Gender-Based Differences in Compliments

in the American Comedy TV-series *Ugly Betty*

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1. Introduction

In our daily lives, humans use speech to transmit for instance information and feelings. Humans cannot live without speech. However speaking is a complex behavior which requires both linguistic and pragmatic competence and it is also influenced by sociocultural norms and constraints. According to some implicit cultural rules, humans constantly choose their language use depending on the situation and the interlocutor. Therefore based on various factors, there are different types of behaviors seen in speech acts, such as apologies, requests, complaints, invitations and compliments. Meanwhile, human speech and behavior are always guided by the principle of politeness, greetings, thanks, friendly address terms and expressions of concern and admiration.

At the same time, speech is also affected by the aspect of gender. Whether you are a male or a female it is very important to understand the implicit meanings in speech. When people are children, they have been taught to behave differently to fit in with the gender appropriate language (Coates, 2004).

In the area of conversations, compliments are vital topics to research for linguists. "A compliment is one of them, which notice and attend the hearer's interests, wants, needs, goods..." (Holmes, 1988: 450). It brings many effects in people's life. People will get confident if they receive positive compliments, while if they get negative compliments which threat their faces, they will be hurt. For this kind of polite behavior, many pragmatists and linguists have done many studies. There are many studies about compliments based on different genders. However they usually focus on whether or not female speakers are powerless or just focus on whether or not female speakers are more polite. Further, some of them have shown that there are some differences between males and females in compliments (Holmes, 1988; Herbert, 1998). In their opinion, females tend to give more compliments than males to

maintain solidarity.

1.1 Aim and scope

The aim of the present study is to find out how men and women use compliments in English conversations in TV-series. The compliments will be analyzed as to their frequency, form, topic and function.

1.2 Material

The American sitcom called *Ugly Betty* is used in the present study. *Ugly Betty* is an American comedy which began airing in 2006. The story is set in New York and it revolves around a girl, Betty, and her boss, family and friends.

There are only two seasons in this TV-series when this study is done, so the dialogues in the first and second episodes in the first and second seasons are used with the development of the story. Every beginning episode in every season usually states the time, places, characters involved in the following scenario, and it also repeats the scenario in last season for the audience to link up the whole story. Every episode takes about 40 minutes and all four episodes make up a total of about 160 minutes.

The compliments among all characters which are balanced in gender, being from 9 females and 9 males, have been analyzed. The people in the TV series are not real people, but actors chosen to portray real people. Although the amount of speech is not the same for every character, the conversations are supposed to reflect real conversations in people's daily life. However, they are chosen to match the real ones in daily life. What can be assumed is that the data from the TV series bears some resemblance to real life language.

Four kinds of dialogues involving compliments have been selected where the different characters are contrasted as follows:

(1) The compliments from females to others with different genders.

(2) The compliments from males to others with different genders.

However some compliments have been excluded from the present study: compliments for speakers themselves; compliments from a group of people to a particular thing or a special person and compliments having an ironic meaning, which is judged from the relationship of the speaker and hearer. For example, if the interlocutors are enemies, the compliments between them have ironic meanings, so these kinds of compliments are not chosen. Here compliments are studied as politeness strategies.

1.3 Method

Firstly, the present study lists all main characters in these chosen four episodes. There are 9 females: Betty, Hilda, Amanda, Gina, Fabia, Willhelmina, Jenna Fletcher, Christina, Alexise and 9 males: Daniel, Ignacio, Walter, Bradford, Marc, Santos, Justin, Assistant, shopkeeper.

Secondly, the study chooses all compliments from these 18 characters.

Thirdly, according to the standards of compliments in this study, the study chooses all valid compliments which are regarded as politeness strategies, excluding compliments for the speakers themselves, compliments from a group and compliments with ironic meanings.

Lastly, the study classifies all these valid compliments into different groups based on the aim of this study: the form of compliments, the topic of compliments and the function of compliments.

After these above four steps, the study analyzes the data of these groups in order to reach some conclusions. The study contrasts the number and percentage of the compliments' frequency, form, topic and function based on genders.

2. Theoretical background

Referring to gender-based compliments, some relative theories will be explored ahead, for instance speech acts, face and politeness, compliment, and gender theory.

2.1 Speech act theory

In speech act studies, one of the famous researchers is Austin. He says that on any occasion, an utterance will be performed by actions consisting of three related acts (Levinson, 2003:236):

1) Locutionary act: the utterance of a sentence with determinate sense and reference.
2) Illocutionary act: the making of a statement, offer, promise and so on, in uttering a sentence, by virtue of the conventional force associated with it.
3) Perlocutionary act: the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentences, such as effects being special to the circumstances of utterance.

It is easy to understand what a locutionary act is. It is the basic act of utterance and it only produces a meaningful linguistic expression with no purpose.

(1) *It is too cold!*

Someone made this meaningful linguistic expression. However, in real life, people do not just make the utterances with no purpose. They usually make them with some special intentions which are involved in the illocutionary act. It is performed through

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the communicative force of an utterance as is illustrated in Example (1). It can be a simple statement, and it also can be a request to close to the door, or an explanation for something, or used for some other purposes.

For many people, it is difficult to distinguish between the illocutionary and perlocutionary act. In fact, people do not only make the meaningful utterances with some functions, but also they want to get an effect which is involved in the perlocutionary act. After the hearer hears the utterance of Example (1), he will recognize the effect the speaker wants, for example, for the hearer to close the door, and then he will either do it for the speaker or not.

Among of the above three acts, the most discussed is the illocutionary act. In Austin's theory (Levinson, 2003:236), the illocutionary act is usually performed through a verb which is labeled performative verb (PV). The verb *ask* in Example (2) is a PV.

