

# Giving and Interpreting Compliments in English and Kurdish: Private-Sector Workplace as A Sample

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## ABSTRACT

Compliment as one of the language strategies is used to soften the process of interactions. The way that compliments are given or interpreted as well as the frequency of using them vary from a language to another, from a community to another, and from a person to another. This study tries to track down compliments to illustrate their differences and the similarities in both concerned communities. Complimenting as a lubricant strategy does not always fulfill the purpose, and cannot always be easily employed due to the interactants' differences in terms of cultural backgrounds, social status, gender, and many other social and personal issues. Therefore, giving compliments is regarded as one of the problematic issues, and may cause a kind of misunderstanding among the interactants particularly in a cross-cultural environment.

This study draws on both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the process of data collection. It aims at examining the giving and interpretation of compliment from a socio-pragmatic perspective. It comprehensively considers the concept of compliment, diversity of compliments across cultures, the differences in giving compliments in English and Kurdish as well as showing the relationship between compliment and flattery in these two different communities.

**KEY WORDS:** Compliment Interpretation, Compliment Topics, Cultural Differences, Flattery, Kurdish

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of compliments has drawn the attention of scholars who are interested in Socio-pragmatics over last two decades. Perhaps a great deal of our daily interactions is not arbitrarily constructed. Interactants probably intend to soften the process of communication in order to have a positive effect on interpersonal relationship. Two years of life experience that the researcher had in the United Kingdom was encouraging

to conduct this study. These two years of experience were full of misunderstandings that were associated with giving and interpreting compliments.

The influence of cultural differences can be noticeably observed in the process of constructing compliments and their interpretations by the recipients in both English and Kurdish society. Kurdish culture, as one of the collectivistic cultures (Fattah 2016), allows a greater degree of formulaic utterances in the daily interactions comparing to English culture which is defined by Hofstede (1984) as one of the individualistic cultures. Basing on this social category, this study hypothesizes that Kurdish and English interactants are different in the degree of using compliments on the one hand, and in their interpretations to the received compliments on the other hand.

There are many studies that consider compliments in English language and culture, such as the works by Wolfson and Manes (1980), Wifson (1981), Janet Holmes (1986), Robert Herbert (1989) and many others. The

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study that was conducted by Wolfson and Manes (1978) is regarded as one of the most fulfilling studies on compliments as it made use of a huge amount of data collected in various daily interactions in different situations. The majority of the conducted studies so far place emphasis on the giving and responding to compliments without considering the interpretation of compliments by the recipients. Spencer-Oatey, Ng and Dong (2000: 98) state that "if the compliment is interpreted negatively (for example, is clearly untrue, because it implies envy or desire, or because it assumes an unwarranted degree of intimacy), the effect on interpersonal relations is naturally less positive". The recipients' interpretation is one of the pivotal elements to recognize any utterance as a compliment or not. This study was a great attempt to demonstrate many lexical and syntactical characteristics of compliments, and their functions in interactions.

Compliment as one of the essential strategies of interactions that exposes to the cultural influence has become one of the important elements of cross cultural studies over different languages and societies. According to Wolfson (1981), the process of constructing compliments, and the elements and the issues that are complimented vary from a language to another. This fact drew the attention of many researchers such as Herbert (1989), Creese (1991), Zhuang Enping (1993) and Jia Yuxin (1997) to examine compliments across cultures.

Herbert (1989), in a comparative study, examines the degree of using compliments in South African and New York university students. He concluded that the frequency of using compliments among United States participants is higher. Creese (1991) also conducted a study on the nature, the structure, and the use of compliments among teachers in British and United States, and he states that compliments are used as means of encouragement and showing gratitude in both British and United States. This study, however, resulted in many points of differences in terms of structure and the compliments' topic. For example, Creese states that British participants' favourite compliments' topic is the ability, whereas United States participants' favourite compliments' topic is appearance (Ibid). Moreover, Spencer-Oatey, Ng and Dong (2000) in their study 'Responding to compliments: British and Chinese Evaluative Judgement' examine the recipients' interpretation to compliments by English and Chinese university students. This study presents that the acceptance and the agreement with the compliments are recognized with a higher frequency among English University students, whereas rejection to compliments is regarded as the best response by Chinese university students.

