Analysis of Compliments and Compliment Responses Used by Male and Female Pashto Language Speakers

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author MK designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author RR managed the analyses and presentation of the study. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore compliments and compliment responses used by male and female Pashto language speakers. Current research utilized Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as instrument of collecting data. The DCTs, designed for this study consist of compliments and compliment responses scenarios related with four situational settings related with appearance, personal traits, skills and possessions. The analysis reveals that the formulaic expression and appreciation token were two major response types which were most frequently used by both genders. Most of the findings related with the gender differences in compliments and compliment responses are specific to Pashtun culture and society; however, some of them have resemblance to Turkish, Nigerian, Iranian, and Arabic cultures. This study suggests that gender differences in compliments and compliment responses might be universal but how speakers reflect them in their sociolinguistic behavior may not be uniform across cultures.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Compliments and compliment responses are of particular interest in relation with the reflection and expression of cultural values because of their nature as judgments, overt expressions of admiration of someone's work, or taste [1]. They reflect a variety of cultural norms and values and while doing so, serve to express and maintain those values. This research study is important in part, because it has been conducted in Pashtun context and the results will contribute to the understanding of the sociolinguistic rules of Pashto, an understudied area of speech act research in Pakistan. It is expected that the findings will add a new dimension to the research body of compliments and compliment responses and will provide refreshing insights to this field of study. The rationale of the study is to explore the complimenting behavior of male and females Pashto speakers keeping in view the previous researches conducted in different cultural contexts. Current study will help to find out the similarities and differences in the complimenting behavior keeping in view the gender differences as well as the complimenting behavior of the people peaking languages other than Pashto language.

Keeping in view the background mentioned above, the objectives of the current study are the following:

i.   To explore differences in complimenting behavior of male and female Pashto speakers.
ii. To find out differences in the use of different patterns of compliment responses across genders among Pashto speakers.

The study aims to investigate the following research questions:

i.   What are the differences in the use of compliments by male and female Pashto speakers?
ii. What are the differences in the use of compliment responses between male and female Pashto speakers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to [2], a compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some good characteristic or skill which is positively valued not only by the speaker but also by the hearer. A compliment response is a response to compliment. Being an adjacency pair, compliment and compliment response co-exist.

The primary function of compliments in everyday conversation, according to the researchers such as [3,1,2] and [4], is social although they can serve a variety of other functions. Their function is to establish, negotiate, maintain or consolidate social solidarity. Moreover, [5], [2] and [6,7] also argue that the compliments not only express sincere admiration of positive qualities, but they also replace greetings, thanks or apologies, and minimize face- threatening acts such as criticism, scolding or requests. [8], points out that the primary function of a compliment is affective and social rather than referential or informative. If something is new, it is always commented in society. If compliments are not used on new things, it can be regarded as a sign of jealousy or lack of appreciation.

2.1 Studies on Compliments in Western Asia: The Case of Turkish and Persian

[9], contrasted the compliment response strategies across genders of Iranian teenage English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The data were collected through the use of written discourse completion tasks (DCTs), with four situational settings (appearance, character, ability and possessions). The compliment responses were coded according to [2] categories of compliment responses. The findings show that female Iranian teenage EFL learners preferred to evade and reject more than male Iranian teenage EFL learners. Another interesting result is that female Iranian teenage EFL learners employed an indirect communication pattern of modest acceptance, with a response "no" which means "yes" and demonstrates consideration and politeness towards others. On the contrary, male Iranian teenage EFL learners preferred to use direct communication of acknowledgment. The results also reveal that appreciation token and disagreeing utterance are preferred response strategies for females, however, males prefer down grading utterance and informative comment. The findings of this study suggest that no universal model of compliment responses would work because different genders have

different protocols preventing any valid generalization. [10], has termed complimenting as a speech event while [11], has called it a politeness strategy.

[12], in a study of compliment speech Act realization patterns across gender in Persian investigated compliments and compliment responses in Persian. A DCT was used to elicit 540 compliments and compliment response sequences. All the compliment responses were coded using taxonomy by [4]. The results revealed that Agreement responses occurred most frequently (43.59%) in the compliment exchanges. The findings also show a difference in denial responses between males and females. None of the female respondents used disagreement category while 8.6% of male participant's response fell into disagreement category. The results of this study indicate that among three main categories, agreement category was the most frequently used category in responding to compliments (43.49%). The results also show that some compliment responses were in the form of small prayers that the speaker be blessed from God, and modesty is a driving force behind Persian speakers' responses to compliments. The results also show that 'scale down category' is frequently used category next to agreement while giving response to compliments in Persian society. The study indicates that formulaic expression and appreciation token were the two major response types in Persian society. The findings by [12] resemble the findings of [13] in that agreement category is a frequently found category in compliment responses used by the Persian language speakers. Similarly, formulaic expressions and appreciation tokens were also abundant.

[14], investigated the Speech acts of compliment responses in Persian language. Drawing on [4], classification of compliment responses, the study examined the compliment responses collected through ethnography method. The results show that a majority of corpus (67.60%) of 756 naturally occurring compliment responses fell into the main category of agreement. Moreover, the results also indicate that majority of the compliments (89%) were given on nationality. The findings also reveal that males and females compliment responses consisted of 66.5% and 68.48% of agreement type responses respectively. Similarly, 24.9% of males and 23.3% of females rejected the compliments given to them (males 8.2% while females 7.6%). It suggests that there are no significant differences between males and females in terms of the compliment responses. in other words, the preference for acceptance of the compliment applies rather equally in both genders. This interesting result of the study rejects the notions which imply that Asians tend to reject compliments.

[15], in her study "Moving Away from Traditional Modesty on Responding to Compliments" investigates compliment responses in Pakistani society. This study is based on politeness maxims, and the participants were government officers of different grades who were given eight different scenarios where they were complimented. This study shows that how the notion of power emerges through compliments and compliment responses. The results of this study show that most of the respondents rejected compliments by shifting the credit to their parents. This reflects a clear element of modesty in Pakistani people's responses towards the attribution of credit to their parents for their success. The results also reveal that most of the respondents rejected compliments on their skills and efforts to the team efforts. Moreover, the results also show that the speakers of different grades in Pakistani society follow different patterns while responding to compliments. This study indicates that in Pakistani society people of different socio-economic classes (grades) do not follow the modesty of a collective culture, as reflected in their use of acceptance of self-praise.

The above mentioned study gives some insights into the complimenting behavior of Pakistani society but it is only limited to government officers working in different grades. This study does not reflect the underlying cultural assumptions of compliments and compliment responses of the target population.

A problem with the cited studies on compliments and compliment responses is that the complexity of the phenomenon of complimenting behavior and compliment responding has not yet been fully considered. Although, the above-mentioned studies on compliments and compliment responses provide a solid foundation for further work, there is a lack of empirical studies on the use of compliments and compliment response patterns by the speakers of different languages in Pakistanis. The present study aims to fill this research gap and it focuses on complimenting behavior and compliment response patterns of male and female Pashto speakers in Pakistan to get important cultural information embedded in their compliments and compliment responses.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed is based, in part, on the study of [9], although; several new practices were developed by the researcher. It is not only a qualitative but also a quantitative research design. The expressions collected from the participant have been discussed in different contexts highlighting their meanings. Quantitatively, the data for the frequencies has been represented through graphs and has been analyzed using SPSS or the statistical procedure of analysis in social sciences.

