

## A Pragma-Syntactic Analysis of Compliments in a Selection of Chat-Messenger Messages

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### Abstract:

This study examines the pragma-syntactic features of the compliment speech act in selected chat messages. Drawing on Austin's classification of illocutionary acts and Searle's expressive category, compliments are analyzed as behavioral expressions of admiration, approval, and solidarity. The analysis employs a three-step methodology: a- identifying the pragmatic meaning of each utterance, b- categorizing its grammatical structure according to nine established syntactic patterns of compliments, and testing its validity in the context by applying felicity conditions. The results indicate that compliments in digital discourse are flexible, multifunctional, and often interwoven with other expressive acts, such as congratulations, gratitude, and affection. Such usage highlights the role of compliments in maintaining interpersonal relationships and mitigating face-threatening acts in online communication.

**Key words:** compliment, pragmatics, analysis, chat messenger.

### تحليل تداولي - تركيبى للمجاملات في مجموعة مختارة من محادثات تطبيقات دردشة

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#### المستخلص

تُحلل هذه الدراسة، من الناحيتين البراغماتية والنحوية، أفعال الكلام المتعلقة بالمجاملة في عبارات مختارة من محادثات الدردشة الإلكترونية. وبتابع تصنيف أوستن للأفعال الكلامية الإنجازية، ووضع المجاملات ضمن فئة سيرل للتعبيرات، تُحلل المجاملة باعتبارها تعبيراً سلوكياً عن الإعجاب أو الموافقة أو التضامن. يمر التحليل بثلاث خطوات منهجية: 1- إسناد معنى براغماتي لكل عبارة، 2- تحديد بنيتها النحوية من بين تسعة أنماط نحوية معروفة للمجاملة؛ 3- التحقق من صحتها وفقاً لمعايير السعادة. في الخطاب الرقمي، تبدو المجاملات مرنة وظيفياً، إذ تتداخل مع أفعال تعبيرية أخرى مثل التهئة والشكر والمودة، وما إلى ذلك. تُفسر هذه النتيجة أهمية الحفاظ على صورة إيجابية من خلال الحفاظ على العلاقات الاجتماعية والتفاعل والسلوك في التواصل عبر الإنترنت.

الكلمات الدالة: المجاملة، التداولية، التحليل، محادثة عبر تطبيق الدردشة

## 1- Introduction

Compliments have always been and continue to be, in the core of human behavior. Austin [1] classifies compliments as behabitives: “an expression of attitude toward someone’s conduct or fortunes”. Searle[2] puts them under his category of expressives, psychological state, approval, admiration, joy among others expressed by a compliment <concerning its propositional content. More recent analyses emphasize their solidarity function [3],[4],[5], attributing credit, and mitigating face-threatening acts like requests or criticism.

Compliments have been well researched in spoken discourse but pragma-syntactic realization of compliments in digital communication is still new and developing. Compliments, as a form of computer-mediated communication messenger chats provide fertile ground for analyzing the structure and function of compliments in informal yet socially significant exchanges. The problem addressed by this study therefore is a lack of pragma-syntactic analysis regarding compliment speech acts online where linguistic economy immediacy and interpersonal closeness heavily influence pragmatic choices. The aim can be expressed through an analysis of selected messenger utterances to discover how compliments are pragmatically and syntactically structured and validated through felicity conditions. The procedures involve:

- 1- Finding out the pragmatic meaning of every single utterance.
- 2- Matching the utterance to any one of the nine syntactic compliment patterns.
- 3- Judging each utterance with respect to the felicity conditions (propositional, sincerity, preparatory and essential).

By this, therefore, the study will show how messenger chat compliments function as expressive acts that maintain interpersonal bonds, admiration, and keeping social harmony in digital discourse.

## 2- Literature Review

Speech act theory was presented by Austin [1:150-162]who classifies illocutionary acts into five categories taking into consideration English verbs which are: Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behabitives, and Expositives. He[1:159] treats **compliments** as behabitives since "behabitives include the notion of reaction to other people's behaviour and fortunes and of attitudes and expression of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct", like 'apologies','thanks', 'greetings', '**compliments**', etc.

**Compliment** is a speech act that primarily aims at maintaining, improving, or supporting the addressee's face. It can be used to express admiration or approval of someone's work, appearance or taste[3:92]. Also, the speaker uses it to confirm solidarity or to replace gratitude, greetings, congratulations and sometimes apologies. Such usage helps to soften face- threatening acts like apology, request and criticism[3].

This idea goes with Searle's [6] in that a compliment is an expressive speech act since it states what the speaker feels and expresses psychological states of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy or sorrow. These cases are conveyed in a form of

thanking, apologizing, welcoming, **complimenting** or congratulating. They can be caused by something the speaker does or the hearer does, but they are about the speaker's experience and feeling:[7]

- (1) I am really sorry!
- (2) Congratulations!
- (3) Oh, yes, great!

In his study with Vanderveken [8], Searle assures that **compliment** is has expressive force. He [6:15] relates the convivial class to his class of expressive acts. Therefore, 'compliments', belong to the expressive category, which are distinguished from other kinds of illocutionary acts by the types of psychological conditions they express. As Norrick [9] points out, those expressions do not only express beliefs or intentions, but also emotions that arise in response to the given states of affairs.