Another study that carried out by Sharifian (2005) considers the Persian use of 'shekastehnafsi' and its

English match 'modesty' in both Persian and Australian academic community. This study illustrates that Persian academic speakers usually downgrade the compliments that they receive which is regarded as a polite attempt, whereas such downgrades by the Australian English in the academic community does not positively contribute in the process of interactions (Ibid). There are many other studies that consider compliments from the perspective of cultural differences, but this study has briefly considered several selected studies over some different places all over the world in different languages, societies, and settings, namely in English (USA, UK, and Australia) China, Persian speakers in Iran, and in South Africa. Concerning compliments in Kurdish, although there are some studies that deal with formulaic utterances and social expressions (e.g. Unpublished MA thesis by Hemn Shams, 2006) in general, there is not any study that explicitly examined compliments in Kurdish.

Language study from the perspective of culture is a very problematic issue. Jandt (2010: 37) states that "communication and culture are inseparable", and Fattah (2016: 408) adds that "the degree of the influence of culture may vary from a language to another, from a society to another, from a community of practice to another ". The hypothetical contradiction in the degree of using compliments, and in the process of interpreting compliment across cultures was encouraging to consider compliments in English and Kurdish culture. Precisely, this study aims at considering the process of paying compliments, figuring out the degree of using compliments, indicating the factors that encourage the use of compliments, and examining the interpretation of the recipients to the compliments that they are given in the private-sector workplaces across the United Kingdom and Iraqi -Kurdistan Region.

## 2. COMPLIMENTS

A human being as a social creature generally exerts efforts to strengthen social relations, so one of the methods that can fulfill this purpose is communication. Daily interactions require people to communicate in different ways and make use of different strategies that "results from the need to serve basic human needs in communication" (Tannen 1984: 19); hence, compliment as an effective language strategy occupies a part of human interactions in all languages without exception.

There are many definitions that consider compliments. According to Holmes (1988: 446), compliment is "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill etc.) that is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer". For Wang Yuhuan (1997: 15), compliment is an attempt to "smooth an interaction, strengthen an emotional exchange and

enhance the mutual understanding and friendship" of the interactants. These definitions only focus on the positive side of giving compliments which is not always the case, because no one has the right to give a positive interpretation in advance to the given compliments instead of the recipients (i.e.) compliments are not always positively valued by the hearer, because the hearer may have a distinctive interpretation that is different from the intent of the speaker. For example, speakers sometimes use compliments as lubricants to have a normal interaction, to meet cultural and contextual requirements, or to gain support of the hearers, but these attempts cannot be always interpreted positively by hearers. Although Holmes' definition to compliment lacks the consideration of the hearers' negative interpretation, in her details she (1986: 488) states that "complimenting is a complex Sociolinguistic skill". Holmes (1995: 119) also gets insight into the 'darker side' of complimenting which is associated with the hearers' interpretation to the received compliments. She further elaborates on this point by stating that the interpretation of the received compliments could be face-threatening, offensive, annoying, disgusting, satirical, and ironic (Ibid).

Deriving from the above discussion on the definition of compliment, Compliment is an attempt to soften the process of communication in order to build a strong relationship among interactants, but this attempt does not always fulfill the purpose as the interpretation of the utterances by the recipient does not always match with the speaker's intention.

### 3. GIVING COMPLIMENTS IN ENGLISH AND KURDISH

Compliments can be used anytime, everywhere, with anyone, in different contexts, in different community, and for various topics and purposes. According to Herbert (1988: 8), "compliment behaviour occurs among intimates, acquaintances, and strangers". Although the process of giving compliments is affected by the nature of relationship and the social status of the interactants, the use of compliments is a strategy that cannot be avoided. This section places an emphasis on the topics of compliments that are used by both English and Kurdish interactants. Compliment is a universal language strategy, so the topics that are used for compliments are shared by different languages in common. However, the degree of using compliments for a particular topic may vary from a language to another, from a community of practice to another, from a context to another, and even from a person to another. According to two different studies conducted by Lee (1990 and 2009), compliments fall into different categories. In her first study, compliments are generally used to talk about Physical Appearance, Accomplishments/Skills, Apparel, Other

Attributes, and Possessions (Lee, 1990); and in her second study Lee (2009) states that compliments are usually about appearance, skills, possessions, food, career, health, and children issues. The compliment topics in Kurdish are to a great extent similar to other languages. According to Shams (2006), compliment topics classified into appearance, apparel, personality, possessions, family members, skills, and abilities.