The target population of this study was Pashto speaking university students. Using non-random sampling procedure, a sample of hundred respondents (50 males & 50 females) was selected. The criteria of selection were their fluency in understanding and speaking Pashto language. Moreover, it was ensured that they were native speakers of Pashto language.

3.1 Instrumentation

This research study utilized DCTs as instrument of collecting data. The researcher developed a DCT (Discourse Completion Task) in the light of DCTs used by the researchers in the field of contrastive pragmatics for explaining compliments and compliment responses in different parts of the world e.g. [9,16,17].

The DCT designed for this research study, consist of compliment and compliment response scenarios related to four situational settings (appearance, personal traits, skills and possessions). The participants were given these four situations in which they receive compliments. The participants were asked to imagine that they were facing these situations and write down their most likely answers in each situation. Moreover, in order to facilitate the respondents, the DCTs were written in two versions, Pashto and English.

For content validity a pilot study was conducted where the respondents were requested to respond the situations so that the researcher could find out whether the situations designed to elicit compliments and compliment responses did in fact produce the intended complimenting behavior. Moreover, to ensure the adequate coverage of compliments and compliment responses, the DCTs were designed to reflect the various acts that trigger compliments (such as new dress, good look and skills or achievements).

So far as construct validity is concerned, the free response questionnaire was selected. The study was based on the underlying assumption that compliments and compliment response behavior is a form of communication which cannot be investigated by using a multiple- choice format. Thus, a free response format was adopted, that is, which has been extensively used to study various speech acts, including compliments and compliment responses. For the present study, DCTs (see Appendix A & B) have been designed and tested twice among native speakers of Pashto and had been revised according to their feedback before they were administered for pilot testing.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysis of Compliments in Pashto

As the compliments in the data occur between males and females, it is interesting to see whether there are differences in the complimenting behavior among males and females. Overall compliment utterances of both male and female respondents (Table 1) shows considerable differences in complimenting behaviors of both the genders. A detailed overview will be presented in discussion section.

Table 1. Compliments of respondents (males and females)

Lexical devices	Male	Female
Adjectives	26 %	53 %
Verbs	7 %	9 %
Adverbs	3 %	5 %
Nouns	3 %	1 %
Formulaic complimenting expressions	19 %	30 %

The above mentioned table indicates a considerable difference in compliment patterns of both the genders. The data reveals that female respondents prefer to use adjectives and formulaic complimenting expressions more frequently than males. The above table also reveals that female Pashto speakers prefer to use a restricted set of positively semantic loaded adjectives 53%, verbs 9%, adverbs 5%, and nouns 1%. The table also shows that female Pashto speakers frequently use the formulaic complimenting expressions (30% of the data) in realization of their compliment utterances. Moreover, it also reveals that the lexical choices conveying the semantic load of compliments of males are highly restricted to a set of adjectives

26% of the data, verbs 7%, adverbs 3%, noun 3% and formulaic complimenting expressions (19% of the data).

4.2 Analysis of Compliment Responses in Pashto

A contrastive analysis of compliment responses by the male and female Pashto speakers was carried out to identify different compliment response (CR) patterns between two groups. All the CRs were coded using categories of CR strategies given by [2]. In addition, this study required one more category which is referred as *formulaic expression.* It should be noted that Persians and Arabic speakers also use their own formulaic expressions in responding to compliments. Nonetheless, the formulaic expressions used by Pashto speakers are different in the sense that these responses to compliments seem to come from Pashto speakers' culture. The coding scheme has *four* macro strategies and *eleven* micro strategies. In order to analyze different CR patterns, the data analyzed statistically using percentage values. Moreover, an independent t-test was applied to determine whether gender difference would affect the individuals' use of different CR strategies of response.

4.3 Findings

In this section, the findings of the use of CRs are presented in two parts; (1) patterns in four settings (micro level); (2) General patterns (macro level).

4.3.1 The CR patterns (micro level) corresponding to the four specific situations

The findings presented with regard to the four settings, appearance, personal traits, skill and possession, enable us to see the detailed distribution of CRs and to provide an in-depth analysis of the data.

4.3.1.1 CRs for appearance (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1 shows that there is no uniform trend between male and female respondents. However, both groups preferred formulaic expression the most. The figure also shows that female preferred shift credit and return compliment more than males. The figure also indicates that the males preferred appreciation token more than females and females preferred

agreeing utterance more than the males. Another noticeable tendency is that neither group made use of downgrading or question accuracy.

4.3.1.2 CRs for personal traits (Fig. 2)

Fig. 2 shows that both groups preferred formulaic expression in their responses to compliments. The figure indicates that both male and female have similar tendency in disagreeing utterance. The figure also shows that females preferred return compliment more than males. Another noticeable tendency is that female preferred agreeing utterance and appreciation token more than males.

4.3.1.3 CRs for skills (Fig. 3)

Fig. 3 shows that the most frequently used CRs are again formulaic expression. The figure also indicates that females preferred informative comment and shift credit more than males. In addition, females have more tendencies in disagreeing utterance and return compliment.

4.3.1.4 CRs for possession (Fig. 4)

Fig. 4 shows that both males and females mostly preferred the formulaic expression. Moreover, the figure also indicates that both the males and the females have similar tendency in request reassurance and downgrading or qualifying utterance. The figure also shows that males prefer shift credit and disagreeing utterance more than females. Moreover, the figure also indicates a similar tendency for appreciation token of both males and females.

4.3.2 Independent sample t-test for CRs (micro level) corresponding to the four specific situations

As it was stated earlier, an *independent* t-test was applied to see whether there was difference in realization of compliment response patterns between the two groups (males and females).