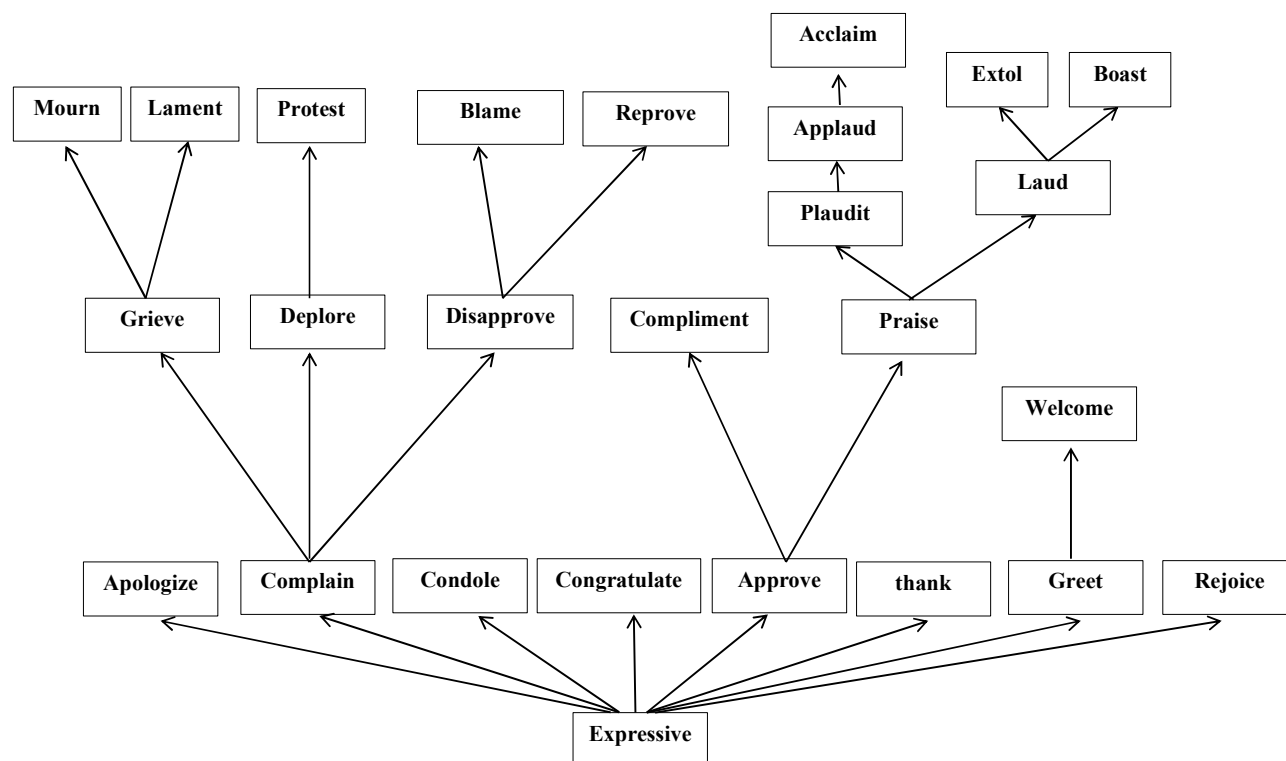
Therefore, Haverkate [10] considers expressive acts to be "speaker and hearer centered", since they have no direction. The speaker simply expresses a mental state about a state of affairs represented in the propositional content. [11]

Accordingly expressive acts are classified as polite formulaic speech acts. For this, Manes and Wolfston [12] define compliments with reference to culture. They say that compliments are "similar to a window through which a society as a whole or an individual in particular can view what is valued by a relevant culture".

Holmes [4:446] in her study of complimenting behavior concentrates on compliment responses in different varieties of English and other languages. She analyzed the syntactic and lexical patterns of compliments and the functional categories of compliment responses in New Zealand English. However, she treats compliment as "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."

Similarly, Kasper [5:446-48] concentrates on such a particular relation between the speaker and the hearer whether it explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to the person addressed for his good characteristic, skill or possession, etc.

In recent a study of the semantic analysis of English speech acts, it is clarified that to compliment someone is to express approval of the hearer for something. It does not necessarily relate to something done by the hearer i.e., compliment can be made to someone on his intelligence, musical ability, etc. See the figure below.



**Figure (1): Semantic Classification of Expressive Speech Acts [8: 218]**

Compliment is often described as a flexible speech act, i.e., it has a status and function of its own and can take on an ancillary function so that it contributes to other speech acts. Wolfson [13] states that compliments can strengthen or even replace other speech –act formulas such as; **thanks, requests** and can downgrade the force of face – threatening acts such as directive **criticism** and **reproach** of various types that are displaying different degrees of strength; e.g.,:

(4) You are a nice person.

(5) Thanks. I am glad to hear that.

[14]

Han [15], cited in Yousif [16], states that people used compliments to replace **greeting, gratitude, apology, and congratulatory** acts. This function has been further investigated in Manes[12], cited in Smadi's[17], analysis of complimenting behavior in American English. The analysis shows that in such a society, compliment serve other functions than those stated before. They are used in **greeting, thanking, and apologizing** or even as substitutes for them.

Finally, it can be concluded that compliment is an expressive speech act crediting someone other than the speaker, normally the addressee, with approval for some positively valued characteristic, competence or possession. Its function is to maintain or enhance the face of its recipient-addressee, express admiration or solidarity between interlocutors and in some cases stand in place of other polite speech acts such as those expressing gratitude, greetings, congratulations or apologies.

Compliments are culturally constructed emotion laden formulaic utterances reflecting what a given society values.

### 3- Functions of Compliment

The speech act of compliment as mentioned before in (section 2) is an expressive and polite speech act, typically followed by the hearer's response. People always try to be respected and evaluate good things positively. Thus, there are no better speech acts than compliments to serve this function since it is used to "express approval of the hearer for something", [4: 447-8]

1- The major compliment functions can be classified into two categories:

A- Appearance/possessions, e.g.,:

(6) Your blouse looks beautiful.

(7) I really love your car.

B- Performances/skills/abilities, e.g. ,:

(8) You did a good job.

(9) You are such a wonderful writer.

Furthermore, Han [15], cited in [19], states that compliments are used for a variety of reasons, to:

1- Express admiration or approval of someone's work.

