

# Compliments on your Competence

*A comparative study on compliment responses from Norwegian English foreign language learners and native speakers of English with a focus on pragmatic competence and idiomatic expressions*  
by Torgrim Talleraas



A thesis presented to the  
Department of Literature, Area Studies and European  
Languages  
Faculty of Humanities  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Masters Degree

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

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Supervisor: Bergljot Behrens  
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# Summary

The aim of this study has been to paint a picture of how Norwegian learners of English as a foreign language respond to compliments when communicating in English, in comparison to a group of native American English speakers. The study is founded in the belief that Norwegians come off as more “rude” than other Western cultures and often fail to strengthen bonds of solidarity, which is the main function of a compliment. The thesis sets out to investigate whether or not Norwegian learners would conform to the pragmatic conventions of the culture in the target language, or if there are differences founded in pragmatic transfer. The study is motivated by a wish to get a better understanding of Norwegian learners’ speech act performance in English, but also to form a solid background for developing teaching materials in this domain.

To answer my research question I have used a discourse completion task (DCT) to gather the information needed. The test is modeled after the refined version of a DCT made by Billmyer and Varghese (2000). This method was chosen for its prominent use in speech act research, and the many benefits it provides for a study of this kind, which requires a collection of large amounts of close-to natural speech data. The data has been elicited gathered from a group of 26 Norwegian learners of English from Mailand VGS. The data has then been compared to a group of five native American Speakers from the greater New York City area. Due to the small size of this control, the Norwegian learner results have also been compared to Herbert’s (1995) findings on compliment response behaviour amongst American English speakers. The study finally compares the idiomaticity of the speech act realizations between the learners and the control based on Sinclair’s (1991) idiom principle.

The results from this study show that Norwegian learners tend to use acceptance and nonacceptance strategies with a seemingly similar frequency to the Am.E control group. However, the coice of other strategies in addition to acceptance differed between the two groups, which indicates pragmatic transfer from the informants’ L1. Daily interaction with native speakers of English is shown to have had a clear effect on the strategies chosen, making them more similar to the control.

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# 1 Introduction

When can we say a person has truly acquired a language? This question has been at the heart of much research made into second language acquisition (SLA) and some research has found that even if a learner were to acquire an understanding of both lexis and grammar in a certain language, the knowledge of how to use this language in a contextually correct fashion is not guaranteed (Taguchi, 2012). The use of language in a correct context can be referred to as a person's sociolinguistic competence (Fraser, 1990) or a person's Pragmatic competence. (Bachman, 1990)

Wolfson (1989) performed a study on compliment response behavior amongst learners of English, and compared them to a group of native American English (Am.E) speakers in order to test their ability to conform to the culture of the language they were learning. Wolfson's findings were that in fact several learners failed to adapt to the expectations of native speakers, and would therefore miss several opportunities to establish relationships and strengthen solidarity with native speakers of the target language (Wolfson, 1989). The importance of teaching pragmatic competence can also be argued, due to the tendency of Norwegians to both travel and study abroad. Research has also shown that early exposure to pragmatic competence has improved the acquisition rate of both vocabulary and grammar in language learners. (Kasper 1997) The present study is influenced by the prior research performed by Wolfson, and is concerned with comparing compliment responses given by Norwegian English foreign language learners (EFL) at the final year of their obligatory English education in Norwegian schools. Norwegians perform admirably well in proficiency tests of English, particularly in test scores in the test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL). Part of this proficiency can be explained by the amount of native English influence in a young Norwegian's life through internet, movies and books. However, even if the grammatical competence and reading comprehension amongst Norwegian EFL learners are above average, this does not guarantee a similar level of pragmatic competence.

To study the pragmatic competence in English L2 learners I have chosen to make a performance study of a speech act with clear presupposed differences between L1 and L2, at least at the surface level. I chose responses to compliment due both to the availability of prior research made into compliment behaviour in Am.E and other languages, but also due to a distinct lack of compliment response research between Norwegian and Am.E. It is also

interesting to note the presumptions of fellow master students on this subjects, as they have voiced their expectation of great differences between learners' and native speakers' speech act realizations due to a supposed modesty of Norwegian culture in contrast to American culture, the latter being considered boastful. These assumptions are also supported in research made by Røkaas (2000) which states that Norwegians are highly egalitarian in nature, and in theory have a hard time accepting praise or compliments made on their abilities.

This study attempts to provide an answer to the research question: "Do Norwegian EFL learners know the code for responding to compliments in English?" I hypothesize that compliment response behavior will be somewhat different in the two languages based on modesty amongst the Norwegians. In particular I theorise that the compliment response to compliments made on someone's abilities or where there is social distance between interlocutors will use a higher tendency of nonacceptance from the Norwegian learners than from the Am.E control group. I also hypothesize that due to extensive access to Am.E through different media, there will also be quite a few similarities in the sum of all compliment responses.

The data needed to help me answer my research question have been collected through the use of a discourse completion task (DCT) from 26 Norwegian students at their first year of high school (age: 15-16). Because I also wished to be able to compare the Norwegian EFL learners' speech act realizations to a group of native speakers, I acquired responses on the same task from five Am.E speakers to make up my control group. The data are used to give a picture of the communicative strategies used by my Norwegian respondents in comparison with my Am.E control group. I also discuss cases of first language (L1) influence in their responses and the idiomaticity of their speech act realizations. The discussion of idiomaticity is based on Sinclair's (1991) Idiom principle in light of Bachmann's (1990) understanding of pragmatic competence as both sociolinguistic competence and illocutionary competence, the second being the most relevant for considering idiomaticity. A final focus of this study will be on gender based differences in compliment response behavior, based on prior research made by Herbert (1995) on native Am.E speakers. The background literature presented here will be covered in chapter 2.0.

The structuring of this thesis has taken advantage of previous master theses on politeness strategies in second language learners: Stine Johansen's (2008) "A Comparative Study of Gratitude Expressions in Norwegian and English from an Interlanguage Pragmatic and Second Language Acquisition Perspective" and Anna Loise Petersen's (2012) "Politeness Strategies in Reminders: A Study of the Pragmatic Competence of Danish Advanced Learners of English". The two studies mentioned have focused on appreciation amongst Norwegian learners of English and reminders amongst Danish learners of English respectively, while I have chosen to focus on responses to compliments. For a comparable study made on compliment responses, I have used Félix-Brasfeder & Hasler-Barker's (2012) "Complimenting and Responding to a Compliment in the Spanish FL Classroom: From Empirical Evidence to Pedagogical Intervention" as a source of inspiration.

It is the intention of this study to inspire further research made into the field of pragmatic competence for use as a background for developing pedagogical tools in the foreign language classroom which can further aid learners in improve their communicative skills in the target language. Several studies have outlined the positive effect of teaching pragmatic competence in a foreign language classroom, even to beginner level learners (Kasper, 1997). The research which has shown the benefits of pragmatic competence teaching in the SLA classroom will be presented in chapter 2.2.

## 2 Theoretical background

This chapter will provide an outline of the language theories used for this thesis. At first I will give a brief introduction to pragmatics which will in turn be used as a foundation to present and define a prevalent pragmatic theory: Speech act theory. In particular this thesis will be concerned with one branch of speech act theory, namely Brown & Levinson's face theory to study politeness. Due to the concern of this thesis on learner language development and its implications for teaching, this chapter will also introduce pragmatic competence as a field within SLA. Another very interesting aspect of language learning will also be discussed here, namely the idiom principle, the theory of how human interaction is largely chosen from prefabricated chunks. The three theories above will then be used as a foundation to discuss previous research into the compliment-compliment response formula in both English and Norwegian.

### 2.1 Pragmatics, the study of meaning in context

Pragmatics has been defined in several ways as a field of linguistics. Perhaps one of the most influential definitions of pragmatics was by Geoffrey Leech in his 1983 *Principles of Pragmatics*. He defines pragmatics as "the study of how utterances have meanings in situations" (Leech, 1983, x). A study performed by Jenny Thomas (1995) built on Leech's research, and analyzed what she found to be a split in the definition of pragmatics up to this point as either speaker meaning or utterance interpretation. Dissatisfied by restricting the field of pragmatics to either of these interpretations, she instead proposed a definition of pragmatics as "meaning in interaction". She claims that meaning arises through interaction noting that

"Making meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance" (Thomas, 1995, 22).

The study of how meaning arises through the speaker and hearer by an utterance in a context is the definition of Pragmatics according to Thomas (1995, 23). Thomas also praised the importance of pragmatics in linguistic description, particularly through its ability to describe

what she calls utterance meaning (or what may also be referred to as illocutionary act, or speech acts) and the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer (Thomas, 1995, 184).

A point has to be made about the similarities, but also the differences between pragmatics and semantics. One study performed on the two linguistic fields was performed by Gillan (2007) where she builds upon prior research performed by Burks, Bar-Hillel and Reisenbach. She states that:

“Pragmatics studies those aspects of linguistic construal which are context sensitive, while semantics studies those which are not; rather, semantics studies those features of linguistic construal rooted in the grammar and the lexicon, while pragmatics studies those which are not.” (Gillan, 2007, 377)

For the purpose of my thesis where I aim to analyze my respondents use of communicative strategies, I will use the definition of pragmatics as “meaning in interaction” given by Thomas (1995). Furthermore, I will use the distinction of pragmatics given by Gillan (2007) and consider pragmatics as separate linguistic field from semantics. In particular this study will be focusing on one subgenre of pragmatics in linguistic research, namely speech act theory.

### **2.1.1 Conceptualizing politeness, face threatening speech acts**

The origin of speech act theory can be attributed to J.L. Austin (1962) publication “How to do things with words” in which he demonstrates the gap between “performative utterances”, or as he later refers to them, speech acts. It is a theory about how human interaction is a series of sequential language actions, or as Johnstone later stated it: “When you say something, you are doing something.”(Johnstone, 2008, 230). Austin’s theory was an opposition to the theories proposed by ordinary language philosophers, led by G. E. Moore and the logical positivist approach to linguistics led by Bertrand Russel. They found everyday language as inefficient and sought to improve it. In addition, their testing was founded in the idea that meaning was empirically testable as either true to false. Austin’s claim opposed this, and claimed that natural language performed admirably well in spite of the apparent imperfections claimed to be present by Bertrand Russel and G.E Moore. He found that language instead should be studied in its raw natural form, as this would give more insight into the dynamic process of communication and transfer of meaning (Thomas, 1995, 29-30).

Austin believed that humans not only use language to transfer meaning, but also use language to perform actions (Austin, 1962, 6). Austin arrived at a three part distinction of all language use between what he calls Locution, Illocution and Perlocution. These three terms are defined as the spoken word, the force or intention behind the words, and the effect of the spoken words respectively. It was particularly interesting to Austin as to how much the speakers intended meaning for any given utterance could be influenced by the context surrounding the utterance. This meant that it was possible for a single locution to have several perlocutions. Austin referred to this phenomenon as illocutionary force (Thomas, 1995, 49-50). In modern research this illocutionary force has been defined as illocutionary act, or more frequently speech act.

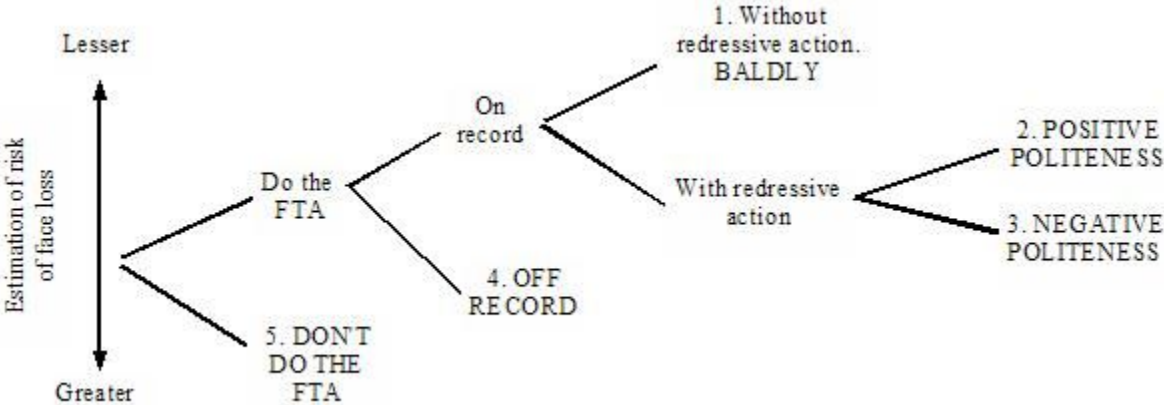
Austin's theories were later employed by researchers such as Paul Grice, John Searle and Geoffrey Leech to study the concept of politeness. Grice's theory of conversational implicature found conversation to be cooperative in nature and stated that several maxims govern human speech. There are no limits to the amount of maxims, and the importance of each maxim would differ based on the context, like "be polite". (Ambrose, 2010) Searle on the other hand refined the term illocutionary force as speech act. His claim was that illocutionary acts are driven by the intentions of the speaker and then in turn the recognition of the hearer (Ambrose, 2010). Leech's *Principles of Pragmatics* built on Grice's work and found that a politeness principle with its own maxims similar to that of the cooperative principle governs human interactions. The different maxims differed in importance across different cultures, and overplaying one maxim in one culture may be considered rude or interpreted as ironic in another (Leech, 1983).

Brown and Levinson built on all of the aforementioned theories in their highly influential *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. They constructed an argument based on the previous work of Grice, Searle and Leech, but found their conclusions problematic. They argued that the maxims in the conversational and politeness principle were not restrictive enough and would allow the possibility of an unlimited number of maxims. They also argued that according to the principles stated by Grice and Leech it would be very hard to be impolite, when in reality it is terribly easy. (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 5)



Brown and Levinson’s argument is focused on the notion of “face” and what they refer to as “face threatening acts”. The notion of face is described in *Politeness* as “the public self image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 61). Every member of society has two “faces”. These two faces are a positive face concerned with maintaining ones self image, and a negative face concerned with freedom of action and from imposition. Every person will attempt to satisfy the face wants of these two faces for themselves. However, these face wants can only be satisfied by the words and actions of others, which means that it is in the mutual interest of both speaker and hearer (S and H) to maintain the face wants of the other. Sometimes however it is impossible to avoid threatening the positive or negative of either S or H, and a face threatening act (FTA) is made. Their argument continues to state that these FTA’s are made by S on a scale of preserving either S or H’s “face wants” directly relatable to both S and H’s positive and negative face. This scale is presented below in figure 1. A high number next to a strategy represents a lower rate of imposition on either S or H’s face, while a lower number represent a higher rate of imposition. If an act would threaten H or S’s positive or negative face, S has to consider what strategy to employ. If the damage to the face is more severe, then a higher number strategy will be chosen. (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 59-60) This mitigation of face loss, and attempts made to uphold the face of another while still performing an on record FTA is what constitutes their definition of politeness (Mills, 2003, 58).

Figure 1: Brown & Levinson's face theory model



(Brown & Levinson, 1987, 60)

Brown and Levinson's theory has been problematized by quite a few scholars on one major point: Face theory implies that all politeness is made in the interest of doing well, and in turn politeness should be impossible to abuse. Sell (1991) criticized the theory by bringing up how politeness could be abused to hide the truth and claimed that politeness could be seen as a "velvet glove within which to hide one or another kind of iron fist." (Sell, 1991 cited in Mills, 2003, 59) A major point of criticism however is made by Mills, as she notes that Brown & Levinson's theory gives little to no insight into S's motivations and the interest of interactants in contexts. (Mills, 2003, 116) I still maintain Brown & Levinson's face theory as the theoretical background for my study on the FTA response to compliment. I maintain their theory on the basis that my study is not focused on the speakers motivations when realizing their FTA's. This analysis of this study is instead focused on the comparison of compliment response strategies employed by Norwegian EFL learners to test their level of pragmatic competence compared to a native speaking control group to which purpose Brown & Levinson's theory and terminology is well suited.

## **2.2 Pragmatic Competence in SLA**

Interlanguage pragmatics, or the pragmatic competence of language learners, is a field within second language acquisition (SLA) concerned with learner comprehension use and development of socially appropriate language in another language than one's own. (Taguchi 2012: 1) This skill is not necessarily developed with a learner's grammatical knowledge of the language. Similarly "a high level of proficiency with grammar does not necessarily guarantee a similar level of pragmatic competence" (Bardovi Harlig, 1999, 2000, cited in Taguchi, 2012, 3). Within SLA, pragmatic competence is attributed the fluency level of language development. Fluency is defined by Segalowitz (2007) as "aspects of productive and receptive language ability characterized by fluidity (smoothness) of performance." (Segalowitz, 2007, 181, cited in Taguchi, 2012, 7) According to a model proposed by Bachmann (1990), pragmatic competence is subdivided into two principles: illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. Illocutionary competence concerns a learner's ability to properly performing speech acts in a target language, while sociolinguistic competence refers to the selection of an appropriate speech act and communicative strategies in an appropriate context. (Bachman, 1990, cited in Kasper, 1997) This study will be

primarily concerned with the illocutionary competence aspect of Bachmann's definition, as only one specific speech act is being elicited from the respondents.

