقافه أخرى ونسيء فهم بعضنا البعض. هذا بسبب الاختلافات الثقافيه وأيضاً لأننا نستخدم الأسلوب الأردني في المجامله. هذا لا يعمل هنا، هل تعرف ما أقصد؟ يجب أن ننقل إلى الطريقه الأستراليه عندما نتحدث إلى أشخاص متعددي الثقافات. (JA 17)

‘Sometimes we compliment a person from another culture and we misunderstand each other. This is because of the cultural differences and also because we use the Jordanian style of complimenting here. This style does not work here, you know what I mean? We should switch to the Australian way when we talk to intercultural persons.’ (JA 17)

In addition to compliment giving, responding to compliments was another area of difficulty for the sampled participants. Table 7.2 reveal that for only 10% of the interviewees, compliment giving poses no difficulties in intercultural situations; however, complications frequently occur when responding to compliments. In this regard, JA 10 claimed:

أعتقد أن إعطاء المجامله اوك، ولكن المشاكل [...] هي في الرد على المجاملات. قد تختلف طريقة الرد في ثقافتي من طريقة الرد بالإيطاليه أو الإنجليزيه وهذا هو السبب في حدوث المشاكل. (JA 10)

‘I think giving a compliment is ok, but [...] problems are with responding to compliments. The way we respond in my culture is different to the way someone responds in Italian or English and this is why problems happen.’ (JA 10)

The above opinion was also echoed by JA 12 who perceived that:

إن مجاملة الثقافات المختلفه اوك بالنسبه لي، لكن الرد على المجاملات يسبب أحياناً مشاكل بسبب التوقعات الثقافيه المختلفه حول كيفية الرد. أحاول أن يكون الرد بسيط ودقيق. (JA 12)

‘Giving compliments to intercultural people is ok for me, but responding to compliments sometimes causes problems due to different cultural expectations of how to respond. I try to be simple and precise.’ (JA 12)

Not all participants were found to encounter complications in intercultural complimenting. As presented in Table 7.2, 15% of participants professed that they were confident complimenting in intercultural situations due to their good knowledge of both the Australian culture and their understanding of the English language. The following quotation delivered from interview transcripts explains this opinion:

بالنسبة لي، لا يهم إذا كان الشخص الذي أتحدث إليه من ثقافتي أم لا. لا فرق لنكون صادقين. أنا أفهم تماما الثقافة الأسترالية وكذلك اللغة الإنجليزية. إن إخبار أي شخص بأنه شخص جيد أمر سهل حتى لو كان العمر والثقافة والدين واللغة مختلفين. حسنا، بالنسبة لي لا توجد صعوبات. أنت فقط تقول الكلمات الرقيقة، وهي سهلة. أعتقد أن سوء الفهم يحدث لأن الناس لا يفهمون ثقافات بعضهم البعض. لذا، فإن التدريب الثقافي مهم للغاية خاصة في بلد مثل أستراليا حيث يوجد العديد من الأشخاص من ثقافات مختلفة يعيشون في مكان واحد. (JA 4)

‘For me, it does not matter if the person I talk to is from my culture or not. No difference to be honest. I fully understand the Australian culture and the English language. Telling anyone that he/she is a good person is easy even if age, culture, religion and language are different. Well, for me there is no difficulties. You just say kind words and it is easy. I believe miscommunication happens because people do not understand each other’s cultures. So cultural training is very important, especially in a country like Australia where you have many people from different cultures living in one place.’ (JA 4)

The above sentiment was also echoed by JA 2 who perceived that:

أنا إثنوغرافي في الثقافة. لقد عشت في أستراليا لسنوات عديدة ويمكنني أن أقول إن لدي وعيًا جيدًا بالثقافة الأسترالية، وكيف يجب أن يتصرف الناس وفقًا للمعايير الأسترالية. لا أواجه أي صعوبات. أنا جيد التواصل. يمكن أن أعطي مجاملات وردود على المجاملات دون أي مشاكل. (JA 2)

‘I am a great ethnographer of culture. I lived in Australia for many years and I can say I have good awareness of the Australian culture, and how people should act according to the Australian norms. I do not face any difficulties. I am a good communicator. I can give compliments and respond to compliments without any problems.’ (JA 2)

Along the same vein, JA 14 claimed:

لا أواجه أي صعوبات. أم، أنا صادق ومباشر، وعندما أرى شيئاً يستحق الثناء أجامل، أو لا أقول شيئاً. نعم، وعندما أورد على المجاملات أقول "شكراً". لذلك عندما يتعلق الأمر [...] بالرد على المجاملات مع أشخاص متعددي الثقافات، فأنا ليس لدي أي مشاكل (JA 14)

'I do not face any difficulties. Um, I am honest and straightforward and when I see something worth complimenting I compliment, otherwise I just say nothing. Yeah and when I respond to compliments I say "thank you". So when it comes to [...] responding to compliments with intercultural people, I am ok.' (JA 14)

The present study confirms that intercultural complimenting poses difficulties for the majority of the sampled interviewees (85%). While complimenting difficulties were mainly reported in compliment giving (75%), responding to compliments was said to be a difficult task by only 10% of interviewees.

Cultural differences may lead to misunderstood compliments, and thus to intercultural miscommunication among dissimilar participants. Although findings of previous research show that compliment responses can vary based on the speaker's cultural background and that miscommunication occurs when compliments are responded to by dissimilar cultural individuals (Chick, 1996; Fujimara-Wilson, 2014; Li, 2015), the results of the present study indicate that appropriately responding to compliments was considered an easily accomplished task by the majority of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians. This could possibly be because of participants' tendency to accept the majority of compliments offered to them. As indicated in table 7.2 above, 90% of participants were said to accept compliments offered to them. The sampled participants were inclined to express gratitude when someone gives them a compliment.

In addition, undermining and returning other people's compliments was not a common feature of male Jordanian-Australians' complimenting behaviour. Hence, for the majority of the sampled participants, complexities infrequently arise when responding to compliments.

### **7.2.1 Perceived Causes of Intercultural Miscommunication**

Causes of intercultural miscommunication can be various. In their interview responses, participants presented what they considered the two main causes of intercultural miscommunication: (a) following one's native cultural norms when interacting with other participants and (b) people's limited knowledge of the target culture. The pattern of

response by cause of intercultural miscommunication in complimenting is summarised in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.3: Pattern of response by cause of intercultural miscommunication**

Perceived causes of intercultural miscommunication	Pattern of response N = 20
Following native cultural norms	65% (13)
Limited knowledge of the target culture	35% (7)

As indicated in Table 7.3, there was consistent agreement among the majority of participants that following one's native cultural customs is the main cause of intercultural misunderstanding. The data reveal that 65% of interviewees believe that rigorously adhering to one's social and cultural traditions and discounting the target culture's customs and rules of complimenting was considered the key source of difficulties in intercultural complimenting. The following two quotations extracted from interview transcripts illustrate the preceding observation:

في بعض الأحيان عندما تجامل كثيراً، يعتقدون أنك غير جاد. في ثقافتني، نجامل كثيراً ويقبل الناس المجاملات. في بعض الأحيان، لن تكون المجاملات صحيحة 100٪، ولكنها تعني أن تكون مهذباً وتشجيعياً أيضاً. في أستراليا، ينظرون إليك في بعض الأحيان بالدهشه لأنهم يعتقدون أنك غير صادق أو أنك تمزح. حسناً، أعتقد أن الحل الأفضل هو فهم قواعد الثقافه الجديده واتباع هذه القواعد. بذلك لن يكون لديك أي مشاكل. (JA 7)

'Sometimes when you compliment too much, they think you are unserious. In my culture, we compliment a lot and people accept compliments. Sometimes the compliment is not 100%, true, but it is meant to be polite and encouragement. In Australia, people may think that you are dishonest or you are joking. Well, I think the best solution is to understand the new culture's rules of complimenting and follow these rules. By following these rules, you will not have any problems.' (JA 7)

أعتقد أن الصعوبات تأتي من الاختلافات بين ثقافتي والثقافات الأخرى. على سبيل المثال، في ثقافتي يميل الناس إلى المجامله أكثر من اللازم و المجامله من أجل أن يكونوا لطيفين ومهذبين، لذلك قد لا تكون المجامله صحيحة. أيضاً، فإنها يميلوا إلى تقديم الشيء الممدوح للمتحدث كما قلت من قبل. كل هذه الأشياء تسبب مشاكل إذا قمت بتطبيق هذه المعايير الثقافيه هنا في أستراليا. (JA 16)

‘I think difficulties come from differences between my culture and other cultures. For example, in my culture people tend to compliment too much and compliment in order to be nice and polite, so compliments might not be honest. Also, they tend to offer the thing complimented to the speaker as I said before. All these things cause problems if you apply these cultural norms here in Australia.’ (JA 16)

In addition, people’s lack of understanding of the target culture was also perceived to be a cause of miscommunication. Dealing with persons who possess different cultural norms to one’s own may also lead to misunderstood compliments. As shown in Table 7.3, 35% of interviewees maintained this observation. For example, JA 3 stated that his intention is frequently misunderstood when complimenting other participants due to his limited knowledge of the target culture.

أجد أن الآخرين يسيئون فهم نيتي أو أسباب مجاملاتهم، ويظنون دائماً أنني بحاجة إلى شيء ولهذا أنا أجامل. هذا يسبب لي مشاكل. قد يكون هذا لأنني لا أفهم الثقافة تماماً، أو ربما لأنني لا أستطيع شرح نفسي بشكل كامل باللغة الإنجليزية. (JA 3)

‘I find that others misunderstand my intentions or reasons for complimenting, and they always think I need something and that is why I compliment. This causes me problems. Maybe this is because I do not fully understand the culture, or maybe because I can’t fully explain myself in English.’ (JA 3)

This view was supported by JA 19 who argued that:

لقد وجدت أن الناس من الثقافات الأخرى لا يفهمون مجاملاتي. أعني أنهم لا يفهمون ما أقصده أو ما أحاول قوله. عندما يحدث هذا، فإنه يبدو غريباً وأشعر بعدم الارتياح. أعتقد أن هذا بسبب اختلاف ثقافتهم وتقاليدهم. أتذكر عندما مدحني زميل لي في العمل على قميصي الجديد أنا أيضاً مدحته لكنه اعتقد أنني كنت ساخر. كان هذا محرجاً. (JA 19)

‘I found that people from other cultures do not understand my compliments. I mean they do not understand what I mean or what I am trying to say. When this happens, it feels weird and I feel uncomfortable. I think this is because their culture and traditions are different to mine. I remember once a co-worker complimented me on my new shirt and

I complimented him back but he thought I was sarcastic. This was embarrassing.’ (JA 19)

The above opinion was also echoed by JA 15 and JA 5 who pointed that:

إذا كان هناك شيء مقبول في ثقافتني، فهذا لا يعني أنه مقبول في الثقافات الأخرى. أجمال دائماً أطفال أصدقائي في مظهرهم وملابسهم وكذلك إنجازاتهم في المدرسه، ويحب أصدقائي ذلك. لا أعتقد أنني أستطيع القيام بذلك مع أشخاص من ثقافات أخرى. (JA 15)

‘If something is acceptable in my culture, it does not mean it is acceptable in the other cultures. I always compliment my friends’ kids on their look and clothes and their achievement at school and my friends love this. I do not think I can do this with people from other cultures.’ (JA 15)

إن وجود ثقافات مختلفه أو تقاليد مختلفه أو توقعات مختلفه يسبب صعوبات عندما أتحدث إلى أشخاص من ثقافات مختلفه، خاصة إذا لم أفهم الثقافه الأخرى. وهنا في أستراليا، هناك العديد من الثقافات لذا من الصعب فهمها جميعاً. (JA 5)

‘Having different cultures, different traditions or different expectations cause difficulties when I talk to people from different cultures, particularly if I do not understand the other culture. And here in Australia, there are so many cultures so it is difficult to understand all of them.’ (JA 5)

Indeed, having proficient English language ability is significant in minimising instances of intercultural miscommunication. Another informant who established that possessing good speaking skills in English helps reduce breakdowns in communication maintains this interpretation. According to JA 18:

الصعوبه الأخرى هي التحدث. التحدث أمر مهم لأنه إذا لم تكن تتحدث بشكل جيد، فلن تتمكن من المجامله بشكل جيد. وحتى لو أعطيت مجامله، فمن المحتمل أنك سوف يساء فهمك. (JA 18)

‘The other difficulty I think is speaking. Speaking is important because if you do not speak well, you will not be able to compliment well. And even if you compliment, it is likely that you will be misunderstood.’ (JA 18)

To conclude, it can be argued that failure to follow the target language and culturally appropriate rules of speaking and complimenting is the main cause of miscommunication in intercultural complimenting. Indeed, people's inadequate English language skills accompanied with their insufficient knowledge of the target culture's norms, traditions and rules of speaking are also other reasons for breakdown in communication. Therefore, teaching and learning intercultural communicative competence while taking into consideration the English language proficiency and cultural knowledge and awareness of individual speakers is a powerful tool to overcome the complimenting difficulties of participants.

### 7.3 Teaching and Learning Compliments

In this section, information gathered from the sampled male Jordanian-Australian interviewees on how they obtained and developed complimenting competency in and outside English classrooms is described and analysed. Six teaching themes featured prominently throughout the data. For a detailed presentation of the pattern of response by each theme, please refer to Table 7.4.

**Table 7.4: Pattern of response by teaching theme**

Teaching theme	Pattern of response N = 20	
The importance of English classes and textbooks in teaching complimenting.	The effectiveness of current English classes and textbooks in learning complimenting.	Yes – 5% (1)
	The importance of teaching complimenting in English language classrooms/textbooks.	No – 95% (19)
The importance of teaching complimenting in English language classrooms/textbooks.	100% (20)	
The importance of practice	35% (7)	
The importance of role-play	20% (4)	
The importance of real-life interaction	35% (7)	
The importance of online interaction	20% (4)	
The importance of training on cultural awareness	15% (3)	

Complimenting is believed to be a universal speech act (Alinezhad, 2015; Golato, 2002; Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Quran, 2012; Shahidi Pour &

Zarei, 2016a). However, its universality does not seem to prevent intercultural miscommunication from happening. Accordingly, the speech act of complimenting should be taught to students, migrants and refugees in order to assist to develop their intercultural communicative competence, with the hope of minimising intercultural misunderstanding.

### 7.3.1 The Importance of English Language Classrooms/Textbooks

English language classes and textbooks are perceived to be crucial in assisting participants to develop their complimenting abilities. As indicated in Table 7.4, the importance of including explicit teaching of complimenting in English classrooms and textbooks was highlighted by all participants (100%). In addition, the data presented in Table 7.4 show that for 95% of interviewees, current English language classes or textbooks are considered insufficient and ineffective in teaching participants how to appropriately deal with complimenting. The participants reported that they attended English classes as part of their Adult Migrant English Program; however, indicated that teaching complimenting was not part of the syllabus.