(2) *I **ask** you to finish this work.*

Austin also classifies the speech acts into two groups: the implicit performatives and the explicit performatives (Levinson, 2003:238). The latter one can be divided into five categories: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, expositives and behabitives. Compliments belong to the behabitives whose function is to express one's attitude to something or somebody.

After several years, Searle develops Austin's speech act theory. He puts it into two main categories, direct and indirect speech acts which are based on the structure. Example (3) illustrates them below.

(3) a *Give back my book!*

   b *I want to use my book.*

Here, a and b have the same function but a is more direct than b. In other words, the indirect speech act is usually more polite than the direct speech act.

Based on the function of the utterance, Searle classifies the speech acts into 5 types (Levinson, 2003:240):

1) Representatitives: used to state some facts (Such as the statement, concluding).

2) Directives: used to get somebody to do something (Such as the order, command, request, and suggestion).

3) Commissives: used to commit to doing something (Such as the promise, threat).

4) Declarations: used to change the way or state things are (Such as the declaring, notice).

5) Expressives: used to express feelings and emotions. (Such as the apology, compliment).

The compliments are included in the expressive speech acts. They are usually involved in speakers' and hearers' psychological states and the face states. This concept is explained in the next section.

2.2 Face and politeness

All the speech acts cannot exist without face and politeness, and they usually save face or threaten face. It is therefore necessary to talk about face and politeness theories.

Politeness is usually an expression of concern for the feelings of other people both in linguistic and non-linguistic ways. It is used to express respect to the person who is talked to. The most profound statement of politeness is from Brown and Levinson (1978:66). In their opinion, politeness is "something that is emotionally invested, and

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that can be lost, maintained or enhanced and must be constantly attended to in interaction". They say that people need certain wants which are related to politeness. This kind of wants is called face needs.

There are two categories of face needs: negative face and positive face. The former one is the need to be independent and free from imposition; while the latter one is the need to be connected, to belong, to be a member of group (Yule, 2006:120). In general, face is the self-image. If some utterances seem to be a threat to others' self-images, it is called a Face Threatening Act (FTA); while if some utterances seem to lessen the threat to others, it is called a Face Saving Act (FSA) (Yule, 2006:120).

To keep the conversations going on or to keep the solidarity, people will avoid FTAs and try their best to use a FSA that emphasizes others' positive face needs. Compliments can be used as FSAs.

(4) *Your clothes are very beautiful!*

To a female, Example (4) is a positive face act which can build a close relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Since clothes are a part of a person's appearance, it indirectly praises the hearer for looking good.

2.3 Compliments

From the above theories, it seems that compliments are a very important speech act and cooperative strategy in people's lives. Then a more detailed account of compliments follows below.

2.3.1 The definition of compliments

Compliments have three kinds of meanings: they are remarks that express admiration of someone or something; they are remarks that show that we trust someone else and have a good opinion of them; they are remarks that express praise, or good wishes (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2004).

In the *Free Dictionary* (2008), compliments are defined in a similar way: they can be expressions of praise, admiration, or congratulation; they can be formal acts of civility, courtesy, or respect; or they can be good wishes; regards.

Then from the compliments' thesaurus in the *Free Dictionary* (2008), they can mean expressions of approval and commendation or excessive or insincere praises.

Some researchers have made some definitions about compliments, among which the most famous and standard one is Holmes' version:

> A compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc), which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer.(1986:485)

From the four above definitions, it is easy to see some principles that define compliments: first, it is a polite speech act; second, it can be direct or indirect, which means it could have an explicit form meaning that people can distinguish it quickly, or it could have not an obvious structure, however people still regard it as a compliment, if only it can attribute credit to someone according to its implicit meaning; and last, it is given to others, not to the speakers themselves.

2.3.2 The topics and forms of compliments

Other studies have shown that there are some differences between males and females in their realization patterns of compliments. Two important studies which focus on gender differences in complimenting are those by Holmes (1988: 445-465) and Herbert (1998: 53-75). These authors find that the syntactic patterns and lexical choices made by men and women are different. Based on the findings, they assume that females use compliments for keeping solidarity while males regard compliments as potential Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) or actual assertions of praises.

Research into the topic and structure of compliments has been done. Major compliment topics can be classified into three categories based on objects of compliments: appearance/possessions，performance/skills/abilities and personality traits（Manes & Wolfson, 1981，Knapp et al., 1984，Wolfson, 1989，Herbert, 1998).

According to Manes & Wolfson (1981:120), there are nine categories in terms of the sentence structure found in compliments:

NP = noun phrase

ADJ = adjective

PRO = pronoun

V = verb

ADV = adverb

1 *Your blouse is/looks (really) beautiful.* (NP *is/looks (really)* ADJ)

2 *I (really) like/love your car.* (I *(really) like/love* NP)

3 *That's a (really) nice wall hanging.* (PRO *is (really) a* ADJ NP)

4 *You did a (really) good job.* (You V *a (really)* ADV NP)

5 *You really handled that situation well.* (You V (NP) *(really)* ADV)

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6 *You have such beautiful hair!* (You *have (a)* ADJ NP!)

7 *What a lovely baby you have!* (What *(a)* ADJ NP!)

8 *Nice game!* (ADJ NP!)

9 *Isn't your ring beautiful!* (Isn't NP ADJ!)

From Herbert's (1998:56) view, compliments can be put into three types in terms of personal focus:

(a) 1st person focus: *I love your rings!*

(b) 2nd person focus: *Your rings are beautiful!*

(c) 3rd person focus: *Nice rings!*

The 1st and 2nd person focuses are the personalized forms, while the 3rd person focus is the impersonal form.

2.3.3 The functions of compliments

From the function of the compliment, according to some previous research, it can be divided into six types:

1 To express admiration or approval of someone's work/appearance/taste (Herbert, 1998). Example (5) can explain it.

(5): *I like your coat.*

This compliment just praises other's appearance and shows the speaker's admiration.