This study tries to categorize compliment topics that are given by both English and Kurdish interactants in the private work place context, then determining the degree of using each compliment, and then clarifying the interpretation process for the given compliments by both English and Kurdish recipients in the concerned community (See table 7)

### 4. DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN COMPLIMENT AND FLATTERY

The distinction between compliment and flattery is not an easy process as both of them are connected to the use of nice words to others. There is a kind of consensus among all the reliable dictionaries in terms of defining compliment and flattery. For example, Mariam Webster, Cambridge and Oxford dictionaries define compliment as the sincerity of using heartfelt words and making respectful acts to praise a particular person, whereas they define flattery as the insincere act of excessive praise used to coax someone to let you have or get something that you want from him/her. It can be derived from these definitions that the intention of the speaker and the interpretation of the recipients distinguish compliment from flattery. Precisely, according to Eylon and Heyd (2008: 685), flattery is the "use of excessive commendatory language in describing the qualities or record of another person for the purpose of creating a favorable attitude in that person towards the flatterer". The only point that makes flattery different from compliment is the intention of the speaker and the interpretation of the recipient. Therefore, drawing a boundary between compliment and flattery is not easy for the observant. Moreover, this distinction may vary from a culture to another and from a context to another. Barnlund and Araki (1985: 12) state that "Americans tend to draw a sharper boundary between compliments and flattery" as for this distinction they place emphasis on the sincerity of the speaker. Unlike Americans, Japanese do not regard sincerity as an important consideration, because they believed that flattery is only used for important figures that deserve to be flattered (Ibid).

### 5. THE METHODOLOGY

This study draws on both quantitative and qualitative approach in the process of data collection. It is

quantitative because a questionnaire was administrated and 16 recorded interactions were examined to determine the degree of using compliments, and to identify the topics of compliments that are used by both the English and Kurdish speakers in the private-sector workplace context. It is qualitative as it makes use of 30 recorded interactions among English and Kurdish speakers in the private-sector workplaces to examine the interpretation of the given compliments by the recipients.

The implementation of the qualitative approach is associated with the analyses of the compliments stated in the recorded interactions from the perspective of the discursive approach. According to Locher (2006) and Culpeper (2011), Discursive Approach takes into account all the interferences (such as the culture, the norms, social status, academic rank, the nature of relationship among interactants, the setting, the topic of interactions, and the purpose of interactions) that have impact on the process of interactions and interpretations. Therefore, for identifying the compliments, this study goes back to the speakers, whereas for the interpretation of the given compliments, this study restrictedly draws on the recipients interpretations. The qualitative approach is adopted in this study to identify compliments, and to have precise interpretation of compliments. The application of qualitative approach is implemented as stated below:

1. Recording 16 separate authentic interactions in different situations and settings:
  - a. 8 recorded interactions in 8 private-workplaces in England, and the participants are just English native speakers.
  - b. 8 recorded interactions in 8 private-workplaces in Kurdistan Region, and the participants are just Kurdish native speakers.
2. Going back to the participants to replay the recorded interactions to them
3. The participated interactants in the recorded interactions are asked to recognize the compliments that they gave.
4. The concerned speaker is also asked about the reason behind using the compliments and about his/her conviction in giving the compliment.

Then we go back to the recipient of the compliment to:

5. Approve the compliment
6. Interpret the compliment

If there is a contradiction in the process of identifying the compliment, this study takes the interpretation of the recipient into account (See Indexes, branch B). Thus, this method results in underlining all the compliments, identifying the topic and the interpretation of each one of them. This process is helpful to determine the degree of using compliments, the frequency of using each topic,

and the nature of recipients' interpretation in each English and Kurdish private-sector workplace context.

### 5.1 Setting

The process of data collection for the Kurdish part was performed at three factories and five service companies located across the Kurdistan Region. Concerning the English part, the data was also collected at three factories and five service companies located across England. Moreover, the data was collected at different settings and occasions at the concerned factories and companies. Generally, the interactions were recorded in both social and work time gathering in the workplace context including meeting, lunchtime, receiving clients, and daily chitchats, directions and consultations among the employers of different job titles.

### 5.2 Participants

The participants in this study are English and Kurdish native speakers with different job titles: worker, engineer, section manager, supervisor, cashier, seller, boss, etc. from different private factories and companies. The total number of participants in the questionnaire and in the authentic interactions is 101 persons.

1. The number of the participants in the questionnaire is 58 persons from different genders, and with different status and job titles. 25 of the participants are from factories and companies located in England, and 33 participants are from the factories and companies located in the Kurdistan Region.
2. The number of participants in the recorded authentic interactions is 43 persons (males and females). The number of Kurdish participants in eight recorded interactions is 26 persons, and the number of the English participants in eight recorded interactions is 17.