According to the sampled interviewees, explicit teaching of metalinguistic information such as complimenting is not practically and comprehensively taught in English language classrooms in Australia. The following information extracted from interview transcripts support this perception:

يجب أن أقول إن ما تعلمته لم يكن مفيداً عندما يتعلق الأمر بالمجامله. أعني تم مناقشة المجاملات نظرياً  
كنوع واحد من أفعال الكلام. لا أستطيع أن أذكر أنني تلقيت تدريباً خاصاً على المجاملات. (JA 3)

‘I have to say that what I have learnt was not helpful when it comes to complimenting. I mean compliments are discussed theoretically as one type of speech acts. I cannot recall I have received specific training on compliments.’ (JA 3)

The above sentiments were also echoed by JA 6 who observed that:

لا أعتقد أنها مساعده جيده. كانت مساعده بسيطه، هل تعلم؟ لأن التعليم في الفصول لا يركز على مهارات  
المحادثه أو المجاملات. يعلمونك القواعد اللغويه والمفردات. كما يعلمك الكتابه، ولكن ليس المجاملات.  
(JA 6)

‘I do not think it was a good help. It was a very simple help, you know. Because education in classes does not focus on conversation skills or compliments. They just teach you grammar and vocabulary. They also teach you writing, but not compliments.’  
(JA 6)

Along the same lines, JA 19 argued:

دروس اللغة الإنجليزية والكتب المدرسيه ليست مفيده. أتذكر عندما كنت أدرس اللغة الإنجليزية، تعلمت كيفية قراءة الكتابه والتحدث أيضا، ولكن لم أتعلم كيفية مجاملة الأجانب. (JA 19)

‘English classes and textbooks are not helpful. I remember when I was studying English, I learned how to read, write and speak, but I was not taught how to compliment foreigners.’ (JA 19)

Bearing in mind participants’ interpretations above, it is apparent that the primary focus of English language textbooks is on teaching reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammar and that teaching of metalinguistic topics such as complimenting is not usually included in English courses syllabuses. Hence, two members of the study recommended that teaching of complimenting should be embedded in English textbook curriculums. In this regard, JA 10 argued:

أحب أن أرى تعليم المجاملات و الرد على المجاملات في مناهج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. أعتقد أنه ينبغي التعامل مع المجاملات مثل أي موضوع آخر. (JA 10)

‘I would like to see teaching compliments and compliment responses included in the English teaching syllabuses. I think compliments should be treated like any other topic.’  
(JA 10)

Similarly, JA 11 observed that:

حسناً، تعليم المجاملات و الرد على المجاملات في مناهج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية ضروري لضمان حصول جميع الطلاب أو غيرهم ممن يأتون إلى أستراليا على معلومات حول المجاملات وكيفية التعامل مع الثقافات المختلفه. أعتقد أن هذا مهم. (JA 11)

‘Well, the inclusion of teaching compliments in the English syllabus is important to ensure all students or others who come to Australia learn about compliments and how to deal with different cultures. I think this is important.’ (JA 11)

Another member of the study not only agreed, but also highlighted the significance of training and practice in the teaching and learning of complimenting. JA 3 stated:

أعتقد أنه يجب تدريس المجاملات [...] للطلاب من الناحية النظرية والتطبيقية. بهذه الطريقة يمكن للطلاب الممارسة وبالممارسة يتعلموا. (JA 3)

‘I think compliments [...] should be taught to students in theory and practice. By following this way, students can practise and by practice they can learn.’ (JA 3)

From previous research on the speech act of complimenting, it is evident that limited materials about complimenting are included in the workbooks of spoken English and that in most cases such materials are very theoretical and oversimplified (Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Li, 2015; Vellenga, 2004). Therefore, there is an urgent necessity to focus on teaching pragmatic competence (Grossi, 2009) and metalinguistic knowledge and awareness in English language classrooms.

Metalinguistic knowledge is an awareness of the language and its structures, forms and functions, which allow speakers of that language to use it deliberately (Andrews, 1999). According to Chomsky (1975), metalinguistic awareness is the knowledge of the features and structures of language. Metalinguistic knowledge relates to people’s ability to identify, correct and describe second language mistakes (Roehr, 2007). Metalinguistic awareness refers to one’s responsiveness to the characteristics of the language that provide speakers of that language the ability of not only understanding or constructing utterances, but also testing the linguistic structures underlying the meaning of the utterances (Malakoff & Hakuta, 1991).

Overall, complimenting is “a complex multi-linguistic skill” (Creese, 1991, p. 47) and leaving participants alone to comprehend patterns and norms of communication by assimilation is likely to deprive them of the opportunity to make choices about the use of the target language (Holmes & Brown, 1987). Hence, teaching pragmatic competence and metalinguistic information including complimenting was perceived to be essential by the majority of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians.

### 7.3.2 The Importance of Practice

As indicated in table 7.4, the importance of practice in assisting participants to develop their complimenting behaviour was reinforced by 35% of interviewees. Participants argued that individuals' lack the opportunity to practise complimenting when attending English language classrooms, which affect their complimenting behaviours outside classrooms. This view was provided by JA 16 and JA 8 in the following terms:

أعتقد أن أهم شيء هو حث الطلاب على ممارسة المجاملات وتشجيعهم على القيام بذلك في محادثاتهم اليومية. (JA 16)

'I think the most important thing is to get students to practise compliments and encourage them to do so in their daily interactions.' (JA 16)

أحب أن أرى المعلمين يسمحون للطلاب بممارسة المجاملات بشكل طبيعي وممارسة المزيد والمزيد من المجاملات. قد يكون من خلال منحهم أمثله حقيقيه من المجاملات ومن ثم جعلهم يمارسون. (JA 8)

'I would like to see teachers allowing students to practise compliments naturally and practise more and more. Maybe by giving them real-life examples of compliments and then get them to practise.' (JA 8)

Practice was considered an effective teaching method that can assist participants to learn about complimenting in appropriate ways that are consistent with Australian cultural and social norms. Moreover, it was importantly recognised that practising in natural or real-life situations is the best way to acquire complimenting skills. As classrooms are not only structured (Vellenga, 2004) but also time restricted, it is not always possible to incorporate real-life situations into the teaching of compliments. While video and audio recordings (Rose, 2001) can be effective in this regard, it is important to state that such methods tend to deprive learners of the ability to practise by themselves. Therefore, role-plays can be the best technique for teaching complimenting in classrooms as it incorporates naturalism and practice.

### 7.3.3 The Importance of Role-Play

As shown in Table 7.4, the role-play technique was regarded as an effective method for teaching compliments by 20% of participants. The following quotations taken from

interview transcripts highlight the importance of role-plays in the teaching and learning of compliments:

أعتقد أن لعب الأدوار سيكون مفيدًا للغاية في الفصول الدراسية لأنها يساعد الطلاب على التفاعل بشكل طبيعي والتفاوض مع بعضهم البعض. (JA 4)

'I think role-plays will be very helpful in classrooms because they help students to naturally interact and negotiate with each other.' (JA 4)

أعتقد أيضًا أن لعب الأدوار ممارسه جيده للمتعلمين لأنهم يشجعهم على الممارسه بأنفسهم. يشبه لعب الأدوار المحادثات الحقيقيه. (JA 2)

'I think also role-plays are good practice for learners as they encourage learners to practise themselves. Role-plays are similar to real interactions.' (JA 2)

Indeed, role-plays can give students the skills to handle problematic complimenting interactions. In the practice stage, teachers can also interfere and provide the appropriate language and the necessary feedback. This view was expressed by JA 1 who stated:

النقطه المهمه الأخرى في رأيي هي تمثيل الأدوار في الفصول الدراسيه. هذا يسمح للطلاب بالممارسه بأنفسهم. بعد ذلك، يمكن للمدرسين إعطاء الطلاب ملاحظات بناءه. (JA1)

'The other important point in my opinion is administering role-plays in classrooms. This allows students to practise. After that, teachers can give students constructive feedback.' (JA 1)

Overall, role-plays enable learners to be dynamic, responsible and empowered members in the process of learning compliments. Teachers can also act as organisers who not only provide constructive feedback, but also assist individuals towards independence in the new language and culture (Lazaraton, 2003; Li, 2015; Nguyen, 2007).

#### **7.3.4 The Importance of Real-Life Communication**

In addition to the role-play technique that was discussed in Section 7.3.3, real-life communication was perceived to be a good method in developing individuals'

complimenting skills. Although role-plays help people to learn about complimenting in as realistic a situation as possible, real-life interactions enable people to fully engage in genuine situations, hence, allowing more natural and authentic learning.

The importance of real-life interaction in developing people's complimenting abilities was highlighted in the data. Table 7.4 shows that 35% of the interviewees observed that participants should engage in real-life conversations in order to develop and improve their complimenting behaviour. Refer to the following statements taken from interview transcripts:

يحتاج الطلاب إلى ممارسه المجاملات في المواقف المختلفه. أعني مواقف الحياة الحقيقيه التي هي أفضل طريقه للتعلم. هناك حد لما يمكن أن تقدمه الفصول الدراسيه، لذلك أعتقد أنه يجب علينا الممارسه بأنفسنا بالتفاعل المستمر مع الناس والتعلم منهم. (JA 7)

'Students need to practise complimenting in different situations. I mean real-life situations that is the best way to learn. There is a limit to what classrooms can offer, so I think we should try and practise ourselves by continually interacting with people and learning from them.' (JA 7)

في رأيي، لا أحد يستطيع أن يعلمنا المجاملات. إنه شيء نتعلمه بأنفسنا عن تجاربنا في الحياة، وعن طريق التحدث دائماً مع أشخاص آخرين. (JA 12)

'In my opinion, no one can teach us compliments. It is something we learn ourselves through our experience in life and by talking to other people.' (JA 12)

In the same way, JA 13 and JA 1 shared their experience:

تعلمت كيف أجمال بتفاعلاتي اليوميه مع الناس في الحياة الواقعيه [...] وهذا مفيد جداً لتحسين معرفتي بالثقافات الأخرى. (JA 13)

'I learnt how to compliment through my daily interaction with people in real-life, [...] and this was very helpful to improve my knowledge of other cultures.' (JA 13)

بالنسبه لي، ما ساعدني في تعلم كيفية التعامل مع المجاملات هو التفاعل المستمر مع أشخاص آخرين من ثقافات أخرى في الحياة اليوميه. (JA 1)

‘For me, what helped me to learn how to deal with complimenting is continually interacting with other people from other cultures in real-life.’ (JA 1)

Classroom teaching is certainly crucial in assisting individuals to develop and improve their complimenting norms. According to Byram (1997), classroom education empowers learners to reflect on their skills, knowledge and information gained within the class. Nevertheless, classrooms cannot always offer natural communication with members of the target community, which as a result impacts the development of participants’ complimenting abilities. Hence, everyday interaction with members of the target culture was perceived to be the best tool to improve complimenting skills of participants.

### 7.3.5 The Importance of Online Communication

Online interaction through social media channels was regarded as helpful as real-life communication in assisting participants to advance their pragmatic competence, including complimenting. As summarised in Table 7.4, 20% of interviewees referred to the importance of online communication in their interviews. For example, JA 13 argued:

تعلمت كيفية تقديم المجاملات من خلال التفاعل اليومي مع الأشخاص في الحياة اليومية وكذلك من خلال وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. أتحدث إلى أشخاص من ثقافات مختلفه عبر الإنترنت وهذا مفيد لتحسين معرفتي بالثقافات الأخرى. (JA 13)

‘I learnt how to compliment through my daily interaction with people in real-life and through social media. I talk to people from different cultures online and this was very helpful to improve my knowledge of other cultures.’ (JA 13)

The above observation was also echoed by JA 1 who perceived that:

ما ساعدني على تعلم كيفية التعامل مع المجاملات هو التفاعل المستمر مع أشخاص آخرين من ثقافات أخرى في الحياة اليومية وكذلك من خلال وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. أنت لا تصدق ذلك، لقد كانت وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مساعده عظيمه. (JA 1)

‘What helped me to learn how to deal with complimenting is continually interacting with other people from other cultures in real-life and though the social media. You will not believe it, social media was a great help.’ (JA 1)

Indeed, technologies have provided increased opportunities for people to interact with one another. Websites have made social interaction as well as learning content much more spontaneously and instantaneously available to people (Bosch, 2009) regardless of their location. Social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter are effective in connecting individuals around countless topics of interest, encouraging interaction and learning (Bowman, N. D., & Akcaoglu, 2014). In addition, online communication assists individuals to actively construct their own viewpoints and then communicate them to an individual or group online (Sims, R., 2003; Stacey, 1999).

### 7.3.6 The Importance of Cultural and Intercultural Awareness

The data presented in Table 7.4 show that training on cultural and intercultural awareness is another theme that was highlighted by 15% of male Jordanian-Australian interviewees. Consider the following response:

أحب معلمي أن يعلمني كيف تتعامل الثقافات الأخرى مع المجاملات، وما هو مقبول أو غير مقبول أن أقول. لأنه إذا عرفت الفرق فلن أقلق. أعتقد أن الوعي الثقافي مهم جدا. (JA 18)

‘I like my teacher to teach me how other cultures deal with compliments, and what is acceptable or unacceptable to say. Because if I know the difference I will be fine and I will not be worried. I believe cultural awareness is very important.’ (JA 18)

Cultural awareness was regarded as an important part in hypothesising the cultural measurement for language teaching. Cultural awareness refers to ones’ knowledge of the target culture’s rules of speaking as well as their understanding of one’s own culturally-based interactive behaviour and that of others (Baker, 2012). According to Baker (2011, p. 201), cultural awareness is an understanding of the “role culturally based forms, practices and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication”. People’s levels of cultural knowledge of the new culture should be taken into consideration when teaching compliments (Holmes & Brown, 1987; Li, 2015; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). Learning how to compliment in intercultural situations requires possessing an understanding of the target culture’s social values, which can be dissimilar to one’s own. Although “knowledge of specific cultures may still have an important role to play in developing an awareness of cultural differences and

relativisation”, such knowledge “has to be combined with an awareness of cultural influences in intercultural communication as fluid, fragmented, hybrid and emergent with cultural groupings or boundaries less easily defined and referenced” (Baker, 2011, pp. 200–201). Intercultural awareness is an extension of cultural awareness; however, it is more pertinent to the needs of participants in intercultural contexts, in which cultural impacts are likely to be diverse, dynamic and developing. Therefore, intercultural awareness is also needed for successful intercultural communication.

Although participants attended English classes in diverse contexts and were exposed to different ways of teaching and learning English in those contexts, some pedagogical implications can be drawn from their responses. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of the study highlights the importance of teaching intercultural pragmatics in English classes in Australia. The data confirmed that teaching of metalinguistic information such as complimenting is not practically and comprehensively taught in English language classrooms in Australia. Teaching and learning complimenting is believed to be crucial to the development of participants’ communicative competence. Consequently, more focus should be placed on incorporating teaching and learning of the speech act of complimenting into English classrooms in Australia in order to assist participants to develop their complimenting abilities, and as a result become pragmatically and culturally competent.

## **7.4 Major Findings**

Complimenting in intercultural encounters was found to present several difficulties for the majority of the sampled participants. Social and cultural values were usually reflected in participants’ use of language, including the speech act of complimenting, which thus led to miscommunication when giving and responding to compliments intercultural. The data confirmed that 85% of participants reported encountering difficulties with intercultural complimenting. In contrast, 15% of participants professed that they were confident dealing with compliments in intercultural situations. In particular, those who were born in Australia, or had migrated to Australia at a young age (long-time residents) reported no difficulties with intercultural complimenting. Similarly, those who have a good knowledge of both the Australian culture and the English language reported confidence with intercultural complimenting.

In their interview responses, participants presented what they considered the two key causes of intercultural miscommunication: (a) following one's native cultural norms when interacting with other participants and (b) people's limited knowledge of the target culture

Increasing cultural and intercultural awareness and incorporating complimenting into language teaching are some of the strategies that could assist to overcome participants' barriers and minimise intercultural misunderstanding. Learning a new language includes gaining an understanding of how to use words, sentences and rules of speaking in order to interact successfully with speakers of the language. This comprehension of language views a language not merely as a code (words and sequences of words that join words together) or body of knowledge to be acquired, but also as a social practice in which to take part (Kramsch, 1994). According to Svalberg (2007), the social aspects of language indicate that learning grammar and vocabulary alone is not sufficient and that individuals should understand how language is used to generate and express meanings. Individuals should also understand how to interact with others and how to participate in a communication with others. Indeed, an understanding of language as "open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal" (Shohamy, 2007, p. 5) incorporates the rich complications of communication and helps in the process of learning. Language also assists to protect the culture and history of a group or community (Chinwe, 2015). As language and culture are intertwined, learning the language assists in learning the culture and vice versa. Teaching compliments and cultural awareness in Australian English classrooms was perceived to be effective in assisting participants to improve their complimenting capabilities and as a result develop their intercultural communicative competence.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the data from the semi-structured interviews with twenty Jordanian-Australian interviewees in Sydney, Australia. In general, the findings of the interviews reveal the difficulties of intercultural social communication and the complexities that participants face in intercultural encounters.

The next chapter presents the data obtained from observing participants' social interaction in various locations in Sydney, Australia.