2 To establish/confirm/maintain solidarity (Wolfson, 1989). When a stranger comes into a group and makes the utterance in Example (5), it also can be regarded as a method to establish a new friendly relationship in the group.

3 To replace greetings/gratitude/apologies/congratulations (Wolfson, 1989). When two friends meet with each other, one of them utters a sentence like Example (6):

(6) *How nice you are today!*

This utterance has the same function of the greeting as *How are you?*

4 To soften face-threatening acts such as apologies, requests and criticism (Wolfson, 1983). If the speaker makes some offence to the hearer, he could use a compliment to change the topic and soften the tense atmosphere.

5 To open and sustain conversation (conversation strategy) (Wolfson, 1983). If the interlocutors are strangers, they can begin their conversations from the compliments to open the dialogues. Example (7) describes it exactly.

(7) *Hi, your English is very good, when did you begin to learn it?*

6 To reinforce desired behavior (Manes, 1983). It is usual in daily life. Example (8) can illustrate it.

(8) *How nice your ear rings are! Where did you buy them?*

These two sentences show not only the speaker's admiration, but also the speaker's strong hope to buy the same ones.

Compliments in different situations have varied meanings and functions. In general, they are usually used as a politeness strategy to make other feel comfortable and continue the conversations.

2.4 Gender and conversation

2.4.1 Categories of gender

From different aspects, humans can be divided into two groups. If they are divided into males and females, they are done so in terms of biological sex, which depends on their sex organs and genes. In contrast, when using gender to divide the humans, people can adopt a psychological and cultural term which involves the subjective feelings of maleness and femaleness. Meanwhile, gender also refers to society's evaluation of behavior as masculine or feminine (Basow, 1992: 2; Barker & Dariuze, 2001:48; Yule, 2006:222).

Many differences between women's and men's voices have been studied from some aspects. From the biological aspects, because women and men have some differences in the physical vocal tract, the voice of women is various from men. For example, on the pitch, women usually speak with a high pitch because of short and thin vocal folds, while men speak at a low pitch (Graddol & Swann, 1989:15).

From the social aspect of voice between women and men, there are still some differences. In Spender's view, men usually use lower pitched voice because of not only the anatomy but also their will to use the low pitched voice (Graddol & Swann, 1989:18). For men, using the high pitched voice will be regarded as ridicule which will destroy their images. The lower pitched voices are regarded as more confident and dominant than higher pitched ones in men's opinions. In society, men are usually the authoritative group. They are the center of the society and the dominance while women are usually the subordinate groups in the society.

Although some equality between women and men has been achieved in many fields, such as the academia, the economy and politics, the influences of the traditional views and the objective differences based on genders still exist.

2.4.2 Feature of conversation based on mixed genders

Relating to speech, linguists discuss gender rather than sex.

> In the new psychology of sex and gender, maleness and femaleness are viewed largely as social constructs that are confirmed by sex – characteristic styles of self – presentation and the differential distribution of females and males into different social roles and statuses and maintained by intrapsychic needs for self – consistency and the need to behave in a socially desirable manner. (Unger 1989:17)

Language is social and it is also personal. In the Saussurean's model, language is an abstract system while Noam Chomsky claims that language is an aspect of individual behavior (Graddol & Swann, 1989: 6). Conversations cannot happen without humans.

For linguists, gender is regarded as a grammatical term which is close to the speech and conversations. In the early 1970s, research on how women and men speak came to occupy the center of the study of discourses and genders (Thomas & Shan: 1999; Coates: 2004; Graddol & Swann: 1989; Lakoff: 1975; Holmes: 1996). In Lakoff's opinion, there are four approaches to the study of gender and language: the deficit, dominance, difference and social constructionist approaches. Most linguists prefer to use the last one which has to do with the interactions between the genders and puts emphasis on doing gender rather than being gender. That means people act as females or males based on their subjective decision rather than on their biological sex. In other words, a female can act as a male if she likes and a male can act as a female.

Through much research, some absolute differences between men and women in speech acts have been found:

(1) Women are more socially engaged cooperative and constructive than men;

(2) Women are more silent than men in public, so they are a muted group;

(3) Women ask more questions than men in speech pattern;

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(4) Women are interrupted more than men;

(5) Women have the different choices and frequency of the lexical items from men;

(6) Women use more politeness behaviors than men, such as compliments, apologies, minimal responses and tag questions. (Coupland, 2000:7; Wooffitt, 2005:200; Coates: 2004; Graddol & Swann: 1989; Lakoff: 1975)

In general, women's language is described as a kind of language that avoids direct and forceful statements and relies on forms that convey hesitation and uncertainty.

2.4.3 Feature of compliments based on mixed genders

As far as compliments, many linguists have done a lot of studies about these based on genders. According to their opinions, some differences have been explored:

(1) Women use compliments to each other obviously more than they do to men or men do to each other;

(2) Women are more likely to receive compliments than men. This means that complimenters may be aware of the risk of discomfiting men with an FTA;

(3) As far as the syntactic patterns, both women and men use the first form (NP *is/looks (really)* ADJ). Women use the seventh form (What *(a)* ADJ NP!) more than men, while men use the eighth form (ADJ NP!) more than women.