### 5.3 The number and the Period of the recorded interactions

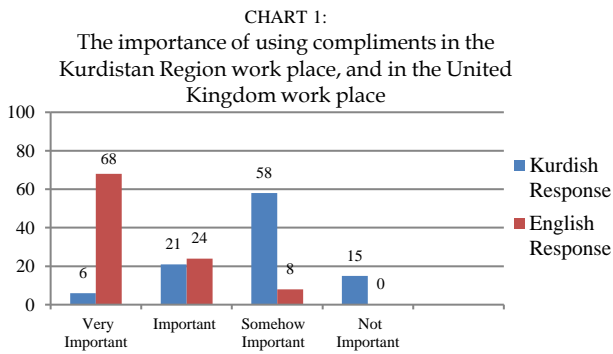
The number of the recorded interactions is 16 divided equally between English interactants from United Kingdom, and Kurdish interactants from the Kurdistan Region (See 6.1. The total duration of all the analyzed interactions is 5 hours and 20 minutes. The duration of the shortest one is 26 minutes, whereas the duration of the longest one is 53 minutes. However, only the first 20 minutes of each recorded interaction is extracted to analyze.

## 6. DATA AND DATA ANALYSES

This study draws on two ways to collect the data. The first instrument is a questionnaire, and the second instrument is recording authentic interactions.

### 6.1 Kurdish and English data from questionnaires

In the questionnaires, the participants were asked about the significance of using compliments in their daily interactions. The results that are achieved in both



the United Kingdom (UK) work places and the Kurdistan Region work places are stated below.

The above chart clarifies the importance of using compliments by the Kurdish and English interactants in the private factories and service companies. It generally illustrates that the use of compliments is important in both cultures. However, the significance degree of using them is noticeably different. The data that is achieved in the questionnaires and stated in the chart shows a great difference concerning the significance of using compliments in daily interactions in these two different contexts. For the 58% of the Kurdish participants in the Kurdish private work place community, the use of compliments is just 'somewhat important', for 21% of them is important, and only 6% of them believe that the use of compliments is 'very important', whereas 15% of Kurdish participants believe that the use of compliment is not important at all. Unlike Kurdish participants, 68% of the English respondents categorize the use of compliments in daily interactions as 'very important', and 24 % of them believe that it is 'important'. Thus, the chart confirms that the use of compliments in the UK private work place context is more important than the use of compliments in the Kurdistan Region private work place context.

Another question that was given in the questionnaire has been designed to consider the reaction and the interpretation of the compliment recipients. The question aims at figuring out the extent to which the recipients of the compliment accept the given compliment, and to which extent they feel convenient.

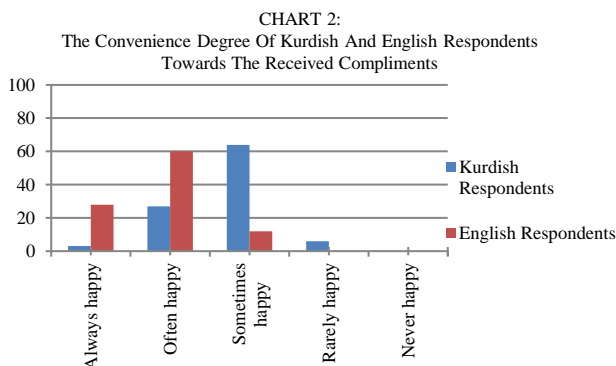


Chart 2 illustrates the reaction and the interpretation of the Kurdish and English interactants to the received compliments in the private work place context. The collected data that have been stated in the chart display a considerable difference between English and Kurdish perspectives regarding the interpretation of the compliments. 64% of the Kurdish participants in the private work place are just 'sometimes happy' with the received compliments, and only 27% of them are 'often happy' with them, whereas the comparative chart shows that the majority of English participants (88%) are either 'often happy' or 'always happy' when they are given compliment. In specific, 60% of them admit that they are 'often happy' with the received compliments, and 28% of them believe that they are 'always happy'. Unlike the English participants, a great degree of the Kurdish participants are negatively affected when they are given compliment as they believe that compliments are sometimes used for the purpose of flattery. Therefore, the questionnaire also beholds a statement to consider the confusion that occurs in distinguishing compliment from flattery. There is a kind of overlap between these two strategies of language; therefore, the chart 2 clarifies the nature of such overlap in both Kurdish and English private work place context.