# **CHAPTER EIGHT: ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

## **8.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of participant observation of approximately twenty participants in Sydney, Australia. It investigates the complimenting practices detected by observing male Jordanian-Australians' social interactions. Participant observation included observing participants giving and responding to compliments in social intercultural situations in both Arabic and English. The observed functions included not only male Jordanian-Australians but also other mainstream Australians and other ethnic Australians. In this regard, compliment giving strategies, compliment response strategies, compliment sequences and compliment content were identified, presented and analysed. Furthermore, the use of syntactic strategies, positive semantic carriers and related intensifiers in both giving and responding to compliments were observed and explored. This chapter offers another essential supplement to data from the semi-structured interviews to ensure the two dimensions of analysis in this thesis (perceptions and practices) are fully investigated and integrated.

## **8.1 Background**

Male Jordanian-Australians were covertly observed in order to obtain a strong and rich understanding of their insights and practices of compliments in intercultural situations. Participants were observed during outdoor functions that occurred in numerous locations in Sydney, Australia, including Georges River National Park, Royal National Park, Parramatta Park and Flinders Slope. In addition to outdoor events, participant observation included indoor functions such as friends' gatherings, birthday parties, wedding ceremonies and indoor sports events. Outdoor functions included some activities such as playing chess and playing soccer. They also involved having discussions about various topics such as work, study, sports, family, children, Jordanian politics as well as Australian politics. Likewise, indoor functions involved some activities like playing cards and playing chess. They also included various discussions about work, study, sports, family, children, and issues concerning the Jordanian community in Australia.

Each outdoor event consisted of approximately twenty individuals who were friends and friends of friends. I was already a friend of some of the participants, while others were introduced to me on the day of the picnics. Similarly, indoor functions included about twenty people who were friends and friends of friends. Participant observation was conducted between December 2016 and September 2017. Timing of each observed function was noted. The overall duration of observations was approximately 38 hours, which resulted in 137 compliments.

## 8.2 Giving Compliments

Previous research on complimenting confirms that compliment giving includes four strategies; explicit compliments, implicit compliments, noncompliment and opt outs (Bait Jamil, 2016; Beeching & Woodfield, 2015; Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986; Ye, 1995; Yu, 2005; Yuan, 2002). Table 8.1 below presents the average tokens by compliment giving strategies in participant observation.

**Table 8.1: Average tokens by compliment giving strategies**

<b>Compliment giving strategy</b>	<b>Average tokens N = 137</b>
Explicit compliments	71.53% (98)
Implicit compliments	12.41% (17)
Noncompliments	9.49% (13)
Opt outs	6.57% (9)

As presented in Table 8.1 above, explicit compliments had the highest frequency of 71.53%. Implicit compliments accounted for 12.41% of the overall data, followed by noncompliments, which had an average token of only 9.49%. The lowest average token was recorded in opt outs, which had 6.57% of the total number of compliments.

### 8.2.1 Explicit Complimenting

Explicit compliments are typical and clear compliments, which include unambiguously saying something positive about the receiver. Furthermore, explicit compliments are usually direct and unequivocal positive comments that encompass as a minimum one

positive semantic carrier (Beeching & Woodfield, 2015; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Ye, 1995; Li, 2015; Yuan, 2002; Yu, 2005).

As indicated in Table 8.1 above, the use of explicit compliments by the observed male Jordanian-Australians was very frequent and accounted for 71% of the total number of compliments, indicating that they prefer to provide a clear positive comment when offering compliments. For example, in an outdoor picnic at Royal National Park, Australia, JA 1 was complimented on his appearance. Consider the following compliment as extracted from the data:

Compliment on appearance – new hair cut

قصة شعر جميله يا علي.

‘Nice haircut, Ali.’

In the same vein, in an indoor friends’ gathering at a participant house, JA 3 was complimented on his performance, as follows:

Compliment on performance – passing an exam

عبد الله، لقد قمت بعمل رائع باجتياز امتحان طب الأسنان.

‘Abdallah, you have done a great job by passing the dentistry exam.’

Similarly, in an outdoor picnic at Georges River National Park, Australia, JA 12 was complimented on his possession, as follows:

Compliment on possession – new house

محمد، المنزل الذي اشتريته جميل.

‘Mohammad, the house you have bought is beautiful.’

The high frequency of explicit compliments offered by the observed participants confirms that male Jordanian-Australians are regarded as being generous with compliments. In other words, the observed participants are inclined to express their positive intentions in contexts where a compliment is usually expected. This perception is attributable to their native social and cultural norms, which associate compliments with politeness, resulting in offering more explicit compliments to others. The findings of participant observation support the results of the semi-structured interviews that presented in Chapter Five, which

indicated that male Jordanian-Australians tend to offer compliments for politeness purposes. Although they reside in a new country and culture, the observed male Jordanian-Australians are still influenced by their Jordanian cultural norms, which place responsibility on individuals to offer more compliments, which are explicit, as a sign of politeness and respect when exchanging compliments.

### 8.2.2 Implicit Complimenting

Implicit compliments refer to utterances in which the speaker gives a planned compliment even if it is not clearly expressed (Cordella et al., 1995; Maíz-Arévalo, 2012). Moreover, implicit compliments necessitate more inferences from the addressee to restructure the implicated meaning (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989; Nguyen, 2007; Yu, 2005).

As summarised in Table 8.1, implicit compliments were also identified in male Jordanian-Australians communications. In total, the observed participants provided 12% of implicit compliments in their social interactions. For example, in an outdoor picnic at Parramatta Park, Australia, JA 6 was implicitly complimented on his appearance. Consider the following compliment as extracted from the data:

Implicit compliment on appearance – losing weight

وكأنك فقدت وزن يا إبراهيم.

‘You look like you have lost weight, Ibrahim.’

Likewise, in an indoor friends’ gathering at a participant house, JA 9 was implicitly complimented on his appearance, as follows:

Implicit compliment on appearance – new hair cut

ماذا تفعل لتجعل شعرك يبدو هيك.

‘What do you do to make your hair look like this?’

In some situations, an implicit compliment can accompany an explicit one. In other words, one phrase can include both an explicit and implicit compliment. For instance, in an indoor friends’ gathering at a participant house, JA 18 was explicitly and implicitly complimented on his attire. Consider the following example:

Compliment on new shirt

من أين اشتريته؟ قميص جميل.

'Where did you get it from? What a nice shirt.'

By the same token, in an outdoor picnic at a Flinders Slope, Australia, JA 5 was explicitly and implicitly complimented on his possession, as follows:

Compliment on a friend's car

أتمنى لو كان عندي واحده. سياره رياضيه جميله.

'I wish I had one. It is a beautiful sporty car.'

Although not all implicit compliments share the same degree of indirectness, they are generally chosen when assessing the addressee's skills or personal appearance in order to avoid face threat, particularly when the relationship between the speaker and the addressee is still distant (Maíz-Arévalo, 2012).

### 8.2.3 Noncomplimenting

As covert observation of real-life social situations was conducted, participants were observed to employ various complimenting strategies based on the situation in which the compliment is given. The results indicate that in certain situations where a compliment is expected, some participants were reluctant to give compliments and they preferred to refer to another topic such as كيف حالك؟ (How are you?), كيف كان حالك؟ (How have you been?), or انه جميل ومشمس اليوم (it is nice and sunny today). This strategy is called noncomplimenting. Noncompliments are either bound semantic formulas happening on their own or other responses that do not convey any positive meaning (Shahidi Pour & Zarie, 2016a). As indicated in Table 8.1 above, noncomplimenting had an average token of only 9%. For example, at a wedding ceremony, JA 7 was not complimented in a situation where a compliment was expected. Consider the following example:

Noncompliment

بلال، يسعدني رؤيتك مجددًا. كيفك؟

'Bilal, I'm happy to see you again. How have you been?'

While some members of the study were disinclined to offer a compliment (such as the case in the above mentioned example), other individuals complimented others whom they had

not seen for some time, particularly at the start of the observed function and as people started to arrive. For example, at a wedding ceremony, JA 7 was complimented on his appearance, as follows:

#### Compliment on appearance

بلال، ما أجمل رؤيتك مرة أخرى. تبدو أصغر يا مايت.

‘Bilal, how good to see you again. You look younger my mate.’

Using an Australian cultural artefact such as “mate” highlights the importance of intercultural communicative competence. Understanding the target culture leads to intercultural communicative competence. Learning the target culture requires “gaining insights into how the culture of the target language interacts with one’s own cultural experience” (Liaw, 2006, p. 50) When learning the target culture, it is crucial to consider individuals’ cultural perceptions, beliefs and values as this may facilitate successful intercultural communication (Yuan, 2002).

The presence of noncompliments in the data confirms that not every participant decides to compliment in a situation where a compliment is expected.

#### 8.2.4 Opting out

In a situation where a compliment is called for, if an individual decided to say nothing or chose not to participate in the complimenting process by simply smiling or remaining silent, it can be coded as an opt out (Jin-pei, 2013; Kecskes, I., & Romero-Trillo, 2013).

Opt outs are “cases where informants do not say/supply anything in a situation where a compliment is usually expected” (Yuan, 2002, p. 193). As a compliment giving strategy, opt out was evident in the observation data and accounted for 6% of the total number of compliments. For example, in an outdoor picnic at a Flinders Slope, Australia JA 1 smiled instead of complimenting Tony on his possession. Consider the following example as extracted from the data:

#### Opt out – Smile

Instead of complimenting Tony on his new sporty car by saying for example, “what a beautiful car”, Ali only smiled.

Similarly, in an indoor friends’ gathering at a participant’s house, JA 14 remained silent instead of complimenting Ahmad on his appearance, as follows:

Opt out – Silence

Instead of complimenting Ahmad on his new hair cut by saying for example, “what a nice haircut”, Issa remained silent.

Broadly speaking, the existence of opt outs indicates that some individuals might select not to express their positive intentions in some contexts where a compliment is usually anticipated (Lin, Woodfield, & Ren, 2012). Furthermore, it shows that some participants may feel uncomfortable offering face-to-face compliments.

### 8.3 Compliment Topics

Compliments exchanged by the observed male Jordanian-Australians in their social interactions focused mainly on five topics: appearance, possessions, personality traits, performance/ability and attire. The average tokens by compliment topics are summarised in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2: Average tokens by compliment topics**

<b>Compliment topics</b>						
<b>Compliment giving strategy</b>	Appearance	Possessions	Ability/ Performance	Personality	Attire	<b>Total</b>
Explicit compliments	40	23	11	15	9	98
Implicit compliments	11	0	0	0	6	17
Noncompliments	2	2	4	2	3	13
Opt outs	5	2	1	1	0	9
<b>Total</b>						<b>137</b>

As presented in Table 8.2, the data from participant observation show that male Jordanian-Australians use of explicit compliments was high on appearance (40), followed by possessions (23), personality (15), ability/performance (11) and attire (9). Implicit

compliments, however, were primarily focused on appearance (11) and attire (6). In addition, the use of noncompliments showed only slight divergence on compliment topics, ranging from two noncompliments on appearance, two noncompliments on possession, four noncompliments on ability/performance, two noncompliments on personality to three noncompliments on attire. Even though the opt out strategy was low on attire (0), personality (1), ability/performance (1) and possession (2), it was high on appearance (5).

Previous research on complimenting establishes that compliment giving strategies (explicit, implicit, noncompliment and opt out) vary according to compliment topics (appearance, ability/performance, possessions, aspects of personality and attire) (Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986; Ye, 1995; Li, 2015; Yuan, 2002). While previous studies on this subject suggest that appearance, attire, performance, ability, possessions, achievements and personal character/personality are the primary topics of compliments (Abdul Sattar & Lah, 2009; Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1998; Shaari & Maros, 2017; Sorahi & Nazemi, 2013; Ye, 1995; Li, 2015), the data presented and analysed in this thesis show that there is another facet to topics of compliments, which is about the frequency of each compliment topic. Although the findings of the study support results of former research, which indicate that compliments on appearance are the most frequent topics of compliments, the present study departs from findings of preceding studies, which argue that compliments on personality happen less frequently than those on performance, ability and attire (Holmes, 1986; Nguyen 2007; Li, 2015).

The data from participant observation suggest that compliments on appearance were observed to be most frequently practised by the observed male Jordanian-Australians followed by possessions and then personality. Moreover, compliments on performance, ability and attire were found to be participants' less favoured categories. Compliments on someone's appearance, possessions and personality are frequently given when the subject of conversation is informal, which was the case in the observed social interactions. In such situations, topics of compliments were offered more to praise someone on their appearance, possessions or personality (Tiono & Nova, 2007). Appearance was the most common topic between colleagues, close friends and family members (Al-Rousan & Awal, 2016; Holmes, 1986; Li, 2015). Since social interactions were observed among individuals of equal status, appearance was the most common compliment topic among the observed participants.

The outcomes of the present study indicate that the observed male Jordanian-Australians tend to place a great emphasis on people's appearance. Hence, the present

results provide new insights into how male Jordanian-Australians view other people. In male Jordanian-Australians' opinion, compliments on appearance are remarkable for making individuals feel good and assisting to put them at ease. They are also effective for improving people's confidence and self-esteem. Previous research confirms that there is a connection between self-perceived attractiveness or appearance and different aspects of mental health, such as confidence and self-esteem, which highlights the importance of appearance (Ashton & Nell, 1996; Knee, Neighbors, & Patrick, 2004; Yatsenko, 2013). According to Yatsenko (2013, p. 1), appearance is often regarded as follows:

One of the more pleasant aspects of life, and its influence is often almost unavoidable. There is no denying its value to society – much time and effort has been devoted to its portrayal, and continues to in the present day. Many humans, for example, put a significant amount of effort into their appearance, thus hoping to change how others perceive them.

Consequently, for the observed male Jordanian-Australians, complimenting on appearance is of great significance.

The data from participant observation highlight the importance of differentiating between compliments given in natural unstructured (participant observation) versus goal-oriented situations (semi-structured interviews). In participant observation, compliments between participants on apparel and hairstyle prevailed and functioned as phatic communication, which reinforced the norm of effortful consideration of daily appearance. Conversely, in semi-structured interviews, interviewees reported exchanging more compliments on personality than appearance, which confirm that compliment topics can vary based on the situation or context in which the compliment is given.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the analysis of participant observation also includes an investigation of the use of syntactic strategies, positive semantic carriers and related intensifiers in giving and responding to compliments by the observed participants. In the following sections, syntactic structures is discussed first followed by positive semantic carriers and then compliment intensifiers.

## **8.4 Syntactic Structures**

Syntax has been defined as “the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages” (Chomsky, 1957, p. 1). Syntactic structures

generally characterise the structure of compliments. Compliments appear to be pre-coded and highly recognisable in structure, depending on only a few syntactic patterns (Mustapha, 2012).

The data from participant observation indicate that syntactic structures used by the observed male Jordanian-Australians consisted of 98 (71%) explicit compliments (Please refer to Table 8.1). Table 8.3 below presents the average tokens by frequency of syntactic structures as used by the observed participants when offering compliments.

**Table 8.3: Average tokens by syntactic structures**

<b>Syntactic structure</b>	<b>Average tokens N = 98</b>
NP Look/Be (Int) Adj	40.82% (40)
Adj NP	25.52% (25)
What (a) (Int) Adj NP	9.18% (9)
(Int) Adj	6.12% (6)
I (Int) like NP	5.10% (5)
You V (a) (Int) Adj NP	5.10% (5)
Pro Be (Int) Adj NP	4.08% (4)
NP (Int) Suit You	4.08% (4)

As summarised in Table 8.3 below, in terms of frequency, the most preferred syntactic structure of male Jordanian-Australians was “NP Look/Be (Int) Adj”. This structure comprised 40.82% of all the structures in the data. The second preferred structure was “Adj NP”, which accounted for 25.52% of the overall compliments. Participants’ third favoured structure was “What (a) (Int) Adj NP”, which consisted of 9.18% of the total number of structures. Although “(Int) Adj” involved 6.12% of the entire number of compliments, “I (Int) like NP”, “You V (a) (Int) Adj NP”, and “Pro Be (Int) Adj NP”, “NP (Int) Suit You” accounted for 5.10% and 4.08% respectively. Other structures, namely, “How Adj” and “I (Int) like/love NP” were absent from the data.

The rarity of the structures “I (Int) like NP”, “You V (a) (Int) Adj NP”, “Pro Be (Int) Adj NP”, “NP (Int) Suit You”, as well as the absence of the structures “How Adj” and “I (Int) like/love NP” could be related to participants’ inability to construct native-like compliment structures. This inability might be attributed to the lack of necessary knowledge required to perform this task such as grammatical lack of knowledge. Another

reason might be due to a potential sociolinguistic transfer from their native language into the target language (Monjezi, 2014). The following examples show the most common syntactic structures of compliments as they appeared in the data:

+ NP Look/ Be (Int) Adj

(New shirt)

أنت تبدو جيد اليوم يا علي.