(4) Women compliment each other on appearance more than on any other topic, whereas, between males, compliments on possessions are used more often;

(5) Compliments tend to focus on skills or performance as solidarity signals for males, while compliments reinforce appearance regarded as solidarity signals for females;

(6) Women and men interpret compliments differently. Women seem to use compliments to establish, maintain and strengthen relationship, while men use compliments as encouragement or evaluative feedback. (Wolfson: 1983; Manes: 1983; Holmes: 1988; Holmes: 1996)

For these phenomena, many linguists also give some reasons: (1) From the character aspect, women seek connections and involvement in conversations, while men seek independence and hierarchy. (2) From the socialization aspect, women and men have different experiences from their childhood. Women tend to be more cooperative and relatively close in interactions, while men tend to be more competitive and control–oriented. (3) From the power and society status aspect, men are usually the dominant in the society, and they are the center in public, wherever they are in the economy, region, politics and so on. Men are considered to be more powerful, so they show more competitiveness than women (Holmes, 1996: 7; Holmes, 2001: 157; Lazar, 2005: 31).

3. Analysis

For the above three mentioned reasons in character, socialization and society status aspects, women and men engage in different speech acts when they make compliments. Women make more compliments than men and prefer to use personalized forms. At the same time, the forms of compliments used by women and men are also different (Graddol & Swann, 1989: 93; Coates, 2004: 98; Holmes, 1996: 115). This present study analyzes gender-based compliment from four aspects: the frequency, the form, the topic and the function.

3.1 Frequency of compliments

According to the definition of compliments: a compliment is a speech act with direct or indirect forms to express the admirations, approval, congratulation, praises, trusts, good wishes, greetings for the hearers' appearances, characteristics, possessions, skills or other reasons, which are positively valued by the speaker and the hearer. The present study finds some compliments with the standard form in the section of material in these four episodes, as is illustrated in Example (9).

(9) *I like your poncho.*

This is from Betty to a woman showing her admiration of the woman's possession.

Table 1. The number of speakers' compliments in the four episodes in *Ugly Betty*

Episodes	1(season 1)		2(season 1)		1(season 2)		2(season 2)	
Gender (from)	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number	11	10	12	10	5	4	11	9
Percentage	52.38%	47.62%	54.55%	45.45%	55.56%	44.44%	55.00%	45.00%
Total	21		22		9		20	
Total	72							

Table 1 shows the compliments found in the four episodes included in this study. According to the percentage of compliments in this table, it is easy to find that in every episode, females make more compliments than males depending on the gender balance in the material, there being nine females and nine males. In episode 1 season 1 females make 52.38% compliments and males make 47.62%; In episode 2 season 1 females make 54.55% compliments and males make 45.45%; In episode 1 season 2 females make 55.56% compliments and males make 44.44%; In episode 2 season 2 females make 55% compliments and males make 45%.

Table 2. The different number of speakers for compliments between females and males

Gender (from)	Females	Males
Total	39	33
Percentage	54.17%	45.83%

Table 2 shows the total number and percentage of compliments in the above four

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episodes. According to the percentage of compliments in this table, it is obvious to find that even though females make more compliments than males, there is slight difference between the females and the males. Females make compliments with 54.17%, while males make them with 45.83%. This means that with the change and development of society, males also begin to make more compliments than before at least as reflected in this TV-series. However females still like to praise others to show their politeness and cooperation.

Table 3 to Table 6 show the data of recipients of compliments from females and males. In this TV-series, all these chosen compliments can be classified in two groups: compliments to somebody who is present, which means the speaker makes a compliment to the one who is listening to him or her; the other group is the compliments to somebody who is absent, which means the speaker makes a compliment to somebody who is not there other than the hearer. Almost all utterances have meanings and intentions in order to get certain effects. Example (9) and Example (10) illustrate them respectively.

(10) *I mean, she was so nice.*

Example (9) is a compliment from Betty to a young lady who is also waiting for an interview. Here Betty compliments her who has a beautiful poncho. Example (10) is an utterance also from Betty when she is with her father at home about a famous film star. She praises the star who is not at Betty's home.

These two above groups can be divided into 4 categories according to the recipients of compliments: females, males, group of mixed genders and objects which do not belong to the hearer. Some examples are given to explain them.

(11) *Good work!*

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(12) *I can't tell you how excited I am to be working with such an amazingly talented and dedicated staff.*

(13) *It is so pretty!*

Example (9) is definitely said to a female; Example (11) is a compliment from Daniel's father to Daniel which is for a male; Example (12) is a compliment from Daniel to his staff at the first meeting; Example (13) shows Amanda compliments the wonderful conditions offered by the dog adoption institution in the presence of Marc.

Table 3. The different number of recipients of compliments between femals and males in episode 1 of season 1

recipient makers	Compliment to someone present					Compliment to someone absent			
	Female	Male	Group	Object	Total	Female	Male	Group	Total
Female	2	5	0	0	7	1	2	1	4
Male	5	1	1	1	8	1	1	0	2
Total	7	6	1	1	--	2	3	1	--

Table 3 shows that females make 7 compliments to someone who is present, and make 4 compliments to someone who is absent. It is very easy to find that femles tend to make more compliments to someone who is present. It is the same with males. In this episode males make 8 compliments to someone who is present, and only 2 compliments to someone who is absent. On the other hand, it also shows that both females and males like complimenting the opposite gender. In all compliments from females in this episode, they compliment males 7 times and males compliment females 6 times in all compliments from males.

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Table 4. The different number of recipients of compliments between femals and males in episode 2 of season 1

recipient / makers	Compliment to someone present					Compliment to someone absent			
	Female	Male	Group	Object	Total	Female	Male	Group	Total
Female	3	3	1	0	7	4	1	0	5
Male	5	2	1	1	9	1	0	0	1
Total	8	5	2	1	--	5	1	0	--

The situation in episode 2 season 1 is similar to the one in episode 1 season 1. Table 4 shows that females make 7 compliments to someone who is present, and make 5 compliments to someone who is absent. In this episode males make 9 compliments to someone who is present, and only 1 compliment to someone who is absent. In all compliments from females in this episode, females compliment males 4 times and males compliment females 6 times in all compliments from males.