4.3.2.1 Situation.1 appearance

Table 2 shows a significant difference in compliment response patterns on appearance between the two groups. The p-value .047 is less than alpha of .05 i.e. (0.47<.05). So it is concluded that there is a systematic difference between male and female on compliment response at compliments on appearance.
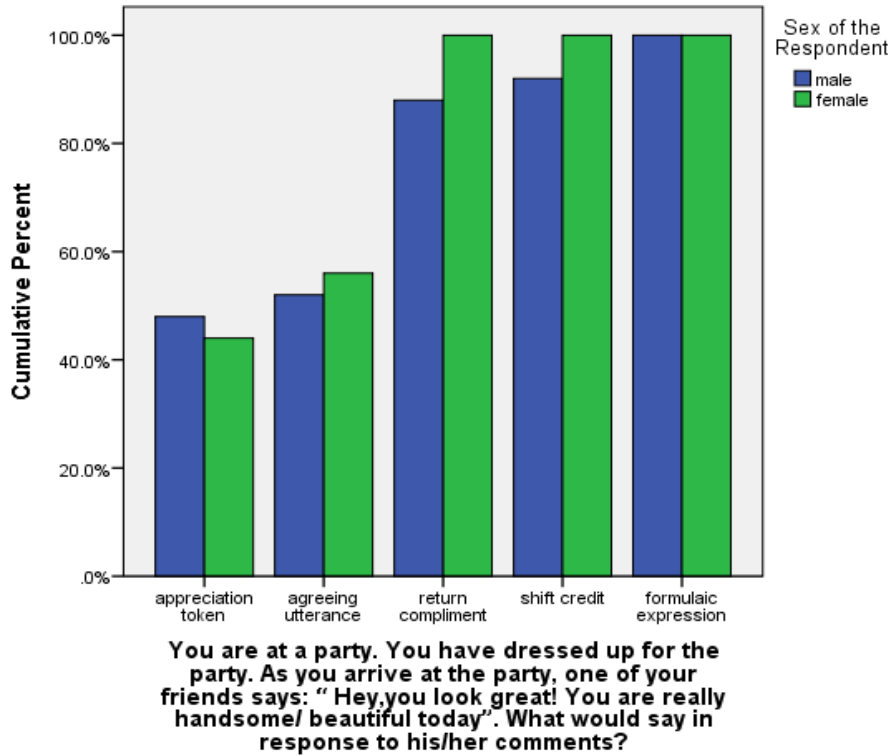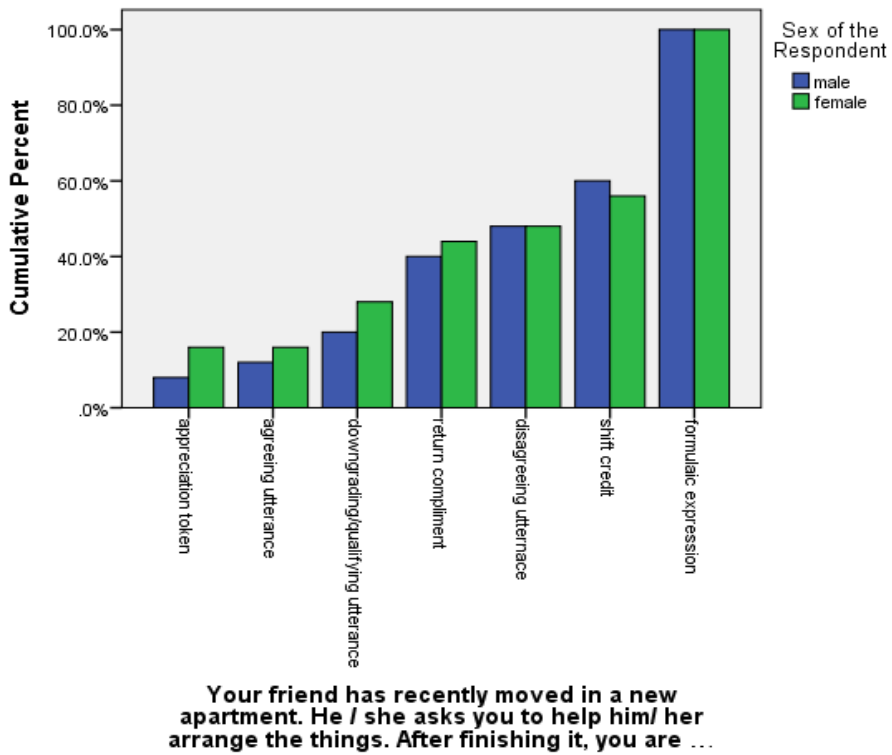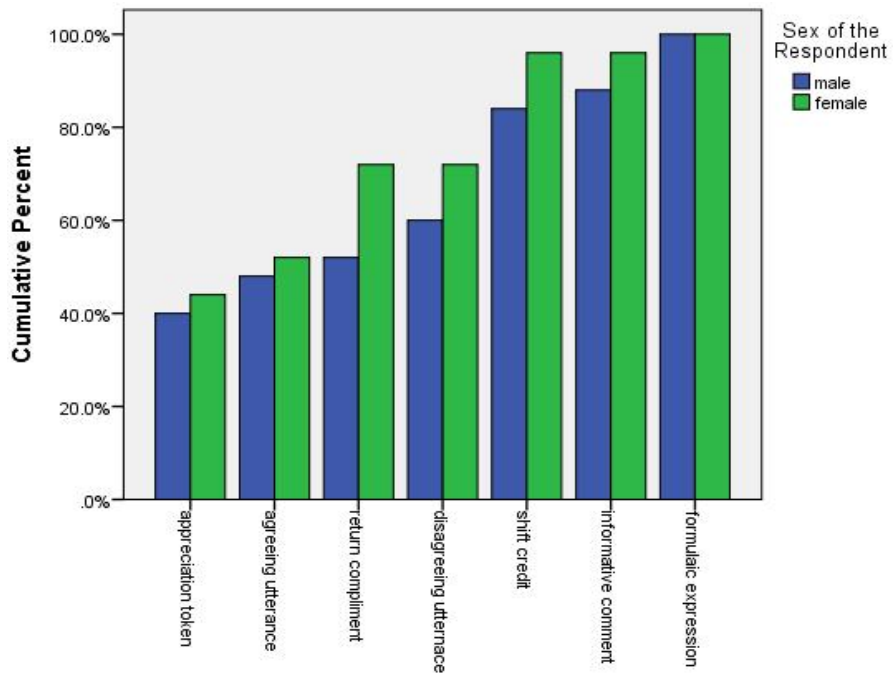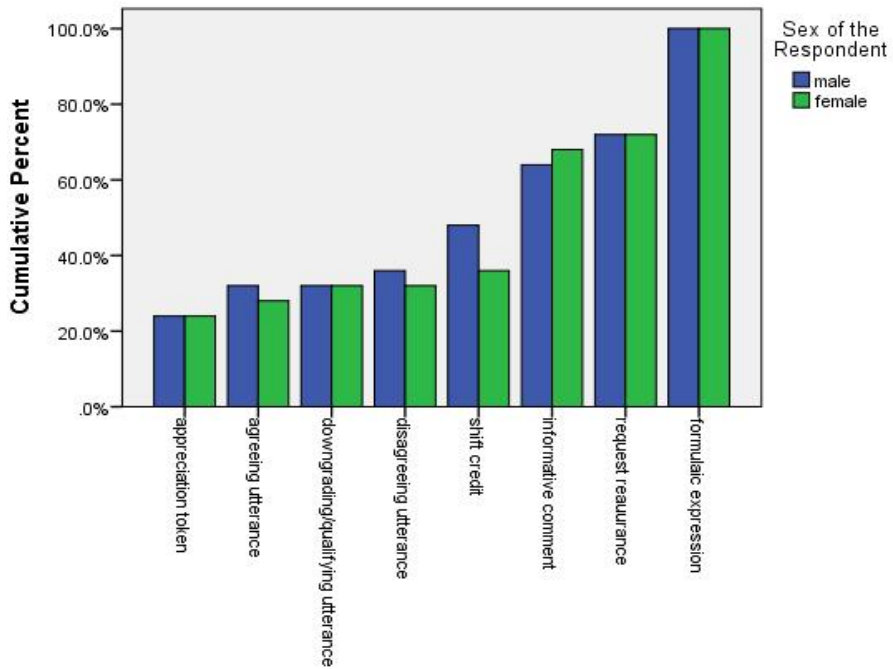
Fig. 1. CRs for appearance