Teaching pragmatic competence to ESL or EFL learners is a lofty goal, and several studies have been made to test if acquiring this competence is necessary, or at all possible. Kasper (1997) lists ten studies performed on ESL and EFL (four and six respectively) ranging from beginner, intermediate and advanced level learners. The summary found that teaching pragmatic competence was possible, more so by explicit than implicit methods, but that acquiring and retaining this competence required frequent brushing-up on one's skills. (Kasper, 1997) Studies performed by Wildner-Bassett (1994) and Tateyama et al. (1997) also showed that beginner level ESL/EFL classrooms benefit from pragmatics instruction, even if the students lacked the grammatical and vocabulary foundation necessary to formulate the speech acts properly themselves. (Wildner-Bassett, 1994 and Tateyama et al. 1997) This view is supported in Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker (2012) in their study of pragmatic teaching to improve pragmatic competence in Spanish FL classrooms. They found that a lack of explicit pragmatic teaching meant that students employed incorrect communicative strategies in complimenting and responding to compliments in Spanish. (Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2012, 263)

Within pragmatic competence research certain pragmatic functions are considered universal; however the expressions of these functions vary wildly depending on culture and social identity. (Taguchi, 2012, 4) Johnstone (2011) defines social identity as a collection of stances, where stance is defined as "the methods, linguistic and other, by which interactants create and signal relationships with the propositions they give voice to and the people they interact with". (Johnstone, 2011, 137) This social identity is then used by discourse interactants to adjust their registry and syntactic patterns to adapt to other perceived social identities. These social identities are not rigid however, and they may change over time and in different situations. (Johnstone, 2011, 151) When EFL/ESL learners attempt to communicate in a different language, they have certain expectations of their discourse partner's social identity. These social identities may range from nationality, gender and popular interests, so to achieve understanding they alter their own stances accordingly. This may mean that two 14 year old boys may discuss a video game using expressions similar to "freaking awesome" but discuss it using another registry entirely with their parents using expressions like "really good". The intended ideal for this type of communication is where the utterance made by speaker (S) is

fully understood by hearer (H) as intended by S. Tannen (2005) refers to this phenomenon as “pragmatic identity”. However, learners may transfer stances and sociocultural norms from their L1 into their L2 communication, and fail to express their intended meaning. Paulston notes that:

“In language teaching we are always dealing with cross-cultural encounters, and what typically happens is that the student applies his native rules of speaking to the target language, rules that may imply a very different social significance” (Paulston, 1990, 290)

Thomas (1983) refers to this phenomenon as “pragmatic failure”. This occurs when the two languages operate under different conventions, and S fails to adapt to the expectations of H. However the severity of this failure may be mitigated if the L1 of the speaker share similar communication and politeness maxims as the L2, such as with English and other Germanic languages. An example of a shared maxim is found in Danish “kunne/ville” where the modal past is used to communicate politeness in a similar way as in English. In an example pragmatic transfer could have occurred from L1 to L2, which would indicate a pragmatic failure, but the result was still pragmatic identity due to how modal politeness similar function in both languages. (Kasper, 1997) Pragmatic transfer may occur in more than transferring syntactic constructions however. The base communicative strategy may be different across cultures, such as in a study by Yu (2004) which found that a Taiwanese learner of English would be far more prone to reject a compliment than accept it, unlike native English speakers. Yu attributed the higher rate of rejecting compliments to the typical “Taiwanese” response of valuing modesty over agreeing with your interlocutor (Ortega, 2009, 47).

Taguchi 2012 studied the pragmatic competence development of 48 Japanese university level learners of English. The study was based on several longitudinal studies of the development of pragmatic competence in a FL classroom. She hypothesized, based on prior research, that adult learners of an L2 could easily learn the conventions of a target language. On the other hand learning the actual production of the correct speech act would be slow if not assisted by frequent explicit feedback (Taguchi, 2012, 56). In her research she tested a group of students through an academic year three times by use of a multiple choice elicitation test. She found that pragmatic competence development depended on a large variety of external factors, but that the most consistent success rate came from frequent practice and explicit demonstrations in speech acts that were closely linked to their own L1 culture (Taguchi, 2012, 248). She also

noted how success in pragmatic competence development is not only linked with the teacher or the environment surrounding the learning process, but also the students' own aspirations and available resources. (Taguchi, 2012, 260)

### **2.2.1 The Idiom Principle**

The significance of idiomatic expressions in everyday speech was expanded upon by John Sinclair in his 1991 book *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Sinclair developed a theory of collocation based on the dichotomist relationship between the open-choice principle, and the idiom principle. He claims that only a small part of everyday speech is segmented into one singular choice of part-of-speech (PoS) after another, otherwise known as the open choice principle. Sinclair theorized instead that the majority of our speech consisted of semi-pre-constructed chunks, or prefabs, i.e. the idiom principle. These chunks vary in rigidity from absolute (“of course”) to allowing for slight variation (“to recriminate is not in his nature”; vs. “it is not in his nature to recriminate”). (Sinclair, 1991, 111) According to his theory human communication works through the production and interpretation of entire chunks at a time in the correct context. This is further evidenced by our ability to understand statements that operate outside ordinary grammar, for example in the phrase “of course”. (Sinclair, 1991, 114) Acquiring these idiomatic expressions is also a part of pragmatic competence theorized by Bachman in chapter 2.2 above, as illocutionary competence.

In my analysis, I have chosen to follow Sinclair's theory. In my analysis I will evaluate the responses collected from my respondents in light of the idiom principle to check for common response patterns. I will then test the idiomaticity of their statements by comparing them to the responses provided by the Am.E control group.

## **2.3 Compliment and Compliment Response**

As stated above Intercultural communication requires a keen sense of pragmatic competence from the L2 speaker. To create a basis for comparison between the L2 and control responses I will assess prior research made into compliment and compliment responses in American English. In addition to this assessment an equal comparison into Norwegian politeness behavior is necessary in order to properly observe occurrences of L1 pragmatic transfer. Due

to compliment responses being a reactionary speech act however, it is necessary to first define what is meant by a compliment.

### **2.3.1 Compliment behavior in American English**

A compliment is defined as a collaborative speech act used as a “social lubricant” to strengthen community and solidarity between interlocutors. (Wolfson, 1983, 89) In Brown and Levinson’s terms, it is commonly used to strengthen an interlocutor’s positive face and thus enforce solidarity by stimulating face wants. A compliment can be used both as a speech act alone, but also as a part of many others, and is generally considered a positive politeness strategy. For example a compliment may be included in the speech act of thanking, or greeting, as in (1) and (2) respectively. (Ishihara, 2010, 180)

(1) Thank you, you are too kind.

(2) Hello, you are looking sharp today!

In addition, a compliment can also be applied to soften an FTA made on H’s negative face by veiling a request (3) or to make indirect criticism (4)

(3) That is a nice sandwich.

(4) You are usually so good at this.

S in 3 uses a compliment to initiate an FTA on H’s negative face by violating the Gricean maxim of manner and being ambiguous by requesting H’s sandwich through expressing admiration to it. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 66) In 4 S once again violates the manner maxim, this time by being vague. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 226) By doing such the compliment veils criticism of a mistake H’s made in a softer manner than directly threatening it by pointing out H’s mistake. By doing so, S avoided redressive action, and instead opted for a politeness strategy. (Ishihara 2010:180)

Manes & Wolfson (1986) argued that the production of compliments in Am.E is heavily formulaic. They based this claim on a study made on six hundred and eighty six different compliments collected by themselves and students of American English universities. Their study showed that in American English, compliments are highly formulaic both syntactically and semantically. Semantically they found that a compliment attributes its positive value in

the adjective in about 90% of reported cases. The most common adjectives were "nice" and "good" followed by "beautiful", "pretty" and "great". Together these five adjectives make up about two thirds of the reported cases in the entire study, with most other adjectives only appearing once or twice. The syntactic formula as well is very restrictive in Am.E:

(A) NP [is/looks] (really) ADJ	53.6 %
(B) I (really) [like/love] NP	16.1 %
(C) PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP	14.9 %
<b>Sum</b>	<b>84.6 %</b>

The sum of these three formulas alone amount to 84.6% of all compliments in Am.E. The following six make up the remaining 15.4% except for a few deviations (2.8%).

(D) You V (a) (really) ADJ NP	3.3 %
(E) You V (NP) (really) ADV	2.7 %
(F) You have (a) (really) ADJ NP	2.4 %
(G) What (a) ADJ NP!	1.6 %
(H) ADJ NP	1.6 %
(I) Isn't NP ADJ!	1.0 %
(J) Deviations	2.8 %
<b>Sum</b>	<b>15.4 %</b>

The inflectional patterns of Am.E compliments are also very limited. The verb in most compliments is in the simple present or past. The adjectives are also in simple form, only rarely appearing as comparatives or superlatives. (Manes and Wolfson, 1986, 122) A compliment can be part of a greater syntactic frame such as in (5) and may also contain additional sequential information that attains compliment status when occurring with the compliment proper. An example of an included question to the compliment is seen in (6) below. In (7) an additional comment has been added to the compliment. While the comment has no compliment status on its own, it strengthens the compliment by making a comparison.

(5) **I think** you look great!

(6) That is a nice jacket, **is it new?**

(7) You look great! **So much healthier since last I saw you.**

Compliments are usually also very direct in Am.E, most compliments being addressed to H directly. There were very few indirect compliments presented in Manes and Wolfson's study and all of them were made at the expectation of a compliment response from their interlocutor (Manes & Wolfson, 1986, 122-123).

Herbert (1990) performed a study on gender based differences in Am.E compliment behavior and found that there are clear differences with regards to the gender of who produces the compliment and to whom it is directed. Female complimenters are often more personal in their compliments than male complimenters, often including the first person pronoun ("I think you look great in blue"). The actual amount of compliments offered to either gender and from either gender are relatively similar, though women are much more frequent at complimenting each other than men are (330 reported cases vs. 228) (Herbert, 1990).

### **2.3.2 Compliment response behavior in American English**

The speech act "compliment" cannot be found without its inseparable adjacency pair "compliment response". In Pomerantz's words the two form an "action chain event". The action chain event is a coordinated event where performing action1 allows your interlocutor to perform action2 which is an appropriate response. Action2 as a response to a compliment may be any number of different fulfillments of the speech act, such as acceptance, rejection, redirection or even responding to a perceived request, but it is expected that the action chain event is unbroken and the compliment is responded to. (Pomerantz, 1978, 82)

Compliment responses in Am.E are less formulaic both syntactically and semantically than the compliment, but they still follow a predictable pattern. Pomerantz (1978) found that most Am.E speakers base their compliment responses on two maxims when responding to compliments:

Maxim 1: Be supportive: Agree with S about the content of the compliment

Maxim 2: Be modest: Avoid self-praise, do not increase the value of the compliment.

There is no syntactic formula to compliment responses, such as there was to compliments. A study performed in Herbert (1986) however, built on Pomerantz's research and found that



almost all compliment responses fall into the following four response categories, with its appropriate subcategories. This study will use the slightly updated version shown in Herbert (1990) with only three metacategories: Agreement, non-agreement and other interpretations:

Figure 2: Herbert's compliment response categories

- Agreement
  - o Acceptance
    - Appreciation token (Thanks)
    - Comment Acceptance
    - Praise Upgrade
  - o Nonacceptance
    - Comment History
    - Transfer
      - Reassignment
      - Return
- Nonagreement
  - o Acknowledgement
    - Scale Down
    - Question
    - Disagreement
    - Qualification
  - o Non Acknowledgement
- Other Interpretations
  - o Request.

Figure 2 shows the three metacategories presented in Herbert (1990), and all appropriate subcategories. Agreement is itself divided into two main categories: Acceptance and nonacceptance. Acceptance denotes that S fully agrees with H's compliment or is increasing the value of what is being complimented. Nonacceptance on the other hand means that S is making an attempt to defer some of the positive value, while still agreeing with the compliment. This can be done by providing background history that provides new information to the subject of the compliment. It can also be done by transferring the target of the compliment to another person or object, or returning a compliment to H.

When S does not agree with H, a nonagreement strategy is used. This would imply that the recipient of the comment disagrees with H's assessment. This can occur in one of three ways: It is possible to scale down the value of what is being complimented, or by asking a question of H, such as in (9). An abrupt disagreement of H's compliment is also possible, as is failure to acknowledge the compliment at all. It is also possible to interpret a compliment as something other than a social lubricant, for example as a request strategy shown in the dialogue in (10) and (11) action chain below, where (11) makes up the compliment response:

(9) Do you really think so?

(10) That is a really nice jacket

(11) Do you want it?

Here the S in (11) interpreted H in 10's compliment as a desire for the jacket in question. S then made an offer to give the jacket to H in return. It is important to note that while the compliment response strategies are considered universal, what is considered polite and rude among them is very culturally bound. While acceptance of compliments is considered the appropriate compliment response in western cultures, disagreement is considered appropriate in eastern cultures as an example. (Herbert, 1990, 209)

As stated above, the ideal compliment response strategy in western cultures is agreement. This is also true for Am.E where the expected compliment response strategy is an acceptance strategy, most frequently by an appreciation token. An appreciation token in Am.E is commonly a variation of the lemma THANK, commonly with the pronoun "you" attached, or as a plural "thanks" (Brasdefer & Hasler Barker, 2012, 247). Herbert (1986) found in his study that about 66% of all compliment responses were agreements. Amongst these agreements, half were appreciation tokens and about a third were a short history on the subject of the compliment. Upgrading the value of your own compliment is very rare in Am.E (0.38%). The most common compliment rejection found by Herbert was direct disagreement (9.98%), scaling down the target of the compliment (4.52%), or raising a question of disbelief (4.99%). However it is also worth noting that failing to acknowledge the compliment entirely makes up 5% of all compliment responses in Herbert's study. (Herbert, 1986: 81) Am.E speakers almost never interpret compliments as a form of requests, which is much more common in Arabic cultures (Ishihara, 2010: 181).

Brown & Levinson considered the effects of responding to a compliment as a part of their face theory. They found that by complimenting S in a conversation, H attends to S's positive face wants. However the compliment will force a reaction from S which will invariably damage S's positive face. Brown & Levinson notes that by accepting the compliment:

“S may feel constrained to denigrate the object of H's Prior compliment, thus damaging his own face; or he may feel constrained to compliment H in turn”  
(Brown & Levinson, 1987, 68)

Brown & Levinson's theory notes that any and all forms of the nonagreement strategies from Herbert's theory above, as well as the transfer and comment history agreement strategies would damage S's positive face. In addition Brown & Levinson's face theory notes that expressing thanks (appreciation) would damage S's negative face due to humbling themselves in front of another (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 67).

In Roger Herbert's study on sex based differences in compliment responses, there were clear differences on how the different genders replied to a compliment. Compliments offered by a male S, were much more likely to be accepted and responded to by an appreciation token, than any compliment offered by a female S, whose compliments are much more likely to be met by a commented history or an abrupt disagreement. (Herbert, 1990, 213) The same study also showed tendencies that the compliment with intent to show good-will between interlocutors, so called social lubricants, are much more likely to get accepted than if the function of the compliment is to praise the someone's abilities. (Herbert 1990, 222) Further research on the field of gender specific linguistic behavior was made in Holmes (1995). Here she concluded that women have a higher need to nurture personal relationship than men who are more status oriented. (Holmes, 1996, 2-6 cited in Arnádiz, 2012, 311) Some specific examples of female specific linguistic behavior relevant to this study are listed below:

- “They (women) agree and conform to points made by their partners, elaborating and developing their partner's points from their own experience.
- They disagree in a non-confrontational manner, using modified rather than direct disagreeing assertions.
- They compliment others and express appreciation frequently.”

(Holmes, 1995, 222 cited in Arnádiz, 2012, 311)

### 2.3.3 Compliment strategies in Norwegian

Compared to research made on Am.E speakers, there is very little research on Norwegian speaker's compliment and compliment response actions. There are however, several interesting surveys made on other aspects of politeness in Norwegian culture. Research made on to appreciation strategies in Norwegian will be able to provide valuable insight which will be very relevant to the comparisons made later in this study, and will be covered below.

An interesting survey of Norwegian politeness was found in Fretheim (2005). The study compare Norwegian and English sentences from the English/Norwegian Parallel Corpus (ENPC) that are considered polite in either language and observe their attested translations to make general claims about the function of politeness in Norwegian. The study found that Norwegian requests are highly tentative: often using syntax to create an indirect request, often asking whether or not there is a possibility for another person to do something for them. (Fretheim, 2005, 147) An example of this sentence construction is lifted from Fretheim (2005, 149) and shown in (12) with the attested English translation in (13).

(12) Kunne jeg få sette fra meg kofferten min her?

(Could I get set from me the suitcase mine here?)

(13) Could I place my suitcase here?

Fretheim also noted the absence of an equivalent to "please" in almost all situations where this word was used in English. He found that the word simply had no direct correlate in Norwegian. While "vær så snill" and "vær vennlig" served somewhat the same function, the frequency of "please" is much higher in English use than any variation of "vær så snill" in Norwegian. In fact, when translated into Norwegian, any mention of "please" is often emitted an example of this is shown in (14) with the Norwegian translation in (15) which has been borrowed from Fretheim. (2005, 155)

(14) Listen to me carefully, please.

(Follow now well with)

(15) Følg nå godt med

Fretheim concludes that Norwegian has few ways of mitigating negative face threats beyond indirectness. Norwegians tend to opt out instead of making an on record face threatening act. (Fretheim 2005: 155-158). In addition Norwegian language also has very few ways of

preserving H's face wants. Attempts to please H's face wants is often considered ironic, as there is no expectation between two Norwegian interlocutors to do so. This is not to say Norwegians does not keep these things in mind; however it is expected that both interlocutors are of about equal rank. This is noted in the absence a "vous/tu" distinction, and the lack of "sir" in everyday speech making Norwegians appear more egalitarian than the rest of the western world. (Fretheim, 2005, 145)

Fretheim also noted how apt Norwegians are at using appreciation even in situations where other cultures would consider this unnecessary, or even ironic. Norwegian speakers tend to appreciation in a wide range of situations, including greetings ("Takk for sist") and farewells ("Takk for meg"). (Fretheim, 2005, 146) The thesis by Stine Hulleberg Johansen (2008) researched thanking strategies in Norwegian respondents. She used a discourse completion task (DCT) as a method to collect responses in both Norwegian and English to observe thanking strategies and pragmatic transfer from Norwegian learners. She reinforces the observations made by Fretheim above by noting her Norwegian respondents frequent use of "thank you", even to the extent that they underlined their own indebtedness to their interlocutor. (Johansen, 2008, 133)

Røkaas (2000) made a comparison of Norwegian compared to American politeness. She outlined seven areas where American and Norwegian politeness differed greatly. For one, Norwegians tend to use very few expressions of emotion and only to intimates if they did. Americans were more emotional, often including personal feelings in requests even to strangers. (Røkaas 2000, 115) She concludes that Norwegian speakers' verbal behavior to favor what she calls "verbal humility" or to be more likely to understate their case and be less boastful of personal traits than Am.E, who are imagined as being prone to overstatements and to praise up their own abilities (Røkaas, 2000, 112). Ironically this conception of Am.E linguistic behavior is the opposite of Pomerantz' maxim of modesty and Herbert's observations on compliment response strategies. However it may be very well true that Røkaas' observation is widespread amongst L2 learners in their conception of Am.E speakers, which may influence their compliment responses when communicating in English.

