

The Speech Act of Complimenting as Part of the Ukrainian, Russian and English-Speaking Communities: Ukraine and the USA

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Abstract

Compliments as speech acts have the reflection and expression of cultural values. Many of the values reflected through compliments are personal appearance, new acquisitions, possessions, talents and skills. It is especially important in linguistic interaction between people. This research aims to analyze the speech acts of complimenting in Ukrainian and American cultures in order to use them for teaching pragmatics second language (L2) students. Defining the ways of complimenting in Ukrainian, Russian and American English help to avoid misunderstandings and pragmatic failures. This study uses a method of ethnomethodology. Speech acts are studied in their natural contexts. To carry out this research native speakers of English in the United States and native speakers of Russian and Ukrainian from all over Ukraine were interviewed on-line. The analysis was made on the data that included: 445 Russian, 231 Ukrainian and 245 English compliments. Results of this study show how native speakers tend to compliment people: syntactical structure of expressions, cultural lexicon, attributes praised and language context. It has implications for teaching English to Ukrainians and for teaching Russian and Ukrainian to speakers of English. Knowing how to use speech acts allows the speaker to have pragmatic competence. Upon completion of the data analysis on the current study, further information on deeper analysis in terms of semantics and metaphorical language can be provided.

Keywords: compliments, pragmatic competence of second language students, pragmatic failure, speech act, structure of compliments

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