‘You look good today Ali.’

+ Adj NP

(New car)

سياره جميله.

‘Nice car.’

What (a) (Int) Adj NP

(Nice car)

يا لها من سياره جميله.

‘What a nice car.’

+ (Int) Adj

(Good singing)

رائع. عمل جيد جدا.

‘Wow. Very well done.’

+ I (Int) Like NP

(New haircut)

أنا حقا أحب قصتك الجديده.

‘I really like your new haircut.’

You V (a) (Int) Adj NP

(Looking good)

أنت تبدو جيد اليوم صديق.

‘You look good today mate.’

+ Pro Be (Int) Adj NP

(Nice sunglasses)

هذه نظارات جميلة. من أين اشتريتها؟

'Those are nice sunglasses. Where did you get them from?'

NP (Int) Suit You

(Hair cut)

هذا الشعر يناسبك يا علي.

'This hair cut suits you, Ali.'

Overall, compliment structures occur frequently, yet intangibly, within daily social interactions (Monjezi, 2014; Sims, A. L., 1989). The findings of the study establish that the way a compliment is syntactically structured affects the course and outcome of both parts of the compliment sequence. In addition, the data from participant observation reveal that compliment structures highlight participants' intercultural identities and the dynamic nature of discourse identity production during intercultural interactions (Jenks, 2013).

## 8.5 Positive Semantic Carriers

Semantics is predominantly the linguistic and the philosophical study of meaning in languages. It refers to the connection between words, utterances, expressions, symbols and signs, and meaning (Cruse, 1986; Jackendoff, 1990; Nielson & Nielson, 1992). Implicit compliments are generally ambiguous remarks, which lack positive lexical items at the level of linguistic form. They require more intervention from the addressee to restructure the associated meaning. In contrast, explicit compliments are usually optimistic and unambiguous statements, which include at least one positive semantic carrier that clearly implies the intended meaning (Kecskes & Romero-Trillo, 2013; Ye, 1995; Yu, 2005; Yuan, 2002).

Based on their lexical items that are used to express positive evaluation, compliments can be divided into four major categories: adjectival compliments, verbal compliments, adverbial compliments and noncompliments (Jin-Pei, 2013). Table 8.4 below shows that the observed male Jordanian-Australians produced a high frequency of adjectives and nouns when complimenting. Specifically, 79.60% of the positive semantic carriers that were provided by participants were adjectives, followed by nouns, which accounted for 10.20% of the total number of compliments. On the other hand, adverbs and

verbs were least frequently used and consisted of only 7.14% and 3.06% of the total number of positive semantic carriers respectively. It seems safe to infer from the data that the observed male Jordanian-Australians rely mainly on semantically positive adjectives to convey positive evaluations. An overall distribution of the average tokens by positive semantic carriers is presented in Table 8.4 below.

**Table 8.4: Average tokens by positive semantic carriers**

Positive semantic carriers	Average tokens N = 98
Adjective	79.60% (78)
Adverb	7.14% (7)
Noun	10.20% (10)
Verb	3.06% (3)

The most preferred positive adjectives used by the observed male Jordanian-Australians were جميل, لطيف, عظيم, جيد (*good, great, nice and beautiful*). The high occurrence of these adjectives appears to be consistent with findings of previous research, such as Holmes' (1986) study of New Zealander compliments, Wolfson's (1984) study of American compliments and Li's (2015) study of intercultural Chinese individuals, which indicate that the abovementioned adjectives are the most frequently used positive adjectives when complimenting.

This similarity highlights the importance of complimenting as a universal social linguistic phenomenon. Although other popular positive adjectives such as لطيف, أحسنت (*cool, well done*) were also present in previous studies (Beeching & Woodfield, 2015; Holmes, 1986; Kecskes & Romero-Trillo, 2013; Li, 2015; Yu, 2005; Yuan, 2002; Wolfson, 1984), they were scarce in the present data.

## 8.6 Responding to Compliments

When responding to compliments, people generally have the choice of either accepting or rejecting the compliment. In addition, some individuals may choose to avoid the entire compliment, and thus neither accept nor reject it. Compliment response strategies consist of three substrategies: acceptance, rejection and deflection or evasion (Bait Jamil, 2016; Ebadi & Pourzandi, 2015). The data indicate that compliment response strategies used by

the observed participants were varied. While the majority of the observed participants accepted and appreciated compliments, some were observed to reject compliments and others avoided them. The average tokens by compliment response strategies are summarised in Table 8.5 below:

**Table 8.5: Average tokens by compliment response strategy**

Compliment response strategy	Average tokens N = 137
Acceptance	72.72% (99)
Rejection	13.13% (18)
Deflection/ Evasion	14.15% (20)

As indicated in Table 8.5 below, the acceptance strategy had the highest frequency of 72.72%. In other words, the observed participants accepted a total of 99 compliments. The high frequency of the acceptance strategy confirms the fact that male Jordanian-Australians' preferred compliment response strategy is acceptance. While the deflection/evasion strategy accounted for 14.15%, the rejection strategy comprised only 13.13% of the total number of responses, indicating that the observed participants were more inclined to evade compliments than reject them.

### 8.6.1 Acceptance

Table 8.5 above indicates that the observed participants accepted 72% of the overall number of compliments. The acceptance strategy consists of five substrategies: appreciation, agreement, downgrading, request reassurance and compliment return (Beeching & Woodfield, 2015; Li, 2015). As summarised in Table 8.6 below, the appreciation substrategy appeared 42 (42.42%) times in the observation data (شكرا جزيلا. أنا أقدر إطراءك, Thank you very much. I appreciate your compliment). Moreover, the agreement substrategy occurred 26 (26.26%) times (شكرا لقد عملت بجد للوصول إلى هذه المرحلة, Oh. thank you. I have worked out very hard to get to this stage). In addition, there were 16 (16.16%) indications of the downgrading substrategy (شكراً، لكن القميص يبدو عادي, Thanks, but the shirt looks just ok), 10 (10.11%) occurrences of the request reassurance substrategy (شكراً لك, Oh really?) and 5 (5.5%) occurrences of the compliment return substrategy (شكرا لك

كذلك (Thank you Ali, I love your haircut as well). The average tokens by the acceptance strategy are shown in Table 8.6 below:

**Table 8.6: Average tokens by acceptance strategy**

Acceptance strategy	Average tokens N = 99
Appreciation	42.42% (42)
Agreement	26.26% (26)
Downgrading	16.16% (16)
Request Assurance	10.11% (10)
Return	5.5% (5)

The following examples refer to the acceptance substrategy as they appeared in the data:

#### Appreciation

تبد جميل يا صديقي.

شكرا أنا أقدر ذلك.

‘Looking good mate.’

‘Thank you, appreciate that.’

#### Agreement

لديك عضلات قويه الآن.

شكرا لك لقد عملت بجد للوصول إلى هذه المرحلة.

‘You have strong muscles now.’

‘Thank you. I have worked out very hard to get to this point.’

#### Downgrade

قصة شعر جديده لطيفه، أحمد.

لا بأس بها

‘Nice new haircut, Ahmed.’

‘Actually, it is just an ok haircut.’

#### Request reassurance

طعام جيد، علي.

جد؟ أنا سعيد لأنه أعجبك.

‘Good food, Ali.’

‘Oh really? I’m glad you liked it.’

Compliment return

أنا أحب سيارتك الرياضيه الجديده.

شكرا. سيارتك جيده أيضا.

‘I like your new sporty car.’

‘Oh, thanks. Your car is very good as well.’

### 8.6.2 Rejection

Rejection of compliments was evident in the observed social interactions. Table 8.5 reveals that rejection of compliments occurred 18 times in the observation data. Previous studies on complimenting establish that the rejection strategy involves three main substrategies, which are: disagreeing utterance substrategy, question accuracy substrategy and challenge sincerity substrategy (Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986; Li, 2015; Yuliyani, 2016). The average tokens by the rejection strategy are presented in Table 8.7 below.

**Table 8.7: Average tokens by rejection strategy**

Rejection strategy	Average tokens N = 18
Disagreeing utterance	27.78% (5)
Question accuracy	22.22% (4)
Challenge sincerity	50% (9)

Table 8.7 indicates that there were 5 (27.78%) occurrences of the disagreeing utterance substrategy (أوه لا! لا أعتقد أنه لطيف يا رجل. أنت فقط تمدح. هل هي سياره جميله؟), 4 (22.22%) existences of the question accuracy substrategy (هل هي سياره جميله؟), and 9 (50%) indications of the challenge sincerity substrategy (أنت فقط تمدح، صحيح، You are only complimenting, aren’t you?). Overall, rejection of compliments was infrequent and only consisted of 13% of the total number of compliments. The following are examples of the rejection strategy:

Disagreeing utterance

قصة شعر رائع.

لا ، أنا لا أحبها.

'What a nice haircut?'

'No, I don't like it.'

Question accuracy

إنها منطقته رائعه.

هل تعتقد أنها جيدة؟

'It is a good area.'

'Do you think it is good?'

Challenge sincerity

إنه قميص جميل.

أنت تمزح. إنه قديم.

'It is a cool shirt.'

'You are joking. It is an old one.'

### 8.6.3 Deflection/ Evasion

The data from participant observation establish that some male Jordanian-Australians used avoidance of compliments as a replacement for rejecting compliments. As indicated in Table 8.5, the deflection/evasion strategy occurred 20 (24.5%) times in the observation data. The deflection/evasion strategy consists of four substrategies: shift credit, informative comment, legitimate evasion and opt out (Herbert, 1989; Holmes, 1986; Shahidi Pour & Zarie, 2016a). Table 8.8 below shows the average tokens by the deflection/evasion strategy.

**Table 8.8: Average tokens by deflection/evasion strategy**

Deflection/Evasion strategy	Average tokens N = 20
Shift credit	50% (10)
Informative comment	35% (7)
Legitimate evasion	5% (1)
Opt out	10% (2)

In their conversations, the observed male Jordanian-Australians employed the shift credit substrategy 10 times (50%) (I got this shirt from my sister as a birthday present) and the informative comment substrategy 7 times (35%) (That was my brother's idea to get a sport car). Although the opt out strategy occurred 2 (10%) times (smile, silence), the legitimate evasion substrategy existed 1 (5%) time only (I will pick you up to go for a drive at 9 pm, Ok?). Consider the following examples that refer to the deflection/evasion substrategy:

#### Shift credit

تبد أصغر سنًا في قصة الشعر هذه.

شكرا ، لقد كان اقتراح زوجتي.

'You look younger with this haircut.'

'Thanks, it was my wife's suggestion to have a different haircut.'

#### Informative comment

اعجبني حذاؤك.

اشتريتها من Foot Power في باراماتا عندما كنت أقوم بالتسوق في عيد الميلاد.

'I like your shoes.'

'I have it from Foot Power in Parramatta when I was doing my Christmas shopping.'

#### Opt out

لديك عضلات.

ابتسامه.

'Looking muscly.'

'Smile.'

#### Legitimate evasion

سياره جميله.

سأخذك لأذهب في التاسعه مساءً.

'Nice car.'

'I will pick you up to go for a drive at 9 pm, Ok?'

In summary, it can be indicated that the observed participants were found to prefer accepting compliments. The high frequency of the acceptance strategy in the observation data supports the findings of the semi-structured interviews, which confirm that male Jordanian-Australians are more likely to accept compliments rather than rejecting or

evading them. This inclination to accept compliments could possibly be due to the influence of the native culture, which encourages individuals to accept compliments as a sign of politeness and to avoid hurting others' feelings.

## 8.7 Intensifiers

When giving compliments, people frequently use intensifiers to highlight the degree of appreciation and endorsement. The data show that intensifiers modified some of the compliments offered by male Jordanian-Australians to strengthen the level of gratitude in complimenting. Types and frequencies of intensifiers are summarised in Table 8.9 below:

**Table 8.9: Type and frequency of intensifiers**

Intensifiers	Frequency N = 70
very	50% (35)
so	7.14% (5)
too	2.86% (2)
much/more	5.71% (4)
really	31.43% (22)
-er	2.86% (2)

The data reveal that the most popular intensifiers used by the observed male Jordanian-Australians in their interactions are: *very*, *so*, *too*, *much*, *more*, *really* and *-er*. To be precise, “very” and “really” were the most frequently used of the intensifiers. As indicated in Table 8.9, there were a total of 70 intensifiers. In particular, “very” had the highest frequency of 50%, followed by “really”, which accounted for 31.43% of the overall intensifiers. Two intensifiers namely “so” and “much/more” accounted for 7.14% and 5.71% respectively. The lowest frequency was recorded in “too” and “-er”, which both had 2.86% of the total number of intensifiers. The following are examples of intensifiers:

أنا حقا أحب سيارتك. انها تبدو رياضيه جدا.

‘I *really* like your car. It looks *so* sporty.’

إنها قصة شعر لطيفه جدًا. تبد أصغر سنا الآن.

‘It is a *very* nice haircut. You look *much* younger now.’

These examples indicate that, in complimenting, intensifiers are used to emphasis the speaker’s illocutionary force.

## 8.8 Features of Natural Conversation in Compliments

Participant observation is considered a sound method that leads to obtaining entirely naturally occurring data. Features of natural conversations include but are not limited to exclamation elements, repetitions and omissions (An, 2013; Trosborg, 1995; Quaglio, 2008; Van Lier, 1984). The average tokens by feature of natural conversation is summarised in Table 8.10 below.

**Table 8.10: Average tokens by feature of natural conversation**

<b>Feature of natural conversation</b>	<b>Average tokens N = 161</b>
Exclamation particles	82.65% (133)
Repetitions	9.19% (15)
Omissions	8.16% (13)

Exclamation elements, repetitions and omissions are discussed in the following sections.

### 8.8.1 Exclamation Particles

Exclamation particles were used by the observed participants in their interactions. The average tokens by exclamation particles are summarised in Table 8.11 below.

**Table 8.11: Average tokens by exclamation particles**

<b>Exclamation particles</b>	<b>Average tokens N = 133</b>
Oh	87.96% (117)
Well	5.26% (7)
Wow	4.52% (6)
Oh, my God	2.26% (3)

As indicated in Table 8.10 above, there were 133 (82.65%) occurrences of exclamations particles in the data. In particular, the data show that the most popular exclamations used by the observed participants were: *oh*, *oh my God*, *well* and *wow*. Table 8.11 shows that “oh” appeared 117 (87.96%) times, “well” occurred 7 (5.26%), “wow” existed 6 (4.52%) times and “oh, my God” was used only 3 (2.26%) times. The following are some examples of exclamation particles as they appeared in the data:

نزهه لطيفه.

اوه شكرا لك. أنا سعيد أنها أعجبتك.

‘What a nice picnic.’

‘Oh, thank you. I’m glad you like it.’

يا لها من سياره جميله.

شكرا لك.

‘Wow, what a nice car?’

‘Thank you.’

### 8.8.2 Repetition

Another feature of natural interactions is repetition. Although it can be infrequent in written language, repetition frequently occurs in spoken language. According to Schegloff (1987), spoken language is a social activity that is part of people’s everyday behaviour and that repetition is not an indicator of a disfluent or disorder chatterer. Words, expressions or utterances are successively reiterated in conversations and answers as a way to emphasis and refocus.

With respect to complimenting, repetition of the same kind of compliment serves to reinforce the value and power of compliments (Rees-Miller, 2011). As summarised in Table 8.10, the data confirm that repetitions were infrequent in the observation data. In particular, there were only 15 (9.19%) occurrences of repetitions in the observed interactions. Consider the following examples:

يا له من قميص جميل. اعتقد انه جميل مع الجينز.

‘What a beautiful shirt. I think it is beautiful for your jeans.’

سيارتك الجديده جميله جدا. إنها حقاً سياره رياضيه جميله.

‘Your new car is very nice. It is really a nice sporty car.’

Considering the above examples, the words “beautiful” and “nice”, are examples of repetition, which function to support and enhance the complimentary power.