There are very few studies that focus solely on Norwegian compliment and compliment response. One of the largest studies performed on Norwegians compliment habits was held by the clothing firm "Match Fashion", who performed a study on 1011 people where only 20% of all subjects reported getting a compliment daily, and 40% reports that they feel

underappreciated by not getting enough compliments. (Ulveset, S. last update: 23.10.2012 <http://www.kk.no/904372/nordmenn-er-daaerlig-paa-aa-gi-komplimenter>, Last accessed 01:48 on 31.12.2013) This study also points out that there are sex based differences in Norwegian compliment behavior in that women receive about twice as many compliments than men based on their physical appearance. However many popular magazines in Norway often post articles on Norwegian compliment response behavior. General themes amongst these magazines involve the tendency for Norwegians of experiencing embarrassment when receiving compliments. (Okkelmo, S. last update: 25.01.2013 <http://www.kk.no/910086/daerlig-til-aa-ta-imot-komplimenter>, last accessed 01:48 on 31.12.2013)

### **2.3.4 L2 proficiency in Norwegian EFL learners**

A point has to be made on the average proficiency level of Norwegian speakers when communicating in English. TOEFL is one of the most reliable sources for testing English proficiency in non-native English users and its results are recognized by over 8500 colleges and universities across the world. The test measures respondents' communication skills in an academic setting and tests their reading, listening, writing and speaking skills. In the 2012 TOEFL, Norwegians measured among the top performers with a mean score of 93 out of 130. It is worth noting that the highest scoring country was the Netherlands with a mean score of 100 out of 130 (TOEFL, [http://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/94227\\_unlweb.pdf](http://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/94227_unlweb.pdf) last accessed 10.12.2013).

# 3 Presentation of method for the present study

In this chapter I will present my choice of method, as well as discuss some strengths and shortcomings for the purpose of my study. I will also give a short presentation of the motivations for the different questions in my questionnaire, as well as give a brief overview of my participants and how the experiment was conducted.

## 3.1 Discourse Completion Task (DCTs)

I have chosen to collect the data needed for this study through a discourse completion task (DCT). This is largely due to the DCT's prevalent role as a data collection method in the field of pragmatic language research for a long time (Woodfield, 2008, 43). To test the adequacy of a reliable method for finding responses relevant to my research question, I performed a preliminary study on a similar subject matter to the compliment response study reported on here. I compared instances of compliment responses gathered through a corpus method in a parallel corpus, and compliment responses gathered through a DCT. In performing this preliminary study I found that the most reliable results were acquired by use of the DCT.

The DCT was originally designed as a method for collecting and comparing realizations of speech acts from both native speakers and learners of English by Blom-Kulka (1982) and further developed as the main elicitation tool in the Cross Cultural study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) (Blom-Kulka & Ohlstein, 1984, 196). The DCT is a survey with a set amount of situations or "discourse sequences" in which the respondent is given a short description of the situation as well as part of a dialogue. The respondent is then expected to complete the dialogue, and thus provide the researcher with their response (Blom-Kulka & Ohlstein, 1984, 198). Due to the DCT's popularity in communicative language testing, it has engaged debate and met some criticism, primarily for only eliciting supposed, instead of genuine language use. The following paragraphs will outline several benefits of the method for my study, but also point out some of the valid critical remarks in the literature.

The main benefit of using a DCT to collect data relevant for pragmatic competence analysis lies in the test's inherent ability to collect large amounts of data in a very short amount of time. The data collected in this way can be gathered from around the world with relative ease by use of internet, e-mail and even ordinary post. Additionally, the data can be easily collected in a controlled, replicable environment from a large group of respondents (Hartford & Bardovi-Harling, 1992, 3). This makes the DCT an excellent reliable method for collecting a wide range of data on linguistic phenomena which would otherwise be difficult and very time consuming to collect. The data can be stored in an easily accessible corpus which can then be used to analyze general tendencies in language use in a large group of people. Cummings (1996) has also compared data elicited through a DCT and found it to be consistent with naturally occurring data collected through other time-consuming methods such as role plays and audio interviews (Cummings, 1996, cited in Billmyer & Varghese, 2000, 518).

On the other hand, other researchers have pointed out that a DCT does not recreate actual language use, but instead the respondents' imitated responses. Bebee & Cummings (1996) found that the DCT as a research tool is effective, but fails to recreate natural speech by affecting the length of responses, repetition in discourse and even some communication strategies such as avoidance (Bebee & Cummings, 1996, 67). This is problematic when considering that according to Labov (1972) the goal of sociolinguistic research is to "observe the way that people use language when they are not being observed". Bebee & Cummings also noted that ethnographic observation also has its problems, primarily by lacking control of the environment the test is conducted in, which again raises problems for the analysis of the data collected. (Bebee & Cummings, 1996, 67) Felix-Brasdefer (2010) found that natural data collected for the sake of research will often be erroneous, but also makes it clear that "simulated data, if elicited with care, offer an alternative for speech act performance studies in a foreign language context" (Felix-Brasdefer, 2010, 42). For the purpose of my study, I have chosen to align myself with Felix-Brasdefer's observation that natural data can be substituted with simulated data. This conclusion was also supported by Cummings (1996). Both ethnographic and simulated observations have problems. However, the benefits of a simulated collection, namely easy data collection and replicable test environment, make me confident in choosing the DCT as my elicitation tool.



Some studies have shown that DCTs elicit responses similar to oral language production in role plays, and have concluded that “both methods elicit representations of a spoken language” (Rintell & Mitchell, 1989). The differences between oral and written data are commonly represented in the length of responses. Beebe & Cummings (1996) compared the speech act “refusal” in a DCT and in phone conversations and noted that discourse in a DCT is often shorter and more direct than naturally occurring language. This is also supported by Rintell & Mitchell (1989): their study found that respondents used much longer sentences in role plays, as well as being more direct. On the other hand while the exact wording differed from natural speech, the conversational strategy used was often the same (Rintell & Mitchell 1989). More recent studies have attempted to counteract Rintell & Mitchell’s argument. Research performed by Woodfield (2008) showed that DCTs “do not elicit the interactional features of speech act production” which show up more easily in oral elicitation methods, such as role plays (Woodfield, 2008, 62). By using a DCT instead of an oral collection method, certain linguistic features like turn-taking and non-verbal features are easily lost (Cohen, 1996, 25). While relevant to general language research, the concerns raised by Woodfield and Cohen will not be directly relevant to this thesis and will not be discussed any further.

Rose & Ono (1995) noted several important weaknesses of the DCT as a method. They built on Rose’s (1994) research, which again built on Bardovi-Hartlig & Hartford’s (1993) research on speech act DCT testing performed in the CCSARP project (Rose & Ono, 1995, 197). They found problems with the data collected through a DCT in mainly two areas. Firstly they noted deviations in the data collected through DCT and multiple choice question (MCQ) testing on Japanese students. They conclude that no single method can give a complete answer to speech act behavior, but that a complete picture can be made through application of several methods. Rose & Ono still considered the DCT as a valid method able to elicit relevant data however they cautioned using it to explain all aspects of language research without further methods of data collection. This conclusion was built on the findings of Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1992) “The DCT then allows us to not only test our hypotheses, but can also provide data which can help us interpret the natural data” (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1992, 49). I weighted this against the argument presented in Rintell and Michell (1989) where they remarked that conversational strategy remains the same through several elicitation methods. Because I am comparing and contrasting similarities and differences in conversational

strategies and idiomatic expressions between Norwegian EFL learners and Am.E native speakers, I am confident in using the DCT as the sole testing method.

Rose and Ono cautioned that a DCT must be constructed carefully to ensure that the situations found within are not unfamiliar to the respondents. Rose (1994) used a DCT which was originally designed for Am.E respondents on a group of Japanese EFL learners. The DCT was directly translated from English, and contained several situations which assume situational knowledge which is uncommon to a Japanese respondent. Considering this test, Rose & Ono found the results to be skewed due to unfamiliarity to the situations in Japanese learners. For example, they found that the respondents tended to opt out more frequently than normal. Their conclusion contained a caution to anyone collecting data through a DCT in cross-linguistic research (Rose & Ono, 1995, 197). The concern raised by Rose & Ono above is very relevant in a cross-linguistic study, and I have taken care to make culture specific situations familiar to both native Norwegian and English users in my DCT. However there is a point to the situations being more native-like to English daily life, and that the compliments are similar to those found in everyday Am.E speech due to the focus of this thesis on pragmatic competence in learners.

A benefit of using written elicitation is granting the participant a greater sense of anonymity, reducing the sense of anxiousness in a second language learner. It is also possible to reassure the respondent that spelling will take no part in the analysis of the DCT, allowing the respondent to relax and write down his or her genuine immediate response (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986). Because of this observation, I informed my respondents that the test would be anonymous, believing this would help the respondents provide more truthful responses.

A frequent issue when collecting data for studies in cross-cultural pragmatics is the wide range of sociolinguistic variables in the group of respondents. The wide range of variables can cause problems in creating comparable testing situations (Felix-Brasdefer, 2010: 42).

Collecting data from groups over large geographical locations can also be a challenge when considering comparable testing situations. A written DCT helps solve these problems by being easily distributable both manually and electronically. In manual testing situations it is possible to collect data from several respondents in a controlled environment, such as a classroom (Kumar, 2005, 127). Distributing the test electronically raise other problems, however. If the respondent is given virtually unlimited time to answer the DCT their answers may differ too much from their oral language use. This would constitute a break from the

ideal research material noted by Manes & Wolfson (1981) as being too far removed from “real” language. This problem can be circumvented by holding the test in a controlled environment, which is the case of the experiment held for this thesis. The Am.E control group responses on the other hand, has been collected electronically by online survey, though with emphasis on how much time they should spend on each response given as an introduction to the survey.

Another strength of the DCT is the ability to “fine tune” the situations in the DCT by including contextual information. This guides the respondents to produce the relevant speech acts for the researcher. The question is how much contextual information should be provided. Billmyer & Varghese (2010) performed a study using DCTs from the CCSARP project, and modified them to include a much greater amount of information than the original DCT’s, including both date, exact time and location as well as expansions on the length of the response field. Their goal was to observe if such modifications affected the respondents’ results (Billmyer & Varghese, 2000, 522). What they found was that adding additional information to the context of the situation resulted in the speech act realizations provided by their respondents to double if not treble in length from the ones in the original DCT used in the CCSARP. The increase in length of the responses also did not add anything to the communication strategies in the speech act realizations. It did increase the degree of elaboration in the responses however, with the respondents often repeating information from the contextual information in their responses. They also found that the increased length caused certain reading comprehension problems for intermediate L2 English learners, which again led to an increase in response time (Billmyer & Varghese, 2000, 542-543).

Another concern is the type of contextual information provided in the DCT. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1993) found that adding a line of dialogue to the DCT to create a dialogue completion task invites a reactive speech act from the respondent. This type of context greatly aided English learners in framing the DCT. They found that including a line of dialogue influenced the learner data in a positive direction, noting that: “DCT’s can be refined to elicit more natural responses by including authentic speech” (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1993: 159). Because the focus of this thesis is on a reactive speech act, I have included a compliment from a supposed speaker in my DCT.

## 3.2 Design of the DCT for the present study

For my experiment I use an original DCT which I have constructed myself based on DCT's used in previous research. I am particularly inspired by the one used in Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford's (1993) research. Moreover, I have adjusted the amount of contextual information based on the findings in Billmyer and Varghese (2000) and considered the degree of situational familiarity based on findings in Rose and Ono (1995).

My DCT contains ten situations. Since the goal is to test the compliment response strategies used by Norwegian EFL learners, I chose to employ a large amount of variation to the situations surrounding the compliments. The motivations for these situations are three variables which are listed in order. The first is social distance. This concerns whether or not the source of the compliment is above or below the recipient in social rank, or if the location assumes a more formal behavior. The second variable is gender. Each situation states the complimenter's gender see if this has any influence on the compliment response strategies elicited. This is founded in the gender based differences in compliments responses from Herbert (1990). The third is the target of what is being complimented. This is being valued as either complimenting the recipients ability or performance or if the compliment is being used as a social lubricant. Finally I have chosen to distinguish between five syntactic formulas in the compliment in the test situations. The five types of compliments are the five most frequent syntactic formulas for compliments found in Manes and Wolfson (1986) discussed in chapter 2.3.1. I used the percentile values to calculate how many of each compliment formula should be included and arrived at the numbers: A: 4 B: 2 C: 2 D: 1 E: 1. When I constructed my DCT, I made use of these four motivations to ensure as large a variation as possible in my situations. In chapter 3.0 each situation and their findings are presented and the different variables will be listed after each situation. By constructing my situations around these three variables, I will be able to analyze whether there are any particular situation where Norwegian EFL learners' compliment behavior is observably different from the control. I will also be able to analyze if my Am.E control group use different certain situations differently than the Norwegian EFL learners.

I chose to limit myself to ten situations due to time limitations due for the informants. One of the major pitfalls of any questionnaire is that they can take too long to complete. If a questionnaire is too long the respondents may feel that the rate of imposition is too great and rush their way through the questions (Sealey, 2010, 69). Because of this I wished to be able to hold the DCT within a time window of thirty minutes or less. The limit of ten questions was found by timing a pre-test of the same size on a group of friends who have finished Norwegian high school, and timing the time it took for them to respond. As recommended by Sealey (2010, 30).

Figure 3: Order of DCT situations

1 <sup>st</sup> DCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2 <sup>nd</sup> DCT	5	7	3	6	10	8	1	4	9	2

I also opted for having two versions of the DCT for the Norwegian learners shown in figure 3. The only difference is the order in which the situations are listed. This is due to a

legitimate concern about Sealey’s observation of time constraints. If the responses to the later situations are any longer or shorter, or wildly different between the two groups, this could be ascribed to a flaw in the testing method. It is also possible for the order of questions to influence the responses collected by carrying over information from one situation to the next.

The length of the situational context in my DCT is a compromise between the benefits of long and short descriptions outlined in Billmyer and Varghese (2000). I have chosen to include locational data where it would necessary to make my respondents aware of their surroundings. I have also taken care to describe the social distance between the source of the compliment, and the recipient. Because I have chosen to research a reactive speech act (response to compliment), I have chosen to include a line of dialogue stating the actual compliment. I used variations of some of the compliments found in Manes and Wolfson’s “The Compliment Formula” altered to better fit the situations in my DCT. To ensure their authenticity I left the syntactic and semantic formulas intact, and then asked three American friends to look over and evaluate the compliments to make sure they still appeared natural for Am.E speakers.

Since my target group for my DCT was first grade high school students, I ensured that all of the situations could be considered naturally occurring in a 15- 16 year old’s life. Most of the situations concern life in school or around it, living with parents or hanging out with friends and similar naturally occurring situations. The situations should be natural for both Norwegian learners and the English control group in the same age group.

I included an introduction and a learner's profile to my DCT. This is the introduction presented to my informants. I apologize for the spelling mistakes that appeared in it.

“First of all: Thank you for your willingness to participate in this questionnaire.

The questionnaire is structured into two parts. The first part is a questionnaire with a list with ten imagined situations where you are receiving a compliment.

Try to imagine yourself in the situation, and write down what would be your immediate, intuitive response in English. Try not to spend any more than one minute on each situation. You should also not go back to change any previous answers as there are no right or wrong answers to the situations. For the purpose of this questionnaire I am not concerned with your spelling, and any spelling mistakes will not influence my analysis of your response.

The second part is a learner's profile. This survey is anonymous, but the personal information gathered in the learner's profile will be very valuable to analyzing your answers.”

I forgot to inform about the possibility of writing nothing in response to a situation in the instructions, but informed them of this possibility orally when distributing the test. The learners profile was located at the end of my DCT to collect statistical data. In particular I wanted information about the respondents' age, gender and language background for my analysis of their responses to test whether more frequent exposure to native English improved their degree of pragmatic competence. I decided to put the learner's profile at the back of the DCT, so that the respondents wouldn't consider this information when filling out the DCT.

## **3.3 The experiment setup**

### **3.3.1 Distribution of the DCT**

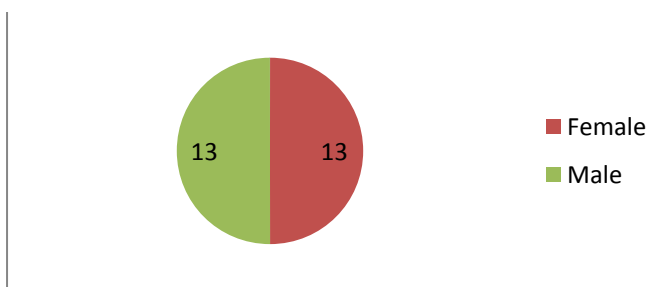
Because the intended competence level of my study is intermediate learners of English, and to best control the environment surrounding the completion of the DCT, I chose to hold the test in a classroom situation. For this purpose I contacted an English teacher at Mailand VGS in charge of a “Studieforbedrende VG1” class. I would like to expand my thanks to Rakel Wika Langvatn for giving me this opportunity. I was allowed to hold the test at the beginning of one

of her English classes early in the morning. Before distributing the DCT I gave a short presentation of myself in English and repeated parts instructions on the first page of the DCT. I assured them that the test was anonymous and that spelling would play no part in my analysis. After I had distributed the DCT, I informed them that opting out of any situation was an option orally, since I had forgotten to include it in the written instructions. While I included a line in the instructions that they were responding to compliments, I did not state that the purpose of this experiment was to compare their choice of communicative strategies or the effect of their individual language backgrounds on their response. I collected the tests immediately after the respondent had finished it, in order to avoid the students rereading and correcting their response. The entire test was completed within 30 minutes.