Table 5. The different number of recipients of compliments between females and males in episode 1 of season 2

recipient / makers	Compliment to someone present					Compliment to someone absent			
	Female	Male	Group	Object	Total	Female	Male	Group	Total
Female	0	3	1	0	4	0	1	0	1
Male	3	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0
Total	3	3	2	0	--	0	1	0	--

Table 5 shows that females makes 4 compliments to someone who is present, and make 1 compliment to someone who is absent. In this episode males make 4 compliments to someone who is present, and no compliment to someone who is absent. In all compliments from females in this episode, female make 4 compliments to males and males make 3 compliments to females in all compliments from males.

Table 6. The different number of recipients of compliments between females and males in episode 2 of season 2

recipient / makers	Compliment to someone present					Compliment to someone absent			
	Female	Male	Group	Object	Total	Female	Male	Group	Total
Female	2	4	2	2	10	0	1	0	1
Male	3	2	0	2	7	0	2	0	2
Total	5	6	2	4	--	0	3	0	--

Table 6 shows that females make 10 compliments to someone who is present, and make 1 compliment to someone who is absent. In this episode males make 7 compliments to someone who is present, and 2 compliments to someone who is absent. In all compliments from females in this episode, females make 5 compliments to males. Males make the same number of compliments both to femles and males in all compliments from males. However it does not affect the conclusion in table 7 below. As a whole, males make more compliments to females than to males.

Table 7. The different number of recipients of compliments between females and males in all 4 episodes

recipient / makers	Compliment to someone present					Compliment to someone absent			
	Female	Male	Group	Object	Total	Female	Male	Group	Total
Female	7	15	4	2	28 （71.79%）	5	5	1	11 （28.21%）
Male	16	5	3	4	28 （84.85%）	2	3	0	5 （15.15%）
Total	23	20	7	6	--	7	8	1	--

Table 7 above is the total data of recipients for compliments between different genders in the four episodes. This table shows that both females and males tend to compliment the ones who are present, because the purpose of compliments is to express respect for the hearer and the speaker also wants to get a response, while people who are not

present cannot give responses.

Compared to males, females seem to compliment ones who are absent more than males. Females compliment this type of recipients in 28.21% and males do it in 15.15%. Because males are more powerful than females, they usually use the voice of commands and directives to express their feelings (Coates, 2004:94) which make them require more responses. For females, they usually compliment with personalized forms (Herbert, 1998:58) and just express their feelings, so they will not necessarily receive any responses

Table 8. The percentage of different categories of compliments based on gender

recipient makers	Compliment to all situations			
	Female	**Male**	**Group**	**Object**
Female	12(30.77%)	20(51.28%)	5(12.82%)	2(5.13%)
Male	18(54.33%)	8(24.24%)	3(9.09%)	4(12.12%)

Table 8 shows the data of percentage of all categories of compliments based on genders regardless of whether they are at present or absent. In these four episodes, females make 51.28% compliments to males and males make 54.33% compliments to females. To show this more clearly, according to the table, two separate diagrams are made based on females and males.

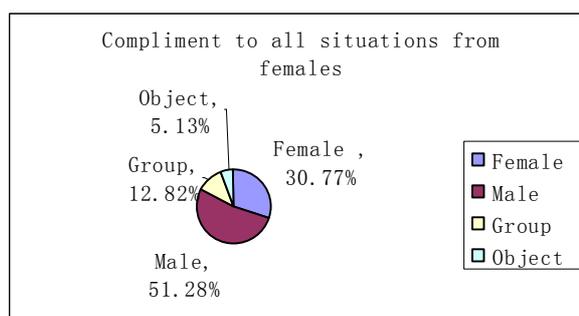Diagram 1. Compliments to people in all situations from females

Diagram 1 illustrates that for females, they perfer to compliment males more than the other three categories. Compliments to females come in the second position.

Diagram 2. Compliments to people in all situations from males

Compliment to all situations from males

Object, 12.12%
Group, 9.09%
Male, 24.24%
Female, 54.33%
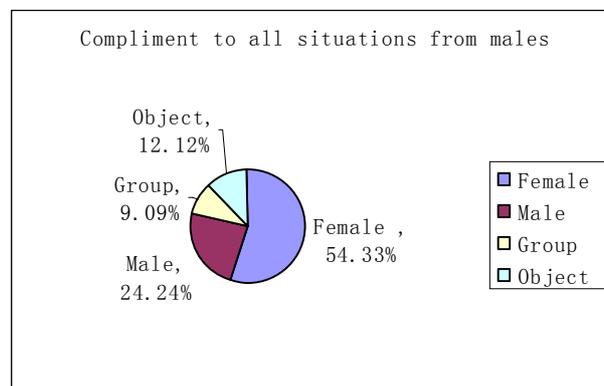
Female
Male
Group
Object

Diagram 2 also tells the similar phenomena, for males, they tend to compliment females most and then males.

Table 3 to Table 7 and Diagram 1 to Diagram 2 say that females and males usually like to compliment a specific person more than people in groups and objects. Meanwhile, they prefer to compliment the opposite gender rather than the same gender.

Then from the number, it is possible to find that females and males receive more or less the same number of compliments in this TV-series. Females receive 30 compliments while males receive 28 in total. Females receive only a little more compliments than males. This is because nowadays the equlity between females and males has been advocated, and it influences people's opinions towards gender and the behaviors in terms of the methods of speech acts. More and more males regard females to be equal with males, so they will give compliments to females and receive compliments from femles which are thought to be a kind of FTA.

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3.2 Form of compliments

As far as the form is concerned, all compliments in these four episodes have been divided into 10 categories based on Manes & Wolfson (1981:120) which were mentioned in section 2. Some examples will illustrate each type.

(14) *It was very good!*

Example (14) belongs to the first type exactly defined as NP *is/looks (really)* ADJ. The Example (9) shows the second type defined as I *(really) like/love* NP.