2- Confirm /maintain solidarity

3- Replace greeting /gratitude /apology /congratulation acts.

4- Soften face-threatening acts such as 'apologies', 'requests' and 'criticisms'.

5- Open and sustain conversation.

6- Reinforce desired behaviour.

Accordingly, the major compliment topics can be classified into three categories [18] cited in [19]:

1- Appearance /possessions.

(10) Your blouse looks beautiful.

(11) I really love your car.

2- Performances /skills /abilities.

(12) You are such a wonderful writer.

3- Personality traits:

(13) Good boy.

### 4-Syntactic Structures of Compliment

The most frequent syntactic structure of compliment is:

**noun phrase (mostly it) + /is /looks + (really) + adj.**

(14) It looks lovely.

There is another compliment with the same syntactic structures in the sense:

(15) It is very cozy.

Wolfson [13:83-84] asserts that 'it's very cozy' is a real compliment mostly used by females. This signifies that compliment should be expressed with positive adjectives, since they are inherently positive and polite speech acts. Also, compliment may be sarcastic, ironic, deceptive and their meaning would need to be clarified as in

the above example since the meaning of the compliment adjective 'cozy' is ambiguous rather than positive. Taavitsainen and Jucker [20] clarify that the ambiguous compliment speech act may not be considered a real compliment.

Moreover, Manes and Wolfson [12:114-120] observe in their study nine categories:

**1- Np is / looks (really) Adj.**

(16) Your blouse is beautiful.

**2- I (really) like/love Np.**

(17) I like your car.

**3- Pro is (really) (a) Adj Np.**

(18) That's a nice wall hanging.

**4- You v (a) (really) Adj Np.**

(19) You did a good job.

**5- You v (Np) (really) Adv.**

(20) You really handled that situation well.

**6- You have (a) adj Np!**

(21) You have a such beautiful hair!

**7- What (a) adj Np!**

(22) What a lovely baby you have!

**8- Adj Np!**

(23) Nice game!

**9- Isn't Np adj?**

(24) Isn't your ring beautiful? [12]

Compliments are either used to initiate a conversation or depend on the previous context. So, the use of dummies is natural and understood by the addressee in terms of the speaker's intended meaning is identified by the referent unambiguously,[12:451].

## 5- Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on the analysis of certain chat- messenger messages using Jibreen's felicity conditions of the speech act of compliment as well the syntactic analysis of the act under study. This research aims to master the syntactic structures used in utterances expressing compliments.

The structure of compliments is generally characterized by restricted syntactic structure and precoded lexical items. For example, Wolfson[9] states that compliments seem to be precoded and highly recognized in structures depending on a few syntactic patterns. After three years, Manes and Wolfson [12] find that 80% of the compliments in their corpus were adjectival compliments, and within the set, two-thirds depended on only five adjectives to carry the positive semantic load.

However, few studies have applied illocutionary analysis to compliments. For example, Jacobs et al.[21] and McLaughlin [22] used Searle's felicity conditions. According to Searle's four conditions Jacobs et al.[21:6] provide the following felicity conditions for compliments:

- 1- Propositional condition: the speaker must indicate a positive value for an attribute, state, or event,
- 2- Sincerity condition: the speaker must approve of the attribute, state or event being mentioned,
- 3- Preparatory conditions: the attribute must have positive value, the attribute must be noteworthy, and the hearer must be able to take credit for the attribute.
- 4- Essential condition: the utterance has to count as recognition and approval of the attribute, state, or event credited to the hearer.

Within this illocutionary analysis, a functional definition of the compliment sets out rules for inferring utterances that count and those that do not count as compliments. Also sentences that are direct compliments, as illustrated in Example (25), and indirect compliments, as illustrated in Example (26), are easily identified as compliments since they satisfy the four types of felicity conditions provided by Jacobs et al. (1996).

(25) I like your hairstyle.

(26) I am glad I went to the same school with cool-headed people like you. [23]

The dataset for this research comprises roughly ten conversational exchanges (text messages) sourced from the interactions between program coordinators and Iraqi English language instructors operating within the Fulbright framework. These exchanges took place through chat- Messenger, yielding genuine examples of digital communication. The selection criteria focused on the occurrence of complementary expressions in naturally occurring dialogues, without the imposition of any thematic or structural limitations.

The data was gathered in a spontaneous and natural manner as observed in conversations, instead of being obtained through elicited or experimental dialogues. The discussions were characterized by spontaneity and informality, free from external constraints, which guarantees that the compliments examined represent authentic communicative practices within a digital context. To protect the privacy of participants, all messages were anonymized.

Examining compliments within chat-messenger discourse holds considerable importance for various reasons:

- 1- Digital discourse: Conversations conducted through messaging platforms exemplify a contemporary form of communication, wherein pragmatic strategies are tailored to fit online environments.
- 2- Informal register: The nature of compliments exchanged in instant messaging frequently diverges from those present in face-to-face interactions, revealing distinct syntactic and lexical characteristics.
- 3- Cross-cultural variation: The participants, who are English teachers from Iraq, function within a bilingual and bicultural context, rendering their strategies for complimenting especially significant for comprehending the influence of cultural norms on digital pragmatics.

## 6-Performative Hypotheses of Compliment

One way to think about the speech acts being performed by utterance is to assume that underlying every utterance (U) there is a clause, similar to (27) presented earlier containing a performative verb (VP) which makes the illocutionary force explicit, this is known as the **performative hypothesis**. The basic format of the underlying clause is shown in (28):

(27) I (VP) you that ...

(28) I (hare by) VP you (that) U [24]

Compliments appear to lock such performative verbs though Aakhus and Aldrich [31] argue that compliments are not excluded from speech acts. They are indirect speech acts in that they are performed through other speech acts, such as assertions.

(29) I like/ love/ admire your shirt.