### 3.3.2 Participants

Because of the inclusion of a learner's profile I was able to map out the respondents' age, gender and linguistic backgrounds, all of which will be important for the analysis. Since the test was distributed in a VG1 classroom, all of the respondents were born in 1997 and are therefore either 15 or 16 years of age. The gender distribution in the class was about equal with 15 boys and 13 girls. Two of the male students gave non-applicable responses for different reasons. One of them only provided an answer to the first situation and provided no answer for any of the rest. The other respondent provided answers that were strictly ironic and

Figure 4: Gender distribution



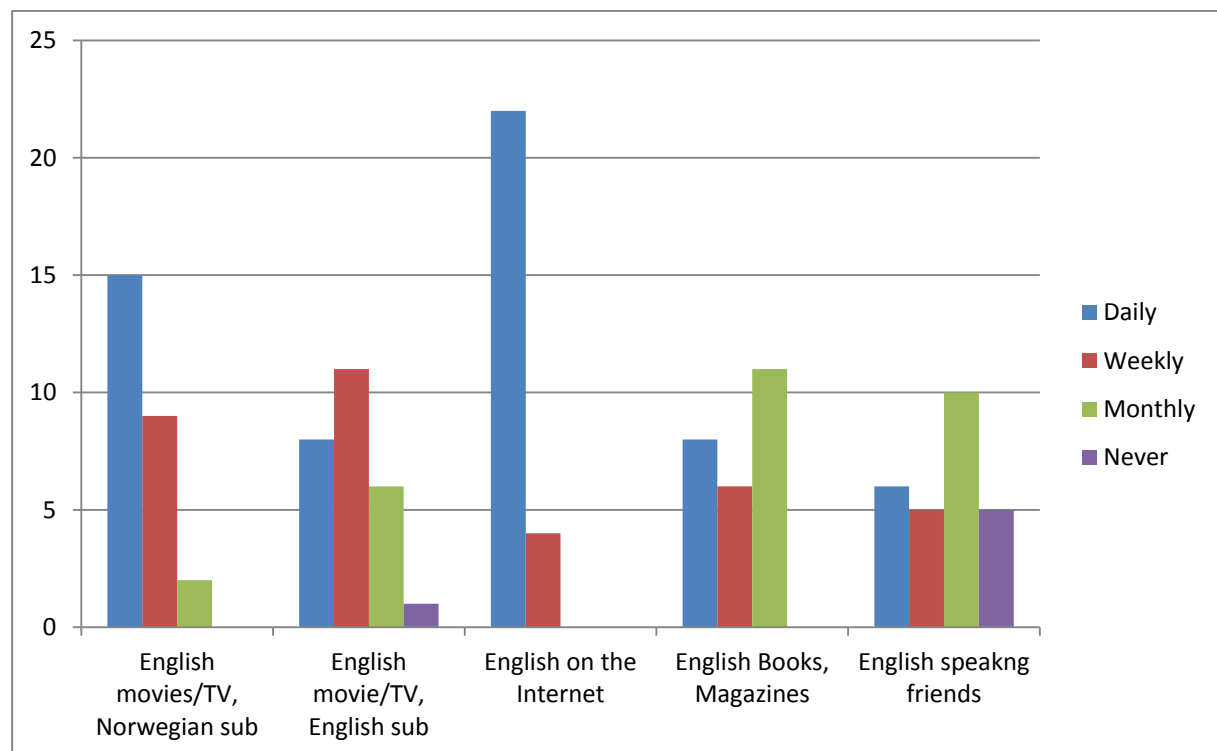
contained several cases of profanity. I have therefore chosen to omit these answers from my analysis. The gender distribution is my Norwegian response group is therefore 50/50 and is shown in figure 4.

I also asked about the participants' native language, as well as the native language of their mother and father, to consider whether their language background had any influence on their responses. If a respondent with another L1 than Norwegian provides a very different response than the remaining EFL learners, I can speculate that this is accounted to pragmatic transfer from their respective L1. I cannot provide any further resolution into this however, as it would be outside the scope of this study. In addition to 22 Norwegian L1s four respondents claimed other languages than Norwegian as their native tongue. Of the four, two are Vietnamese, one

is Danish, and one is Albanian. These same respondents were the only ones to claim that their parents spoke different L1's than Norwegian.

I also asked the participants about their English speaking habits. This included how often they were exposed to English through movies/television, the internet, books/magazines, or international friends. The responses for which are shown in figure 5 below.

Figure 5 Frequency of interaction with English



Most of the respondents (23) claimed that they had daily, or at least weekly interaction with English, most commonly through the internet (22 daily, 4 weekly), or through movies/television. More so with Norwegian subtitles (15 daily, 9 weekly) than with English subtitles (8 Daily, 11 weekly). The information gathered here is not surprising, as a large amount of broadcasted television and movies targeting youth in Norway is in English and are commonly made in the USA. It is interesting to note that few of the respondents claimed any kind of frequent interaction with English speaking friends (6 daily, 5 weekly). This implies that the main source of influence for pragmatic knowledge come from the internet and television/movies. It will be very interesting in the comparison of both compliment response strategies and idiomatic expressions to see in what degree these different L2 influences has had on the Norwegian EFL respondents. I will pay special attention to the respondents who claimed to communicate daily with English speaking friends in my analysis, primarily to see



if they have adapted a more native-like level of pragmatic competence than the people who claim they hardly if at all interacted with native English speakers.

I assembled a group of five respondents, three male and two female, who had not studied the field of linguistics. The Am.E control group age range is between 20 and 23, and they all live in the greater New York/New Jersey area. Each respondent was asked to participate over an electronic messaging board (Facebook) in which they were given a link to my online survey. The survey was presented in the same format as in written paper with introduction first leading into the DCT with a much shorter learner's profile at the end. This means they had virtually unlimited time to complete the survey, but as stated in the introduction I asked them to spend no longer than one minute per question, and to not go back and change any responses. There is a concern about the age of my control being not equally comparable to that of my Norwegian response group. I still believe that the responses gathered will be valuable to use as a comparison, as my control is still considered young adults. Because of this, I choose to use the responses provided in this group as a comparison for both communicative strategy, and idiomaticity. Due to the time constraints for the present thesis, I was not able to collect more than 5 control responses. Because of this I have opted to include the conclusions in Herbert (1990) to provide additional data for my analysis.

# 4 The experiment results

## 4.1 Situation 1: Going to prom.

How would you respond to your female friend in the following situation?

You are going to the end-of-school prom, and are trying to dress up as nicely as you can. You choose the finest suit/dress you own and spend a lot of time trying to look nice. When you get to the prom, you recognize one of your female friends and approach her. As you come up to her, she says: “I really like your outfit. You look sharp!”

**Social distance:**

Yes

**Gender of complimenter:**

Female

**Intention of Compliment:**

Social Lubricant

**Syntactic Structure:**

C

Figure 6: Situation 1

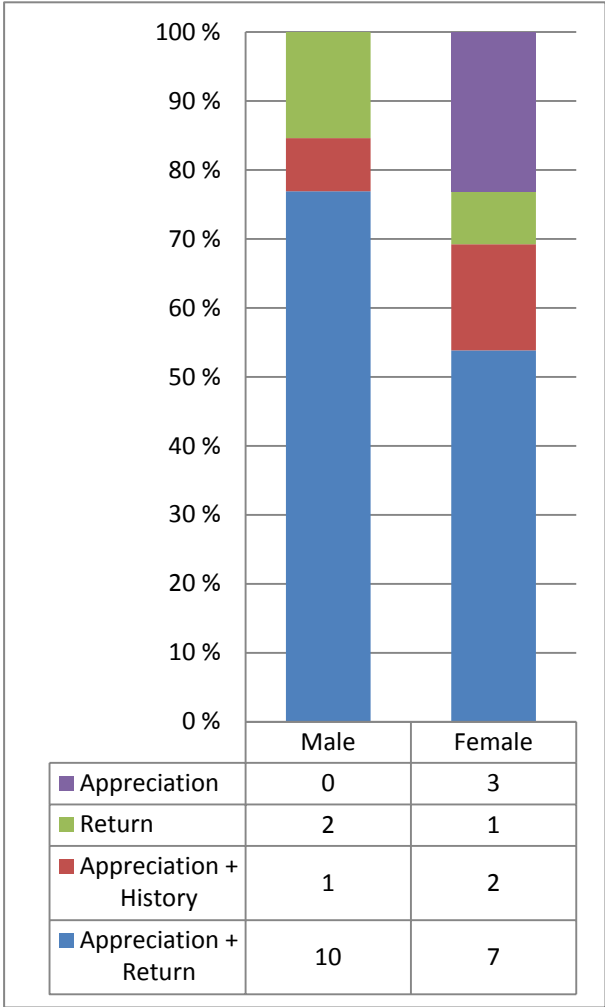


Figure 6 shows that the most common compliment response strategy chosen by the Norwegian respondents was an appreciation with an additional return strategy. An example of such a compliment response realization is shown in (16).

(16) “Thank, you. You look great too”

There was very little gender differences between the responses, but the female respondents were more likely to respond with

just an appreciation token shown in (17). The most common male response is shown in (18)

(17) Female: Thank you

(18) Male: Thanks, you too

## 4.2 Situation 2: Improvements in school.

How would you respond to your female teacher in the following situation?

You have been struggling at school lately, and your teacher has been trying to help improve on your grades. After a long period of study and late nights, your hard work pays off and you get a top grade on your latest test. Your teacher approaches you, saying: “You did real good work! I’m proud of you.”

Figure 7: Situation 2

**Social distance:**

Yes

**Gender of complimenter:**

Female

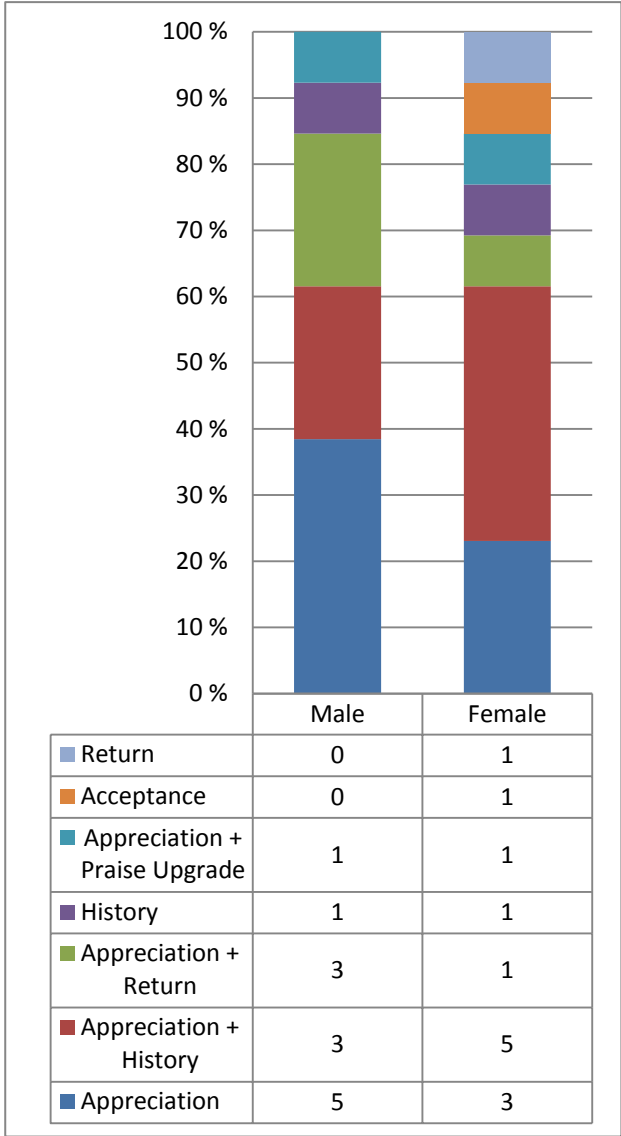
**Intention of Compliment:**

Attribute in respondent

**Syntactic Structure:**

D

Figure 7 shows that the responses were similar to the ones found in situation 1, as almost all respondents included an appreciation token in their response. There is an equal gender split between a lone appreciation response, and appreciation followed by a comment history. The female respondents were more likely to provide history claiming that they worked hard. An example of comment history is shown in example (19). The men however were much quicker to reassign part of their success to the teacher. An example of which is shown in (20).



(19) Thank you for the help, I’d really worked hard

(20) Thanks, I couldn’t have done it without you.

### 4.3 Situation 3: Working out.

How would you respond to your male friend in the following situation?

After a summer filled with barbecues and dinner parties you have gotten a bit out of shape. You have started going back to the gym and are starting to see some great results. As you approach your friends at school one day, one of your male friends says: “Wow, you look good. Have you been working out?”

Figure 8: Situation 3

**Social distance:**

No

**Gender of complimenter:**

Male

**Intention of Compliment:**

Social lubricant

**Syntactic Structure:**

A

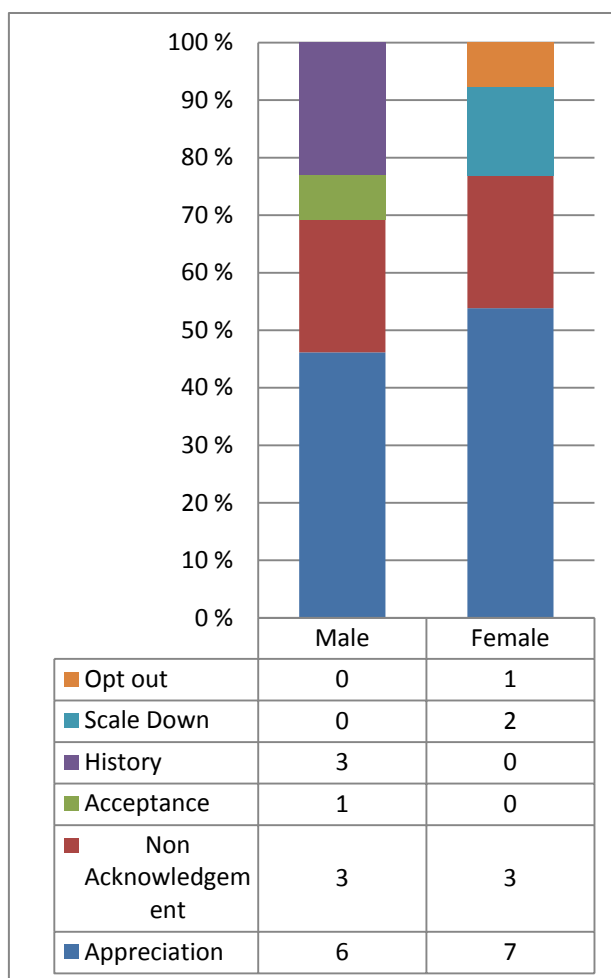
The most common compliment response shown in Figure 8 is an appreciation token; however it is very interesting to note that several people chose not to acknowledge the compliment. However, every respondent chose to answer the follow-up question. The non-acknowledgement responses then chose to answer the question, but also ignored the compliment. There are some differences in the mean length in the compliment responses between the

genders. Male responses were often longer than the female ones, while the long answers from the females are commonly rejections. Examples of this are shown in (21), (22) and (23) respectively.

(21) Female: Yes, thank you

(22) Male: Thank you, yes I have been working out

(23) Female: Yes I have, but I am not in shape yet.



## 4.4 Situation 4: A good weekend

How would you respond to your father in the following situation?

It is Saturday morning on the first week of fall break, and you and your friends have a great weekend ahead of you. So you are in a really good mood. As you head to the kitchen to eat breakfast with your family, your father looks at you and says: “You look really cheerful today.”

**Social distance:**

Yes

**Gender of complimenter:**

Male

**Intention of Compliment:**

Social lubricant

**Syntactic Structure:**

A

Figure 9: Situation 4

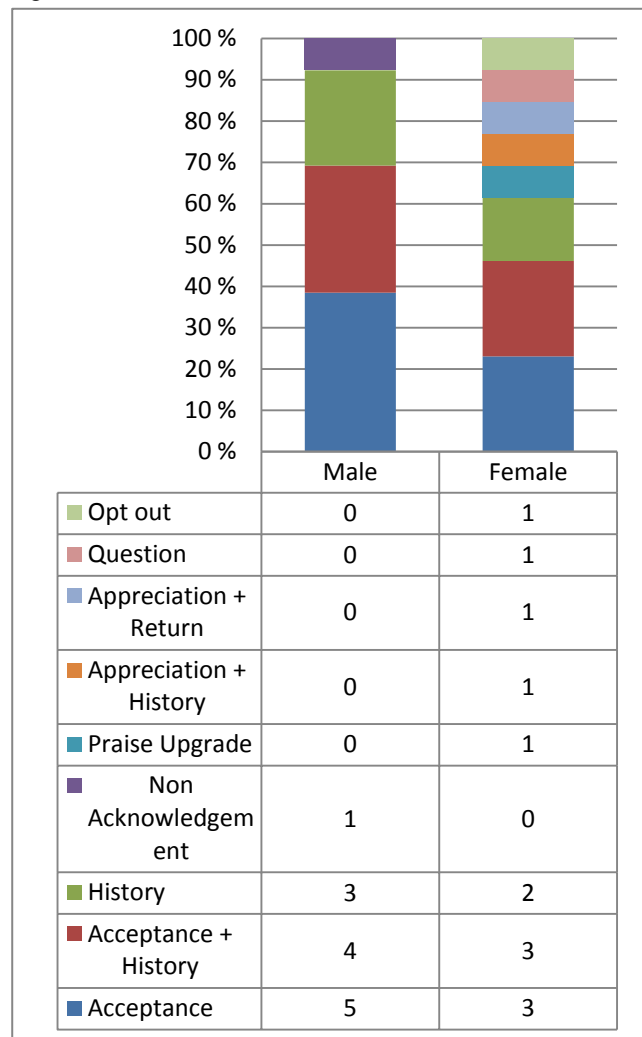


Figure 9 shows that the most frequently used response in this situation was comment acceptance, often providing a comment history describing why they were feeling cheerful. There is a bit of gender variation in the responses. Male respondents are much more likely to provide a comment acceptance to their fathers compliment and perhaps provide a short common history. While the female respondents were also most likely to provide similar strategies, they also used a much broader range of different responses. They were also the ones to use an appreciation tokens and were more positive in their responses than the male respondents, an example of this is shown in (24).

(24) Thanks dad, I'm having a good day

## 4.5 Situation 5: Making dinner

How would you respond to your mother in the following situation?

You are making dinner at home for your family and make up the recipe as you go. While eating together your mother exclaims: “Wow, this is really good! You must give me the recipe for later!”