(15) *You guys are the experts*

Example (15) is the third type defined as PRO *is/ are (really) (a)* ADJ NP. However there is a slight change in the plural. In Manes & Wolfson's types, the third type is the singular number, and here the singular and plural both belong to the third type.

(16) *You did a great job on this issue.*

Example (16) is the presentation of the fourth type defined as You V *a (really)* ADV NP.

(17) *Only one of you got his list correct. Justin*

Example (17) is of the fifth type. Here it has some changes based on the Manes & Wolfson's types. The present study adds the adjective as is shown below: You V (NP) *(really)* ADV/ ADJ.

(18) *You have got the gift!*

Example (18) illustrates the sixth type defined as You *have (a)* ADJ NP. There is no

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example for the seventh type.

(19) *Good work, darling.*

Example (19) shows the eighth type. However there is also some changes for this type. In Manes & Wolfson's types the adjective should be followed by the noun phrase, here the noun phrase can be omitted as is shown below: ADJ (NP)!

(20) *Isn't it pretty !*

Example (20) belongs to the ninth type defined as Isn't NP ADJ.

(21) *Do you know I am so proud of you?*

Example (21) is classified into the last group for others. This category is the one which does not belong to the above nine categories. This is the utterance from Hilda to her son Justin. Though it is a question, in that situation, Justin does a good job and his mother is very happy to praise him, so it is still a compliment regardless of its form and it belongs to the last category.

Table 9 below shows the concrete number of each category. This diagram shows the percentage of the each catergory which helps us understand Table 9 more clearly.

Table 9. The forms used by speakers for compliments between females and males in 4 episodes

Gender \ Form	1 season 1 F	1 season 1 M	2 season 1 F	2 season 1 M	1 season 2 F	1 season 2 M	2 season 2 F	2 season 2 M	Total F	Total M	Total Mixed
(1)	6	5	7	4	1	2	4	0	18（46.15%）	11（33.33%）	29（40.28%）
(2)	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3（7.69%）	0（0%）	3（4.17%）
(3)	3	1	2	1	0	1	0	2	5（12.82%）	5（15.15%）	10（13.89%）
(4)	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1（2.56%）	2（6.06%）	3（4.17%）
(5)	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0（0%）	3（9.09%）	3（4.17%）
(6)	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	2（5.13%）	2（6.06%）	4（5.56%）
(7)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0（0%）	0（0%）	0（0%）
(8)	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	3	3（7.69%）	7（21.21%）	10（13.89%）
(9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1（2.56%）	0（0%）	1（1.39%）
Other	0	1	2	1	1	0	3	1	6（15.38%）	3（9.09%）	9（12.50%）

(F= female M= male)

Diagram 3. The forms of compliments based on genders

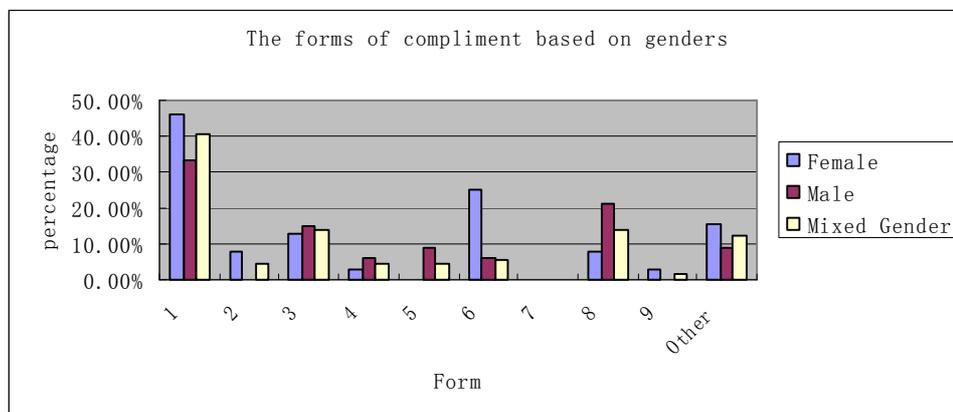The forms of compliment based on genders

Table 9 and Diagram 3 show that both females and males like to use the first form to make compliments. Then compared to females, males perfer to use the eighth form more than females. According to Herbert (1998:56), compliments can be divided into three categories in terms of personal focus: the first person, the second person and the third person focus. The first person and second person belong to the personalised forms while the third person belongs to the impersonal form. The eighth form belongs to the third person focus. That means that males like to use impersonal compliments more than females.

For another, the data tells us that females compliment others with the tenth form more than males, which means females compliment with more flexibility and they just want to express their feelings paying less attention to the form. For females, giving and receiving compliments are everyday occurrences and the form is not very important.

3.3 Topic of compliments

For the section on the topic of compliments, the study classifies them into four types according to Herbert (1998): apperance, possession, perfomance or skill or ability, personality and others. The appearance means someone's external packings, the make-ups, the clothes and so on.

(22) *It's beautiful. Just like you.*

This compliment is from Hilda's boyfriend when she puts on the wedding dress which is part of a female's apperance. It belongs to this type.

The type of possession means to compliment something of someones' as is shown in Example (9). The poncho is the young lady's possession. The type of perfomance or

skill or ability is easy to understand. It means to compliment someone's job or competences. Example (11) has shown this meaning. For the kind of personality it means to compliment someones' internal traits or people's friendship or other emotions. The compliment in Example (10) explains it. Here Betty praises a film star to her father. Betty says though the girl is a star, she still likes to sit with her and talks with her – an ugly girl, without any pride. It is so kind of the star. It is a nice internal character.

