

## The pattern of compliments in Instagram photo comments

Indah, Rohmani Nur ✉

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia ([indah@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id](mailto:indah@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id))

Rifana, Nur Fatikh

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia ([fatikhrifana@gmail.com](mailto:fatikhrifana@gmail.com))



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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the pattern of both compliment and its responses on topic of skill or ability used in Instagram. The purpose of this study is to explore the complimenting pattern of Igers (Instagram users) as well as the way they respond complimenting in online context. For the analysis, this study employs Manes and Wolfson's theory (1981) of compliment form to identify the syntactic pattern of the compliments. In figuring out the type of compliment responses of Igers, it applies Herbert's (1989) theory of compliment responses taxonomy. The finding revealed that Igers' compliments on skill or ability in Instagram are mostly short, characterized by the use of minimal syntactic pattern with the dominant use of adjectives rather than verbs. In addition, most Igers show acceptance strategy by applying appreciation token and comment acceptance.

**Keywords:** compliment; compliment response; syntactic pattern; Instagram; Igers

## The pattern of compliments in Instagram photo comments

### 1. Introduction

Over the last two years, according to the survey of Global Web Index Summary in January 2016, Instagram (IG) has grown to be one of world's most popular social networking sites which are actively used after Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This phenomenon, therefore, shows that in today's world people are continually finding and adapting into new ways of communicating, in this case virtual communication (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). IG offers a platform for communicating that allows its users or Igers (Instagramers) to upload, display, and share photos and videos as well as giving responses on one another's posted photos which then are commented or given compliments by others.

Holmes (2013) describes compliments as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' which is "positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (p. 485). While compliment responses (CRs) according to Herbert (1990) are utterances that are used to respond another utterance that refers to something which is positively valued by participants and attributed to addressee (as cited in Tiono & Nova, 2007).

This study explores Manes and Wolfson's theory (1981, cited in Ishihara, 2003) in exploring compliments. They stated that the way people giving compliments are generally formulaic in both their meaning and form, since particular verbs, syntactic forms and adjectives, which describe positive evaluation, are often used. In attempt to analyze the responses of the Igers, the researchers explore Herbert's (1986, cited in Falasi, 2007) taxonomy of compliment responses. He modified the CRs categories introduced by the pilot researchers, Pomerantz in 1978.

Further, the compliments and responses observed in this study are taken from IG that is asynchronous which means there is no immediate response between the interactants is expected, since in this environment, interactants are online in the different time and spaces (Sahawneh, 2012). On the other hand, in face-to-face interaction, according to Holmes (2013), the hearer is under some pressure to agree with the speaker and accept the compliment. Hence, immediate response is expected in synchronous interaction.

Compliments and compliment responses have been a popular topic of research within various linguistics subfields such as sociolinguistics, second language learning, cross-cultural pragmatics etc. Among those who are interested in exploring this topic is Han (1992) who carried out research contrasting Korean females complimenting behavior in Korean interaction and in English interaction. She examined ten Korean female students and eight American female students attending the same university. Through field notes and interview, Han discovered the noticeable differences shown by Korean female depending on the language they used. In Korean interactions, their most common response was to reject by disagreeing the complimenter. Even they accepted the compliments, they were more likely to accept it in the form of downgrading. While in English interactions, they tended to accept the compliments by saying "thanks" or "thank you".

Another research related to the pragmatic transfer was conducted by Falasi (2007). Using Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and interview, he observed the pragmatic transfer occurring in Arabic learners of English and whether they produced target-like compliment response in English. The finding indicated that Arabic (L1) expressions and strategies were sometimes transferred into English (L2). They perceive their norms of humility as universal rather than language specific although native speaker might think that they are being offending and bizarre.

There is also growing body of work in new contexts such as films. One of them is Tiono and Nova (2007) who explored the type of compliments and compliment responses paid by the main female character of the

movie *What Women Want*. The result shows that social status and gender did not constantly influence how female superior character gave compliments. In details, two types of compliments are dominant, compliments on skills/abilities and compliments on personality traits. The responses are in appreciation token, comment history, return, and no acknowledgment.

Concerning gender difference and cross-cultural pragmatics, Shabani and Zeilani (2015) investigated compliment responses strategies used by 30 Persian native speaker and 26 Canadian English speakers. They also examined the effect of gender in responding the compliments. The findings indicated that both speakers mostly accept the compliment. Regarding to the effect of gender, it showed that there is no significant difference between the two groups.

Recently, compliment and CRs in new virtual context has been gaining some interests. Among the works available is research done by Placencia & Lower (2013), who observed complimenting behavior directed at members of one Facebook (FB) network of family and friends in the United States. They examined the preliminary characterization of American English compliment related to form of compliments, object of compliment and the function of compliments. Ten females' FB accounts were observed in order to collect the corpus. It involved 722 FB's user as those 10 photos obtained 1057 compliments and 1346 "likes". The finding shows that compliments in FB are generally formulaic similar to compliments forms in face-to-face interaction on appearance, ability and possession. In addition, they figured out that females tended to give compliments than male. In FB complimenting has contact and rapport-building function. Besides it also functioned as reminder of someone's existence and presence.

Another research in the same platform, FB, was conducted by Choironi (2013) examining the responses paid by the complimentee based on their gender. She elicited the data from FB accounts of two females and two males. The result showed that male's compliments are disagreeing, informative comments, ignore and shift credit. While, CRs used by male are disagreeing utterance, and informative comments. For CRs used by female are appreciation token, disagreeing utterance, return compliments, ignoring, informative comments, shift credit, and request reassure. RCs used by female are appreciation token, agreeing utterance, downgrading utterance, disagreeing utterance, return compliments and informative comments. She also found out that female tends to give accepting CRs for both male and female's compliments. On the other hand, males tend to reject than females do.