Figure 10: Situation 5

**Social distance:**

Yes

**Gender of complimenter:**

Female

**Intention of Compliment:**

Social Lubricant

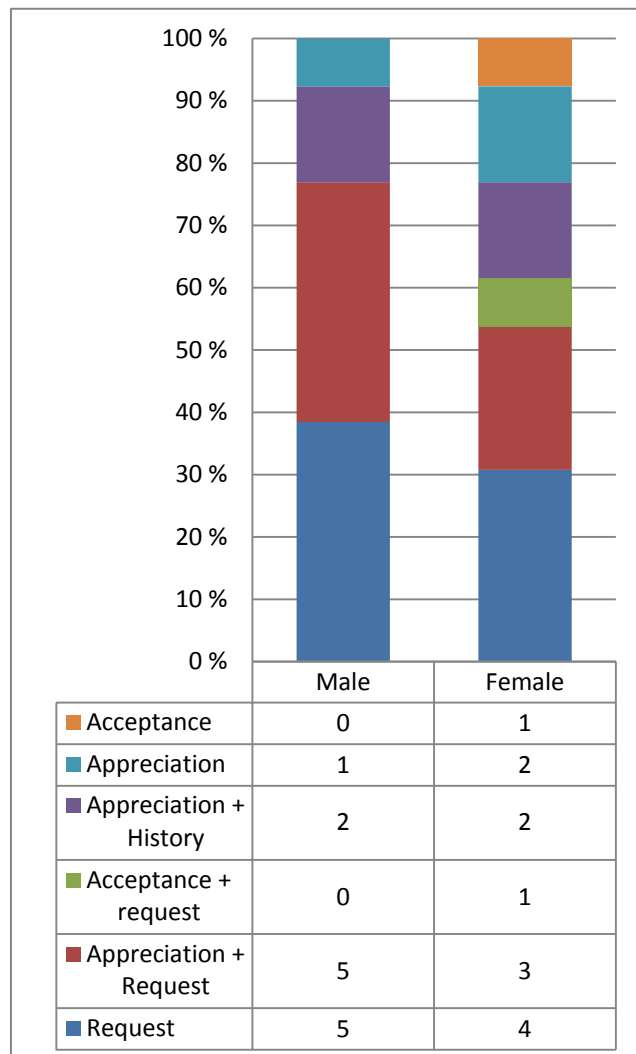
**Syntactic Structure:**

A

Figure 5 shows that the most common response was appreciation in combination with a request response, however it was equally frequent to ignore the compliment and only respond to the request. Example (25) is an example of one of these request responses, where the compliment is also recognized, while (26) shows an example of only responding to the request.

(25) Oh, thank you! I can give you the recipe later.

(26) Of course you can get the recipe.



It is also interesting to note that the male respondents were much more likely to admit that they made up the recipe as they went along, while the female respondents leaned towards claiming they followed a recipe.

## 4.6 Situation 6: Friend on the street.

How would you respond to your female friend in the following situation?

You are walking down the street with your new boy/girlfriend. On the way you meet a male friend you haven't seen for years. You and your old friend start talking about the adventures you once had, while your boy/girlfriend asks if (s)he can check out the store across the street. As (s)he leaves, your female friend exclaims: "I really like your new boy/girlfriend. (S)he seems nice"

**Social distance:**

No

**Gender of Complimenter:**

Female

**Intention of Compliment:**

Social Lubricant

**Syntactic Structure:**

B

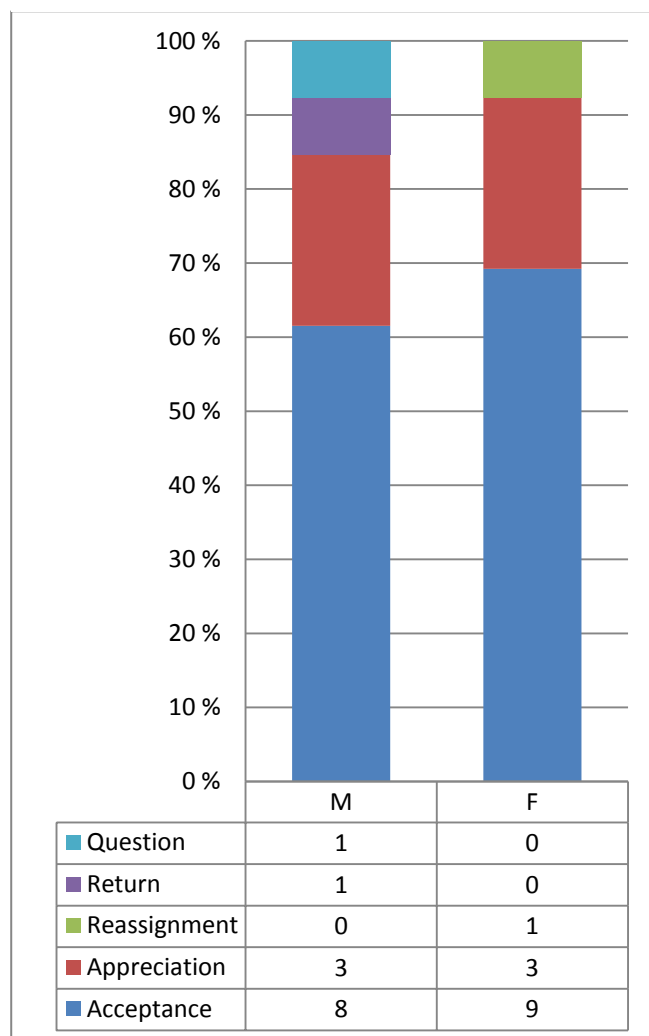
Figure 6 shows that compliment response was the most frequent compliment response to this situation. The second most frequent strategy was an appreciation token. The genders were almost uniform in their response here, and there is very little difference between their responses. Almost all of their responses simply agreed with the complimenter and affirmed that they thought so too, similar to the response shown in (27).

(27) Yea, I like him too

Even the one question response also includes an affirmation of the respondent's feelings, shown in (28).

(28) Really? I think so too

Figure 11: Situation 6



## 4.7 Situation 7: The shirt and the crush.

How would you respond to your crush in the following situation?

You put on an old shirt you found in the back of your closet one morning. You meet some friends on the way to school and the person you have a crush on is with them. The person you have a crush on compliments you, saying: “I really like your new shirt, you look nice.”

### Social distance:

No

### Gender of Complimenter:

Opposite of respondent

### Intention of Compliment:

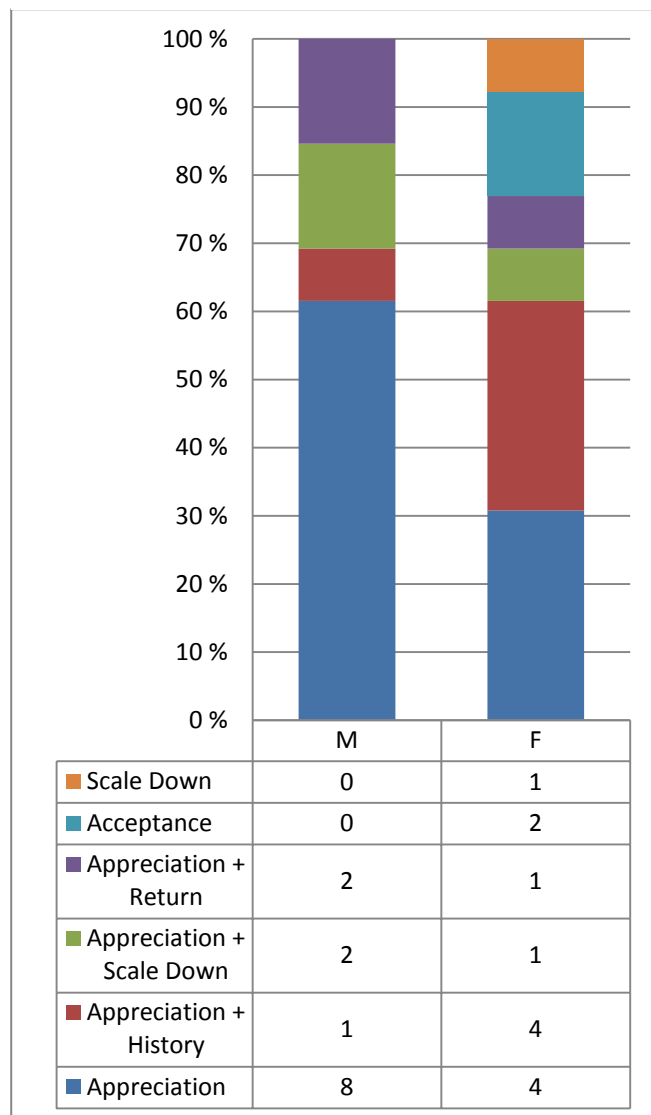
Social lubricant

### Syntactic Structure:

A

Figure 7 shows that the most common response to this situation was by appreciation token, with several more opting to include a comment history. It is very interesting to see the gender distribution here, as the female respondents are evenly split between providing comment history and not. Male respondents however, were far less likely to include comment history. A few respondents also chose to scale down the compliment through their response by admitting to finding the shirt in the back of the closet, as shown in (29) written by a male respondent.

Figure 12: Situation 7



(29) Oh, it's old, but thanks.



# 4.8 Situation 8: Meeting the family

How would you respond to crush in the following situation?  
 You have recently gotten together with your crush, and you are taking him/her home to meet your parents. You are really nervous before they meet, but the meeting goes well, and you have a pleasant dinner together. After dinner, you go to your room to watch a movie, as your crush says: "You have such a nice family, I really like them."

**Social distance:**

No

**Gender of Complimenter:**

Opposite of respondent

**Intention of Compliment:**

Social lubricant

**Syntactic Structure:**

B

There was no uniform compliment response from the respondents. There does seem to be a gender specific preference towards appreciation and a return from the female respondents, and comment acceptance from the males. A typical appreciation plus return strategy is shown in (30), and an acceptance response is shown in (31).

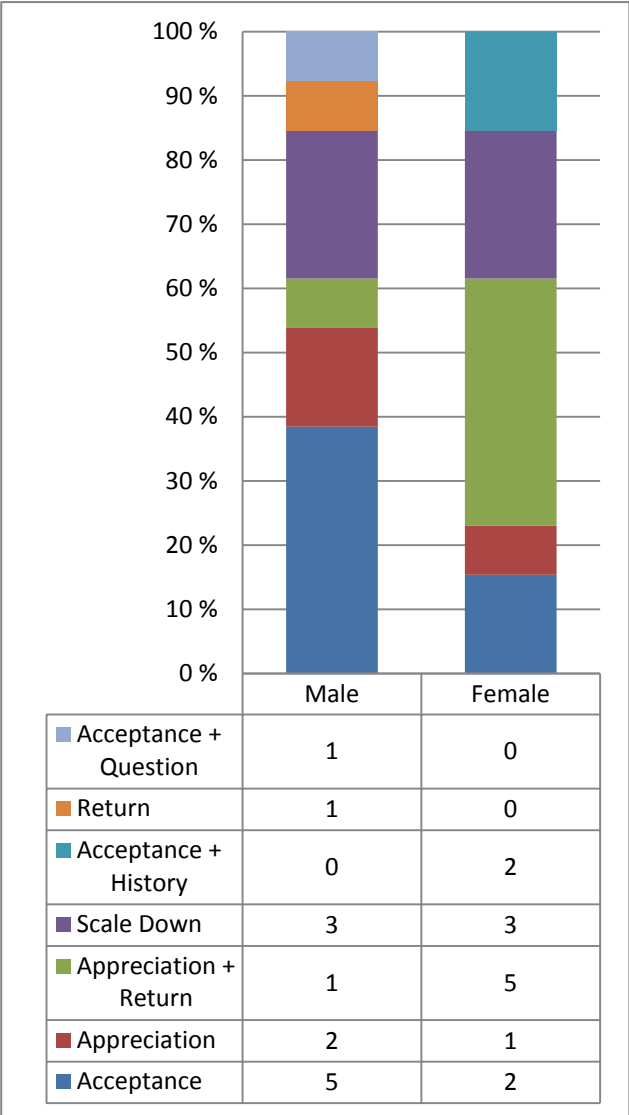
(30) Thanks, It seemed like they liked you too.

(31) good that they like each other.

A larger number than usual (7 respondents) disagreed with the compliment through scaling down or asking a question to the complimenter. A common example is shown in (32)

(32) Oh, but you haven't seen them when they are weird

Figure 13: Situation 8



# 4.9 Situation 9: Playing the guitar

How would you respond to your male friend in the following situation?

You have been learning how to play the guitar for the last six months and have gotten quite good. You are hanging out with some friends one afternoon, and one of your male friends who is part of a band asks you to play a tune for them. You accept, play them a song. Your friends applaud you, and the male friend who asked you to play says: “That was really nice, you've gotten quite good.”

**Social distance:**

No

**Gender of complimenter:**

Male

**Intention of Compliment:**

Attribute in respondent

**Syntactic Structure:**

C

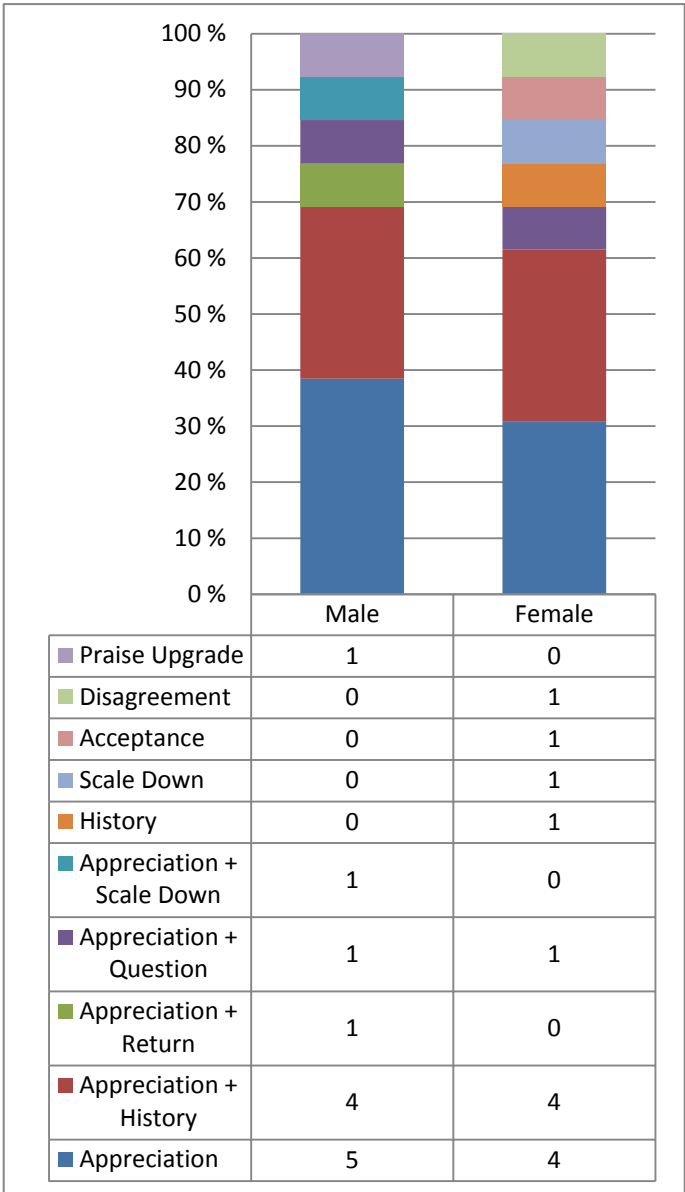
As shown in figure 9, the most frequent response to this compliment was an appreciation token, along with a comment history explaining that they had worked hard. An example of this is shown in (33).

(33) Thank you, I’ve practiced a lot

There was also a wide range of different responses, more so than in the other situations, but there was an increased frequency of disagreements, particularly the first abrupt disagreement in the DCT, which is shown in (34)

(34) No way, I’m not that good.

Figure 14: Situation 9



## 4.10 Situation 10: At work

How would you respond to your male manager in the following situation?

You work at a store and have been asked to sort the products that you sell. You wish to impress your manager and create an easy sorting system that displays the products optimally. Your manager approaches you, looking impressed as he says: “This is a nice piece of work. Well done.”

Figure 15: Situation 10

### Social distance:

Yes.

### Gender of complimenter:

Male

### Intention of Compliment:

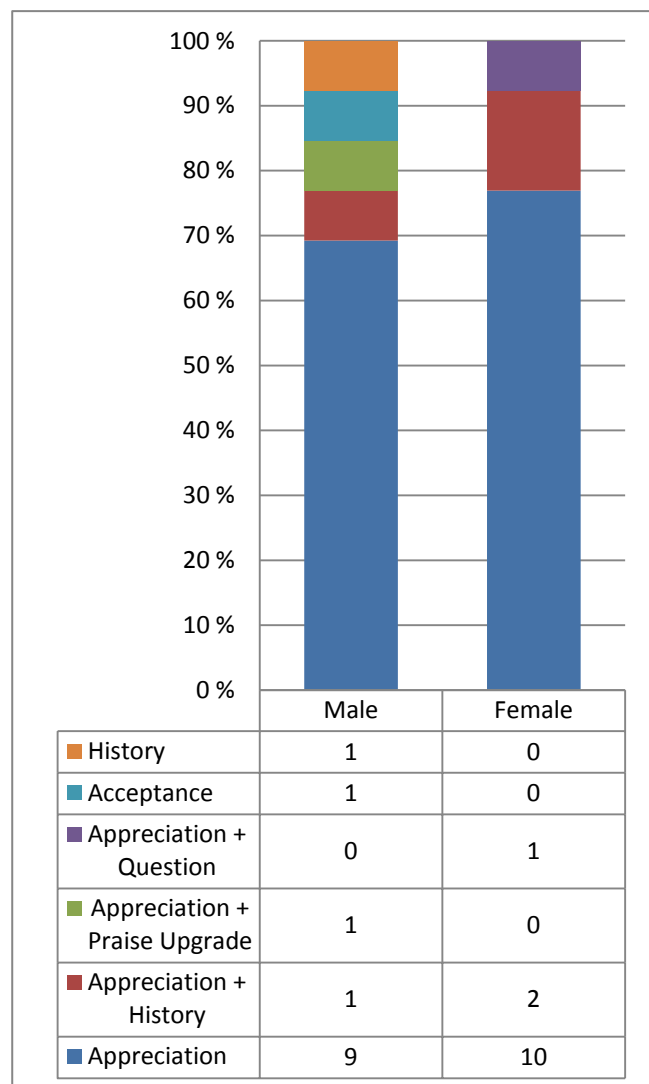
Attribute of respondent.