Indeed, repetition is a feature of natural interaction. However, people should not consider repetition as an exact replication, but rather as a reiteration that creates differences, which provide more options in how to make meaning, understand the differences that people encounter in others and adapt to a changing situation (Larsen-Freeman, 2012).

### 8.8.3 Omission

Omission refers to certain situations in which the speaker, consciously or unconsciously, leaves something out of the sentence. According to Nguyen, (2007), omissions have three types: subject omission, verb phrase omission or object omission. As presented in Table 8.10, the results show that omissions occurred 13 (8.16%) times in the data. The following are some examples of omissions:

(Adjective missing)

سياره جیده.

واو اعتقد ان سيارتك.

‘Good car.’

‘Wow I think your car is very...’

(Object missing)

تهانينا لأن ابنك قد اجتاز اختبارات الثانويه العامه.

شكرا لك على. أنا سعيد.

‘Congratulations that your son has passed his high school exams.’

‘Oh, thanks for your... I am happy.’

Omissions were uncommon in male Jordanian-Australians communications. However, their infrequent existence can be a feature of natural interactions (Carter & McCarthy, 1995). It also highlights the naturalness of the observation data.

In summary, features of natural communication existed in the data. The findings of the study demonstrate that participants used repetitions and omissions in their

communication. In addition, some exclamation elements such as attention getters were used by the observed male Jordanian-Australians as their social interactions were informal and casual.

## **8.9 Major Findings**

### **8.9.1 Giving and Responding to Compliments**

The data from participant observation revealed that the sampled participants were observed to offer more compliments to people from their own speech community and culture than to other individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Explicit compliments on appearance and possessions were found to be the most frequent among the observed male Jordanian-Australians, contradicting results of semi-structured interviews that showed that participants' preferred complimenting topic was personality. In addition, male Jordanian-Australians were inclined to accept compliments rather than refusing or avoiding them, which reinforced the findings of semi-structured interviews. As natural conversations were observed, natural language was also evident in the observation data, such as exclamations, repetitions and omissions.

### **8.9.2 Syntactic Structures**

The findings of the study establish that the way a compliment is syntactically structured affects the course and outcome of both parts of the compliment sequence. With reference to the syntactic structures employed in offering compliments by the observed participants, the data established that male Jordanian-Australians used "NP Look/Be (Int) Adj" such as *المنزل يبدو جميلاً* (The house looks beautiful) as their first and primary choice. The high preference of this syntactic structure among male Jordanian-Australians can be partially related to the linguistic structure of the Arabic language, which requires every sentence to have a verb, subject and object (Moubaidin, Tuffaha, Hammo, & Obeid, 2013). It could also be partially linked to participants' choices of personality and appearance as their preferred topics for complimenting.

The second preferred structure was "Adj NP" followed by "What (a) (Int) Adj NP", "(Int) Adj", "I (Int) like NP", "You V (a) (Int) Adj NP", "Pro Be (Int) Adj NP" and "NP (Int) Suit You" respectively. Other structures, namely, "How Adj" and "I (Int) like/love NP" were absent from the data. The scantiness of the structures "I (Int) like NP", "You V

(a) (Int) Adj NP”, “Pro Be (Int) Adj NP”, “NP (Int) Suit You” and the absence of the structures “How Adj” and “I (intensifier) like/love NP” could be related to participants’ inability to construct native-like compliment structures. This inability might be attributed to their lack of the necessary knowledge required to perform this task such as lack of grammatical knowledge. Another reason might be due to a potential pragmatic transfer from their native language into the target language.

Compliment structures were found to be highly structured. The observed participants were found to be direct and informal in articulating their compliments syntactically in intercultural communication contexts. The syntactic investigation of compliments among male Jordanian-Australians contradicts findings of previous research, which emphasises the universal formulaic nature of compliments. Formulaic compliments are “general and mainly performed a phatic function, filling pauses and avoiding silence, particularly in interaction closings” (Mackiewicz, 2006, p. 12). Previous research on this topic claims that compliments are extremely formulaic and that syntactic structures employed by speakers when complimenting are also formulaic (Bait Jamil, 2016; Daikuhara, 1986; Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1986, 1995; Li, 2015; Wolfson, 1983; Ye, 1995; Yuan, 1998). Holmes and Brown (1987, p. 529) argue that compliments are “remarkably formulaic speech acts” and that this formulaic nature of compliments can be exposed by some regularly employed syntactic structures and forms that express compliments. Although the observed participants used some of the regularly employed syntactic structures such as “NP Look/Be (Int) Adj”, “Adj NP” and “What (a) (Int) Adj NP”, their compliments are found to be nonformulaic, in that, they are more specific and individualised and more instructive than formulaic compliments (Mackiewicz, 2006). Thus, nonformulaic compliments can occur in information or everyday social interactions as well as in task-oriented and formal conversations.

### **8.9.3 Positive Semantic Carriers**

Compliments are not only greatly prescribed in syntactic structures, but also in lexical substances that reflect optimistic valuation (Alinezhad, 2015; Herbert, 1989, 1991; Holmes, 1986, 1988; Li, 2015; Manes & Wolfson, 1981). The reported in this study revealed that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were inclined to use more adjectives (*nice, beautiful, great, good*) when complimenting than other lexical items. This inclination can be attributed to the syntactic features of the Arabic grammar in which an adjective comes after a noun to either explain some of its conditions such as لقد جاء الرجل

لقد جاء الذكي (The smart man has come) or to clarify what is related with a noun such as صديق الرجل الذكي (The friend of the smart man has come) (Moubaidin et al., 2013). Although adjectives were the highest used semantic carrier, differences were evident with respect to the frequency of each of the other semantic carriers, which establishes that no permanent suppositions can be reached as there are cultural and linguistic differences that may affect people's use of lexical choices.

## 8.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the results of participant observation with respect to the complimenting practices of male Jordanian-Australians were presented and analysed. The data from participant observation supplemented the data from semi-structured interviews (Chapters Five, Six and Seven), which investigated participants' perceptions of compliments. In other words, participant observation provided an overview of how male Jordanian-Australians naturally use compliments in everyday social interactions. Furthermore, participant observation provided an opportunity to obtain natural data by observing participants' everyday natural interactions. It enabled participants to produce comprehensive and more genuine verbal language than the semi-structured interviews did. Participants were freely able to deliver comprehensive and detailed language in their interactions.

The closing chapter discusses the major findings of the study with reference to the three research questions presented in Chapter One of this thesis. Furthermore, it illustrates the importance of including the teaching of complimenting to participants in Australia. It also foregrounds some of the study's implications and provides some directions for further studies in this area of research.

# CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

## 9.0 Introduction

This study empirically examined the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians. The intercultural context in this study is a migration and study abroad context for participants of Jordanian origin who had lived in Australia for a period of at least five years at the time of the study. The research was conducted using ethnographic methodological approach, which included semi-structured interviews and covert ethnographic observation of participants' social interactions in various locations in Sydney, Australia. The study draws valuable inferences about the perceptions and practices of compliments of male Jordanian-Australians in particular and migrants in general.

This chapter provides answers to the research questions presented in Chapter One of this thesis. It also recaps the significance, benefits, originality and contribution of the study. Moreover, it summarises the study's theoretical and educational implications. In addition, the chapter presents the limitations of the study and suggests key recommendations for further research in this area of study.

## 9.1 Addressing Research Questions

In this section, the analysis provided in previous chapters is reviewed and evaluated to understand what conclusions and suppositions can be reached to respond to the research questions posited in Chapter One of this thesis. To remind the readers, the present study addressed the following three research questions:

1. What does an intercultural approach say about the pragmatics of complimenting?
2. How does a focus on individual speakers (as opposed to groups or speech communities) and their experiences and life stories, help to understand the pragmatics of complimenting in immigrant contexts?
3. What can be learnt from the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians, and how can this knowledge contribute to understanding the dynamics of linguistic usage in immigrant contexts?

The following subsections respond to the three research questions.

### 9.1.1 Research Question One

#### **What does an intercultural approach say about the pragmatics of complimenting?**

The intercultural approach was a beneficial and practical method for a good understanding of the pragmatics of complimenting. The intercultural approach showed that the process of teaching and learning a new language includes more than just the teaching of the linguistic aspects of a language such as syntax, vocabulary, phonology and morphology. The intercultural approach and the theory of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 2009; Byram, Holmes, & Savvides, 2013; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Hymes, 1972a, 1972b) confirmed that learning a new language also involves the dynamic components of pragmatic knowledge, including understanding of speech acts such as complimenting. Pragmatic ability “encompasses the four main channels for communication, the receptive ones, listening and reading and the productive ones, speaking and writing” (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 3). Therefore, teaching and learning pragmatics is a central point where language and culture meet.

In addition, learning a new language involves the dynamic components of cultural knowledge (Byram, 2012; Gay, 2000, 2002; Kramersch, 1993), which refers to one’s cultural and intercultural awareness. Learning a new language successfully demands knowledge and understanding of the culture of that language (Bachman, 1990). Consequently, any intercultural interaction that lacks appropriate cultural knowledge and understanding may lead to misunderstanding and breakdown in communication (Chlopek, 2008). According to Kramersch (1993, p. 1):

Culture is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them.

Knowledge of the cultural aspects of the target society or culture is vital for effective intercultural communication. Culture consists of an extensive range of facets, including traditions, customs, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, values, assumptions, social relationships, celebrations, ceremonies, politeness convention, methods of interaction, the use of time in communication and the use of body language and physical space (Chlopek, 2008). As “culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing” (Kramersch 1993, p. 1), it

is of supreme importance that the target culture and not only chosen aspects of that culture, is taught in English classes in Australia to assist students, migrants and refugees to simultaneously understand the English language and the Australian culture. Teaching cultural and intercultural awareness needs to be incorporated into English classrooms along with teaching linguistic skills to empower students, migrants and refugees to develop intercultural communicative competence, and consequently, successfully settle in the Australian community and culture.

Achieving abundant intercultural communication and successful intercultural communicative competence is not the only reason to incorporate the intercultural approach into English classrooms. In multicultural countries, like Australia, there is still a considerable amount of stereotypes, prejudices and preconceptions about individuals who speak different languages and those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Fiske, 1998; McAndrew et al., 2000). According to Chlopek (2008), stereotypes often result from people's lack of understanding of the other. Stereotypes affect participants' use of different speech acts including the speech act of complimenting. Furthermore, stereotyped perceptions and prejudices influence participants' ability to develop intercultural communicative competence, resulting in inadequate integration into the target community. Hence, reducing stereotypes is an important reason for introducing the intercultural approach to English classrooms in Australia. Appropriate intercultural teaching and training is an effective method to increase one's understanding, tolerance, acceptance and respect of others (Chlopek, 2008). According to Kramsch (1995, p. 83):

Breaking down stereotypes is not just realising that people are not the way one thought they were, or that deep down 'we are all the same.' It is understanding that we are irreducibly unique and different and that I could have been you, you could have been me, given different circumstances.

Successful intercultural teaching and training leads to successful reception of beliefs, views, behaviour and practices that may clash with one's beliefs and values. Teachers, "in guiding the learner to new perspectives and new identities, is tampering with fundamentals of human identity" (Gee, 1988, p. 220). The intercultural approach, therefore, needs to be incorporated into English classrooms in a sensitive and sensible way.

The findings of the present study demonstrate the importance and efficiency of the intercultural approach in the study of the speech act of complimenting. The intercultural approach enhances one's ability to pragmatically deal across cultures (e.g. compliment

people from other cultures), which is increasingly important, as the world gets smaller and as cities become more multicultural. Becoming multicultural does not mean people are becoming identical, it means having more and more contact with people who are culturally different. Having an intercultural awareness and being able to deal with this cultural difference peacefully and creatively is becoming an important issue to thrive. Through exploring participants' complimenting behaviours, I investigated some features of the phenomenon that cannot be sufficiently illuminated by regular semantic or syntactic analysis, which tends to target isolated and elicited data. Furthermore, adopting the intercultural enquiry allowed the revelation of the main barriers that participants face in intercultural encounters in Australia.

Overall, successful implementation of the intercultural approach in English classes in Australia assists in the development of intercultural communicative competence, which in turn results in successful complimenting practices in intercultural situations. Indeed, effective complimenting also leads to successful intercultural communication, and as a result easier assimilation and greater harmony in the community.

### **9.1.2 Research Question Two**

**How does a focus on individual speakers (as opposed to groups or speech communities) and their experiences and life stories, help to understand the pragmatics of complimenting in immigrant contexts?**

In this study, the focus was on individual speakers, as opposed to groups or speech communities and on their individual experiences and life stories. In this regard, the complimenting behaviours of individual speakers in social intercultural contexts were observed. Furthermore, individual speaker's stories, experiences and views were studied to gain a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions and practices of complimenting.

The findings of the study indicated that participants' level of intercultural communicative competence is based not only on their level of English proficiency (Alptekin, 2002; Bagaric & Djigunovic, 2007; Canale, 1983), but also on their level of cultural and intercultural awareness (Baker, 2012). The degree of influence of the native language and culture was also found to have an impact on the sampled participants' intercultural communicative competence, which both influenced their use of language in general and their use of speech acts, including complimenting in particular.

In addition, the results of the study revealed differences with regard to perceptions and practices of compliments among individual participants. The sampled participants were perceived to be dissimilar, in that they were thought to be sincere or insincere, polite or impolite, direct or indirect and modest or less modest. Moreover, the English language skills and cultural and intercultural awareness of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were identified as diverse. While some participants demonstrated advanced English skills and boundless cultural responsiveness, others revealed limited English abilities and inadequate cultural awareness, influencing their complimenting behaviours. Similarly, the influence of the native language and culture on their perceptions and practices of compliments was understood to be enormous for some participants and slight for others. The results indicated that some male Jordanian-Australians demonstrated an awareness of and an ability to set themselves free from the impact of the native language and culture, resulting in successful complimenting practices and in turn positive intercultural communication.

Previous research on the speech act of complimenting indicates that compliments are said to be culture-specific (Alinezhad, 2015; Manes, 1983; Mursy & Wilson, 2001; Shahidi Pour & Zarei, 2016a; Wierzbicka, 1985). In other words, the complimenting practices respected in one culture may not be appreciated in another culture. The data from the present study confirm that differences still arise even between individuals of the same community or culture. Focusing on individual speakers rather than groups or speech communities assisted in revealing differences within the same community and culture. Therefore, generalisation is not an option as each individual has distinctive perspectives, life stories and experiences.

As discussed in Chapter Two, preceding studies on pragmatics tended to mainly focus on studying groups or speech communities, ignoring the necessity and importance of investigating perceptions, experiences and life stories of individual speakers. Hence, the findings of such studies were generalised to include all members of the targeted community or culture, disregarding differences between particular members of the same group or culture. Such generalisation is likely to make such results inadequate due to the overlooked and unstudied differences that still exist between different members of the same group.

The findings of the study show that each individual has unique linguistic, pragmatic and cultural knowledge. Therefore, a focus on individual speakers is necessary not only to fully investigate the phenomenon under study, in this case compliments, but also to assist in arriving at more accurate and authentic outcomes. The individual differences in

linguistic, pragmatic, social and cultural perception and interpretation of compliments and interactional contexts are all contributing factors in people's pragmatic failure in intercultural encounters. Consequently, understanding the barriers and difficulties that each individual faces may assist to come up with effective and practical recommendations.

### **9.1.3 Research Question Three**

**What can be learnt from the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians, and how can this knowledge contribute to understanding the dynamics of linguistic usage in immigrant contexts?**

Studying the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians not only helped to understand how compliments operate in social intercultural communication encounters, but also revealed the difficulties that participants face when complimenting interculturally. Furthermore, investigating intercultural complimenting assisted in the proposal of some educational suggestions, which may support the development of successful complimenting practices of participants in Australia (Please also refer to section 9.3 below). The present study found that when complimenting, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians were inclined to modify their compliments and compliment response strategies in the target language based on both their level of pragmatic competence and their degree of cultural and intercultural awareness. The study also found that the sampled participants were likely to favour existing customs, to employ polite and modest strategies, to consider the listener's face and to employ specific linguistic features that are influenced by their native language when complimenting.