And some compliments fit into constatives because their asserted truth or falsity can be judged; e.g.

(30) Your shirt is nice/you look fine.

Austin's [1] distinction between performatives and constatives involves judgments of truth and falsity besides felicity and infelicity conditions. However, it appears that illocutionary analysis is yet to be applied to some speech acts particularly compliment because compliment lacks performative verb. Unlike promises or requests that have explicitly performative verbs [25], e.g.,:

(31) I promise to send the draft.

(32) ? I compliment you on your nice tie.

Consequently, the implicit and explicit compliments have to be distinguished. Explicit compliment may take recourse, performative or to assertion, where the judgment is openly expressed. In implicit compliment such judgment is either presupposed or implied [26], e.g., :

(33) Your husband has a very good taste.

As a result, speech act of compliment is versatile in that it can achieve different perlocutionary effects. Also, it is characterized by a variety of ways and structures as Kerbrat [27] distinguishes direct and indirect compliments:

(a) **Direct compliment** refers to remarks including linguistic forms that directly and unambiguously frame these comments compliments, such as:

(34) Isn't the food great!

(35) I'm impressed a lot!

(36) I really like your hair that way.

(b) **Indirect compliment** refers to remarks which would be seen as compliments by the addressee, although the positive semantic carrier generally associated with complimenting is missing at the level of the linguistic form. Indirect compliments need more inferences on the part of the addressee to reconstruct the intended meaning conveyed in the message by the speaker, e.g., :

(37) Wow, I hope I'll have a coat like this.

(38) Your boyfriend is a very lucky man.

(39) Wow, what did you do to your hair? [27]

## 7- Compliment as a Face – Threatening Act

In relation to the concept of face, people always wish that others evaluate them positively and acknowledge their positive values. There is no better speech act than compliment to serve this function, yet, Brown and Levinson [29: 94] describe compliment as inherently face-threatening acts besides being face – enhancing speech acts, [28].

Speech act of compliment can also be seen as a kind of positive politeness strategy, that is, action that attends to the addressee's positive face by including him or her in the group. This means compliment signals concerns about the addressee's positive face by noticing or attending to the addressee's face desires [29].

On the contrary, compliment may be considered as a face –threatening act because it may connote that something about the addressee is admirable or interesting to the speaker. Thus, giving the former a reason to think that he or she may have to take action to protect the object of the latter's desire, or even making him or her feel compelled to offer the object complimented to the speaker [29].

Holmes [14:487] shows that a compliment could be a very face–threatening act because a given speaker's expression of admiration for an object will, in general, impose an obligation on the hearer to offer that object to the speaker. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that the response to a compliment such as:

(40) a. What an unusual necklace! It's beautiful.

b. Please take it. [14]

Furthermore, the act of complimenting usually requires the addressee's response and it does not seem to be an easy matter for the addressee to given an appropriate response that could resolve the conflicting constraints of agreement and self-praise a voidance. That is because compliment can function as a positive politeness device and as a face-threatening act, [14].

## 8- Felicity Conditions of Compliment

Searle [2: 54-71] proposes a set of felicity conditions for performing the act of 'promising' and claims that one can formulate these conditions for other types of speech acts. If any of these conditions are not met, the speech act in question would be performed insincerely. So for an utterance to perform a compliment these appropriate conditions have to be fulfilled technically. In other words, Searlean conditions are the basis on which other researchers can build their conditions for other speech acts. They are as follows:

1. Propositional Content Conditions: "What can be expressed in the proposition of a sentence".
2. Preparatory Conditions: "They specify contextual requirements"
3. Sincerity Conditions: " They specify the required beliefs, intentions...etc., "
4. Essential Conditions: These are the constitutive rules that determine the type of the illocutionary force indicating device (henceforth IFID).

Jacob[21:6]and McLaughlin[10:142-143]apply illocutionary analysis to compliment using Searle's felicity conditions (1965,1969,1975), which were developed from Austin's concept. These conditions are four:

- 1- **Propositional condition:** where the speaker must indicate a positive value for an attribute, state or event.
- 2- **Preparatory conditions:** the attribute must have a positive value. The attribute must be noteworthy and the hearer must be able to give credit for the attribute.
- 3- **Sincerity condition:** the speaker must approve of the attribute, state, or event being mentioned.
- 4- **Essential condition:** the utterance has to count as recognition and approval of the attribute state or event credited to the hearer.

Moreover, in her study, Jibreen [19:19] finds out that compliments are expressive speech acts used explicitly or implicitly to express approval of the hearer for something good. She adds that compliment belongs to the convivial class, which are face-saving acts. She (ibid) tries to be authentic in presenting her felicity conditions of compliment since she depends on three models: Searle [2], Norrick [9] and Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk [30].

Now the researcher prefers the latter felicity conditions as they are more recent and comprehensive and tries to take them as her model for analysis. They are appropriate to be applied to the successful performance of compliments acts:

**1. The Propositional Content Conditions:** Speaker (S) expresses his/her 'compliment' in his /her utterance for the property 'a' related to hearer (H). This is done to establish familiarity with H.

**2. The Preparatory Conditions:**

- a. There is a property 'a' related to the Hearer.
- b. Speaker feels that this property 'a' has positively affected him/her. Hence,
- c. Speaker expresses his/her appreciation or value judgment of 'a' in his/her utterance using the formulaic structure of the speech act of 'compliment'.
- d. Case (c) leads to (d) that S wishes H to believe that 'a' is in the interest of S. The H knows that but might accept or reject S's compliment.

**3. The Sincerity Conditions:** These conditions require that speaker must feel with sincere evaluation for 'a' related to the hearer.

**4. The Essential Conditions:** The speaker reflexively wants the hearer, by counting the speaker's utterance as an expression of evaluation, to recognize speaker is complimenting. The violation of one or more of the above conditions will make the performative utterance (in one way or another) unhappy or infelicitous.