For those ones which do not belong to the above 4 types or maybe have mixed topics , the study classfies them into others. For example:

(23) *Oh,he's amazing.*

This compliment is from Amanda to a cameraman in the presence of Betty. The man is handsome and Amanda has a close relationship with this guy in private. It cannot be distiguished on the spot what the objective of the compliment is: to compliment the man's apearance or his ability to flirt with other women.

Table 10. The topics of speakers for compliments between females and males in 4 episodes

Gender Form	1 season 1 F	1 season 1 M	2 season 1 F	2 season 1 M	1 season 2 F	1 season 2 M	2 season 2 F	2 season 2 M	Total F	Total M	Total Mixed
Appearance	1	0	3	1	0	1	1	2	5(12.82%)	4(12.12%)	9(12.50%)
Possession	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1(2.56%)	2(6.06%)	3(4.17%)
Performance/ ability/ skill	4	7	8	4	4	1	3	3	19(48.72%)	15(45.45%)	34(47.22%)
Personality	1	2	1	3	1	1	6	4	9(23.08%)	10(30.30%)	19(26.39%)
Other	4	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	5(12.82%)	2(6.06%)	7(9.72%)

(F= female M= male)

Diagram 4. The topics of compliments based on genders
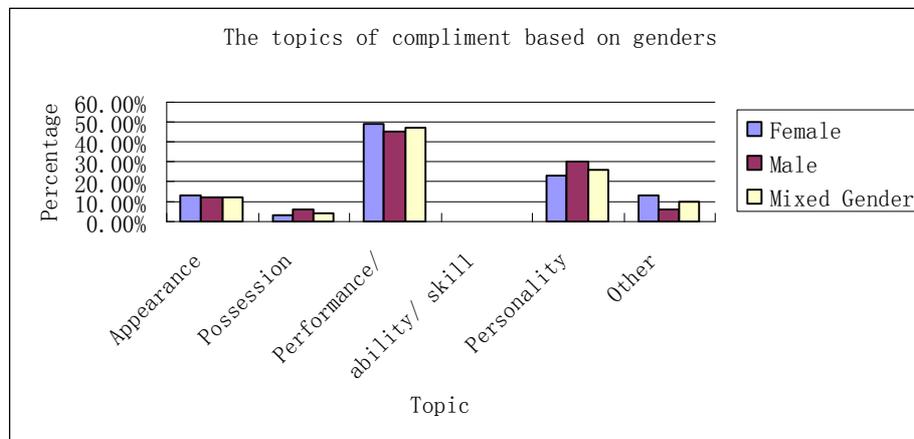
The above Table 10 and Diagram 4 show the data of the topics of compliments. They say that both females and males compliment other people's performance more than other topics; and the personality takes up second place. This is different from Herbert's study (1998:56). He says that women tend to conpliment each other on appearance while men prefer to compliment on possessions or skills. Here the data show that females compliment more on skills just like the males. The reason is that with the equal status in society between females and males, females begin to occupy

key positions in politics and economy, and they also will and can pay attention to others' abilities. They tend to notice others' internal personalities.

3.4 Function of compliments

The last section of compliments is concerned with their functions. Every utterance has an intention, so do the compliments. Here the functions of compliments are classified into 9 groups based on Manes's opinions (1983).

① To admire others' appearances. As is shown in Example (22), Hilda's (Betty's elder sister) boyfriend shows his admiration to her.

② To approve others' performances. As is shown in Example (11), Daniel's father praises Daniel's achievement.

③ To make a solidarity in a group. As is shown in Example (12), Daniel compliments his staff at their first meeting to build a good relationship, which can make his future management work smoothly.

④ To replace as greetings. None.

⑤ To soften the tight atmosphere and reduce the face-threatening. As is shown in Example (15), the film star does not modify her photos which caused a conflict with her assistant and the editor of a magazine. In order to mitigate the atmosphere, she makes this compliment go on working.

⑥ To open or sustain conversations as a politeness strategy.

(24) *Uh, nice place.*

This compliment is from Daniel to Betty about her house when he goes to her home to apologize for hurting her. At beginning he does not know how to start the conversation because he has never said sorry to his staff. Then he uses this utterance as a lead-in.

⑦ To show the envy of other's possessions or performances.

(25) *Ugh, she's so fabulously douchey.*

Amanda says this sentence when she looks at a film star's photo who is more beautiful than her.

⑧ To fawn others especially from the subordinate to the dominant.

(26) *Brava! Brava! Brava!* (Good!)

Marc makes it to his boss Wilhelmina. When his boss finishes an exciting speech to the staff for first as soon as she is promoted as the chief editor through some intrigues, he gives applause as an honest advocator.

⑨ Others which do not belong to the above eight categories.

(27) *It's all nice.*

Betty's father makes this compliment to Betty's company's magazine. He does not understand this business, but in this situation, it is just a material for his chat after supper.

Table 11. The functions intended by speakers for compliments between females and males in 4 episodes

Gender / Form	1 season 1		2 season 1		1 season 2		2 season 2		Total		Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	Mixed
① Admiration	1	1	5	1	2	2	3	3	11(28.21%)	7(21.21%)	18(25.00%)
②Approval	2	3	5	2	3	0	2	2	12(30.77%)	7(21.21%)	19(26.39%)
③Solidarity	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1(2.56%)	1(3.03%)	2(2.78%)
④Greeting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
⑤Softening face-threatening	2	3	2	2	0	1	3	3	7(17.95%)	9(27.27%)	16(22.22%)
⑥Opening or sustaining conversations	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0(0%)	1(3.03%)	1(1.39%)
⑦Envy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1(2.56%)	0(0%)	1(1.39%)
⑧Fawning	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	1(2.56%)	5(15.15%)	6(8.33%)
⑨Other	3	1	0	2	0	0	3	0	6(15.38%)	3(9.09%)	9(12.50%)

(F= female M= male)