As well as studying perceptions and practices of compliments, the present research investigated the lexical items, syntax, contents and discourse patterns of compliments. Speech acts, including compliments, "rarely occur in isolation, and much of their meaning is derived from their position within a sequence of linguistic interaction" (Cameron-Faulkner, 2014, p. 42). The findings of the study illuminated that the linguistic features evidenced in the linguistic use of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians appeared significantly different on the surface, however, similar underneath. As a result, the linguistic features of the sampled participants can be easily misinterpreted as indications of different social and cultural norms, which may lead to breakdown when communicating interculturally. Such failure entails that communication is socially and culturally determined. In general, linguistic communication that happens in the context of structured

social interpersonal interaction is socially and culturally specified. As part of social interaction, compliments are habitually offered in interpersonal communication to express a variation of social and cultural customs and beliefs (Manes, 1983). The data confirmed that in social interaction the sampled participants used specific linguistic strategies (Please refer to Chapter Five) to accomplish their goal by adhering to the rules and guidelines of dialogues and social conversations.

The relationship between language and culture highlights the importance of cultural linguistics. Cultural linguistics is a subdivision of linguistics that studies the connection between language, culture and conceptualisation (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2011, 2013). Cultural linguistics “places a stronger emphasis on the cultural construction of the conceptualisations that serve as the basis for particularly the semantic and pragmatic components of language” (Sharifian, 2013, p. 5). One’s list of conceptualisations may involve those that are related to their native language, those obtained because of living in particular cultural environments, or those developed from communicating with members of other cultures (Sharifian, 2013). Incorporating the teaching of cultural linguistics into the teaching of speech acts (including complimenting) is crucial to achieve successful linguistic, semantic, pragmatic, cultural and intercultural competence.

In addition to cultural linguistics, interactional sociolinguistics (Tannen, 2011) can be a source for intercultural pragmatics. As Tannen (2005, p. 205) argues, the connection between interactional sociolinguistics and intercultural pragmatics is close and both fields are:

concerned with how language conveys meaning in interaction; both regard the process by which language does so as dynamic, emergent, and resulting from the interaction of participants rather than from the single-handed linguistic production of individual speakers; and for both, the language of intercultural interaction is key.

The development of participants’ sociolinguistic skills is significant for appropriateness of language use (Yu, 2008). Sociolinguistic competence focuses on advanced thinking competencies through which participants prove how they can use language in the new language. Thus, sociolinguistic competence provides a platform for developing language in its social, cultural and linguistic aspects (Coupland & Jaworsky, 1997; Hudson, 1980; Trudgill, 1984).

Even though the linguistic choices made by the sampled male Jordanian-Australians shared similarities, the differences revealed could be driven by the influence

of the native social, cultural and pragmatic norms, functioning behind the scenes. Considerations of the linguistic usage of compliments among the sampled participants strongly recommend that it is necessary to investigate participants' experiences and perceptions of language use (semi-structured interviews) together with their daily natural interactions and practices (participant observation) in order to understand reasons behind such similarities and differences and to recognise what aspects of language use can be related to the influence of the first language and culture and what features could be attributed to the impact of the target language and culture. No matter how similar or dissimilar the linguistic choices produced by the sampled participants are on the surface, it is reasonable to state that the sampled male Jordanian-Australians share the motivation of wanting to demonstrate both politeness and intercultural communicative competence in their interactions.

Moreover, the study showed how the complimenting behaviours of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians function to endorse intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 1999; Hymes, 1972a) in migrant and refugee contexts. The theory of intercultural communicative competence was significant for this present study as the level of intercultural communicative competence impacts participants' perceptions and practices of compliments in intercultural interactions. Through the impact of communicative language in interaction, it was acknowledged that intercultural communicative competence is essential for successful intercultural communication. Similarly, through the impact of communicative language on education, it was recognised that intercultural communicative competence is crucial to good classroom training, and thus it should be the main focus of language teaching of students, migrants and refugees. The term communicative competence means an ability or "competence to communicate" (Bagaric & Djigunovic, 2007, p. 94). As participants, male Jordanian-Australians were keen both to learn from the target culture and to contribute to the intercultural environment in which they live. In intercultural communication encounters, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians delivered relevant language structures from the new language and culture, embraced new cultural norms and rules of speaking behind certain discourse conventions and attempted to amend the level of pragmalinguistic transfer from their first language (Jordanian Arabic) to their second language (Australian English) in line with the context in which the interaction occurs.

Pragmalinguistic refers to the speaker's resources for conveying communicative acts and relational meanings, including pragmatic strategies like directness or indirectness

to perceive a specific speech act such as complimenting (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Mirzaei, Roohani, & Esmaeili, 2012). It also reflects on the interpersonal functions of complimenting including politeness and face-saving (Leech, 1983). In addition, pragmalinguistic transfer is the influence of a speaker's first language and culture on their comprehension, production and acquisition of second language pragmatic information. It often happens when people depend on their first language and their native sociocultural norms and rules to perceive speech acts in a second language or a new culture (Bu, 2012; Kasper, 1992, 1995; Rizk, 2003; Zegarac & Pennington, 2000).

The findings of the study indicated that male Jordanian-Australians transferred some complimenting aspects from their first language and culture (Jordanian Arabic/Jordanian culture) into the target language and culture (Australian English/Australian culture). In particular, pragmalinguistic transfer was apparent through the use of (a) some syntactic structures in which adjectives and nouns are grouped together such as "+Adj NP", *سياره جميله* (It is a nice car), (b) some compliment topics such as complimenting children on appearance, *طفل لطيف* (A cute baby) and (c) some compliment response strategies such as offering the object of the compliment to the complimenter, *هو ملكك* (It is yours). Investigating the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians showed that certain interlanguage aspects arise. In other words, the language used by the sampled participants highlighted which aspects represent the native Jordanian aspects of complimenting and which features referred to the impact of the second language and culture, in this case Australian English and culture, on their complimenting behaviours. The results of the study confirmed that "NP Look/Be (Int) Adj", *أنا حقا أحب سيارتك* (I really like your car) followed by "Adj NP", *قصة شعر جميله* (Nice haircut) were the most frequently used syntactic structures. Such preference could be related to the influence of the syntactic characteristics of the native language on the sampled participants' preference and selection of such syntactic structures.

The choice of particular compliment topics such as appearance or look and personality traits by the sampled participants was another example of pragmalinguistic transfer. The selection of such topics also revealed the cultural preferences of male Jordanian-Australians. To name a few examples, weight gain, skin complexion and complimenting infants and children are some samples of pragmalinguistic transfer. Although the majority of western cultures, including the Australian culture, classify weight gain as something unattractive and unpleasant, Jordanians perceive it as a sign of good health and wealth and as a symbol of a wealthy and relaxed lifestyle. A skinny body is

undesirable in the Jordanian culture since it is considered an indication of poverty. With reference to skin complexion, Jordanians generally appreciate fair skin. Jordan is a warm country and only those who have a wealthy and relaxed life can have fair skin. A tanned complexion is undesirable in the Jordanian society and is regarded as a sign of a poor and unfortunate life that comes from manual labour and hard work out in the sun. Therefore, a tanned complexion is not usually preferred among Jordanian individuals. In contrast, tanned skin is highly cherished in western countries like Australia where individuals tend to spend a great amount of time in the sun in order to obtain a tan.

Another example of pragmalinguistic transfer is complimenting infants and children. In general, compliments on infants and children were very frequent among the sampled male Jordanian-Australians, particularly from relatives and close friends. Family members and friends often give compliments to their friends' children on their looks, personality, ability or performance in school. The sampled male Jordanian-Australians were observed to be generous in offering compliments to their friends, and hence compliments on children or newborns were also expected as they can facilitate social conversations. From a Jordanian social and cultural perspective, this tendency to compliment children reflects the significance of having children, which is considered an accomplishment in the Jordanian society. According to the sampled male Jordanian-Australians, these cultural differences have created misunderstandings when complimenting in intercultural contexts due to having different perceptions on, for example, weight gain, skin complexion and complimenting infants and children between their native culture and the new culture.

In addition, compliment response strategies of the sampled male Jordanian-Australians presented a conflict between the native language and the target language rules of speaking. The difference was obvious at the compliment substrategy response level. For example, the downgrading utterance substrategy provided the most apparent evidence of pragmalinguistic transfer by the sampled participants since this substrategy presents a central point between approval of a compliment and self-avoidance. Another response substrategy, which was a sign of pragmalinguistic transfer is the shift credit substrategy as it presented a conciliation between the desire to keep solidarity by approving the compliment and the wish to be modest. Other substrategies of compliment responses such as reassurance *حقاً؟* (Oh really?) and opt out (smiling) are also examples of pragmalinguistic transfer in compliments. Although pragmalinguistic transfer was present in the complimenting practices of male Jordanian-Australians, the sampled participants were

able to function practically between the two cultures: the Jordanian and Australian cultures. This inclination was consistent across the semi-structured interviews and participant observation data.

Increasing and improving intercultural awareness of social, cultural, linguistic and pragmatic similarities and differences between one's native language and culture and the target language and culture will significantly assist to develop people's sociocultural, pragmatic and complimenting competency in intercultural communication encounters. Such awareness, once achieved, can empower participants and assist them to implement an innovative and strategic way of blending complimenting approaches and expectations from both cultures, and as a result be successful intercultural communicators.

Interculturalism (Gundara, 2000) is also crucial to help participants towards a competency in the target culture. The present study joins a growing body of scholarship that acknowledges the significance of intercultural skills and abilities (Siissmuth, 2007) in the Australian intercultural or migrant contexts. Greater focus on developing intercultural skills and competencies of migrants and refugees is essential in this regard. The definitions of intercultural communicative competence were briefly examined in this research; however, such examination revealed a fundamental complexity that unquestionably requires further comprehensive study, which was not possible given the scope of the present study. The sampled participants defined intercultural communicative competence in terms of interaction, communication and cultural knowledge. In other words, they accentuated the significance of understanding and acquiring awareness of the new culture rather than focusing on their own culture (Odag, Wallin, & Kedzior, 2015).

Although the majority of the sampled participants were aware of the fact that the ability to competently speak both their first language and second language contributes to their pragmatic, cultural and intercultural competence, the perception of interculturalism is still influenced by predominant theories and thoughts of general identity. Having access to intercultural (Müller-Hartmann, 2000), social and academic networks is proven to be vital to enable participants to become more interculturally competent. In addition to promoting the growth of intercultural communicative competences, these social and academic networks support the social and cultural transformation and the development of interlingual and intercultural skills (Siissmuth, 2007) in intercultural contexts in Australia.

In brief, it can be argued that the linguistic operations of complimenting produced by the sampled participants confirm that no one strategy of compliment and compliment responses would work since different individuals have dissimilar sets of strategies. In

addition, it can be indicated that neither knowledge of language nor knowledge of culture is united across the same speech community (Sharifian, 2013). The present study revealed differences in the complimenting norms of members of the same cultural group, thus precluding any valid generalisation.

## **9.2 Recap of Significance, Benefits, Originality and Contributions**

As explained in Chapter One, this study is important in many ways that are both theoretical and pedagogical. From a theoretical perspective, it provides understanding and linguistic knowledge about the complimenting behaviours of participants in intercultural settings. This research project sheds light on the communicative strategies inherent in compliments and compliment responses among male Jordanian-Australians with wider implications for our understanding of this topic in other comparable intercultural and immigrant contexts in Australia. The thesis also illuminates theoretical ideas that are relevant in determining whether being intercultural affects an individual's selection of strategies, topics and language, particularly in intercultural social interactions. In this way, the study adds to our understanding as well as to the body of literature on how compliments are perceived and practised among participants in an intercultural or immigrant context.

In addition the study contributes new knowledge to intercultural perspectives on interlanguage pragmatics and highlights the importance of the development of intercultural communicative competence of migrants and refugees in Australia. Pedagogically, this research provides insights into whether there is a need for further pedagogical training for immigrants and refugees in order to assist them to gain the necessary cultural and pragmatic skills to be able to successfully settle in Australia.

The study of male Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments is original because it brings together a study of their complimenting behaviours along with an analysis of the effects of social and cultural issues such as family, cultural norms, traditions, language and communication on an individual's language development, cultural awareness and first language and cultural pragmatic transfer. Unlike previous studies on complimenting that mainly implemented cross-cultural approaches, this study adopts an intercultural approach, which examines interaction between individuals and groups from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and investigates the impact of culture on

individuals and their actions, feelings, thoughts as well as their speaking and listening proficiency (Dodd, 1998).

Contrasting cross-cultural approaches, which do not suggest any interaction between the individual and cultures involved, intercultural approaches cover interaction between or within cultures. From an intercultural view, it is possible to examine the life stories and experiences of individuals who move from one country or culture to another and to investigate the interactions of individuals from diverse countries and cultures who live in a country such as Australia (Fries, 2006). This unique approach constitutes the originality of this thesis in the sense that previous similar studies have mainly targeted cross-cultural approaches (Bait Jamil, 2016; Cedar, 2006; Golato, 2002; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Motaghi-Tabari & Beuzeville, 2012; Nguyen, 2007; Quran, 2012; Sorahi & Nazemi, 2013; Tang, C. H., & Zhang, 2009; Tran, 2010) where the main focus is on comparing and contrasting two cultures, groups or speech communities while overlooking the role and importance of individual speakers, which is at the heart of this work. The findings of such studies were generalised to include all members of the targeted community or culture, disregarding differences between particular members of the same group or culture. Such generalisation is likely to make such results inadequate due to the overlooked and unstudied differences that still exist between different members of the same group.

The social benefits of the study are various and are not only to male Jordanian-Australians, but also to language teachers, language school administrators, the Jordanian Department of Education, the Australian Department of Education and Training and the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Language teachers may refer to the research findings to develop effective strategies to assist migrants and students to overcome their language and cultural barriers. The Jordanian Department of Education may use the research findings to develop new policies in order to assist students to overcome their language difficulties and to communicate effectively in a second language. Furthermore, language school administrators, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Department of Education and Training may highlight the research outcomes to create new policies or amend existing ones in ways that may benefit migrants and refugees in Australia.

By investigating how male Jordanian-Australians perceive and practise intercultural compliments, this thesis contributes to the knowledge of intercultural complimenting and intercultural pragmatics. The study contributes to our understanding as well as to the body of the literature of how compliments are perceived and pragmatically

practised among participants in immigrant contexts. The findings of the study revealed that intercultural differences affect participants' choice of strategies, topics and language. It also showed that the cultural specificity of complimenting as a social act is influenced by values such as politeness, sincerity and insincerity. From a pedagogic viewpoint, the study discovered the cultural dilemma participants face when complimenting in another language while simultaneously trying to retain their Jordanian cultural identity. Moreover, it highlighted the importance of explicit teaching of intercultural complimenting and intercultural awareness in English classrooms in order to develop pragmatic competence of students, migrants and refugees in order to assist them to gain the necessary social, cultural and pragmatic skills to be able to successfully settle in Australia. In this sense, it contributes new knowledge to the intercultural understanding of interlanguage pragmatics, particularly to the development of intercultural communicative competence of migrants and refugees in Australia.

Overall, the innovative strength of the thesis lies in the rich data corpus that was gathered. It also lies in the interpretation of the data to illuminate language and identity issues with a focus on individuals in a lesser-known minority migrant group in Australia – male Jordanian-Australians. The focus on participants who have two cultures co-existing within them is believed to have made the sampled male Jordanian-Australians different to participants of previous studies. Therefore, the context of this study is different to previous studies. Unlike previous studies on compliments, which either targeted students of tertiary education in Australia or compared and contrasted two societies, cultures or cultural groups, the present research focused mainly on migrants of Jordanian origin in Australia, making it unique and innovative. Henceforth, this thesis adds features of intercultural complimenting to our knowledge. It also reveals intercultural gaps and constitutes a knowledge base that opens doors for future research on complimenting, intercultural pragmatics and intercultural communication (Please refer to Section 9.4 below).