## 9- Analysis of Compliment

**Text 1:** *"That is very kind of you to take such as picture. I will never forget that day."*

Function of compliment: Sue expresses her admiration of Dr. A's initiative to take a picture and to document the presentation of her student Sue .

Syntactic structure: Sue uses the third pattern (pro is (really) (a) Adj +Np). The references to the element of compliment are syntactically clear and direct.

Pragmatic Analysis: The utterance contains direct and explicit linguistic forms that convey the speech act of compliment. Here the words like "that is very kind of you" to

do that action clarify an admiration towards Dr. A's action which is good and deserve compliment.

Felicity conditions :

1- Pcc: Sue expresses her compliment for taking the picture and documenting the event .

2- Pc: a. Dr. A's action is exclusive for Sue.

b. Sue feels happy because Dr. A took a picture for her presentation and documented the event.

c. Sue expresses directly and explicitly her appreciation of A's action by using "that is really kind of you."....

d. Sue's wants Dr. A. to believe that taking and sending the picture for Sue is something beneficial and important for Sue.

3- Sc: Sue feels happy with A's action and she uses words like "really", " kind", and 'never forget that day."

4-Ec: Sue here wants Dr. A to recognize her compliment and she uses a direct clear compliment to express her thanks and her feeling of admiration towards the works.

**Text 2: "The lentil soup you made was the most delicious food I have ever eaten. I mean it. I must have it again..."**

Compliment Function: During a culinary event at the university, Sue, a trainer, attended and made a delicious lentil soup. Here, the speaker, Dr. A, expresses his admiration for Sue's cooking.

Syntactic Structure:

The speaker uses the first pattern Np. +v. +Adj. which is the most direct pattern used by speakers. At first glance, the structure of the elements appears dependent. In fact, it is direct, explicit, and arranged in such an appealing way. Instead of saying "your lentil soup looks/is delicious," he says, "the lentil soup you made was the most delicious food I've ever eaten..." He emphasizes the statement by adding further sentences: "I'm serious" and "I have to eat it again".

Pragmatic Analysis: The compliment is implied explicitly, and the speaker uses more than one statement to convey his point. Happiness Conditions:

1 .Pcc: Dr. A indicates an appositive point of view regarding Sue's cooking.

2 -Pc: a. Sue cooked at the university party, and her lentil soup was delicious.

b. Dr. A believes that Sue's participation in the party is a good activity.

c. Dr. A expresses her act of compliment using a direct and unambiguous pattern structure followed by an assertive statement.

d. Dr. A wants Sue to feel that her participation and cooking are good and important to Dr. A as a coach with such an active student. Her activity, therefore, deserves thanks and a compliment.

3- S: Therefore, A's compliment is sincere and genuine.

4-Ec.: Dr. A uses more than one utterance to ensure Sue understands her compliment.

Dr. Amy describes the summer as wonderful, distinguished by its training program and wonderful events. She doesn't explicitly say that the culinary event was amazing, but rather describes the entire summer course.

Function of Compliment: The function here is to express admiration for Sue's participation in the summer course and events. The grammatical structure used is the first pattern (Np + v. + Adj). It is directly expressed using a positive adjective in a very polite manner.

Felicity conditions:

- 1 -Pc: Dr. A compliments Sue for participating in the summer course and events.
- 2 -Pcc: a. According to Dr. A, participating in the course event is a good deed.  
b. Dr. A participated in the instructors' culinary classes and particularly enjoyed the food Sue prepared.  
c. Dr. A expresses her evaluation of Sue's participation in the course and cooking using the implicit speech act of compliment. Instead of saying "it was a wonderful event," she says "it was a wonderful summer" to include all the events adapted from the summer course. At the same time, it's a direct compliment, in which the speaker used a clear, direct pattern (Np + v + Adj), which is most common among speakers.  
d. Dr. A wants Sue to believe that her role in the culinary event is important to her as an intern. Therefore, she is proud of them for making the summer course different.
- 3 .Dr. A is genuinely honest in her assessment because she enjoyed the event and the food prepared by the instructors, especially Sue's lentil soup.
4. Ec: The speaker wants Sue to know that she enjoyed the activity and the food.

**Text 3:** *"you were always so quiet but so deep and thoughtful. You are a very special person, and the message you sent from the airport broke my heart. We adore you; Sue please know that".*

#### Function of Compliment:

In this message, Dr. A reiterates her support for her student, Sue. Her praise of Sue contains multiple statements aimed at achieving its purpose. Among them, she expresses admiration for Sue's behavior. For example, the statement, "You are a very special person; your message from the airport broke my heart," reflects Sue's personality, which Dr. A admires.

#### Syntactic Structure:

The sentence structure (noun + verb + adjective) indicates that the praise is direct and clear. The speaker reinforces her statement with multiple adjectives (so composed, so profound, so considerate).

Felicity conditions:

- 1.Pcc: Dr. A expresses her positive attitude towards student Sue to deepen her familiarity with Sue.
- 2 .Precondition: a. The qualities of profundity and consideration refer to Sue.  
b. Dr. A emphasizes that these qualities are positive and have had a significant impact on her.  
c. She expresses her evaluation of Sue's character with friendly praise.

d. Dr. A wanted Sue to understand that her interaction with her lecturer was very important to her. This allowed Sue the opportunity to accept or decline the praise. In this case, Sue accepted the praise and responded with, "...It was a pleasure to speak with you"...

3-Sc: Dr. A's evaluation was sincere, and this was stated beforehand: "It was a pleasure to speak with you first..." This phrase, spoken before the praise, conveyed the speaker's sincerity to the listener.

4-Ec: Dr. A wanted Sue to realize that her evaluation of Sue's performance in class and the previously sent emails was insightful, not superficial or arbitrary.