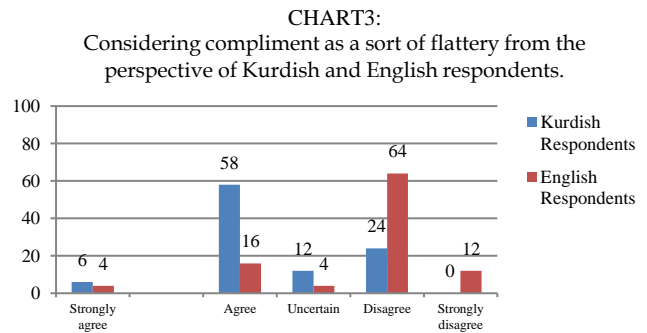
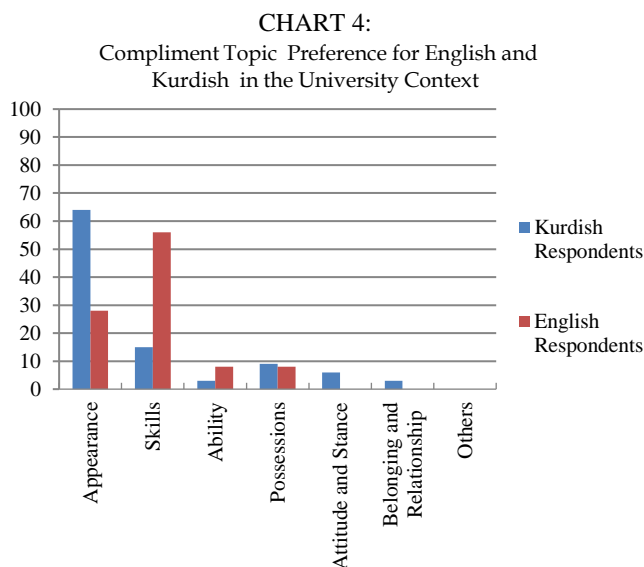


Chart3 shows the relationship between compliment and flattery from the perspective of Kurdish and English participants. There is an observable difference between English and Kurdish participants in terms of distinguishing compliment from flattery. 64% of Kurdish participants categorize compliment as a sort of flattery, whereas 76% of the English participants draw a sharp boundary between compliment and flattery. The majority of English participants consider compliment as an independent language strategy that is totally different from flattery. In connection to the topics of compliment, there is a kind of similarities in both languages. Both the Kurdish and English participants in the questionnaire assert that various topics can be used for giving compliments. The topics that are identified in the participants' responses are: Appearance, skills, ability, possessions, belonging, relationship, social status,

power, personality, attitude, friends, and family members.

The questionnaire also contributes in determining the most frequent use of the compliment by Kurdish and English participants in the private work place context. According to Walfson (1981), the most manipulated topics of compliment are appearance and skills. This common view is not always applicable in all languages and communities, because each culture has its own distinctive features. Concerning the compliment topic preferences in Kurdish and English see the chart below.



The data achieved from the questionnaire regarding compliment topic preferences clarifies that Kurdish and English participants have different interests. Chart (4) elaborate that the preferred topic in giving compliment for the Kurdish participants is Appearance, whereas for the English participants is skills. 64% of the Kurdish participants believe that appearance is the most complimented topic in their daily interactions, and only 15% of them give priority to the skills. For the English participants the degree is to a great extent different from the Kurdish participants. 56% of the English participants selected Skills as the most complimented topics, whilst only 28% of the participants make use of appearance as a material of compliment.

## 6.2 Kurdish and English Data from Recorded Authentic Interactions

The total duration of the analyzed recorded interactions is eight hours taken equally (four hours) from each Kurdish and English interactions. 16 different interactions were recorded in different settings, in different occasions, and in two different cultures (Kurdish and English). This method of data collection is a good attempt to consider the purpose and the

frequency of the use of compliments, and their interpretation authentically.

### A. Samples from the Kurdish data

#### Sample 1:

##### A Conversation between a team leader and a worker.

###### 1. A team leader:

Sarhad, to bro pišwak bda  
Srhad, you go rest have  
Sarhad, have some rest.

###### 2. A worker:

ba rúst!  
By really  
Are you sure?

###### 3. A team leader:

á, á, da bro, báš mándi:m kirdi: awro  
Yeah, yeah, go, so much tired made today  
Yeah, yeah, you can betake. Today, I have overstrained you

###### 4. A worker:

zor swpas, ba xwá to baštrin sarok timy ka  
tá está hamán bwbet  
Very much, thanks to God you best leader  
team that so far had  
Thank you so much, I swear to God that you are the best team leader that I have ever had.

###### 5. A team leader:

hahahaha, swpás  
Hahahaha, Thanks.