Fig. 2. CRs for personal traits

Fig. 3. CRs for skills

Fig. 4. CRs for possession

Table 2. Independent sample t-test for CRs (micro level) corresponding to the four specific situations

Levene's test for equality of variances						
Compliment response scenarios		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
You are at a party. You have dressed up for the party. As you arrive at the party, one of your friends says: " Hey, you look great! You are really handsome/ beautiful today". What would say in response to his/her comments?	Equal variances assumed	25.298	.000	2.089	48	.042
	Equal variances not assumed			2.089	24.000	.047
Your friend has recently moved in a new apartment. He / she asks you to help him/ her arrange the things. After finishing it, you are about to leave, your friend says: "Thank you! You are really kind and helpful". What would say in response to his/her com	Equal variances assumed	.140	.710	-.404	48	.688
	Equal variances not assumed			-.404	47.975	.688
After you have completed a presentation, your classmate says: "Wow, that's brilliant, well done". What would say in response to his/her comments?	Equal variances assumed	1.805	.185	1.309	48	.197
	Equal variances not assumed			1.309	47.040	.197
You have bought a new cell phone. When you receive a call, your friend notices that your phone is different one. He / she says: "Wow, how smart. It is really great". What would say in response to his/her comments?	Equal variances assumed	.092	.763	.000	48	1.000
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	47.961	1.000

4.3.2.2 Situation.2 personal traits

The p-value for compliment responses on personal traits is .668, which is greater than alpha of .05 (.668>.05). This indicates that both groups have no significant difference in their compliment responses for compliments on personal traits.

4.3.2.3 Situation.3 skill

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female speakers in their compliment responses when they get compliments on skills. The p-value .197 which is greater than .05 (.197>.05) reveals no significant difference between the two groups.

4.3.2.4 Situation.4 possession

At compliment response patterns for compliments on possessions, the p-value (1.00) is greater than alpha of .05 (1.00>.05). This indicates that both male and female participants are not significantly different in the realization of the compliment responses when they get compliments on possessions.

The analysis shows that both male and female Pashto speakers have a significant difference with regard to compliment response on appearance. However, both groups do not significantly differ in regard to their patterns of compliment responses on personal traits, skill and possession at micro level.

4.3.3 The CR patterns (macro level) corresponding to the four specific situations

4.3.3.1 CRs for appearance (Fig. 5)

Fig. 5 shows that both male and female preferred formulaic expression the most while responding to compliments on appearance. The figure also indicates interesting noticeable tendency of females in accepting and evade compliments more than male. Moreover, the figure shows that neither group preferred reject in responding to compliments on their appearance.

4.3.3.2 CRs for personal traits (Fig. 6)

Fig. 6 indicates that most frequently used CRs on personal traits are again formulaic expression while responding to compliments on character by both groups. In addition, the figure also shows that male prefer accept more than females.

4.3.3.3 CRs for skill (Fig. 7)

Fig. 7 shows again the same tendency for formulaic expression by both male and females.
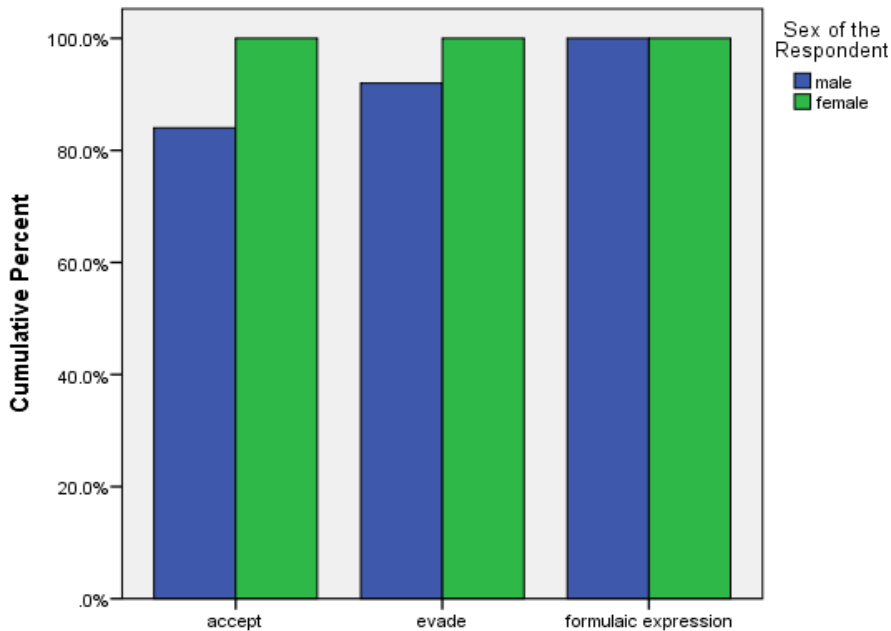
Moreover, the figure also shows that males prefer accept more than females when responding to compliments on skills.

4.3.3.4 CRs for possession (Fig. 8)

Fig. 8 shows that most frequently used CRs by both groups is formulaic expression when responding to compliments on possession. Moreover, the figure also indicates that both males and females have similar tendency in accepting compliments on possession. In addition, the figure also shows that male prefer reject more than female.

4.3.4 Independent sample t-test for four different complement response scenarios

As shown in the Table 3, an independent t-test was applied to analyze the difference between males and females in their compliment response patterns. The group statistics reveals a significant difference only in one scenario, however, no significant difference was found in the remaining three situations.

Fig. 5. CRs for appearance
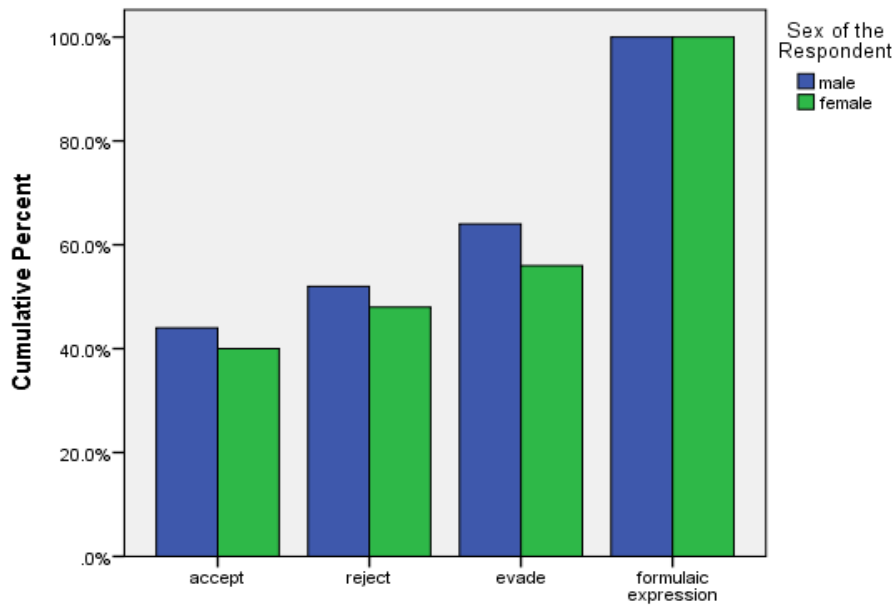
Your friend has recently moved in a new apartment. He / she asks you to help him/ her arrange the things. After finishing it, you are about to leave, your friend says: "Thank you! You are really kind and helpful". What would say in response to his/her com