#### **Text 4: "It was such a great summer!"**

Dr. Amy describes summer as great and it is different because of the training programme and its great events. She does not say directly that the cooking event was amazing rather, she describes the whole summer course .

Function of compliment: the function here is to express admiration for Sue's participation in the summer course and events. The grammatical structure used is the first pattern (Np+ v. + Adj). it is directly expressed by a positive adjective in such a polite way.

Pragmatic meaning: The phrase "It was such a great summer!" conveys more than just a literal description of the season; it expresses positive emotions, satisfaction, and appreciation. It also serves to strengthen social bonds by sharing memories and implicitly complimenting others involved in making the summer enjoyable. Overall, the utterance communicates gratitude, positive evaluation, and a sense of closure, highlighting the speaker's joyful reflection on the past summer and the role of others in creating those memorable experiences.

Felicity conditions:

- 1- Pc: Dr. expresses her compliment to Sue for joining the summer course and participating events.
- 2- Pcc: a. According to Dr. A, participating the course event is a good deed.  
b. Dr. A attended the cooking activity of the trainers and it was enjoying specially the food made by Sue.  
c. Dr. A expresses her evaluation for Sue's mail and cooking event using implicit speech act of compliment. That is instead of saying ' it was a great event' she says " it was such a great summer" to include all the events adapted in the summer course. At the same time it is a direct compliment in which the speaker used a direct clear pattern (Np + v + Adj) which is mostly used among speakers.
- d. Dr. A wishes Sue to believe that her role in the cooking event is important for her as a trainee. That is why she is proud of them since they made summer course is different.
- 3- Dr. A is really sincere for her evaluation because she enjoyed the event and liked the food cooked by the trainers especially Sue's lentil soup.
- 4-Ec: The speaker wants Sue to know that she enjoyed the activity and food.

**Text 5: *You have a big kind heart. Thanks for your lovely words.***

***I am soooo happy to be one of your students in class.***

The function of compliment: Lecturer Dr. A promised to help Sue with her application process. Student Sue is grateful and wants to express her thanks. This praise expresses her appreciation for the lecturer's promise to help.

The syntactic structure conforms to the fourth pattern (you + adjective + noun). This is a direct and explicit praise. The expression of gratitude ("Thanks for your lovely words ") and the indirect praise ("I am soooo happy to be one of your students in class.") further reinforce this. This clearly demonstrates how encouraging the lecturer's words are.

The pragmatic meaning: The scraped content explains the pragmatic meaning behind a student's utterance of appreciation to a lecturer. It highlights that the student's words serve multiple functions, including expressing gratitude, offering a direct compliment, and indirectly praising the lecturer's kindness and teaching abilities. Additionally, the utterance helps strengthen social bonds, showing respect and emotional closeness, while also conveying appreciation for support and elevating the lecturer's professional and personal value. Overall, the pragmatic meaning reflects heartfelt admiration and gratitude, reinforcing positive social and academic relationships.

The felicity conditions:

- 1- Pcc: the student Sue indicates her compliment towards the instructor who offers a support and help in completing the admission.
- 2- Pc: a. there is a support in words and efforts introduced to Sue.  
b. Sue feels that Dr. A's support is good for her and helpful in her admission.  
c. So that Sue expresses her appreciation in an explicit, direct compliment that is followed by thanking and implicit compliment.  
d. Sue presents her compliment and thanking to let Dr. A believes that her support is credible for Sue.
- 3- Sc: Actually Sue is sincere in her compliment because Dr. A's opinion is important to fulfill the admission.
- 4- Ec: Sue wants Dr. A to recognize her positive feeling by using compliment followed by thanking and intensified by another indirect compliment "I am soooo happy to be one of your students in class" that is to say indirectly you are a good teacher.

**Text 6:** All the adventures, great moments and difficult times have helped us create, not just a class, but a friendly session with lots of smiles. A friendly and safe environment we all felt happy to be part of. Each of you has given their best, ***each of you has worked really hard throughout this year. I can't find the words to describe how proud I am of you.***

I'm so thankful for all your smiles, support and encouragement. I'm grateful for all we have shared. Thanks for opening your hearts and letting me be part of your lives, but I'd especially like to thank you

for helping me become a better educator. ***Thank you for making me feel that my job is not a job, but a passion.*** Thanks to you, I love being a teacher more and more every day. Each of you has made a difference for me. I will never forget you.

### Function of compliment

The speaker (the lecturer/teacher) addresses the students at the end of the academic year. The aim is to express gratitude and thanks for their efforts, support, smiles, and encouragement.

The compliment goes beyond individual appreciation to include the whole group, emphasizing their positive impact on the teacher's own life.

Pragmatic function: strengthening the human bond between teacher and students, showing that teaching is not just a job but a passion.

Sentence Structure: The text contains several syntactic patterns of compliment:

- 1- Direct descriptive pattern: "*I can't find the words to describe how proud I am of you*".
- 2- Nominal + adjective + object pattern: "*Each of you has worked really hard*".
- 3- Direct thanking pattern: "*Thank you for making me feel that my job is not a job, but a passion*".
- 4- Repetition of thanking expressions (Thanks / Thank you) reinforces the praise and compliment which makes it more impactful

Pragmatic Meaning: Apart from being simply descriptive, the compliment becomes an emotional gratitude expression. The direct compliments are (proud of you, thankful, grateful), and the indirect ones describe a friendly and safe classroom with lots of smiles. The praise links students' academic performance with the teacher's personal experience, giving it deeper pragmatic meaning: the students turned teaching into a passion rather than a duty.