###### 6. Other attended workers: Chuckled

In the first sample, one can easily observe inequality in the quality of interactions of the team leader compared to the style of the worker's interaction. The Team leader, with the use of an imperative sentence, orders the worker to take a rest (Line 1 and 3), so the worker was delighted with this offer, he showed his gratitude, and gave a compliment in a response to this offer (Line 4). The team leader's reaction to the compliment was a laugh and the word (thanks) (Line 5). This disinterest in the team leader's response to the given compliment resulted from the concerns of the team leader about the workers sincerity. This impression has been ratified after playing the concerned recorded interactions to the participants and asking them some questions accordingly. The worker confirmed that he gave the team leader a compliment (Line 4), but the Team leader reveals that he recognized this compliment as flattery that is why he laughed at the compliment and 'thanks' was the only word that is used to shown his

insincere gratitude (Line 5). Moreover, the nearby hearers also recognized the given compliment as flattery which can be easily observed their chuckles (Line 6).

### Sample 2:

#### Early morning in a company

##### 1. The manager:

"bayáni báš"  
"Good morning"

##### 2. The salesman:

bayáni báš kák (A) jian, baxerbey t sar çáw m  
Good morning sir (A) dear, welcome you over eyes my  
Good morning dear sir (A), you are most welcome.

##### 3. The manager:

are ba rást, dazán i kešai (K) m çárasar kird  
By the way, know you problem (k) I solve did  
By the way, I solved (k)'s problem

##### 4. The salesman:

ba rást !  
Really!

##### 5. The manager:

hahahahaha, ai çon.  
Hahahahahaha, surely.

##### 6. The salesman:

hawáleky xosh a, ba xwá to na bwáyai kas  
naydatáni (M) rázibkát  
News good , to God you not have none  
capable (M) convince  
It is good news. Except you, no one would be able to  
convince (M)?.

##### 7. The Manager:

ba jidita ! , hahaha  
Are you sure! , hahaha

This brief conversation shows the dominant status that the Manger has, and the compliments that the Salesperson gives. The Manager started a new day with the formulaic utterance "bayáni báš" (Line 1), but the salesperson respond to this greeting with the use "bayáni báš" (good morning), mentioning the name of the manager (kák (A) = sir A), and adding two other ritualized utterances ( jian = darling), and baxerbey sarçáw m = you are most welcome) (Line 2). The greeting and response are unequal in length and quality, so one can easily observe the use of compliment by the salesperson resulted from his lower administrative status. The sales person was asked about the strategy of his response (Line 2) to his boss greeting, and about his

description to the manager "Except you, no one would be able to convince (M)" (Line 6). After going back to the salesperson, I could find that the salesperson was not sincere in his compliment. As a consequence, the Manger laughs at the compliment (line 5 and 7), and even he used the formulaic utterance "Are you sure" (line 7) to ask the salesperson about his sincerity in his compliments. I returned to the Manger to ask him some questions about the compliment that he was given by the Salesperson so he simply said: "Although I am 100% sure that the salesperson does not mean it, and it is a pure flattering, I am happy with the statement. Throughout all the recorded interactions in the Kurdish context, I have found that 73% of the approved compliments are categorized as flattery. However, they generally like to be given with compliments.

### B. Samples from the English data

#### Sample 1:

#### A conversation between Thomas (Assistant Plant Manager) and Charlie (Quality Assurance Manager)

1. Thomas: Good morning
2. Charlie: Good morning sir
3. Thomas: How is work going?
4. Charlie: Everything is going well. However, I doubt that we can increase the productivity with keeping the quality by June.
5. Thomas: Charlie, this tie looks nice on you.
6. Charlie: Oh, thank you sir, that is so kind of you.
7. Thomas: By the way Charlie, I would like you to aim at present a report on increasing the productivity by Thursday morning.
8. Charlie: Surely sir, I can pull it off. Oh, sir, I just wanna say thank you, that feedback you gave me last week was very useful.
9. Thomas: Thanks Charlie, keep going

Two compliments have been approved by the interactants in this short conversation. The first compliment was given by Thomas (Assistant Plant Manager) which was about the 'tie' that was being worn by Charlie (Quality Assurance Manager) (Line 5). The second compliment was focused on an interesting feedback that was given to Thomas by Charlie. After going back to them, both stated that the compliments made them feel good. However, they were different in the degree of happiness. Charlie was 'very happy' with the received compliment, but Thomas was just 'happy' with it. These differences in the degree of happiness resulted from the differences in Thomas and Charlie status and power in the factory. Moreover, Thomas revealed that the compliments that are given by the employees that they work for you are not touching as the compliments that are given by friends or family members.