### **9.3 Implications**

This study, to the best of my knowledge, is the first to examine the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians. Through recognition of intercultural, social, pragmatic and linguistic differences in the speech act of complimenting, it contributes to research on intercultural communication. Moreover, through exploration of sociopragmatic features of complimenting among participants, the present research adds

to our knowledge of interlanguage pragmatics and to knowledge of interactive linguistic teaching and learning of complimenting in English classrooms in Australia. In addition, this study offers a view into the connection between complimenting and interactional practices in intercultural contexts. It also has intercultural pedagogical implications.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of the study highlights the importance of teaching intercultural pragmatics in English classes in Australia. The data confirmed that teaching of metalinguistic information such as complimenting is not practically and comprehensively taught in English language classrooms in Australia. The following information extracted from interview transcripts support this perception:

يجب أن أقول إن ما تعلمته لم يكن مفيداً عندما يتعلق الأمر بالمجامله. أعني تم مناقشة المجاملات نظرياً  
كنوع واحد من أفعال الكلام. لا أستطيع أن أذكر أنني تلقيت تدريباً خاصاً على المجاملات. (JA 3)

‘I have to say that what I have learnt was not helpful when it comes to complimenting. I mean compliments are discussed theoretically as one type of speech acts. I cannot recall I have received specific training on compliments.’  
(JA 3)

The above sentiments were also echoed by JA 6 who observed that:

لا أعتقد أنها مساعده جيده. كانت مساعده بسيطه، هل تعلم؟ لأن التعليم في الفصول لا يركز على مهارات  
المحادثة أو المجاملات. تعلمونك القواعد اللغويه والمفردات. كما يعلمك الكتابه، ولكن ليس المجاملات.  
(JA 6)

‘I do not think it was a good help. It was a very simple help, you know. Because education in classes does not focus on conversation skills or compliments. They just teach you grammar and vocabulary. They also teach you writing, but not compliments.’ (JA 6)

Along the same lines, JA 19 argued:

دروس اللغة الإنجليزيه والكتب المدرسيه ليست مفيده. أتذكر عندما كنت أدرس اللغة الإنجليزيه، تعلمت  
كيفية قراءة الكتابه والتحدث أيضاً، ولكن لم أتعلم كيفية مجامله الأجانب. (JA 19)

‘English classes and textbooks are not helpful. I remember when I was studying English, I learned how to read, write and speak, but I was not taught how to compliment foreigners.’ (JA 19)

Bearing in mind participants’ interpretations above, it is apparent that the primary focus of English language textbooks is on teaching reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammar and that teaching of metalinguistic topics such as complimenting is not usually included in English courses syllabuses. Hence, two members of the study recommended that teaching of complimenting should be embedded in English textbook curriculums. In this regard, JA 10 argued:

أحب أن أرى تعليم المجاملات و الرد على المجاملات في مناهج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. أعتقد أنه ينبغي التعامل مع المجاملات مثل أي موضوع آخر. (JA 10)

‘I would like to see teaching compliments and compliment responses included in the English teaching syllabuses. I think compliments should be treated like any other topic.’ (JA 10)

Similarly, JA 11 observed that:

حسناً، تعليم المجاملات و الرد على المجاملات في مناهج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية ضروري لضمان حصول جميع الطلاب أو غيرهم ممن يأتون إلى أستراليا على معلومات حول المجاملات وكيفية التعامل مع الثقافات المختلفة. أعتقد أن هذا مهم. (JA 11)

‘Well, the inclusion of teaching compliments in the English syllabus is important to ensure all students or others who come to Australia learn about compliments and how to deal with different cultures. I think this is important.’ (JA 11)

Another member of the study not only agreed, but also highlighted the significance of training and practice in the teaching and learning of complimenting. JA 3 stated:

أعتقد أنه يجب تدريس المجاملات [...] للطلاب من الناحية النظرية والتطبيقية. بهذه الطريقة يمكن للطلاب الممارسة وبالممارسة يتعلموا. (JA 3)

‘I think compliments [...] should be taught to students in theory and practice. By following this way, students can practise and by practice they can learn.’ (JA 3)

From previous research on the speech act of complimenting, it is evident that limited materials about complimenting are included in the workbooks of spoken English and that in most cases such materials are very theoretical and oversimplified (Li, 2015; Vellenga, 2004). Therefore, there is an urgent necessity to focus on teaching pragmatic competence (Grossi, 2009) and metalinguistic knowledge and awareness in English language classrooms. Due to lack of practice and limited exposure to daily communication in the new language, some migrants and refugees find it challenging to achieve pragmatic competence even after living in Australia for a reasonable period. Although they live in an English speaking country, some migrants and refugees continue to socialise and interact with individuals from their own speech community and continue to speak their first language. In order to overcome this difficulty, more focus needs to be placed on increasing participants’ English language input.

Language input can be a great tool to develop individuals’ intercultural communicative competence. As a former teacher of English, I believe that language input is usually delivered from two main sources, first, teachers’ conversation in classrooms and second, teaching resources and materials. In English classes, the focus is mainly on linguistic competence rather than on pragmatic competence and cultural knowledge. As a former student of English in Australia, I have noticed that most English teachers tend to ignore pragmatic knowledge in classrooms, focusing instead on linguistic knowledge. Discounting pragmatic knowledge leads to pragmatic failure, particularly in intercultural interactions (Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004). Real-life interactions can be a valuable tool that assist to develop participants’ pragmatic competence. Unlike real-life conversations, which allow unlimited natural interactions, classrooms have specific structures that sometimes restrict access to ordinary natural interactions. Therefore, participants require suitable language input to overcome this shortage of experience of real day-to-day interactions in English.

Moreover, teaching resources are a good source of language input; however, such materials tend to focus on mainly linguistic competence rather than pragmatic competence (Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004). Furthermore, teaching materials need to be research-based on speech acts rather than writer-based on perception (Nguyen, 2007). Authentic materials should be used as they offer better enthusiasm for participants. Participants require natural

language input in English classrooms in order to enhance their pragmatic competence. Examples of possible methods that can be employed to deliver more natural input in classrooms may involve video, television (Grant & Starks, 2001), film (Rose, 2001) or role-plays. The use of role-plays in classrooms, for example, is beneficial to achieve this goal. Role-plays allow individuals to reflect on their performance and then compare it with one another (Burton & Daroon, 2003; Nguyen, 2007). Such teaching techniques as Burton and Daroon (2003) indicate, increases individuals' awareness of sociopragmatic perception and significance. By using such methods, participants will be given an opportunity to observe and practise natural interactions, develop pragmalinguistic confidence in the new language, and as a result confidently engage in conversations outside the classroom environment (Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 2000; Burns, 1998; Cohen, 1996, 2005).

Few scholars (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Sadeghi, 2012) have formally studied the impact of teaching pragmatics on people's speech act behaviours. Previous research confirmed that implicit and explicit teaching of appropriate complimenting practices, taking into consideration cultural customs or social rules of communication have effective influences on individuals' communicative performance (Dastjerdi & Farshid, 2011; Grossi, 2009; Karimnia & Afghari, 2010, 2011; Tajeddin & Ghamari, 2011). A good example of the importance of teaching compliments in classrooms is Billmyer's (1990) study of the effects of teaching complimenting on Japanese learners of English. The results showed that unlike the untaught group, the tutored Japanese learners of English provided a greater number of suitable compliments, established a higher level of naturalness in commencing compliments and employed a more wide-ranging collection of positive adjectives in compliments. Similarly, the impact of compliment education and training was evidenced in participants' compliment responses. The findings revealed that the tutored group used richer variations of deflections and longer replies. The untutored group, on the other hand, employed simple expressions of agreement or refusal. Another good example of the significance of teaching compliments in classrooms is Huth's (2006) study of American learners of German. In the study, culture-specific compliment response structures were taught to twenty American learners of German. The results indicated that informants were capable of both negotiating cultural identity when using second language sequences and producing German culture-specific complimenting structures with second language discourse indicators.

As the present study revealed, the sampled male Jordanian-Australians tend to use their first language cultural and social rules of speaking due to their lack understanding of cultural and social customs of speaking of the target language. Moreover, the sampled participants were noticed to often carry out a particular strategy with a different expectation, which leads to negative pragmatic transfer. Therefore, the role of English classrooms is vital to develop participants' awareness of intercultural difficulties such as intercultural complimenting. The focus of such classrooms should be on explicitly delivering language input, and particularly complimenting, to participants rather than leaving it to the unconscious assimilation of ideas or knowledge, which "risks disempowering learners, depriving them of choice and sophistication in their use of English" (Holmes & Brown, 1987, p. 543). Explicitly teaching compliments and compliment responses to migrants and refugees leads to better pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic outcomes than implied teaching (Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001). Migrants and refugees can be assisted to interpret others' complimenting behaviours. They also can be supported to negotiate their personalities, subjectivities and intentions in giving and replying to compliments in intercultural settings (Ishihara, 2010).

In addition to natural language input, teaching and increasing cultural and intercultural awareness is crucial to develop individuals' intercultural communicative competence (Fenner, 2001; Huth & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006; Karatepe, 2001; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). Such awareness includes knowledge, skills and approaches required to undergo successful intercultural communication (Baker, 2012). Participants need to acquire not only a strong comprehension of the social and cultural inferences of discourse practices, but also continuously practise them inside and outside of the English classroom (Harlow, 1990; Tang, Y., 2006). According to Ishihara (2010), classroom teaching of cultural beliefs and values in one's native culture and in the new culture, can support the accomplishment of both cultural knowledge and linguistic control of the new language. The following information extracted from interview transcripts support this perception:

أحب معلمي أن يعلمني كيف تتعامل الثقافات الأخرى مع المجاملات، وما هو مقبول أو غير مقبول أن أقول. لأنه إذا عرفت الفرق فلن أقلق. أعتقد أن الوعي الثقافي مهم جدا. (JA 18)

'I like my teacher to teach me how other cultures deal with compliments, and what is acceptable or unacceptable to say. Because if I know the difference I will be fine and I will not be worried. I believe cultural awareness is very important.' (JA 18)

In summary, learning another language and culture in a situation that lacks real-life interactions creates an obligation to raise awareness of how certain contexts and social and cultural rules determine and control speech acts, including the speech act of complimenting (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Gass, Behney, & Plonsky, 2013; Pica, 1996). In addition, teaching and learning a new language and culture should be about how to use language and cultural rules properly for communicative purposes in real-life communication settings (Johnson, K., & Johnson, H., 1998; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018; Nguyen, 2007; Savignon, 2001). By raising cultural and intercultural awareness, participants can choose whether to wish for native-like complimenting or simply maintain their own cultural identity without causing intercultural communication failure (LoCastro, 2001).

#### **9.4 Delimitations of the Study**

This research specifically relates to the people to whom the results can be generalised, namely male Jordanian-Australians. The members in the group investigated have been controlled with respect to age, gender and social status. Social class and other subcultural dissimilarities were not studied in this research. Consequently, the generalisations and findings will be applicable only to participants who share similar features. In this study, qualitative and ethnographic methods are used to examine spoken utterances in spoken situations. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The study was based on a small sample of compliments and compliment responses derived from male Jordanian-Australians in social, academic and professional settings. The focus of the study was on male participants only. While it was desirable to recruit participants from both genders, there were two impediments: (a) the traditional and cultural sensitivity that restricts a male researcher's access to female Jordanian-Australians, and (b) the limited availability of female participants of Jordanian origin in Australia. These samples are enough to reflect male Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and methods of complimenting and responding to compliments as limiting the scope of the research assists in arriving at more accurate and comprehensive outcomes. However, the results are not expected to be generalised as individuals in similar social situations might respond differently at different times. Moreover, this research has not taken into

consideration other participants and migrants in Australia. Henceforth, generalisations of the results to other settings can be difficult.

This study presents numerous subjects in pragmatic enquiry, such as overcoming pragmatic failures. It also offers a valuable tool for language and cultural researchers, teachers of pragmatics, intercultural communicators and relevant policy creators. Moreover, the results of the research contribute to knowledge on intercultural pragmatics research, intercultural communication and teaching and learning of English in intercultural and migrant classrooms in Australia.

## **9.5 Further Research**

Although the present study has illuminated some fascinating and critical features of complimenting in intercultural contexts, there are still some aspects in this area of study that can be further examined.

Firstly, the present research highlights the significance of adding to what has been revealed through further research investigating the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians in contexts and situations other than social settings. Including other social variables such as gender, marital status and social and educational background. Using other data gathering methods, such as surveys and questionnaires. Studies that reflect the perceptions and practices of compliments among female Jordanian-Australians would provide a comprehensive representation of the complimenting behaviours of Jordanian-Australians in intercultural contexts. In addition, further research that investigates the complimenting behaviours of other participants in Australia will unquestionably enhance our knowledge and add to the body of literature of how compliments operate in other intercultural settings in Australia.

Secondly, more research is needed to study nonverbal features and actions of complimenting, like body language. Other data collection methods such as video recordings can be employed to collect data that expose and represent paralinguistic features such as body language, facial expressions, eye movements, hand gestures, postures and tone of voice. Such research designs will enable more interactional turns and will assist to observe and investigate body language in specific contexts. Studying body language when complimenting may further illuminate the relationship between compliments and other relevant theories such as politeness, sincerity, insincerity and flattery.

Thirdly, additional studies on the significance of intercultural complimenting as actions of flattery, politeness, sincerity or insincerity are evidently necessary and would greatly contribute to knowledge in intercultural complimenting and intercultural communication. Such research could also be complemented by studies of paralinguistic interactions regarding complimenting such as accent, pitch, volume, speech rate, modulation and fluency, in order to offer more perceptions into the teaching and learning of linguistics in Australia.

Finally, other unexamined research areas that may also be explored involve how people's perceptions of participants' accent affect their complimenting behaviours. In addition, how one's willingness to embrace more relevant speech styles in the target language and culture affect his or her complimenting behaviours in particular, as well as his or her language behaviour and intercultural communicative competence in general. In addition, the perception of "nativeness" among male Jordanian-Australians and possibly other participants in Australia is worth studying. Complimenting behaviours of participants on social media as well as their written complimenting norms can also be fascinating areas of additional research.

To sum up, this research is a cross-sectional intercultural study that contributes to the literature of intercultural complimenting and intercultural communication. However, researchers may obtain more perceptions by conducting further research in order to bring more interesting and critical aspects of intercultural pragmatics to light.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

In this research, the complimenting behaviours of male Jordanian-Australians and associated strategies used to convey pragmatic, social, cultural and linguistic competences in intercultural contexts were examined. By using semi-structured interviews as well as participant observation, discourse used by male Jordanian-Australians to communicate their perceptions, beliefs, needs and strategies in relation to the pragmatics of complimenting were observed, gathered and analysed. This study of compliments and compliment responses among male Jordanian-Australians is, insofar as I understand, the only research of its kind employing the intercultural communication analytic approach and naturally occurring data. Contrasting various other research projects of compliments, which targeted isolated and stimulated examples, this study investigated how the speech act of complimenting is perceived (semi-structured interviews) and practised (participant

observation) by participants. Specifically, it studied not only perceptions of compliments, but also compliments in action in intercultural interactions. In other words, it incorporated compliments more determinedly in social intercultural communication. Furthermore, the present research confirmed the effectiveness of the intercultural communication analytic approach in the study of compliments and compliment responses. By exploring compliments in intercultural settings, I was able to study some features of the phenomenon that cannot be covered adequately by the normal semantic or syntactic analysis, which tend to rely mostly on isolated and elicited utterances.

The current research exposed the difficulties that participants face when complimenting in intercultural encounters. Participants' lack of full understanding of the target culture, accompanied with their limited English language abilities and the influence of their native language and culture on their complimenting behaviours were all found to be the main barriers encountered in intercultural communication settings. In addition to uncovering complications of intercultural complimenting, the current research provided pedagogical suggestions to assist in guiding participants towards competency in intercultural communication. Given the results of the present research, administrators of English courses in Australia may choose to place more focus on teaching cultural and intercultural awareness, pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic competence to assist participants in becoming not only linguistically, but also pragmatically and culturally competent. Moreover, the study encourages English teachers to focus on developing their students' understanding and competence of applicable and successful use of speech acts, including complimenting in the new language. Successful intercultural communicative competence is essential for evading intercultural communication mistakes and for initiating and maintaining a strong foundation for increased interaction between participants and native speakers of the target language.

To conclude, this study contributes to the body of research in intercultural pragmatics based on its application of diversified methods that incorporated the elicitation method of semi-structured interviews, which facilitated an investigation of participants' perceptions and beliefs about compliments, as well as the use of covert participant observation, which enabled an authentic collection of naturally occurring data.