### Felicity Conditions

- 1- Pcc: The teacher explicitly praises the students who worked hard and created a positive classroom environment.
- 2- Pc: The students indeed offered support and encouragement.
  - a. The teacher believes this support and effort deserve praise.
  - b. The praise is delivered in the context of the end of the year, which is appropriate for collective appreciation.
  - c. The compliment is meant to show the students that their impact is genuine and valuable.
- 3- Sc: The teacher is sincere in these feelings, linking the praise to a personal transformation (teaching became a passion).
- 4- Ec: The compliment aims to make the students recognize their value and positive influence, strengthening the human relationship between both sides.

***Text 7: I wish I were there to give her a bunch of flowers to honor her service at Salem State University.***

Function of Compliment: The compliment is a display of admiration and respect toward her work at Salem State University. In this case, the compliment functions as an act of achievement honor and appreciation for contribution. It is indirect, since the

explicit adjective of beauty or any other evaluative adjective in general is omitted and replaced by a symbolic act- giving flowers.

The Syntactic Structure: It is complex and indirect, not the simple (NP + V + Adj.) pattern. Instead, it uses a wish construction ("I wish I were there...") combined with a purpose clause ("to honor her service..."). The compliment is embedded in the semantic value of the act (giving flowers), which functions as a positive recognition.

The pragmatic meaning: The scraped content explains that the pragmatic meaning of the utterance centers on expressing respect and appreciation, using the act of giving flowers as a symbolic gesture of recognition and honor. Instead of direct praise, the speaker conveys admiration indirectly, emphasizing emotional involvement and sincerity through phrases like "I wish I were there." This social act strengthens bonds, acknowledges the honoree's contributions, and functions as a socially appropriate way to show gratitude, admiration, and emotional connection.

Felicity Condition:

- 1 .Pc: The utterance attributes a positive value to the woman's service at the university.
- 2 .Pc: a- The service is noteworthy and praiseworthy.  
b- The hearer (the woman) can legitimately take credit for it.
- 3 .Sc: The speaker genuinely wishes to honor her, expressed through the imagined act of giving flowers.
- 4 .Ec: The utterance counts as recognition and approval of her service, even though framed as a wish rather than a direct statement.

#### **Text 8: "You deserve the best"**

Function of compliment: The speaker thanks the addressee and tells them they deserve the best. Pragmatically, it uplifts the value of the addressee by boosting confidence and showing respect or gratitude.

Sentence Structure: (you + deserve + noun phrase). This is a direct and simple structure different from traditional structures of compliments (for example you + adjective + noun) but carries an equally similar pragmatic function.

Pragmatic Meaning: It has become so commonly used that its real meaning sometimes gets lost in conversations. The implied meaning is that the addressee is highly valued, and worthy of good things. The compliment is non-descriptive (does not pick out any specific trait such as a 'kind heart') but expresses general appreciation of personal worth.

Felicity Conditions

- 1- Pcc: The utterance asserts that the addressee deserves the best.
- 2- Pc: a- The speaker believes the addressee is worthy of respect or appreciation.  
b. The context allows for a general compliment of encouragement or gratitude.
- 3- Sc: The speaker is sincere in their feelings, linking worthiness to the person's value.
- 4-Ec: The aim is for the addressee to recognize their high value and feel affirmed.

**Text 9: First, I say I'm honored to have a chance in life to know each of you in SSU. Congratulations dr. Sara for your new position, you deserve all good things.**

Pragmatic Meaning: This means the speaker is honored to know each member of the group, and congratulations are due to Dr. Sara. The compliment is directed at the new position achieved by Dr. Sara, giving a positive value to her achievement and her worthiness for the same. In pragmatic terms, this can be classified as a compliment + congratulatory speech act that helps in building social solidarity.

Grammatical Structure the utterance matches one of nine compliment formula structures; "Congratulations, Dr. Sara, on your new position". This is not a direct compliment formula from the nine patterns, but functions as a congratulatory act. It indirectly conveys approval. The second phrase in this utterance; "You deserve all good things", matches pattern 4:

V (a) (really) Adj Np. Here: "You deserve all good things."- here the verb "deserve" + NP "all good things". Thus, the compliment part of the utterance fits Pattern 4.

The felicity conditions are as follows:

- 1- Propositional condition: The speaker indicates a positive value (new position, deserving good things).
- 2- Sincerity condition: The speaker genuinely approves of Dr. Sara's achievement .
- 3- Preparatory conditions:
  - a. The attribute (new position) has positive value.
  - b. Worth noting. (A professional promotion).
  - c. She can count it for herself .
- 4- essential condition: The utterance is counted as recognizing and approving her accomplishment.

**Text 10: "I can't forget you, dear Dr. Sara. I wish I have Been there to hand you a nice necklace you prefer with the design and color u choose. Love you all. Love you dr. Sara, and hope you all the success in your new position"**

Pragmatic Meaning: The speech act contains compliment, affection, and gratitude toward Dr. Sara. The main pragmatic meaning it tries to convey is personal closeness ("I can't forget you," "Love you") and a congratulatory message ("hope you all the success in your new position"). This has been delivered as a blended compliment speech act pragmatically.

The grammatical structure: the utterance is indirect compliment, not a direct formula. It highlights Sara's taste and choice. "Lovely Dr. Sara"! it fits pattern 8: Adj NP!

Reformulated: adjective + NP. The elliptical form "Love you" functions as a compliment of affection. "Hope you all the success in your new position." closest to pattern 4: You v (a) Adj NP.

Felicity Conditions: The four felicity conditions apply to

- 1- Propositional content condition: Positive values are indicated (success, affection, admiration).

- 2- Sincerity condition: The speaker truly feels approval toward Dr. Sara's qualities and achievement.
- 3- Preparatory conditions:
  - a- The attributes (success, taste, kindness) have positive value.
  - b- They are remarkable (new position, personal qualities).
  - c- Dr. Sara can take credit for them
- 4- Essential condition: The utterance counts as recognition and approval of Dr. Sara's achievement and personal qualities.