### Syntactic Structure:

E

As shown in figure 10, the most common response was an appreciation token alone. The majority of the remaining responses were also appreciations with additional information. There was only one occurrence of nonagreement from one female respondent. This is shown in (35) where asks a reaffirming question to the complimenter.

(35) You think so? Well I am still learning, but thanks!



It is interesting to note how often the respondents chose to include the honorific “sir” in their responses. Four of the respondents chose to respond to the compliment in this manner, all of which simple appreciations showed in (36):

(36) Thank you sir

# 5 Analysis and discussion of results

## 5.1 Method of analysis

The method I will use for my analysis is based on a similar experiment performed by Félix Brasfeder & Hasler-Barker (2012) on Spanish FL learners and their pragmatic competence. To test my research question stated in my introduction, I will first collect the sum of all findings from chapter 4.0 in a similar system as the aforementioned experiment. These responses are divided into Herbert’s compliment response strategies, these responses strategies have been previously discussed in chapter 2.3.2. I will use this data to compare it to the communicative strategies employed by my American control to try to locate differences or similarities. I will also provide a chart where I sum all compliment response strategies divided by gender. By referring to this table and the different situations in chapter 4.0, I will be able to compare differences between the genders in both Norwegian EFL learners and the Am.E control group in total, but also whether gender differences distribute differently according to situational type. I will also provide some examples on the actual expressions used by the Norwegian EFL respondents, and compare them against the idiomatic expressions provided by my Am.E control group. Doing this I will be able to discuss the idiomaticity of the Norwegian EFL learners realization of FTA’s. Once again it is important to note that I have chosen to include Herbert’s findings in my analysis, due to my control only consisting of five respondents.

Figure 16: method of analysis

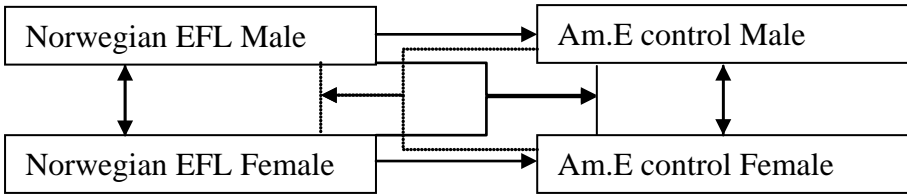


Figure 2 shows the different directions between my comparisons. The arrows pointing towards the line connecting the Am.E male and female control is meant to represent my first hypothesis where I will make no gender based comparison, and only compare how Norwegian EFL learners in general responded compared to the Am.E control group. The second hypothesis is represented by the lines pointing from each gender in Norwegian EFL to each other as well as to the corresponding gender in Am.E control group. This means that the comparisons will be drawn between male and female respondents amongst Norwegian EFL

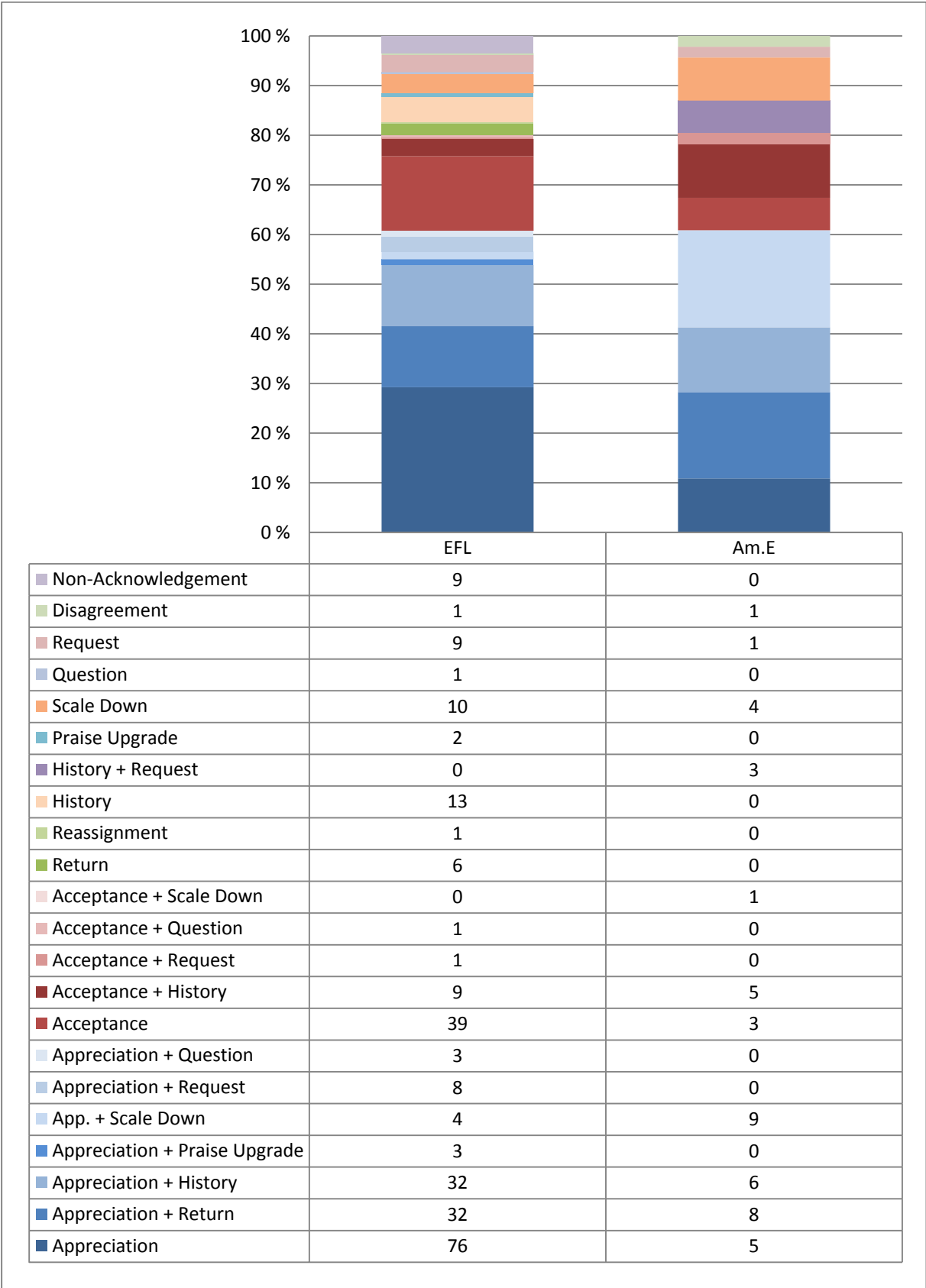
learners but also between male learners and male control and female learners and female control. Testing idiomaticity is represented by the dotted line. This comparison will be made by comparing the speech act realizations made by the Am.E control group and contrasted to statements made by Norwegian EFL learners.

## 5.2 Comparisons of compliment response strategies

The total sum of compliment responses used by my Norwegian EFL respondents is shown in figure 17. The figure represent the most common compliment strategies employed by both Am.E control group in the right column, and the Norwegian EFL learners in the left column.

An observation that stands out in table 14 is the eerily similar frequency of certain acceptance strategies, particularly the use of an appreciation token or an appreciation token plus another strategy, represented with the blue coloring. Both groups used these strategies an approximate of 60% of all cases. The same also holds true with comment acceptance represented in red. Both groups chose to use this strategy about 20% of the time, though slightly more in the Norwegian EFL learner group than the Am.E control group. Comment acceptance also often occurs with an additional strategy. However, the frequency of these different additions to an acceptance strategy within the two testing groups differed quite substantially. The Norwegian EFL learner group was three times more likely to use appreciation alone than the Am.E control group. This pattern is also replicated with comment acceptance, with a seemingly three times higher frequency of use in the Norwegian EFL group compared to the Am.E control group. The Am.E control group on the other hand showed an overwhelming tendency to provide additional nonagreement strategies in their response. The most significant deviation appears to be by use of the pattern appreciation plus scale down which is performed by saying “thanks” but mitigating part of the compliment received. This pattern makes up 10% of the Am.E control group’s total response, but only about 1% of the Norwegian EFL. A similar pattern is also found with scale down alone, where the Am.E control group uses this strategy about three times as often as the EFL group.

Figure 17: Comparison of compliment responses



Another observation is that Norwegians tend to use shorter compliment responses, or at least fewer additional strategies to appreciation or acceptance than Americans when communicating in English. Another interesting observation is that contrary to the claim made in Røkaas (2000) that Americans tend to be boastful of their own abilities, my Am.E control group tend to employ the scale down compliment response strategy very frequently. Either alone (9 %) or in addition to an appreciation token (20%) These two observations will be expanded upon as I analyze the situations separately.

At first, it is interesting to note in which situations the Norwegian EFL learners tended to use simple appreciation or comment acceptance as their prevalent compliment return strategy compared to that of the Am.E control group. For the Norwegian EFL learners, appreciation was the preferred strategy in situations 3, 7 and 10 while in these same situations the preferred Am.E control group responses were agreement, scale down and appreciation respectively. On the surface there is nothing linking these three strategies in terms of variables. The first two compliments are social lubricants with no social distance between H and S, but the last one is made by an authority figure (a manager) to compliment someone's abilities. On the other hand, comment acceptance was only the preferred strategy in situation 6. In this situation the Am.E control group showed a tendency for appreciation with an addition scale down strategy.

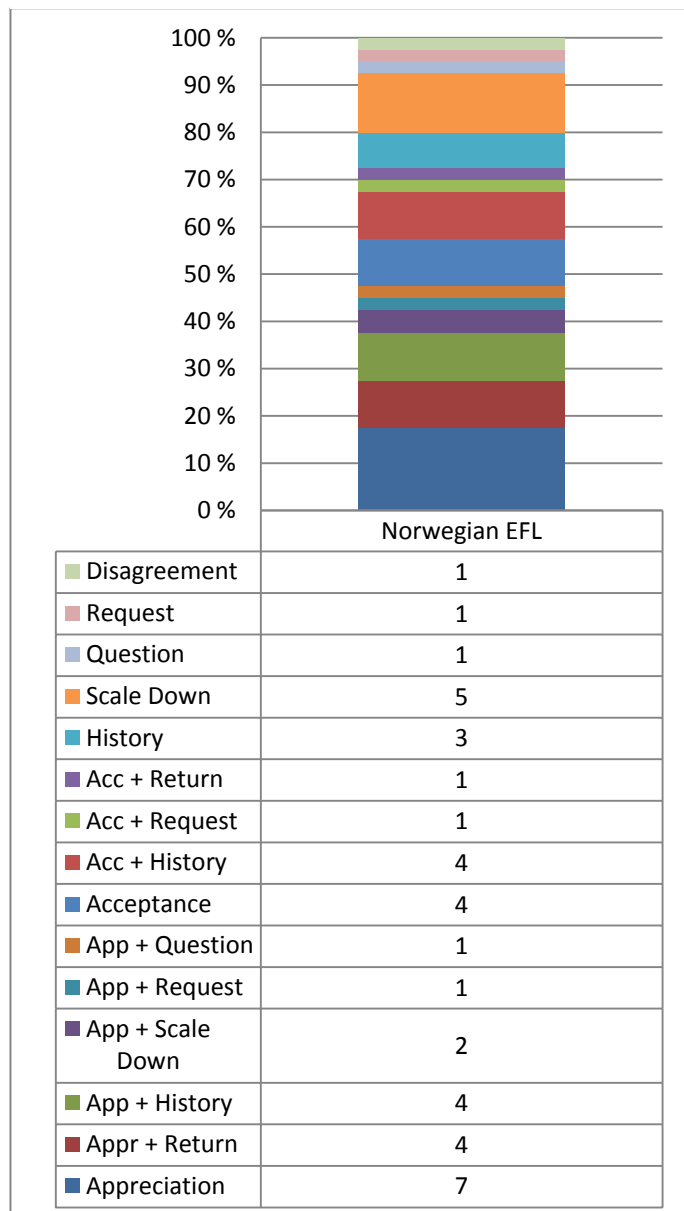
According to Brown & Levinson's face theory presented in chapter 2.1, using any compliment response strategy beyond a simple token of appreciation will damage H's positive face. The damage upon S's positive face may however very well be the intended effect amongst most respondents in the Am.E control group, as their responses fit neatly into the two maxims proposed by Pomerantz (1978): Be supportive and be modest. This also makes my findings in line with those found by Herbert (1990) By employing the non-agreement strategy, most commonly scale down, in addition to an appreciation token, S's compliment response manages to attend to H's positive face want to be approved of, while simultaneously mitigating their own positive face want fulfillment by expressing debtfulness and at the same time damage their own positive face so to not appear boastful.

This finding appears to be at odds with Røkaas's theory that Am.E speakers may very well be boastful. However it is interesting to note that this may very well in part explain some of the Norwegian EFL learner's choice of compliment response strategies. If they expect English speakers to be boastful, they may employ a higher frequency of praise upgrades, and scaled down compliments far less. Expectations may have governed part of their response based on their experience with English through

internet and movies instead of actual interaction with Am.E English speakers. In fact, the respondents who claimed daily contact with English speaking international friends shown in figure 18 tended to scale down the compliment in their responses similarly to the Am.E control group (12% vs. 9%), and never used praise upgrades. Their compliment response strategies were overall more similar to the Am.E control group in terms of favored compliment response and are shown in figure 15 above.

The responses provided by Norwegian EFL learners do show a higher frequency of appreciation without any additional compliment responses than that of the Am.E control group. In cases where social distance was no issue (situations 3, 6,

Figure 18: Daily interaction with English speaking friend



7, 8 and 9) the Am.E control group hardly ever used an appreciation token as their favored compliment response. Their preferred strategy was instead comment acceptance or providing additional comment history. In cases where social distance was an issue, (situations 1, 2, 4, 5 and 10) particularly situation 10, the Am.E control group switched to using appreciation, or appreciation with an additional scale down response strategy. Norwegian EFL leaned towards



appreciation in all situations except for situation 4, 6 and 8, all of which were social lubricants. In these situations the learners instead used comment acceptance. Considering on the observation made by Fretheim (1999) in chapter 2.3.4 in that Norwegians tend to favor thanking, this would imply that there is some pragmatic transfer from L1 when communicating in English.

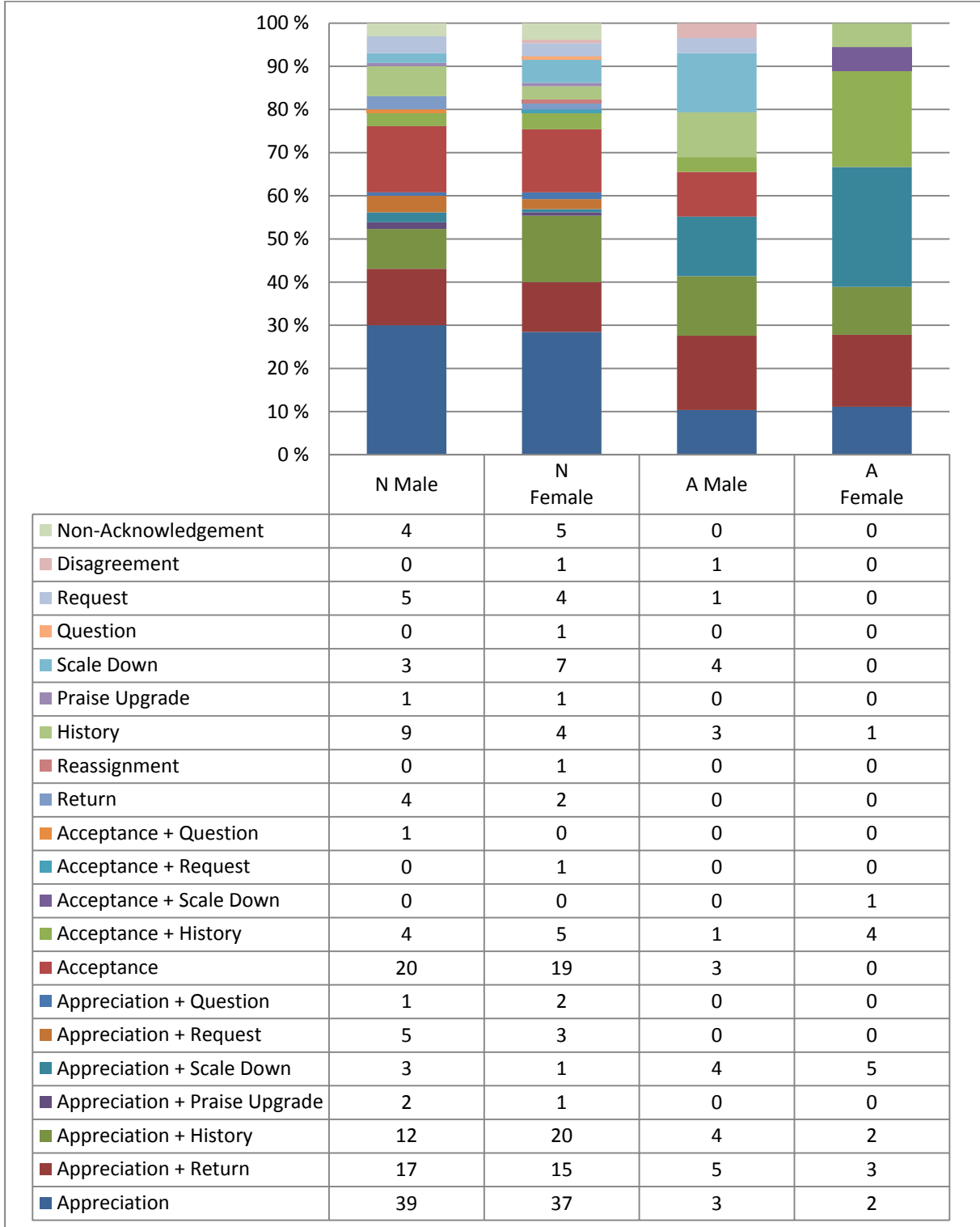
### **5.3 Gender based differences in compliment response strategies**

The second area of interest for this study concerns whether or not there are any distinct patterns of differences defined by the gender of a respondent. The comparison study in this chapter will be heavily inspired by the research performed by Herbert (1990) and further based on observations made in Tannen (1991) on native English speakers. A comparison will be made between both genders in the Norwegian EFL learner group and compared to the Am.E control group. Due to the limited size of the Am.E control group gathered for this study however, additional data from Herbert's (1990) research on gender based differences in Am.E speakers will be used as a basis for comparison when necessary due to his larger group of native informants.