Fig. 6. CRs for personal traits

After you have completed a presentation, your classmate says: "Wow, that's brilliant, well done". What would say in response to his/her …

Fig. 7. CRs for skill

Fig. 8. CRs for possession

Table 3. Independent sample t-test for four different complement response scenarios

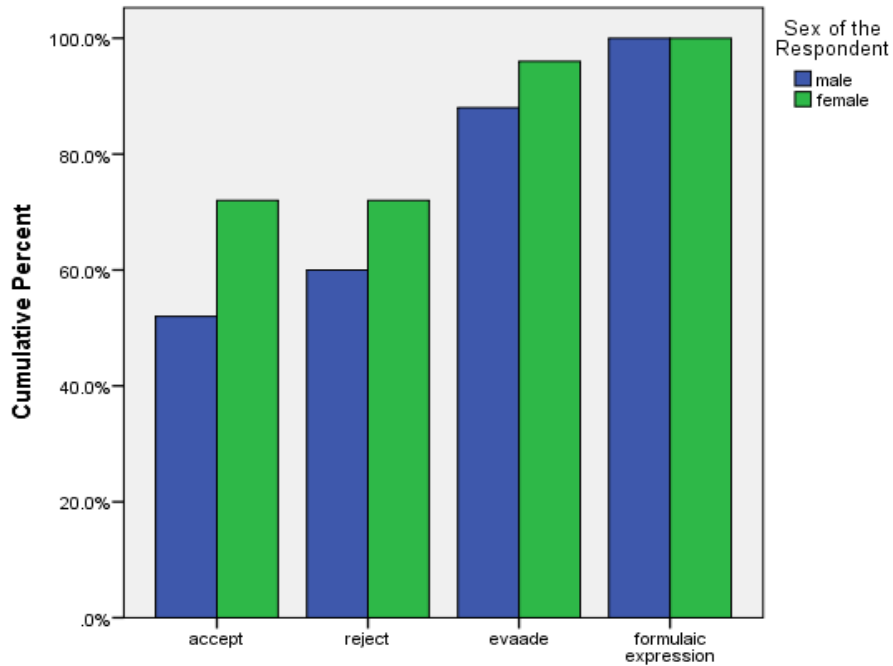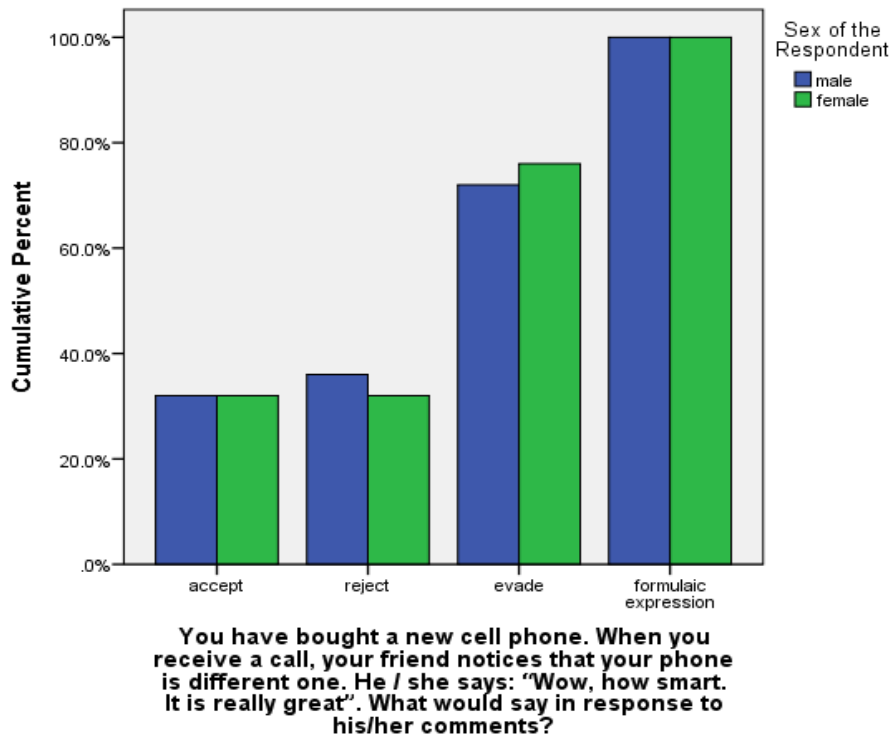| Levene's test for equality of variances						
Compliment response scenarios		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1-You are at a party. You have dressed up for the party. As you arrive at the party, one of your friends says: "Hey, you look great! You are really handsome/ beautiful today". What would say in response to his/her comments?	Equal variances assumed	25.298	.000	2.089	48	.042
	Equal variances not assumed			2.089	24.000	.047
2-Your friend has recently moved in a new apartment. He / she asks you to help him/ her arrange the things. After finishing it, you are about to leave, your friend says: "Thank you! You are really kind and helpful". What would say in response to his/her com	Equal variances assumed	.140	.710	-.404	48	.688
	Equal variances not assumed			-.404	47.975	.688
3-After you have completed a presentation, your classmate says: "Wow, that's brilliant, well done". What would say in response to his/her comments?	Equal variances assumed	1.805	.185	1.309	48	.197
	Equal variances not assumed			1.309	47.040	.197
4-You have bought a new cell phone. When you receive a call, your friend notices that your phone is different one. He / she says: "Wow, how smart. It is really great". What would say in response to his/her comments?	Equal variances assumed	.092	.763	.000	48	1.000
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	47.961	1.000

4.3.4.1 Situation.1 (Appearance)

At the compliment response on appearance, the p value shows significant difference between male and female respondents. The p value which is .047 is less than alpha of .05 (p < .05). So it is concluded that there is difference in compliment responses on appearance of male and female participants.

4.3.4.2 Situation.2 (Personal traits)

The table shows that there is no significant difference in compliment responses on personal traits between the two groups because the p value (.688) is greater than alpha of .05 (p>.05).

4.3.4.3 Situation.3 (Skill)

The value for compliment responses on skills shows no significant difference between the two groups at .197. (p>.05).

4.3.4.4 Situation.4 (Possession)

The p value for compliment responses on possessions (1.00), shows no significant difference between male and female participants as the p value is greater than alpha of .05(1.00>.05).

So it is concluded that there is a significant difference in realization of compliment responses to the compliments at macro level on appearance between male and female Pashto speakers. However, both groups have no significant difference in their compliment responses on personal traits, skills and possessions.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion of the Findings with Reference to Second Research Question

In the area of conversation, there are many studies on compliments based on gender differences. Studies have shown that there are some differences between males and females in compliments [2,4,18].

In the present study, compliment patterns are analyzed in terms of positive semantic carriers. Hence, the researcher compares the gender based differences in compliments only in terms of overall situations.