## 10 .Results and Discussions

**Functions of compliment:** The compliments in texts 1-3 expresses appreciation for behavior, skills, and personality.

Text 1: compliment for behavior (taking photos). Direct and explicit praise, using the word "friendly".

Text 2: compliment for skills (cooking). Direct, emphasized, and reinforced through repetition.

Text 3: compliment for personality traits (calm, considerate, unique) is direct and emotional.

Texts 4-6: compliment for participation in summer courses or activities expresses engagement and gratitude. The teacher chose an indirect but inclusive expression ("Great summer vacation"). Although the praise is given by the student to the teacher, a direct sentence structure (you + adjective + noun phrase) is used to express gratitude and appreciation.

In these texts, compliment reflects the social connection between teachers and students, and shared gratitude. This is collective praise for students, expressing gratitude and pride. Different syntactic patterns. Repetition of gratitude.

Compliment in texts 7-10 used for strengths, achievements, merits, and emotions .

Text 7: complimenting merits and contributions is indirect symbolism (flowers).

Text 8: complimenting general merits is direct and concise ("You deserve the best").

Text 9: complimenting and congratulating achievements (new position). A combination of various expressions.

Text 10: Compliment is combining emotion and achievement. Indirect symbolic behavior + direct praise.

To summarize the above points, Texts 1-3 demonstrate compliment that mentions specific behaviors, abilities, and personal qualities. Clear syntactic patterns emerge in sentences expressing sincerity, emphasized through emphatic words (noun phrases + verbs + adjectives).

On other hand the last four texts demonstrate compliment as an expression of honor, affirmation, congratulations, and emotion, showcasing syntactic diversity from symbolic expressions of wishes to direct statements. Thus, behavior (Text 1), ability (Text 2), personality (Text 3). Participation and gratitude are in (Texts 4-6). Also, service, value, achievement, emotion are used in (Texts 7-10). Compliment

encompasses behavior, ability, quality, participation, achievement, and emotional bonds.

**2. Syntactic Structure:** Expressions that are indirect and symbolic encompass gestures such as offering flowers, making wishes, or using elliptical statements like “I love you.” These manifestations frequently obscure the distinctions among compliments, congratulations, and praise. Furthermore, praise can manifest in various forms: it may be direct for the sake of clarity, indirect for the purpose of subtlety, or a syntactic combination that communicates intensified emotion.

The syntactic structure of compliment adjusts according to context: direct sentences are used for clear expression, indirect sentences for euphemism, and mixed forms for expressing emotional depth.

**3. Pragmatic purposes:** The speech act of compliment serves various pragmatic functions, including commendation, expressing gratitude, encouragement, unity, and emotional sharing. These compliments play a vital role in strengthening interpersonal relationships, affirming achievements, and highlighting shared experiences. As conversations progress, the emotional depth increases, culminating in collective gratitude and a complex interplay of emotions, thereby enhancing social bonds and emotional connections

The usage of felicity conditions: Necessary preconditions for a successful text include expressiveness, sincerity, adequate preparation and necessity. The qualities or behavior on which the praise is based must be real and true, but in addition to this basic truth it also needs to appear true – both from the speaker towards himself/herself as well as from other people’s perspectives. When all these conditions are fulfilled, verbal acts perform their intended function of recognition and compliment; they also create connection between participants.

## 11. Conclusion

This paper analyzed the pragma-syntactic features of compliment speech acts in selected messenger chat utterances within Austin’s [1] classification and Searle’s [6] category of expressives. Compliments, both direct and descriptive as well as indirect or symbolic forms in digital discourse were identified by blended formulas comprising admiration, gratitude, affection- congratulations expressed toward the addressee/ user.

Compliments were used as expressive acts which carried a basic pragmatic function of solidarity, supporting or mitigating face-threatening acts and enhancing interpersonal relationships. They also had additional functions trailing along with them-for example, functioning as thanks or congratulations or simply affirming some emotion.

Syntactic diversity: Apart from those falling within the known compliment structures (You v Adj NP, Adj NP!), there were also indirectly constructed utterances in the form of wish clauses and symbolic acts such as offering flowers or giving a necklace. This therefore proves syntactic adaptability of compliment formulas in online contexts.

Felicity conditions: The propositional, sincerity, preparatory and essential felicity conditions were all satisfied by every single utterance analyzed compliments hence contextual appropriateness genuineness social effectiveness of them.

Messenger chats revealed how compliments transcend individual praise to encompass collective appreciation, as in the teacher's address to students, or to blend personal closeness with professional recognition, as in congratulatory messages to Dr. Sara.

In general, this underlines the fact that compliments in online discourse are multifunctional and expressive; hence, they reflect linguistic creativity together with cultural values. They serve as key instruments of relationship maintenance and affirmation of achievement through which a simple mundane transaction can be transformed into an act of solidarity accompanied by emotion.

### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There are no conflicts of interest

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### Appendix:

And I would love to help you will admissions. And then eat lentil soup.

We will talk you again, I promise!

Sweet dreams to you tonight.

25 OCT 2014 AT 03:22

You have a big kind heart. Thanks for your lovely words. I am soooo happy to be one of your students in class.

Seen

Have a nice day

Enjoy your weekend.

It's night here too. I'll be going to bed soon. I go to bed early. I hope to dream of deserts and stars and lentil soup. Nighty night!

And happy weekend to you too!

So good night for you too

And sweet dreams

😊

That is very kind of you to take such picture . I will never forget that day

The lentil soup you made was the **most delicious** food I have ever eaten. I mean it. I must have it again sometime (InshaALLAH).

I have many more! They are my pleasure. It was such a great summer.

It will be my pleasure to cook it again for you.

Jamal

I wish I were there to give her a **bunch** of **flowers** to honor her service at Salem State University

Zachary

Jamal, I will make sure to give them to her on your behalf.

👍