Figure 16 displays the results provided by the different genders in both languages. The figure is divided into four columns. The first two columns to the left represent Norwegian EFL learner male and female responses and the two columns to the right represent the Am.E control group's male and female responses respectively. Due to the size difference between the two groups, further discussion will be based on percentages not the number of different responses. Additional data included from Herbert (1990) found that American men and women take gender to be an essential part in how often a compliment is agreed or disagreed with. Agreements were more likely to occur when a man gave a compliment to a woman (169 appreciation tokens, 7 comment acceptance among 258 M-F compliment responses) than when a woman complimented another woman (34 appreciation tokens, 37 comment acceptance amongst 330 F-F compliment responses). The comment history strategy was frequent in cases where the same gender complimented each other (M-M: 41, F-F: 85), men also used this strategy frequently when responding to a compliment from a women (70 occurrences out of 246 total). The scale down strategy which was used frequently in my findings was most often used when responding to a female compliment (F-F: 23, F-M: 18)

compared to male compliments (M-M: 0, M-F: 7) (Herbert 1990: 213). The results from my Am.E control group do not show the same results, in particular the much lower occurrences of nonacceptance strategies (comment history, return and reassignment). Some tendencies are similar however, which will be discussed below.

Figure 19: Comparison of gender specific compliment responses



The data presented in figure 16 show that the compliment response strategies used by Norwegian EFL learners are strikingly similar for both genders. Some interesting deviations show up amongst the female respondents however, as the data implies a preference toward an appreciation token with comment history (F: 15%, M: 9%). The data also shows a slight preference for male respondents to provide comment history without any additional strategy over the women (F: 3% M: 7%). The female preference towards appreciation token plus comment history over men is found within almost all responses, but is especially prevalent in situation 7: The crush and the shirt. In this situation the respondents were asked to imagine themselves receiving a compliment from their crush, which for the purpose of this study has the opposite gender of the respondent. The Norwegian female respondents resorted to providing additional comment history here at a higher rate (M: 1 F: 4 occurrences) than the Norwegian male respondents who usually used a simple appreciation token (M: 8, F: 4 occurrences). The Am.E control group was more aligned with Herbert's findings when responding to situation 7. Both women used an appreciation token, with one female respondent including a scale down strategy. Amongst these three Am.E male respondents two responded with an appreciation token with a scale down strategy, while the last responded with a scale down strategy. According to the data shown above, the Norwegian respondents showed a tendency for agreements more often than the Am.E respondents who included nonagreement strategies.

Similarly to situation 7, situation 8: Meeting the family also describes a situation in which the respondent is supposed to imagine receiving a compliment from their crush. However in this situation the Norwegian male respondents more likely to use a simple comment acceptance (M: 5, F: 2) in contrast to the Norwegian female respondents who often showed appreciation in addition to a return strategy by saying "they liked you too." (M: 1, F: 5). Amongst the Am.E respondents on the other hand, the male respondents were likely to provide nonagreement responses such as a question (1 response) or agreement + scale down (1 response) shown in (37)

(37) "I'm glad you do because they're crazy. I thought they might scare you away."

Both of the Am.E female respondents scaled down the compliment, but one of them also included an appreciation token in her response.

The only other situations where there were significant differences between male and female respondents amongst the Norwegian EFL learners were situations 4 and 5. In these situations the respondents were supposed to imagine themselves reacting to a compliment to their parents which would represent a social distance between S and H. In both 4 and 5 the Norwegian male respondents restricted themselves to a very limited set of responses, only four in both cases. The female respondents on the other hand used a wide range of different response strategies to both their mother and their father for a total of 8 different strategies and combination of strategies in situation 4 and 6 strategies in situation 5. Also in situation 5, the female respondents used acceptance strategies at about the same rate as the males. The female respondents also ignored the imperative request made by the mother more often than the male respondents (M: 3, F 5 cases of non-request response strategy). The Am.E responses were similar between both genders, both tending to provide comment history. There was a slightly larger tendency for nonacceptance strategies, particularly scale down amongst the female respondents in situation 5, but all respondents recognized the request made by their mother.

The results presented above give further credence to the findings in the analysis from chapter 5.2. The compliment response strategies employed by the Norwegian EFL learners do not match with the Am.E control group, nor the observations made by Herbert (1990). On the other hand the Norwegian compliment response strategies are very similar to each other across both genders, which indicate that the differences between genders in Am.E speakers are not so prevalent amongst Norwegian speakers. These findings could mean that L1 pragmatic transfer based on gender roles seems to occur in EFL learner students at the VG1 level, as their responses do not match up, however more results are needed to give an absolute answer to this theory.

## **5.4 Idiomaticity in Norwegian EFL learners compliment responses**

Sinclair's theory that language is made up of chunks has implications for second language acquisition in terms illocutionary competence as stated in chapter 2.2.1. Students may have knowledge of the appropriate language prefabs and sociolinguistic knowledge, but may lack what Bachman (1990) refers to as illocutionary knowledge of how to fully realize a speech act. The comparison studies performed above found tendencies for similarities between Norwegian EFL learner and Am.E strategies when responding to compliments, even if there

were some evidence of L1 pragmatic transfer. While the choice of appropriate strategies was similar, this does not guarantee that the expressions used to realize the compliment response speech acts are idiomatic. Even if the Norwegian EFL learners have experience with idiomatic expressions, they may not be able to recognize the correct context for their use due to lack the pragmatic competence.

In situation 1 there is already a clear example of the phenomena explained above. The preferred compliment response strategy for both learners and control across both genders was an appreciation token in addition to a return strategy. One of the typical responses is shown below in (38).

(38) Thank you! You too.

While the response shown in (38) would be an appropriate response to a statement like: “Have a good day”, but sounds strange as a response to “I really like your outfit. You look sharp”. A more appropriate response is shown in (39), which was stated by one of the Am.E control group.

(39) Thank you! You look great too.

Interestingly enough, the compliment response in (39) was mirrored perfectly by one Norwegian EFL learner who claimed daily interaction with an English speaking friend. The tendency shown in chapters 5.2 and 5.3, where respondents who claimed to interact with English speakers daily or weekly showed a greater frequency of native-like responses, is therefore repeated in terms of idiomatic proficiency. In the same situation as (39) above, situation 1, the following two examples were made by respondents who claimed daily interaction with English friends.

(40) Thank you. You are fine too.

(41) Thanks, you look really nice yourself

The example (40) tends to be more typical amongst respondents who claimed monthly or no interaction with native English speakers. Their responses tend to be either much longer than the Norwegian EFL learners who claimed frequent interaction. An example of a longer response can be seen in (42), and a shorter response in (43). A respondent claiming daily

interaction in (44) and an Am.E control group response (45) are used as comparison examples. In these examples they are all responding to situation 2.

(42) Thank you for your help, without you I wouldn't have done the test this well.

(43) Thank you

(44) Thank you. I've worked hard.

(45) Thanks. I've worked very hard for this.

This is not to say that these respondents who claim that they seldom interact with native speakers never used the correct idiomatic expressions. One Norwegian respondent claimed to never interact with native English speakers and responded just like one of the Am.E control group. The respondent did claim to watch English movies and use the internet daily however, which would have contributed to his native-like competence. This response is shown in (46).

(46) Thank you, you don't look so (too) bad yourself.

The tendency so far seems to be that idiomatic proficiency is greater in the EFL learners with frequent first hand experience. Situation 6 however provides some evidence to the contrary however. Three of the Am.E control group responded with the prefab "he is (really) great". This compliment response reaffirms the compliment given by H by mirroring part of it. The most common response (5 vs. 1 other) from the group who claim frequent interaction is shown in (47). This response also serves to reaffirm the contents of H's compliment, but in a different manner. Instead of complimenting the spouse, the response shown instead provides background information affirming that S likes their crush too.

(47) Thank you, I like her too!

The Norwegian respondents who claimed a higher rate of interaction with native English speakers however provided responses that were very similar to the Am.E control group.

Situation 5 also allowed for a very interesting observation. The Am.E control group used an actual idiom quite frequently in this situation. All of the control respondents replied with some variation of the text marked in bold in (48).

(48) Thanks, I **kind of just whipped/made it up.**

The Norwegian respondents on the other hand had no typical response. Some respondents replied with an appreciation and affirmations that they would give their mother a nonexistent recipe. The ones who did tell the truth that they made it all up often provided very long explanations to there not being any recipe, such as in (7)

(49) Eh... Well, it's great that you like it, but I don't have any recipe for it. I just tried something.

These results give an indication that while the Norwegian respondents did provide somewhat suitable compliment response strategies, they did not respond with idiomatic expressions to match the expectations of an Am.E speaker. It is interesting to note that more frequent exposure to native English commonly implies that the learner has a higher rate of success in expressing the correct idioms in the right context and achieving what Bachmann refers to as illocutionary competence. The most influential native-language media seems to be English speaking friends, or from watching English speaking movies with English subtitles. One last interesting point of notice is that the respondents claiming to read English books and magazines daily performed no better in providing idiomatic expressions than those who claim they didn't.

# 6 Conclusion

## 6.1 Short discussion of findings

In this study I have attempted to illustrate Norwegian EFL learners' compliment response behavior compared to an Am.E control group, both in terms of communication strategies and idiomaticity in speech act realization. I set out to investigate the ways in which EFL learners would adapt to the conventions in the target language and whether any potential signs of pragmatic failure due to L1 pragmatic transfer occurred. The comparison is drawn both from prior research (Herbert 1990) as well as a control group of native Am.E speakers from the greater New York City region. I also chose to consider potential gender differences, based on previous research made by Herbert (1990) and Holmes (1995). I set out on this study to contribute to the field of pragmatic competence research in Norwegian learners of English, of which very little prior research exists. Due to the size of both my learner response group and my control group, I can only provide general tendencies to answer my research question. In spite of these limitations, I believe that my findings will contribute to the general insight into the pragmatic knowledge of Norwegian learners of English at the VG1 level, and I hope it can inspire further research into pragmatic competence of Norwegian EFL learners.

The results given above in chapter 5.2 show a tendency for dissimilarity between the Norwegian EFL learners and native Am.E speakers in terms of their communicative strategies chosen to realize the compliment response FTA. The EFL learners tended to restrict themselves to one compliment response strategy alone, commonly an appreciation token. The control, on the other hand, was more in line with Pomerantz' (1989) compliment response maxims as they showed appreciation, but also included a nonacceptance (comment history) or a disagreement (scale down) response strategy to show modesty. While these findings are different from the popular expectations of Am.E speakers noted in chapter 1 on how Norwegians seem to shy away from compliments, the results are not surprising in light of Fretheim's (1990) observation that Norwegians are very appreciative c.f. chapter 2.3.3. The higher tendency for selecting a simple appreciation token as the sole compliment response strategy amongst Norwegian EFL learners would imply that there is in fact some degree of pragmatic transfer from their Norwegian L1. An interesting observation in the data I analyzed relates to the effect interaction with English speaking friends has on the learner's pragmatic



competence. The overall compliment response strategies used by the group claiming interaction with native English speakers, shown in figure 18, would indicate that their increased exposure has had a positive effect on the rate of their pragmatic competence acquisition. This positive effect was also shown by respondents who frequently watched English movies and television, though not as the same rate as the respondents who claimed daily interaction with native English speakers. This observation is also strengthened when comparing the idiomaticity of their FTA realizations to the Am.E control group shown in chapter 5.4. These respondents showed a higher degree of illocutionary competence than the respondents who claimed no interaction with native English speakers. One additional observation that is of great interest is that almost none of the respondents opted out of responding to the compliment, with only 2 occurrences of in total 260 responses gathered from the EFL learners.

Another interesting observation is that the four variables outlined in chapter 3.2 that were used as a foundation each situation seem to have had little effect on the compliment responses provided by the Norwegian EFL respondents. The results presented in chapter 4 showed a general preference for agreement strategies, such as appreciation tokens and comment acceptance, regardless of whether the compliment was a social lubricant to raise solidarity between interlocutors, or if the compliment was made on an achievement or ability of the recipient. There were also few differences in the compliment response patterns relative to the social distance between H and S. These results disconfirm my hypothesis that these variables would prompt disagreement strategies from the Norwegian EFL learners where social distance was an issue, and where the compliment was made on the abilities of the recipient. On the other hand, gender seems to influence the compliment response in certain situations, particularly those where the respondents replied to their imagined crush in situations 7 and 8. When looking at the sum of all compliment responses separated by gender in figure 19 however, the results given are strikingly similar between the two genders amongst the learners, in contrast to the Am.E control group where there are some differences. This would go over well with Fretheim's observation that Norwegians are very egalitarian (Fretheim, 2005, 145) as they would pay little attention to gender. On the other hand the lack of a difference between genders could also be a weakness of the DCT as a method as nonverbal behavior and intonation patterns could represent some difference. Further testing would have to be made by use of other methods, such as role plays, to provide a definite answer as per Rose and Ono (Rose and Ono, 1995, 197). The seemingly similar gender responses from the

learners do not follow the pattern of either my Am.E control group, or the results in Herbert's 1990 study or Holmes' 1995 study. Lack of gender effect on the compliment responses indicate pragmatic failure by the EFL learners which again could be traced to pragmatic transfer from the L1.

## **6.2 Implications, limitations and suggestions for further study**

Testing speech acts or FTA's in particular can be done with in many ways with one or more goals in mind. This thesis has attempted to show tendencies amongst Norwegian EFL learners' responses to compliments when communicating in English for use in SLA research. This research is interesting both to researchers attempting to get a deeper understanding of the pragmatic knowledge amongst Norwegian EFL learners, and for researchers attempting to form a pedagogical tool for teaching pragmatic competence in a foreign language classroom. Quite a few studies have been performed on the positive effect of teaching pragmatic competence, both on the short term (Félix-Brasfeder & Hasler-Barker, 2012) and the long term (Taguchi, 2012). In particular Félix-Brasfeder & Hasler-Barker's 2012 study "Complimenting and Responding to a compliment in the Spanish FL Classroom" presents several classroom exercises that have a seemingly great effect on language acquisition in their students.

A concern has to be raised on the matter of the size of the control group for this thesis, as well as the lack of a suitable Norwegian L1 comparison. Due to time constraints I chose to focus my comparison on gender, and on differences between EFL learners' speech act realizations and those made by native speakers of the target language. Within the limited time at my disposal I was not able to assemble responses from more than five native Am.E speakers from a very homogenous area.

I made the conscious choice due to the time available to me of not including a translated Norwegian section of my DCT. I would like to include a Norwegian comparison in further research to allow for a valuable comparison between speech act realizations made by the learners in both English and Norwegian. By making this comparison I could provide conclusive proof of L1 pragmatic transfer. Due to the limitations in the present study however, I have not given any conclusive answers. I have instead shown several tendencies

which I believe to be important, highly interesting and I invite further research being made into this subject in order to give conclusive answers to the research question because of a severe lack of research performed on pragmatic competence in Norwegian EFL learners. I would also like to invite further research to be made on the variables of foreign language influence and respondents' age, gender etc. outlined in chapter 3.3.2. Knowledge of what variables influence the respondents made from the EFL learners could help researchers create pedagogical tools for use in the foreign language classroom. Additional research can also be made on testing for other variables such as the effect of living abroad on one's pragmatic competence and longitudinal research tracing the effect of different media such as the internet on a language learner's pragmatic competence.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1: First version of the DCT

### Instructions

First of all: Thank you for your willingness to participate in this questionnaire.

The questionnaire is structured into two parts. The first part is a questionnaire with a list with ten imagined situations where you are receiving a compliment.

Try to imagine yourself in the situation, and write down what would be your immediate, intuitive response in English. Try not to spend any more than one minute on each situation. You should also not go back to change any previous answers as there are no right or wrong answers to the situations. For the purpose of this questionnaire I am not concerned with your spelling, and any spelling mistakes will not influence my analysis of your response.

The second part is a learner's profile. This survey is anonymous, but the personal information gathered in the first part will be very valuable to analyzing your answers.

Thank you for your assistance by completing this questionnaire.

Torgrim Talleraas

1: How would you respond to your female friend in the following situation?

You are going to the end-of-school prom, and are trying to dress up as nicely as you can. You choose the finest suit/dress you own and spend a lot of time trying to look nice. When you get to the prom, you recognize one of your female friends approach her. As you come up to her, she says: "I really like your outfit. You look sharp!"

---

2: How would you respond to your female teacher in the following situation?

You have been struggling at school lately, and your teacher has been trying to help improve on your grades. After a long period of study and late nights, your hard work pays off and you get a top grade on your latest test. Your teacher approaches you, saying: "You did real good work! I'm proud of you."

---

3: How would you respond to your male friend in the following situation?

After a summer filled with barbecues and dinner parties you have gotten a bit out of shape. You have started going back to the gym and are starting to see some great results. As you approach your friends at school one day, one of your male friends says: "Wow, you look good. Have you been working out?"

---

4: How would you respond to your father in the following situation?

It is Saturday morning on the first week of fall break, and you and your friends have a great weekend ahead of you. So you are in a really good mood. As you head to the kitchen to eat breakfast with your family, your father looks at you and says: "You look really cheerful today."

---

5: How would you respond to your mother in the following situation

You are making dinner at home for your family and make up the recipe as you go. While eating together your mother exclaims: "Wow, this is really good! You must give me the recipe for later!"

---

6: How would you respond to your female friend in the following situation?

You are walking down the street with your new boy/girlfriend. On the way you meet a male friend you haven't seen for years. You and your old friend start talking about the adventures you once had, while your boy/girlfriend asks if (s)he can check out the store across the street. As (s)he leaves, your female friend exclaims: "I really like your new boy/girlfriend. (S)he seems nice"

---

7: How would you respond to your crush in the following situation?

You put on an old shirt you found in the back of your closet one morning. You meet some friends on the way to school and the person you have a crush on is with them. The person you have a crush on compliments you, saying: "I really like your new shirt, you look nice."

---

8: How would you respond to crush in the following situation?