The study finds that females tend to use more adjectives (53%) than males do (26%), whereas males have a tendency to use more nouns (3%) than females (1%). Moreover, the female prefer to use adjectives like, *khukle/khaista* (beautiful/pretty) 32% while men use these adjectives 33%, of the data. This suggests that both male and female Pashto speakers tend to use adjectives with a slight difference. Two most commonly adjectives were used by male and female Pashto speakers are *kha* (good), *aala* (nice). These adjectives *khukle/khaista* (beautiful/pretty), *kha* (good) and *aala* (nice) are so general in Pashto that both male and female speakers use them frequently in their compliments. It was also found that both genders prefer to attach intensifiers with performative expressions to intensify compliments. Results show that participants showed preference for the intensifier very (deir*)*, followed by so much (*somradeir*).

Another aspect of complimenting behavior in Pashto, which relates to gender, has to do with noun. Interestingly, both genders used nouns which are embedded in cultural values. The results show that only (4%) of the compliments use nouns like *Da wadahalak* (bridegroom) and *Nawey* (bride).

Of compliments which make use of verbs in Pashto are, like *(khwakh)*, impressed (*mutasir*). Both genders have similar tendency in using these verbs. For adverbs, the data indicate, Pashto rely on few adverbs like nicely (*pakhashan*) and differently *(juda)*. Female speakers prefer to use more adverbs than male speakers.

As for the differences between males and females in complimenting polite expressions is concerned, the results indicate that females use these expressions frequently than males which is females (30%) and males (19%). The frequent use of complimenting polite expressions by female Pashto speakers suggests that women in Pashtun society seem to use compliments to establish, maintain and strengthen relationships. Moreover, it also suggests that female Pashto speakers use more politeness behaviors from their counterparts. From the character aspect, it may be argued that female Pashto speakers seek connections and involvement in conversations and male Pashto speakers seek independence and hierarchy. Furthermore, it may be argued that female Pashto speakers strengthen the positive force of compliment more

often than male Pashto speakers. Moreover, women are expected to be polite and delicate. As a result, women place the same expectations on themselves. This has been shown in the women's use of complimenting polite expressions. In addition, this research study supports some previous studies e.g. [2], which explain the finding that women tend to use more polite speech styles than men in the compliment and compliment response realization patterns.

5.2 Discussion of the Findings with Reference to Third Research Question

Having presented the findings of compliment responses used by male and female groups in analysis chapter, further discussion in this section aims to interpret the findings.

5.2.1 Use of compliment responses in Pashto at macro level in four scenarios

The findings show that the most frequently used compliment response pattern is formulaic expression Fig. 5. The interesting point about the participants is that neither group preferred 'reject' as compliment response on appearance. This suggests that Pashto speakers, both male and female accept compliments on their appearance. As the result pattern indicates that both groups prefer to use formulaic expression responses most frequently.

It seems that feature of these formulaic expressions is cultural specific. These expressions are embedded with Islamic teachings because these responses to compliments are in the form of small prayer and good wishes. The analysis also shows that Pashto speakers accept compliments by using appreciation tokens like "*Manana/ shukriya* (Thanks/ Thanks a lot) and evade compliments using

(1) Da Saddarkemelawegy. (You can get it from Sadarbazzar).

For compliment responses on personal traits or character, the analysis reveal that Pashto speakers prefer to use formulaic expression most frequently as shown in Fig. 5. For instance:

(2) Da zamafarazwo (It was my duty) (M-M) (F-F)

The frequent use of this expression by both groups shows that Pashto speakers

consider it a sacred duty to help others in need. Fig. (5) shows that Pashto speakers sometimes reject compliments on character. For example

(3) Na, da heskhbrana da. (Nah, it's nothing special) (M-M)
(4) Zama khayal de domrakhana dy. (I thought I did badly) (F-F)

However, Pashto speakers accept compliments on personal traits using the following patterns;

(5) Zama khayal de os teak sho. (I hope it's ok) (F-F)
(6) Samaslanawa. (It was no problem) (M-M)

The figure also indicates that Pashto speakers reject (50 %) compliments on character, using the following patterns

(7) Reshtya? (Really?) (F-F)
(8) Ta guplagy (you must be kidding) (M-M)

As for compliment responses on skills are concerned, the analysis shows that Pashto speakers, both male and female, prefer to use formulaic expression frequently Fig. 6. For instance,

(9) Da tol da Allah karamdy. (This is the bestowal of Allah/ It's all the blessings of Allah) (M-M)
(10) Da damorplarduagane dy. (These are the well wishes of parents/ these are the prayers of parents) (F-F)

These responses to compliments on skill show that Pashto speakers attribute their qualities to Allah and the results of prayers for them by their parents. It can be argued here that Pashto speakers downgrade their skills showing modesty.

For compliment responses on possessions Fig. 7, the analysis reveals interesting point that Pashto male speakers reject more compliments than their female counterparts. This indicates that female Pashto speakers accept compliments on possessions as they consider it as solidarity markers. Moreover, Pashto speakers use formulaic expressions as compliment responses to compliments on possession to avoid self-praise. For example;

(11) Allah de tala hum darke (May Allah bless you the same) (M-M)

(12) Allah de tala da de nakhadarke (May Allah bless you a nice one)(F-F)

5.2.2 Use of compliment responses in pashto at micro level in four scenarios

As the analysis indicates that there is no uniform trend between the two groups in their compliment response patterns on appearance at micro level. However, both groups preferred formulaic expression the most in responding to compliments on appearance. Moreover, Fig. (1) shows that Pashto speakers also use shift credit "ta khog ye" (you are polite) and return compliment "Stajamy hum khukledy" (Yours(clothes) is good too). In addition, agreeing utterance and appreciation tokens were also used in replying to compliments on possession. For instance,

(13) Khushalaosy (God's prosperity to you) (M-M) (F-F)

The results also show that Pashto speakers accept compliments by using appreciation token "*Manana/ Shukriya*" (Thanks), agreeing utterance "Ta zamazarrakhushalaku" (I am glad you think so).

For personal traits, Fig. (2) shows that Pashto speakers use varying responses. However, they prefer formulaic expression the most. For example;

(14) Da zamafarazwo (It was my duty)   (M-M) (F-F)

The frequent use of "da zamafarazwo" suggest that Pashto speakers when complimented for taking good care of their friends and spontaneously respond (da zamafarazwo), that there are many duties good members of Pashtun society should do the best of their ability. The response patterns were used as evade "Dostankho we de da para" (that's what friends are for). The data shows that 50% of the respondents reject compliments on personal traits by using disagreeing utterance "Zama khayal de domrakhanady" (I thought I did badly). In addition, Pashto speakers accept compliments (40%) on personal traits using return compliment strategy "Ta pkhplakhainsan ye" (you are not bad yourself). Downgrading utterance was used 25% "Heskhbrana da" (it's

nothing), "Hesmaslanawa" (it was no problem), appreciation token "manana/shukriya" (thanks).

For compliment responses on skill, the data reveals that Pashto speakers prefer to use formulaic expression the most. Fig. (3) shows that 90% of respondents evade compliments on skill by using informative comment "*d*omra *gran nawo*" (it was not hard), shift credit *"dazama da para da khushalykhbra da"* (My pleasure). However Fig. (3) also shows that Pashto speakers reject compliments on skills using disagreeing utterance *"da nady"* (it's not). The analysis also shows that Pashto speakers accept compliments (70%) on skills by using return compliment pattern *"stahaga hum khawo"*(yours was good too).