**Sample 2:**

**A conversation between Emma (owner of a café) and Elizabeth (a waitress)**

1. Elizabeth: Hi Mrs. Emma
2. Emma: Hi Liz, how are you?
3. Elizabeth: I am fine, thank you. Oh, my Gosh, I love that shirt you are wearing. It is gorgeous. Where did you get it?
4. Emma: Really! , It is from Lipsy London, hahahaha
5. Elizabeth: Oh, wow!
6. Emma: A gift from Jacob
7. Elizabeth: Oh, you are so lucky,
8. Emma: Yeah, hahahahaha, Thanks
9. Elizabeth: you look amazing in green!
- 10.Emma: really? Thanks Liz

In this conversation, four compliments were approved by the interactants. The compliments were given by Elizabeth (the waiter) (Line 3, 5, 7, and 9) with the use of adjectives. However, in the (line 5), only interjections were used to give a compliment. After going back to Elizabeth to check her stance towards the received compliments, she reveals that these compliments made her day better, so she does not care about the sincerity of the speaker in her compliments.

TABLE 1:  
The results and the analyses of the compliments in the Kurdish and English recorded interactions

Recorded interactions	Length of interactions	Number of participants	Number of compliments	Approved as compliments	Recognized as flattery
Kurdish participants	4 hours	26	19	11	8
English participants	4 hours	17	31	27	4

The number of compliment attempts in 4 hours of recorded interactions by the Kurdish participants is 19 attempts, and the number of the Kurdish participants is in the recorded interactions is 26 persons. This means that the number of the compliment attempts is less than the number of the participants. Concerning English interactants, the number of the compliment attempts is 31 uttered by 19 participants. This equation shows that the number of the compliments uttered by each English participant is a bit less than 2 compliment attempts in four hours length of interactions. After considering the number of the participants and the number of the compliments attempts, it is found out that in the eight hours length of interactions 71% of the entire compliment attempts were used by the English interactants, and 29% were used by Kurdish interactants (See Pie 1).

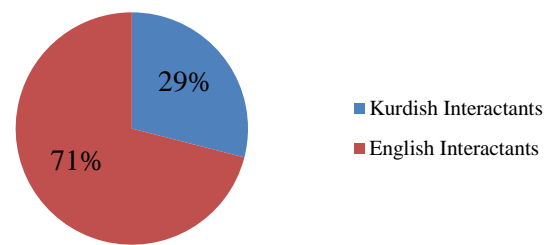
See the following equations to find out the compliment frequency percentage used by Kurdish and English participants.

- Kurdish:  $19 \text{ compliment attempts} \div 26 \text{ participants} = 0.73 \text{ attempt per person}$
- English:  $31 \text{ Compliment attempts} \div 17 \text{ participants} = 1.82 \text{ attempt per person}$
- $0.73 \text{ attempt per Kurdish participant} + 1.82 \text{ attempt per English participant} = 2.55$
- $0.73 \text{ attempt per Kurdish participant} \div 2.55 \text{ over all attempts} = 29\%$  is the percentage of the compliments used by the Kurdish participant in 8 hours length of interaction.
- $1.82 \text{ attempt per Kurdish participant} \div 2.55 \text{ over all attempts} = 71\%$  is the percentage of the compliments used by the participant in 8 hours length of interaction.

Concerning the degree of using compliments in Kurdish and English, the data gathered from recording interactions show that the frequency of using compliments by English interactants is more than their use by Kurdish interactants. Precisely, the degree of using compliments by English participants is approximately two times and half more than the degree of using compliments by Kurdish participants (See Pie1).

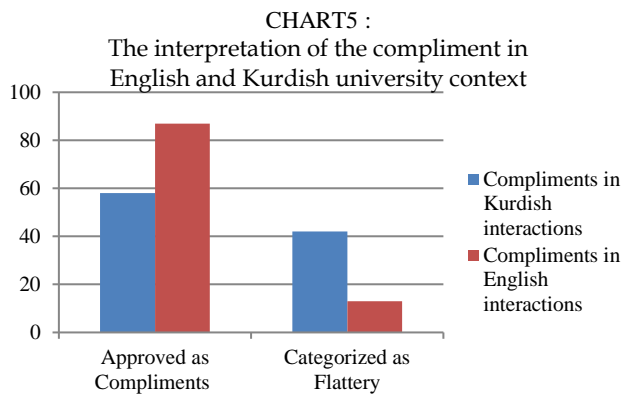
Concerning the interpretation of compliments, the