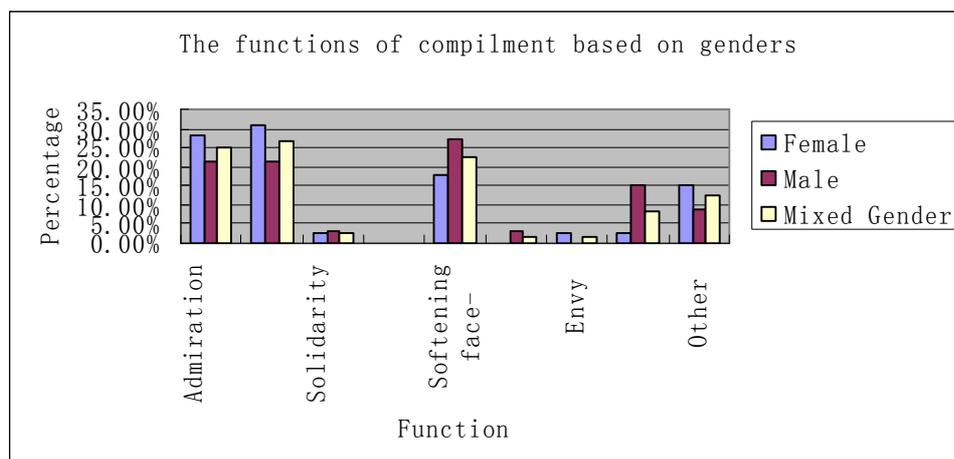Diagram 5. The functions of compliments based on genders

Table 11 and Diagram 5 explore that for females the most portion in their compliments is the function of approval, and the second most is admiration. All these mean that females usually tend to show their admirations and approvals as part of their politeness. They often use compliments as expressions of their feelings and their congratulations. They do not mind whether these actions will be regarded as powerless.

Then from the data of males, it is found that the most part of compliments is to soften face-threatening acts, and the second one is admiration and approval. These imply that males usually use the compliments as a mitigator of face-threatening acts. Though they also make compliments, they mostly do it only when it is necessary. They are not like females who express their feelings through compliments just as the daily life occurrences with no specific intention. For males to give and receive compliments will sometimes threaten their faces. On the other side, the fact that males use more compliments for softening face-threatening acts shows that males have become more and more polite, so the attitude towards males and females might change in people's view.

4. Conclusion

From the present study, some conclusions can be drawn as regards this TV-series. Firstly, females still make more compliments than males, but the distance between them becomes shorter. The result is a bit different from Holmes's study (1988) arguing that women compliment far more than men. From the objects of compliments, both females and males prefer to make compliments to the ones who are present and can give feedback. However, females give a little more compliments to absent people than males do, which is related to their gossip-oriented personality. Folk linguists usually say that females like to gossip more (Coates, 2004), so they discuss others

behind their backs and express their feelings with no purpose.

Secondly, both females and males tend to compliment the opposite genders. Females receive more compliments from female than males receive compliments from males. That is because it is easy to be regarded as gay if males compliment males especially on their appearances, which is a FTA (Holmes, 1996:133). For females it is a polite way to compliment each other even for appearances and clothes.

Thirdly, females and males have more or less a tendency on compliments forms; however females like a little more flexible ones. Males like to use a more concise style like "*Good work!*" which belongs to the third person focuses compliments. This conforms to Holmes's research (1988). Females tend to use the personalized forms of compliments which are more subjective.

Fourthly, females and males choose the topics of compliments similarly. They both tend to compliment others on their performance, abilities, skills and personalities. This result is different from the former views about females. Some former linguists think that females tend to compliment others' appearance, while males focus on possessions (Wolfson: 1983; Manes: 1983; Holmes: 1988). Some former linguists usually think that females tend to choose the appearance more.

Lastly, females use compliments often to admire others' appearances or possessions and approve others performances while males use them to reduce face-threatening acts firstly then secondly to approve others' performance. These results also bring different views about females and males. The former view says that males are not usually as polite as females. Here the data show that males become more and more polite as females. They begin to attend to others' faces too.

However some limitations of this present study still exist. Firstly, the primary materials are from a TV-series which is not the same as real life. Secondly, the corpus

chosen for the study is based on only four episodes which is very small for an authentic study.

The conclusion of this study is just a small part of all research. Many other questions need to be solved, such as the use of compliments based on genders with different ages, different relationships, or different contexts. Meanwhile, further research on the relationship between compliments and responses based on genders could also be done. Moreover, the gender-based compliments can also be related to foreign language study in non-English speaking countries. If the learners know about this difference and culture, they can understand the implied meanings in original English utterances more exactly and master English more easily.

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Appendix

(1) *It is too cold!*

(2) *I ask you to finish this work.*

(3) a *Give back my book!*　　　　b *I want to use my book.*

(4) *Your clothes are very beautiful!*

(5): *I like your coat.*

(6) *How nice you are today!*

(7) *Hi, your English is very good, when did you begin to learn it?*

(8) *How nice your ear rings are! Where did you buy them?*

(9) *I like your poncho.*

(10) *I mean, she was so nice.*

(11) *Good work!*

(12) *I can't tell you how excited I am to be working with such an amazingly talented and dedicated staff.*

(13) *It is so pretty!*

(14) *It was very good!*

(15) *You guys are the experts*

(16) *You did a great job on this issue.*

(17) *Only one of you got his list correct. Justin*

(18) *You have got the gift!*

(19) *Good work, darling.*

(20) *Isn't it pretty !*

(21) *Do you know I am so proud of you?*

(22) *It's beautiful. Just like you.*

(23) *Oh,he's amazing.*

(24) *Uh, nice place.*

(25) *Ugh, she's so fabulously douchey.*

(26) *Brava! Brava! Brava!* (Good!)

(27) *It's all nice.*