For compliment response on possession, Fig. (4) shows again Pashto speakers prefer formulaic expression the most. For instance;

(15) Allah de tala hum darky (May Allah bless you the same) (M-M)

(16) Manana- kustakhwakh ye nu wakhla (Thanks- if you want you can keep it) (F-F)

The other response patterns on possession are, evade using request reassurance 70% *reshtya?* (Really?), informative comment *da bilour plaza kemelawegy* (you can get it from bilour plaza), *da khoarzandy* (it's really cheap) and shift credit 50% used. For example, *awkanamalgarikhostaenakawey* (thats what friends are for). However, the analysis show that 35% Pashto speakers reject compliments on possession, using disagreeing utterance *"nayarasaoweam nu* (nah, I don't think so), *"da domrakha a dy* (it's not).

The analysis also reveals that Pashto speakers accept compliments 30 %, using downgrading "aw bad nady (it's not bad),agreeing utterance, "aw da zamadeirkhwakhdy" (yeah I really like it, appreciation token, "manana/mehrabani" (thanks).

Pashto speakers tend to accept compliments. The most common way in which Pashto speakers respond to compliments is to use formulaic expressions embedded in Islamic teachings and cultural conventions. The data shows that formulaic expression is the most commonly used response type. In Pashto, when someone receives a compliment from others he

/she is likely to reject the compliment with an expression of self-praise avoidance. From a closer observation of the data, the patterns of compliment responses uttered by Pashto speakers show that modesty is displayed by the compliment responses may not really mean that compliment receivers dislike compliments.

In request assurance or question responses, "*Rishtya*" (Really?), the compliment receiver reacts in a phatic manner, which results in the confirmation by the compliment giver. This pattern may be interpreted as a request for confirmation. Pashto speakers probably see in this compliment response pattern an opportunity to attend their interlocutors' positive face wants. As the result patterns indicate that the category of formulaic expression in compliment responses at macro and micro level is used most frequently in each scenario.

This study is in line with [19] who studied compliment responses in Persian and found the use of formulaic expressions in compliment response patterns of Persian speakers. Interestingly, formulaic expressions used by Pashto speakers in this study and those which are used by Persian study of [19] are mostly similar bearing religious expressions. It can be argued here that in Muslims, religion is a determining factor in many social-linguistic facts and situations.

Furthermore, responses to compliments in the form of formulaic expressions like "da*zamafarazwo*" (it was my duty), "*Allah de tala hum darky*" (May Allah bless you the same) seem to be deeply rooted in Pashtun culture and allow the addresses to avoid compliments which can be regarded as self-praise. In response to compliments in order to keep solidarity and social harmony, Pashto speakers simply use these expressions. It can be argued that this feature of using formulaic expression is cultural specific.

One peculiar characteristic of rejecting pattern of Pashto speakers is the use of a single formula in compliment responses (e.g; da nady (it's not), saoweam nu (Nah, I don't think so). These terms mean it is not a beautiful mobile, no I do not agree with you that this mobile is beautiful. Here the rejecting of compliments does not mean to reject the compliments but it has the function of letting the compliment pass or taking it as a phatic expression.

Moreover, this study is in line with the study of [20] who studied Persian compliment responses

and reported the strategy of 'shekastehnafsi' which means showing modesty by scale down compliments. The present study also reveals modesty in compliment responses in Pashto. The analysis shows that Pashto speakers use some patterns to avoid self-praise to show modesty by down play their skills or achievements.

Given their utility, it is not surprising that the use of formulaic expression is wide spread in Pashto. These formulaic expressions relate to the positive face of the addressee, in which the interlocutors want to be desired and respected. These formulaic expressions are socially bound and culturally loaded. The following examples of formulaic expressions in compliment responses reflect the cultural and social components.

1. Da malgarisarakhegarakawal da malgarifarazwey (It is the duty of a friend to help another friend.)
2. Da zamafarazwo (It was my duty.)
3. Allah de tala hum darky (May Allah bless you.)
4. Da tol da Allah karamdy (It is the blessing of Allah)
5. Da damorplarduaganedy (This is because of the prayers of my parents.)
6. Allah de ta la hum dase darky (May Allah give you the same.)
7. Ku stakhwakh ye nu wakhla (You may take it if you like it.)
8. Allah de darla da dynakha darky (May Allah grant you better than this one.)

Formulaic expressions (1) and (2) are used in response to compliments on personal traits. Formulaic expression (3) is used in response to compliments on possessions or appearance. Formulaic expressions (4) and (5) are used in response to compliments on skills and abilities. Formulaic expressions (6), (7) and (8) are used in response to compliments on possessions.

The results of compliment responses in Pashto show a strong tie of religion with social norms. Religion is a determining factor in many social and linguistic situations in Pashto. Indeed there seems to be an Islamic point of view embodied by formulaic expressions. Pashto speakers have their faith in Allah and Islamic teachings significantly influence their speech acts. That is why some compliment responses are in the form of prayer that the complimenter may be blessed from Allah, may Allah keep them happy and he /she may get whatever they want.

Moreover, acceptance of compliments using appreciation token *"manana/shukriya* (thanks),

agreeing utterance *"aw da zamadeirkhwakhdy"* (yeah I really like it), return compliment *"stahaga hum khawo"*(yours was good too) suggest that Pashto speakers view compliment as a positive speech act than FTA. This study supports the notion that compliments are positive speech acts. Furthermore, in compliments, 'congratulations' (*mubarksha*) are seen as acknowledgement of the achievement, possession or good fortune of their conversational partners, while 'thanks' (*manana*) are perceived as expressions of gratitude.

So it is clear that people from different cultures respond to compliments systematically in different ways. It can be argued that we are influenced by sociocultural norms and constraints that affect the way we give compliment responses. This study shows that formulaic compliment responses in Pashto are like routine as a means of making people feel good when they compliment. This research study argues that the social-cultural rules of complimenting behavior of Pashto speakers, having to do with religion, are widely and evenly known, agreed upon and put into practice by the great majority of Pashto speakers. The frequent use of formulaic expressions in responding to compliments shows that Pashto speakers respond to compliments according to their social and cultural makeup. The compliment responses of Pashto speakers in this study have important information about their sociolinguistic behavior embedded in it. In the case of compliment responses in Pashto, some of the richest insights into cultural values are gained and we can come to reasonable conclusions as to what is valued in Pashtun society. The frequency and distribution of formulaic expressions in compliment responses in Pashto suggest that Pashtun is more tradition oriented society which display higher frequencies of formulaic expressions and enjoy respect in the community. Furthermore, the frequent use of formulaic compliment response expressions conveys communicative meaning and the expression of Islamic identity of politeness rules to facilitate social interaction.

5.3 Discussion of the Findings with Reference to Fourth Research Question

The results of independent sample t-test reveal that there is no significant statistical difference at micro and macro level in the type of response patterns used due to gender variable except on appearance. On appearance, females preferred shift credit and return compliment in their compliment responses more than males at micro level (Fig. 1), at macro level females preferred to use accept and evade in their compliment responses on appearance (Fig. 6). The analysis indicates that male and female Pashto speakers do not significantly differ regarding their patterns of compliment responses except on appearance.