PIE1:  
Compliment frequency in 8hours length of recorded interactions by Kurdish and English participants



analysis of the data shows that only 58% the compliment attempts in 4 hours length of Kurdish interactions were categorized by the concerned recipients as compliments, whereas 42% of the compliment attempts were interpreted as flattery by the recipients of the compliment. This case in the analyses of English recorded interactions is to a great deal different from Kurdish, in a way that 87% of the compliment attempts in 4 hours length of English interactions were approved as compliment, whereas only 13% of the attempts were categorized as flattery (See Chart5).





## 7. FINDINGS

Although compliment is regarded as one of the language strategies, the significance of giving compliments varies from a language to another. The use of compliments is less important among Kurdish in comparison to English. 92% of English participants in this study believe that the use of compliment is important or very important, whereas 58% of the Kurdish participants admit that the use of compliments is just somehow important. Therefore, 71% of all the approved compliments, in Eight hours length of recorded interactions, were given by the English interactants, whereas only 29% of the approved compliments were given by Kurdish interactants.

It is the culture differences make Kurdish to have different perspectives from English concerning the importance of compliment in daily interactions. The flattery in the Kurdish society has a negative impact on the frequency of using compliment.

Unlike English, the Kurdish participants do not draw a sharp line between compliment and flattery. 64% of the Kurdish participants categorize Compliment as a sort of flattery, whereas they are actually two different strategies as it is approved by %76 of the English participants. After the data collection and the data analyses, some of the Kurdish participants were asked about the interference between compliment and flattery. The Kurdish respondents believe that the political, administrative, and economical system in the Kurdistan Region in the last for decades, the impact of flattery on the recipients, and the influence of powerful figures over decisions are the some common reasons behind increasing flattery.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

The most important concluding points that have been derived in this study are:

1. The use of compliments is very important in the UK private work-place community, whereas it is just

important in the Kurdistan Region private work-place community.

2. The English speakers in the United Kingdom private work-place community draw a sharp boundary between compliment and flattery, while Kurdish speakers in the Kurdistan Region private work-place community overlap compliment with flattery.
3. The degree of using compliments by English interactants is two and half more than the degree of using compliments by Kurdish interactants.
4. Although the topics of compliments are to a great extent similar in both contexts, English speakers tend to focus on skills more; rather Kurdish speakers tend to focus on appearance.
5. %42 of the compliment attempts were recognized as flattery by the Kurdish interactants; yet only %13 of them was recognized as flattery by English interactants.

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## 10. APPENDIX

### A. The Questionnaire

1. **To which extent the use of compliments is important in daily interactions?**
  - a. Very important
  - b. important
  - c. somehow important
  - d. Not important
2. **Are you happy with the received compliments?**
  - a. Always
  - b. Often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Rarely
  - e. Never
3. **Compliment is a sort of flattery.**
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
4. **What are the topics of compliment that are used in general?**
5. **What are the compliments that you are most likely to use?**

Compliment of appearance  
 Compliment of skills  
 Ability  
 Possessions  
 Belonging and relationship  
 Others, like .....

### B. Authentic Interactions

1. All the used compliments should be approved by their givers to find out the number of the compliments in the recorded interactions by both Kurdish and English speakers in the university context. I go back to the speaker to play her/him the recorded interaction that s/he participated in to underline all the compliments that s/he used in it.

After underlining all the compliments, then we move on to the analysis of the compliments as it is clarified in the following step.

2. The analysis of each approved compliment in the recorded interactions is subject to the following process. For example, the analysis process of the utterance "wow, your presentation was very interesting" is clarified as a sample. This statement is extracted from a recorded interaction that was used by one of the faculty members to the head of department. So, to analyze this statement, I go back to the speaker of this quote and play to him/her the track that includes this statement to ask him/her:

**2.1 Did you really mean it?**

**2.2 What was the reason behind using this compliment?**

**2.3 Why did you select skills as a topic of compliment in the above statement?**

**2.4 Was the response to your compliment satisfactory?**

3. I go back to the recipient of this quote and play this track and inform him/her that this utterance "wow! Your presentation was very interesting" is approved by the speaker as a compliment. Then the concerned recipient will be asked:

3.1 Were you happy about this compliment?

3.2 Do you believe that the giver of this compliment was true in his/her feeling? If at least the answer for 3.2 was (No), the recipient will be asked:

3.3 What is your interpretation to this statement?