You have recently gotten together with your crush, and you are taking him/her home to meet your parents. You are really nervous before they meet, but the meeting goes well, and you have a pleasant dinner together. After dinner, you go to your room to watch a movie, as your crush says: "You have such a nice family, I really like them."

---

9: How would you respond to your male friend in the following situation?

You have been learning how to play the guitar for the last six months and have gotten quite good. You are hanging out with some friends one afternoon, and one of your male friends who plays in a band asks you to play a tune for them. You accept, play them a song. Your friends applaud you, and the male friend who asked you to play says: "That was really nice, you've gotten quite good."

---

10: How would you respond to your male manager in the following situation?

You work at a store and have been asked to sort the products that you sell. You wish to impress your manager and create an easy sorting system that displays the products optimally. Your manager approaches you, looking impressed as he says: "This is a nice piece of work. Well done."

---

I hereby give permission for my answers to be used in scientific research. (Sign with X)

---

## Learners Profile

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother tongue (first language): \_\_\_\_\_

Father's mother tongue (first language): \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's mother tongue (first language): \_\_\_\_\_

Do you speak any other languages beyond Norwegian and English: Yes/No

If yes, which? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how often do you use that language? \_\_\_\_\_

Daily/weekly/rarely

Where do you use that language? (Family/school/friends?) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever lived in an English speaking country (More than four months): Yes/No

If yes, which? \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions are used to see how often you are exposed to English through different media.

I watch English movies/television with Norwegian subtitles

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

I watch English movies/television with English subtitles?

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

I use English on the Internet

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

I read English Books, Magazines or Comics

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

I communicate with International friends in English

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 2: Second version of the DCT Instructions**

First of all: Thank you for your willingness to participate in this questionnaire.

The questionnaire is structured into two parts. The first part is a questionnaire with a list with ten imagined situations where you are receiving a compliment.

Try to imagine yourself in the situation, and write down what would be your immediate, intuitive response in English. Try not to spend any more than one minute on each situation. You should also not go back to change any previous answers as there are no right or wrong answers to the situations. For the purpose of this questionnaire I am not concerned with your spelling, and any spelling mistakes will not influence my analysis of your response.

The second part is a learner's profile. This survey is anonymous, but the personal information gathered in the first part will be very valuable to analyzing your answers.

Thank you for your assistance by completing this questionnaire.

Torgrim Talleraas

1: How would you respond to your mother in the following situation

You are making dinner at home for your family and make up the recipe as you go. While eating together your mother exclaims: "Wow, this is really good! You must give me the recipe for later!"

---

2: How would you respond to your crush in the following situation?

You put on an old shirt you found in the back of your closet one morning. You meet some friends on the way to school and the person you have a crush on is with them. The person you have a crush on compliments you, saying: "I really like your new shirt, you look nice."

---

3: How would you respond to your male friend in the following situation?

After a summer filled with barbecues and dinner parties you have gotten a bit out of shape. You have started going back to the gym and are starting to see some great results. As you approach your friends at school one day, one of your male friends says: "Wow, you look good. Have you been working out?"

---

4: How would you respond to your female friend in the following situation?

You are walking down the street with your new boy/girlfriend. On the way you meet a male friend you haven't seen for years. You and your old friend start talking about the adventures you once had, while your boy/girlfriend asks if (s)he can check out the store across the street. As (s)he leaves, your female friend exclaims: "I really like your new boy/girlfriend. (S)he seems nice"

---

5: How would you respond to your male manager in the following situation?

You work at a store and have been asked to sort the products that you sell. You wish to impress your manager and create an easy sorting system that displays the products optimally. Your manager approaches you, looking impressed as he says: "This is a nice piece of work. Well done."

---

6: How would you respond to crush in the following situation?

You have recently gotten together with your crush, and you are taking him/her home to meet your parents. You are really nervous before they meet, but the meeting goes well, and you have a pleasant dinner together. After dinner, you go to your room to watch a movie, as your crush says: "You have such a nice family, I really like them."

---

7: How would you respond to your female friend in the following situation?

You are going to the end-of-school prom, and are trying to dress up as nicely as you can. You choose the finest suit/dress you own and spend a lot of time trying to look nice. When you get to the prom, you recognize one of your female friends approach her. As you come up to her, she says: "I really like your outfit. You look sharp!"

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8: How would you respond to your father in the following situation?

It is Saturday morning on the first week of fall break, and you and your friends have a great weekend ahead of you. So you are in a really good mood. As you head to the kitchen to eat breakfast with your family, your father looks at you and says: "You look really cheerful today."

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9: How would you respond to the male in the following situation?

You have been learning how to play the guitar for the last six months and have gotten quite good. You are hanging out with some friends one afternoon, and one of your male friends who plays in a band asks you to play a tune for them. You accept, play them a song. Your friends applaud you, and the male friend who asked you to play says: "That was really nice, you've gotten quite good."

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10: How would you respond to your female teacher in the following situation?

You have been struggling at school lately, and your teacher has been trying to help improve on your grades. After a long period of study and late nights, your hard work pays off and you get a top grade on your latest test. Your teacher approaches you, saying: "You did real good work! I'm proud of you."

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I hereby give permission for my answers to be used in scientific research. (Sign with X)

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## Learners Profile

Age:

Gender:

Mother tongue (first language):

Father's mother tongue (first language):

Mother's mother tongue (first language):

Do you speak any other languages beyond Norwegian and English: Yes/No

If yes, which? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how often do you use that language? Daily/weekly/rarely

Where do you use that language? (Family/school/friends?) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever lived in an English speaking country (More than four months): Yes/No

If yes, which? \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions are used to see how often you are exposed to English through different media.

I watch English movies/television with Norwegian subtitles

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

I watch English movies/television with English subtitles?

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

I use English on the Internet

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

I read English Books, Magazines or Comics

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_

I communicate with International friends in English

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly \_\_\_\_\_



### **Appendix 3: Compliment responses elicited by the DCT**

Each response is listed by situation and by version of the DCT received. 1A – 1M received the first version of the DCT. 2A – 2M received the second version. 1A is the same respondent throughout each situation.

## Situation 1

- 1A Thank you, so do you!
- 1B Thanks a lot, I really worked hard on this outfit.
- 1C "Thank, you. You look great too".
- 1D I would smile and say thanks, the samme.
- 1E Thank you! You too.
- 1F "Well, thank you. I like your dress too."
- 1G Thank you, you look really nice too.
- 1H Thank you! It means alot. I like your dress.
- 1I thanks, you too! ☺
- 1J Thank you, you look nice as well
- 1K Thanks, you too.
- 1L Thank you, you are fine too
- 1M Well, thank you. You are beautiful tonight.
- 2A I would answer that by complemating her even better.
- 2B Thak you
- 2C "Thank you. You look great too."
- 2D Oh, thanks you look very nice as well.
- 2E I would smile, and give her a hug
- 2F "Thanks. I spent a lot of time getting styled"
- 2G Smile, and say the same to her/he.
- 2H "Thanks, you look really nice yourself".
- 2I Thank you, you don't look so bad yourself!"
- 2J "Thank you, so do you."
- 2K "You too."
- 2L I hope so, after all these hours of preparing, ha ha. Nah, I'm kidding, thank you.
- 2M I would thank her and give her a compliment as well

## Situation 2

- 1A I would say it ment a lot and that I've really worked for the grade.
- 1B Thank you for your help, without you I wouldn't have done the test that well.
- 1C Thank you so much, I'm so proud of myself right now.
- 1D I would say thank you and said it was because of her.
- 1E Thank you for the help, I'd really worked hard.
- 1F "Thanks, I couldn't have done it without you."
- 1G Thank you, I am proud of my self too.
- 1H Well thank you. I really worked hard for this.
- 1I thanks, I have studied a lot lately, so I'm very happy \*jumping in joy\*
- 1J Thanks for the help teacher, I worked really hard on this
- 1K Thank you I've been working really hard
- 1L Thank you I will work harder from now
- 1M Thank you, it mean a' lot to me.
- 2A I would be very happy and thank her alot.
- 2B Thanks.
- 2C "Thank you."
- 2D Thanks. It means a lot to me.
- 2E I would laugh and smile
- 2F "Thank you. I've been working hard lately"
- 2G thank you, I have work hard
- 2H "Thank you! I'm really proud of myself too. I've been working hard for this."
- 2I "Thanks, I've been trying my best"
- 2J I woul get more motivated and say "I couldn't do this without you"
- 2K "I'm proud myself". "Thanks for all the help".
- 2L Hard work and effort, hard work and effort.
- 2M Thank you, but i had'nt managed it without you.

### Situation 3

- 1A "Yes actually, I have! Thanks for noticing."
- 1B Yes, I have. Thank you for noticing! It means a lot to me
- 1C Yeah, but I do not look great afther my opinion.
- 1D I would say thanks and that I had worked out.
- 1E Yes, thanks!
- 1F "Thanks mate, and yes I have been working out alot."
- 1G Yes, of course I've been working out.
- 1H Yes I have actually, thank you for noticing!
- 1I wow, you noticed! ☺
- 1J yes, a bit too much food during the summer I'm afraid. I had to get back into shape
- 1K Acually yes.
- 1L ---
- 1M Yes, I have actually. Thanks for noticing.
- 2A I would tell my friend that I had. I be too proued the rest of the day.
- 2B yeah, thanks
- 2C "Thank you. No, I have not. Haha!"
- 2D Yes, I have spend a lot time at the gym recently-
- 2E yes I have, but I am not in shape yet
- 2F "Thanks. Yeah, a little"
- 2G It would give me motivation to work out more, because he notised it.
- 2H "Yes! I actually have been working out".
- 2I "Yeah, in fact I have!" with a smile
- 2J I would be really happy, and said "yes, thank you"
- 2K "Thank you. Yes I have been working out."
- 2L Yeah, I had to get back in shape after the summer bbqs and stuff
- 2M "yes, i have been working out".

## Situation 4

- 1A I would say it's because I'm looking forward to spend the weekend with my friends
- 1B Thanks dad, I'm having a good day!
- 1C I know! I just feel great today.
- 1D I would say that I am and just smile.
- 1E -----
- 1F "Yeah, because I'm in such a good mood."
- 1G Yeah! It's because of the break.
- 1H Yeah I'm really looking forward to this weekend.
- 1I Yeah, I'm gonna meet up with my friends after breakfast.
- 1J Well, I have a lot to be cheerful about. It's fall break!
- 1K Ofcourse its fall break!
- 1L I have a good day
- 1M Don't I always look cheerful?
- 2A I would agree, but not much more.
- 2B you know
- 2C "haha."
- 2D I bet I do
- 2E ah, thank you dad, you look cheerful to.
- 2F "Yeah, I am"
- 2G yes, I had a good weekend.
- 2H "Yes I am, it's finally fall break and I can't wait to go out to play with my friends"
- 2I "I am!" With a smile and a giggle
- 2J I would smile even more and say "I know"
- 2K "Well ok". Fee a bit weird.
- 2L I have big plans with my friends for the weekend ☺
- 2M "Yes I am, looking forward to a great weekend."

## Situation 5

- 1A "Haha, of course!"
- 1B I appreciate that, It's good to know that you liked it.
- 1C Thank you mum, but the recipe is mine.
- 1D I would look surprised and say thanks, sure
- 1E Thank you mom, I give you it after dinner.
- 1F "Sure thing. It's really simple."
- 1G Thank you, but the recipe is improvised and I don't remember it
- 1H I really just made up the recipe as I was cooking, but I'll try remember it for you, thanks by the way!
- 1I eh ... well, it's great that you like it, but I don't have any recipe for it. I just tried something
- 1J Why thank you. The problem is that I made it up on the go though
- 1K Thank you, but the recipe is in my head
- 1L The recipe is in the kitchen
- 1M Thank you, I tried just to put some things together.
- 2A I would thank my mother, and tell what I did.
- 2B Um, sure.
- 2C "Oh, thank you! I can give you the recipe later."
- 2D Yes, I will.
- 2E ofcourse you can get the recipe
- 2F "Thank you. It was an experiment"
- 2G that, I don't have the recipe. and be happy because she like it.
- 2H "Thank you mum. The recipe is from the book I got at school in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade."
- 2I Well, let's make it together next time and I'll show you
- 2J I would smile and say thank you
- 2K I would say that I can't remember. Be straight forward with her.
- 2L I made this up, there is no recipe.
- 2M I would have thanked my mother and given her the recipe

## Situation 6

- 1A I would have said that I also like him, and that he is nice ☺
- 1B Yes, he really is! It was nice to meet you again
- 1C Yeah I know, he is really nice. He makes me so happy.
- 1D I would say that I agree
- 1E Yeah he's a great guy.
- 1F "Yeah, isn't she just the sweetest thing?"
- 1G I know, isn't she the best?
- 1H I'm glad you think that, because I really like her.
- 1I yeah, I think so too. ☺
- 1J I really like her too
- 1K Yea, I like him too
- 1L I like here too.
- 1M Thank you, he is.
- 2A I would smile proued and tell all what's good about her.
- 2B yeah, he really is
- 2C "Thank you. I know, he is."
- 2D Thank you
- 2E I'ts good that you like him. I like him to
- 2F "Uhm, yeah. He is"
- 2G happy that they maybe be friends too.
- 2H "Really? I think so too."
- 2I Yeah, she's nice.
- 2J I would say "yeah, I know, he's perfect"
- 2K "Yes, she really is nice." Feel proud of my girlfriend.
- 2L Thanks, I really love her
- 2M you are not the first saying that, but thanks.

## Situation 7

- 1A I wouldn't mentioned it was old and just go with the flo and said "thanks I really like yours too!"
- 1B Thank you, it's old though. You look nice as well.
- 1C (Blush) Thanks, but It is just an old shirt from my closet
- 1D I think I would probably blush a littel and say thanks.
- 1E Just an old one, but thank you!
- 1F "Oh its just an old shirt, but thank you."
- 1G Thank you (with blushing)
- 1H Thank you! It's not new though I found it in the back of my closet.
- 1I This? Oh thanks. It's not new, though
- 1J Thank you very much
- 1K Oh thanks! But its old
- 1L Ooh its old, but thanks
- 1M Thank you, I just bought it yesterday.
- 2A I would smile kind of creepy and say "thanks"
- 2B Thanks, it's old.
- 2C "Thank you"
- 2D Thank you
- 2E I would say thank you and smile
- 2F "Thanks"
- 2G I would probably blush and think it was nice he/ she notised it.
- 2H "Ha ha ha (giving an awkward laugh). Thank you."
- 2I "Thank you!" Probably with a smile on my face
- 2J I would blush and smile
- 2K "Oh, it's not new, it's old." Probably blush as well.
- 2L Really? That surprises me, I'm not really a fan of this shirt.
- 2M I would have said Thank you with a big smile at my face



## Situation 8

- 1A “Well, thank you. Your family is probably very nice too!”
- 1B It means a lot to me that you liked them. I was kind of nervous about you meeting them
- 1C It’s only because you are here
- 1D I would say great, and I would smile to her.
- 1E Thanks, I have to see yours sometime.
- 1F “Phew ... They can be really annoying sometimes.”
- 1G Yeah, you know I raised them well.
- 1H I’m really happy to hear that.
- 1I you do? That’s great! ‘cause my sister is gonna stalk us. \*said in a funny way\*
- 1J I’m sure they really liked you as well
- 1K No, they where not as crazy as normal
- 1L Thank you
- 1M Thank you, it mean a lot to me that you are saying it.
- 2A I would meet her compliment and say “They really like you too”
- 2B That’s good I was afraid you wouldn’t
- 2C Thank you. It seemed like they like you too.”
- 2D Thanks, I like yours too
- 2E that is good to hear.
- 2F “Thanks. They clearly like you too.”
- 2G good that they like each other.
- 2H “Thank you! I’m sure your family is nice too.”
- 2I I would smile
- 2J “oh, but you haven’t seen them when they are weird”
- 2K Tries to be funny. “At least someone does.”
- 2l They might be nice now, but they can be harsh at times, ha ha ha
- 2M I am glad hearing you saying it, it means a lot to me.

## Situation 9

- 1A “You think so? Well, I am still learning, but thanks!”
- 1B I’ve been playing for a while, the exercise was worth it, I guess
- 1C I’m not shure of that, but thanks anyvay
- 1D I would say thanks. I have been working really hard.
- 1E I’ve practiced a lot, thank you.
- 1F “Thanks dud. I think that I really got the hang of it now.”
- 1G Thank you. I have practiced alot
- 1H Thank you! I’ve worked hard.
- 1I thanks, I’ve been practicing.
- 1J Thank you, I’ve practiced a lot
- 1K Thanks. I have been playing for six months now.
- 1L Thank you. I have only played six months
- 1M Practise makes perfect you know.
- 2A I would make them belive I was even better than I was.
- 2B Thank you
- 2C “Have I? Well, thank you.”
- 2D Thanks, I have been practising guitar for half a year now.
- 2E thank you, that is nice to hear
- 2F “Thanks a lot. I’ve been practicing for months”
- 2G thank you
- 2H “No way! I’m not that good.”
- 2I Thanks! But not quite as good as you yet
- 2J “thank you, play something for me too”
- 2K “Thanks.” Fee proud and play guitar when I got home.
- 2L You think? Thank you!
- 2M I would have appreciated the good critics and say thank you

## Situation 10

- 1A “thank you.”
- 1B Thank you. I did it to improve you.
- 1C Thank you boss.
- 1D I would say thank you and become really happy
- 1E Thanks.
- 1F “Thanks, boss.”
- 1G Thank you. I am proud of this
- 1H (I would’ve just nodded as a thank you)
- 1I You liked it? Thanks! ☺
- 1J Thank you, sir
- 1K Thank you, it means a lot
- 1L I had a idea and I followed it.
- 1M Well thank you.
- 2A I would thank my manager and kept working
- 2B Thank you
- 2C “Thank you so much!”
- 2D Thank you
- 2E oh, thank you! I’ts my job and I like it very much
- 2F “Thank you. What do you want me to do now?”
- 2G happy because he like it.
- 2H “Thank you! I spent a lot of time on this so I could impress you.”
- 2I “Thank you, sir!”
- 2J “thank you very much.”
- 2K “Thanks.”
- 2L You know: “Everything for a better buissnes
- 2M I would have said thank you with a little proud smile at my face.