The above discussion indicates that gender does not have that significant effect in general scenarios of compliment responses. Moreover, the acceptance of compliment responses by female Pashto speakers suggest that female Pashtun speakers believe that they can appear civilized and open minded in the way they communicate with others.

6. CONCLUSION

To be more precise, in this study, formulaic expression and appreciation token were two major response types, which were used most frequently. Both genders prefer these two patterns as their preferred response strategies. Moreover, question accuracy and downgrading utterances were used by both genders to avoid self-praise. Expressions of compliments and response types to compliments in Pashto, is reference to sociolinguistic behavior and religious concepts of the Pashto speakers. Most of the expressions or formulas used in complimenting behavior involve a reference to Allah and reflects the cultural and religious dimensions of the Pashtun society. The striking feature of these formulas is that they are not fixed; they are used frequently in different contexts. For example, "*da nazara ma shy*" (May you be void of evil eye) this formula is used to admire someone on their appearance i.e. clothing and it is also used as a prayer for protection of people from evil eye.

In complimenting behavior of female Pashto speakers, the frequent use of complimenting polite expressions supports the sociolinguistic universals in language and gender [2]. It shows that in Pashtun context, women complimenting behavior tend to focus on the feelings of their addressees. Moreover, the findings of this study indicate that female Pashto speakers value compliments more, which shows their solidarity function because of "women's more concern for positive politeness" [21]. In addition, it also shows that in Pashtun context, women focus more on feelings of others. All these findings support the argument that women's speech behavior tends to focus more on feelings of their conversational partners and on promoting social solidarity than men. Furthermore, this study

supports the study of [2], who observed that women peers use solidarity type compliments more often than men, hence showing more-addressee- oriented behavior than men. Moreover, most of the findings related to gender differences in compliments and compliment responses are specific to Pashtun culture and society; however, some of them have resemblance to Turkish, Nigerian, Iranian and Arabic culture. This study suggests that gender differences in compliments and compliment responses might be universal but how speakers reflect them in their sociolinguistic behavior may not be uniform across cultures.

There is a need to explore the use of compliments and compliment responses across other languages and cultures. The use of compliments may vary with respect to the level of education, socioeconomic status and age. These aspects can further be explored in the future researches.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX A

DCT for compliments

Survey on Compliments

Dear participant: This survey is designed to study compliments in Pashto.

Please fill in the questionnaire carefully in order to help the researcher fulfill this survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Gender:

Instrument- Discourse Completion Test

Four situations in which you give a compliment are described below. Imagine that you are in these situations and write down what you are most likely to answer in each situation.

Situation 1 (appearance)

You are at a party. Your friends are dressed up for the party. As one of your friends arrive at the party, he / she looks well dressed and fashionable to you. How do you give compliment?

لـه دعوت یرگـمل وی سـتا یچ هگسـن ید یاغوست یجام خائسـتم لپـاره دعوت رو گـمل سـتا ی. یک دعوت وی پـه تـه دویراورس
هغه/هغه یهتاتـم ردی پـه خائسـتم جامو یک و دویکـارش تـه بـه هغه ای یهغ تـه سـه یوائ؟

Situation 2 (personal traits)

You have recently moved in a new apartment. You ask one of your friends to help you arrange the things. After finishing it, you friend is about to leave. How do you praise his/ her help?

ـهر اوک مدد یک سَمَولو سـامان پـه سـره لمـا یچ یاووائ تـه یرگـمل وی خیـل تـه.ده ریاو هڅ تـه کـور ینو وی اوس تـا کـار ده
تخدیوس نـه پـس سـتا یرگـمل سـو تللـو والـه ید د بـه هغه ای یهغ تـه سـه یوائ؟

Situation 3 (skills)

One of your friends has completed his/ her presentation. Your friend has performed well. How do you give compliment on his/ her performance?

یهغ ای هغه د بـه تـه لـوراوک سـره قـےیطر خائسـتم پـه ردی یرگـمل سـتاورک پـوره زیانـدر او خیـل یرگـمل وی سـتا
د کـار پـه هگتـو سـه یوائ؟

Situation 4 (possession)

Your friend has bought a new cellphone. When he/ she receive a call, you notice that your friend's phone is a different one. You like the model and the color. How do you give compliment on it?

هغه د یچ شـوه معلومـه تـه تـا یکول یخـبر لیموبـائ ټ پـه هغه یچ کلـه ید یاغسـت لیموبـائ ینو یرگـمل وی سـتا ټ لیموبـائ بـل
شـان ید سـاتـ هغه لـمد او گـرن بـنخو ش،ی تـه بـه هغه ای یهغ تـه سـه یوائ؟

APPENDIX B

DCT for Compliment Responses

Survey on Compliment Responses

Dear participant: This survey is designed to study compliment response strategies in Pashto. Please fill in the questionnaire carefully in order to help the researcher fulfill this survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Gender:

Instrument- Discourse Completion Test

Four situations in which you receive a compliment are described below. Imagine that you are in these situations and write down what you are most likely to answer in each situation.

Situation 1 (appearance)

You are at a party. You have dressed up for the party. As you arrive at the party, one of your friends says: "Hey, you look great! You are really handsome/ beautiful today".

یرگـمل وی ســتا یاورس لــه دعوت یچ مګسـن ید یاغوست یجام خائســـتم لپــاره دعوت تـا ي. یک دعوت وی پــه تــه
خه تــه واه ،یوائ
لګـیل، تــه نـن پــه رنبرئ ایتبنر هر ز/خائســتم تــه گـیل یر پــو د بــه تــه اغه ی هغه د صی پــه خوابا یک ســ یوائ؟

Situation 2 (personal traits)

Your friend has recently moved in a new apartment. He / she asks you to help him/ her arrange the things. After finishing it, you are about to leave, your friend says: "Thank you! You are really kind and helpful".

نـه دویختـم کـار ده ـتـوښاغ مدد یک سَمَولو سامان نـه لتـا یهغ /هغه .ده ریاو ہیک تــه کـور ینو وی اوس یرگـمل وی ســتا
ســتا پس
ســ یک وابخ پــه صی تـب د یهغ ای هغه د بــه تــه ي. انسـان دلـه رحم او الیمرست ایتبنر پــه تــه ،منننه" یوائ یرگـمل
یوائ؟

Situation 3 (skill)

After you have completed a presentation, your classmate says: "Wow, that's brilliant, well done".

د یهغ ای هغه د بــه تــه ـور اوک ید ہن . ،وو ہن ردی ،واه یوائ تاتـــه یرگـمل وی ســتا پـس نـه دویختـم زیانـدر او د ســتا
پــه صی تـب
خوابا یک ســ یوائ؟

Situation 4 (possession)

You have bought a new cell phone. When you receive a call, your friend notices that your phone is different one. He / she says: "Wow, how smart. It is really great".

ســتا یچ ہر ک نخـه پــه تــه یرگـمل ســتا یـکـول یخـبر لیموبـائ پــه تـا یچ کلــه ید یاغست لیموبـائ ینو وی تـا
هغه ید شـان بـل لیموبـائ
یوائ؟ .. یوائ ســ یک وابخ پــه صی تـب د یهغ ای هغه د بــه تــه یـد لیموبـائ یر پــو ہر ز ردی دا ،خاســـتم ردی واه"یوائ