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# 11 APPENDICES

## 11.1 Appendix A: Timeline

<b>Timeline</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Aim</b>
February-May 2016	Write research proposal. Develop the research questions. Develop research methodology. Commence compiling bibliography. Commence literature search
June-August 2016	Proposal Seminar. Submit ethics application. Submit application for Confirmation of Candidature.
August-September 2016	Draft of preliminary pages. Commence thesis literature review section. Commence thesis methods section. Finalise outcome measurement issues. Confirm participants' sources. Conduct reliability measurements Continue writing literature review.
October-November 2017	Commence data collection Commence data entry. Continue writing literature review.
January 2018	Cease accepting participants for data collection. Complete data collection
February 2018	Complete data entry. Commence data analysis.
February-May 2018	Complete data analysis and commence writing up results section.
June -August 2018	Continue writing up results chapters
September-November 2018	Continue writing up results chapters Commence writing up discussion and conclusion chapter
December 2018	Complete writing up thesis
January 2019	Submit thesis/ project completion.

## 11.2 Appendix B: Information Sheet to Participant

### Information Sheet to Participant

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Dear Participant,

I wish to invite you to participate in my research project, described below.

My name is Malek Abu-Rabie and I am conducting this research as part of my PhD in the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New England. My supervisors are Associate Professor Finex Ndhlovu and Dr Sophia Waters.

<b>Research Project</b>	Jordanian-Australians' Perceptions and practices of Compliments.
<b>Aim of the research</b>	<p>The research aims to explore perceptions and practices of compliments among male Jordanian-Australians. The specific aims of the study are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To investigate Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments.</li><li>2. To determine whether bilingualism/biculturalism affects an intercultural individual's choice of complimenting strategies.</li><li>3. To discover what promises an intercultural approach holds for a better understanding of the compliments among participants.</li><li>4. To explore how a focus on individual speakers can help us come to terms with the pragmatics of complimenting in immigrant contexts.</li><li>5. To contribute new and original research data to the literature.</li></ol>
<b>Interview</b>	<p>I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview/narration with you at University of New England, Parramatta Campus. The interview/narration will take approximately one hour. With your permission, I will make audio recording and/or notes of the interview/narration to ensure that I accurately recall the information you provide. Following the interview/narration, a transcript will be provided to you if you wish to see one.</p>
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>Any personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results. All names will be replaced by pseudonyms; this will ensure that you are not identifiable. If you agree I would like to quote some of your</p>

	responses. This will also be done in a way to ensure that you are not identifiable.
<b>Participation is Voluntary</b>	Please understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary and I respect your right to withdraw from the study at any time. You may discontinue the interview/narration at any time without consequence and you do not need to provide any explanation if you decide not to participate or withdraw.
<b>Questions</b>	The interview questions will not be of a sensitive nature: rather they are general, aiming to enable you to enhance my knowledge of the perceptions and practices of compliments in intercultural situations.
<b>Use of information</b>	I will use information from the interview/narration as part of my doctoral thesis, which I expect to complete in February 2019. Information from the interview may also be used in journal articles and conference presentations before and after this date. At all times, I will safeguard your identity by presenting the information in a way that will not allow you to be identified.
<b>Upsetting issues</b>	It is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues but if it does you may wish to contact your local Community Health Centre 02 9843 3222 or Lifeline on 13 11 14.
<b>Storage of information</b>	I will keep hardcopy notes and recordings of the interviews/narrations in a locked cabinet at the researcher's office at the University of New England's School of School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Any electronic data will be kept on a password protected computer in the same School. Only the research team will have access to the data.
<b>Disposal of information</b>	All the data collected in this research will be kept for a minimum of five years after successful submission of my thesis, after which it will be disposed of by deleting relevant computer files, and destroying or shredding hardcopy materials.
<b>Approval</b>	This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England, approval number: HE16-258, valid to December 2020.

**Contact details**

Feel free to contact me with any questions about this research by email at [maburabi@une.edu.au](mailto:maburabi@une.edu.au) or by phone on 02 96894888.

You may also contact my supervisors. My Principal supervisor's name is Associate Professor Finex Ndhlovu and he can be contacted at [fndhlovu@une.edu.au](mailto:fndhlovu@une.edu.au) or 02 6773 2133 and my Co-supervisor's name is Dr Sophia Waters and she can be at [swaters4@une.edu.au](mailto:swaters4@une.edu.au) or 02 6773 3318.

**Complaints**

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at:

Mrs Jo-Ann Sozou  
Research Services  
University of New England  
Armidale, NSW 2351  
Tel: (02) 6773 3449  
Email: [ethics@une.edu.au](mailto:ethics@une.edu.au)

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you.

Regards,

Malek Abu-Rabie  
PhD Candidate (Linguistics)  
School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences  
University of New England

## 11.3 Appendix C: Consent Form for Participants

### Consent Form for Participants

**Research Project:** Jordanian-Australians' Perceptions and practices of Compliments.

I, ....., have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.	Yes/No
I have read the information letter and understand that my narratives will be recorded/noted and transcribed.	Yes/No
I agree that my narratives as recorded and transcribed may be quoted in a dissertation, a publication, a conference, an article and a book.	Yes/No
I agree to participate in some talks with the researcher, and I agree that the researcher may quote or paraphrase my answers in this research project.	Yes/No
I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published.	Yes/No
I know who I can contact with new questions.	Yes/No
I agree to participate in this study, realising that I may withdraw my participation at any time without any undue consequences.	Yes/No
I am older than 18 years of age.	Yes/No

.....  
Name

.....  
Date

.....  
Researcher

.....  
Date

## 11.4 Appendix D: Sample Advertisement

**Are you interested in chatting??!**

I am a research student in Linguistics at the University of New England, School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

I plan to study Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments.

I am looking for potential participants aged between 18-65. Participants must be male Jordanian-Australians who have been in Australia for at least 5 years.

I will have in-depth and narrative interviews with participants asking them about the complimenting behaviour in intercultural encounters. The interviews will last for approximately 1 hour and will be audio recorded.

I am looking for 20 participants.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No: HE16-258, Valid to 03 November 2017).

If you are interested in helping me in my research project, please contact me on 02 9689 4888 or send me an e-mail at: [maburabi@myune.edu.au](mailto:maburabi@myune.edu.au) and I will contact you with further details.

Talking is free for you, but it is essential for my study.

Thanks for your interest and co-operation

Regards

Malek Abu-Rabie  
PhD Candidate (Linguistics)  
School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences  
University of New England

## 11.5 Appendix E: Sample Social Media Advertisement

**Are you interested in chatting??!!**

I am a research student in Linguistics at the University of New England, School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

I plan to study Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments.

I am looking for potential participants aged between 18-65. Participants must be male Jordanian-Australians who have been in Australia for at least 5 years.

I will have in-depth and narrative interviews with participants asking them about the complimenting behaviour in intercultural encounters. The interviews will last for approximately 1 hour and will be audio recorded.

I am looking for 20 participants.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No: HE16-258, Valid to 03 November 2017).

If you are interested in helping me in my research project, please inbox me or send me an e-mail at: [maburabi@myune.edu.au](mailto:maburabi@myune.edu.au) and I will contact you with further details.

Talking is free for you, but it is essential for my study.

Thanks for your interest and co-operation

Regards

Malek Abu-Rabie  
PhD Candidate (Linguistics)  
School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences  
University of New England

## 11.6 Appendix F: Sample Email Advertisement

Dear...

I am a research student in Linguistics at the University of New England, School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

I plan to study Jordanian-Australians' perceptions and practices of compliments. I am looking for potential participants who are aged between 18-65. Participants must be male Jordanian-Australians who have been in Australia for at least 5 years.

I will have in-depth and narrative interviews with participants asking them about the complimenting behaviour in intercultural situations. The interviews will last for approximately one hour and will be audio recorded.

I am looking for 20 participants.

If you are interested in helping me in the research project, please circulate this email along with the attached Information Sheet for Participants to Jordanian-Australians at the Australian Jordanian Friendship Association/ Secretary of the Australian Jordanian Association.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No: HE16-258, Valid to 03 November 2017).

I can be contacted on 02 96894888 or [maburabi@myune.edu.au](mailto:maburabi@myune.edu.au) for further details.

Thanks for your assistance.

Regards

Malek Abu-Rabie  
PhD Candidate (Linguistics)  
School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences  
University of New England

## 11.7 Appendix G: Interview Guide

### المرحلة 1: البدء

أقوم بجمع قصص الحياة والتجارب / حول الإطراءات والردود على المجاملات في سياقات / مواقف بين الثقافات / المهاجرين / اللاجئين ، لمشروع بحثي الذي أقوم به ، فضلاً هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن قصتك؟ خذ وقتك. لدينا الكثير من الوقت الذي تحتاجه لهذا وتبدأ في أي مكان تشاء. سأصغي أولاً ، لن أقاطع وقد أقوم بتدوين بعض الملاحظات التي سأطرح عليك أسئلة حولها فيما بعد ، يرجى أخذ الوقت الذي تحتاجه ، وكما قلت لن أقاطعك. هل يمكن أن تخبرني قصة حياتك ، الأحداث والتجارب التي كانت مهمة بالنسبة لك حتى الآن.

### المرحلة الثانية: السرد الرئيسي

#### المرحلة 3: طرح الأسئلة

- (1) ما هو مجاملة ، في رأيك؟
- (2) ما رأيك في وظيفة الإطراء؟
- (3) متى يكون الوضع الأنسب لإعطاء مجاملة؟
- (4) عندما تصبح المجاملة مغازلة؟
- (5) ماذا غالباً ما تكمل شخص ما؟ الشخص الذكر؟ الأنثى؟ شخص كبير في السن ، العمر؟ صديق / قريب؟ زميل؟ غريب؟
- (6) أي من العوامل التالية أكثر تأثيراً على مديحك ورددك؟ ماذا؟
  - (أ) العمر؟
  - (ب) السلطة / الوضع الاجتماعي؟
  - (ج) نوع جنس مقدم ومرفق الإطراء؟
  - (د) العلاقة / الصداقة؟
- (7) في ثقافتك ، كيف تعطي وتستجيب للمجاملات؟
- (8) في حالة ما بين الثقافات ، كيف تعطي وتستجيب للمجاملات؟
- (9) ما الذي تقوله غالباً باللغة الإنجليزية الأسترالية عند الإطراء؟ ماذا تقول في الغالب بالعربية الأردنية عند الإطراء؟ ما هي الطرق المختلفة؟ ما هي الطرق المماثلة؟
- (10) ما هي الصعوبات التي غالباً ما تواجهها عند الإطراء في المواقف بين الثقافات؟
- (11) ما هي الخبرات مع مجاملات في الحالات بين الثقافات كانت لا تنسى؟
- (12) هل تعتقد أن "شكراً" هو أنسب طريقة للاستجابة لمجاملة؟ كيف ترد عادة؟
- (13) إلى أي مدى يعمل ما تتعلمه من دروس اللغة الإنجليزية و/ أو الكتب الدراسية بشكل صحيح في حالات الثقافات المتعددة؟
- (14) كيف تريد أن يعلم معلمك في اللغة الإنجليزية كيفية استخدام المجاملات؟
- (15) ماذا تريد أن تقول عن الإطراءات وردد الإطراء؟

### المرحلة الرابعة: خاتمة الحديث

## **11.8 Appendix H: Interview Guide's Translation**

### **Phase 1: Initiation**

I am collecting life stories and experiences of/about compliments and compliment responses in intercultural/ migrant/ refugee contexts, for a research project that I'm doing and please could you tell me yours? Take your time. We have as much time as you need for this and start wherever you like. I'll listen first, I won't interrupt and I may take a couple of notes that I'll ask you questions about later, um, please take the time that you need and as I said I won't interrupt you. So can you tell me your life story, the events and experiences that have been important to you up till now.

### **Phase 2: Main Narration**

### **Phase 3: Questioning**

- 1) What is a compliment, in your opinion?
- 2) What do you think the function of a compliment is?
- 3) When is it the most appropriate situation to give a compliment?
- 4) When is a compliment flattery?
- 5) What do you often compliment a person on? A male person? A female person? A senior person in status, age? A friend/ relative? Colleague? Stranger?
- 6) Which of the following factors most influence your compliments and compliment responses? How?
  - a) Age?
  - b) Power/ social status?
  - c) Gender of the compliment giver and receiver?
  - d) Relationship/Friendship?
- 7) In your culture, how do you give and respond to compliments?
- 8) In an intercultural situation, how do you give and respond to compliments?
- 9) What do you often say in Australian English when being complimented? What do you often say in Jordanian Arabic when being complimented? In what ways were they different? In what way were they the same?
- 10) What difficulties do you often face when complimenting in intercultural situations?
- 11) What experiences with compliments in intercultural situations have been memorable?
- 12) Do you think "thank you" is the most appropriate way to respond to a compliment? How do you normally respond?
- 13) To what extent does what you learn from English classes and/or textbooks work properly in intercultural situations of complimenting?
- 14) How would you like your teacher of English to teach you how to use compliments?
- 15) What else would you like to say about compliments and compliment responses?

### **Phase 4: Concluding talk**

## 11.9 Appendix I: Interview Questions

- (1) ما هو مجاملة ، في رأيك؟
- (2) ما رأيك في وظيفة الإطراء؟
- (3) متى يكون الوضع الأنسب لإعطاء مجاملة؟
- (4) عندما تصبح المجاملة مغازلة؟
- (5) ماذا غالباً ما تكمل شخص ما؟ الشخص الذكر؟ الأنثى؟ شخص كبير في السن ، العمر؟ صديق / قريب؟ زميل؟ غريب؟
- (6) أي من العوامل التالية أكثر تأثيراً على مديحك وردودك؟ ماذا؟
  - (أ) العمر؟
  - (ب) السلطة / الوضع الاجتماعي؟
  - (ج) نوع جنس مقدم ومرفق الإطراء؟
  - (د) العلاقة / الصداقة؟
- (7) في ثقافتك ، كيف تعطي وتستجيب للمجاملات؟
- (8) في حالة ما بين الثقافات ، كيف تعطي وتستجيب للمجاملات؟
- (9) ما الذي تقوله غالباً باللغة الإنجليزية الأسترالية عند الإطراء ؟ ماذا تقول في الغالب بالعربية الأردنية عند الإطراء؟ ما هي الطرق المختلفة؟ ما هي الطرق المماثلة؟
- (10) ما هي الصعوبات التي غالباً ما تواجهها عند الإطراء في المواقف بين الثقافات؟
- (11) ما هي الخبرات مع مجاملات في الحالات بين الثقافات كانت لا تنسى؟
- (12) هل تعتقد أن "شكرا" هو أنسب طريقة للاستجابة لمجاملة؟ كيف ترد عادة؟
- (13) إلى أي مدى يعمل ما تتعلمه من دروس اللغة الإنجليزية و/ أو الكتب الدراسية بشكل صحيح في حالات الثقافات المتعددة؟
- (14) كيف تريد أن يعلم معلمك في اللغة الإنجليزية كيفية استخدام المجاملات؟
- (15) ماذا تريد أن تقول عن الإطراءات وردود الإطراء؟

## 11.10 Appendix J: Interview Questions' Translation

- 1) What is a compliment, in your opinion?
- 2) What do you think the function of a compliment is?
- 3) When is it the most appropriate situation to give a compliment?
- 4) When is a compliment flattery?
- 5) What do you often compliment a person on? A male person? A female person? A senior person in status, age? A friend/ relative? Colleague? Stranger?
- 6) Which of the following factors most influence your compliments and compliment responses? How?
  - a) Age?
  - b) Power/ social status?
  - c) Gender of the compliment giver and receiver?
  - d) Relationship/Friendship?
- 7) In your culture, how do you give and respond to compliments?
- 8) In an intercultural situation, how do you give and respond to compliments?
- 9) What do you often say in Australian English when being complimented? What do you often say in Jordanian Arabic when being complimented? In what ways were they different? In what way were they the same?
- 10) What difficulties do you often face when complimenting in intercultural situations?
- 11) What experiences with compliments in intercultural situations have been memorable?
- 12) Do you think "thank you" is the most appropriate way to respond to a compliment? How do you normally respond?
- 13) To what extent does what you learn from English classes and/or textbooks work properly in intercultural situations of complimenting?
- 14) How would you like your teacher of English to teach you how to use compliments?
- 15) What else would you like to say about compliments and compliment responses?