Exploring relatively new domain of online environment that is in IG photo comments, this study is attempted to investigate not merely the single speech act of complimenting but include responses to compliment, as Cohen (1998) asserts that compliment and compliment responses is a set of communicative act (cited in Ishihara, 2003). This study is going to find out how Igers give compliment and responses on skills or abilities. In addition, it also observes whether the practice of complimenting in virtual interaction resembles the one occurred in face-to-face interaction.

As Hine (2009, cited in Placencia & Lower, 2013) notes, "studies in the context of the internet are not without difficulty because of the vastness of the internet that makes it challenging to focus and it can thus be difficult to draw the boundaries of one's research". Consequently, this study is restricted to the several limitations. First, this study focuses on analyzing the use of compliment and its responses viewed only from what have been displayed in the photo comments of the selected IG accounts. Therefore, other social characteristics that might influence the complimenting sequence such as social/educational or ethnic backgrounds, age groups, and/or gender will not be taken into account. The concerns of this study are addressed to answer how Igers give compliments and what responses are performed in Instagram photo comments.

This study brings some practical significance. First, for the language learners, this study is intended to give insight about how the interaction in the form of complimenting and responding compliment among Igers are established in an online environment. As mentioned above, the function of compliments is to maintain solidarity in addition to smoothing conversation. Furthermore, by nature, this is a pragmatic attempt to find out the

pragmatic strategies in a specific speech act. Therefore, the results are expected to provide examples for second language (L2) teachers in the context of how to avoid miscommunication in the process of complimenting and responding to reach the purpose of communication.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 *Speech act*

Yule (2010) identifies speech act as the action performed by the speaker with an utterance. According to Austin (1962, cited in Bublitz, 2011) there are three simultaneous acts occur when we say something namely locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. Locutionary is the basic act of utterance or producing a meaningful linguistic expression (act of saying). It refers to what is said. For example the utterance “Would you close the door, please?” the locutionary is the speaker asking the hearer to close the door. Illocutionary act is described as an intended meaning of the speaker or what is speaker expect to do by the hearer. Perlocutionary is the respond of the hearer toward the speaker’s utterance. When speaker say “Would you close the door?” then the perlocutionary act is the hearer will close the door.

Searle (1976) argues that the speech act coincides with the illocutionary act. Therefore, he classifies the illocutionary into assertives, directives, commissives, expressive, and declaration. Assertive refers to statement or expression represents a state of affairs or commits the speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition. Directives exist when a speaker attempts to get the hearer do something. This kind of category are asking, ordering, commanding, requesting, begging, pleading, praying, inviting, and also advising. Commissive concerns to how speaker commits to something or some future course of action. Expressive is specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs in the propositional content. Declarations bring about changes in an institutional state of affairs or in reality.

### 2.2 *Compliments*

Compliment is classified as one type of speech act subsumed under the category of positive politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) mentioned that complimenting conveys agreement, approval, and a sense that the complimenter and complimentee may share similar view (cited in Choironi, 2013). Therefore, one major function of compliment according to Wolfson (1983) is to maintain solidarity among interlocutors shown through admiration or approval (cited in Han, 1992). The topic of compliment, based on Holmes (1986), generally falls into three categories, compliments on appearance, abilities and possessions.

Concerning the form of compliment, Manes and Wolfson (1981) classify the compliments into nine patterns (cited in Ishihara, 2003)

- NP {is, looks} (really) ADJ. (Your blouse is beautiful.)
- I (really) {like, love} NP. (I like your car.)
- PRO is (really) (a) (ADJ) NP. (That’s a nice wall hanging.)
- You V (a) (really) ADJ NP. (You did a good job.)
- You V (NP) (really) ADV. (You really handled that situation well.)
- You have (a) ADJ NP! (You have such beautiful hair!)
- What (a) (ADJ) NP! (What a lovely baby you have!)
- ADJ (NP)! (Nice game!)
- Isn’t NP ADJ? (Isn’t your ring beautiful?)

Compliment responses generally are predictable actions performed by complementee as Huth (2006) called “part of adjacency pair compliment-compliment response” (as cited in Valkova, 2013). Herbert (1990) defines compliment responses as utterances that are used to respond another utterance that refers to something which is positively valued by participants and attributed to addressee.

The pilot study examining compliment responses from pragmatic perspective can be traced back to the works of Pomerantz in 1978. She find out that American in responding to the compliments face dilemma whether they have to agree with the speaker while at the same time they have to avoid self-praise. She then came up with the three strategies to overcome this responding compliment dilemma namely acceptance, rejection and self-praise avoidance. Herbert's (1986, cited in Falasi, 2007) listed taxonomy of compliment responses as follow:

- *Appreciation token*; it conveys the meaning of acceptance of the compliment whether it is verbal or nonverbal. The addressee answers by using a gesture such as nodding head or saying "thank you", for example, "Thanks", "Thank you", [nod].
- *Comment acceptance*; the addressee accepts the complimentary force and offers a relevant comment on the appreciated topic, for example, "Yeah, it's my favorite too."
- *Praise upgrade*; the addressee accepts the compliments and asserts that the compliment force is insufficient, for example, "Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn't it?"
- *Comment history*; the addressee offers a comment (or series of comments) on the object complimented, but the comment is shifted the force of the compliment from the addressee, for example: "I bought it for the trip to Arizona"
- *Reassignment*; the addressee agrees with the compliment assertion, but the complimentary force is transferred to some third person or to the object itself, for example, "My brother gave it to me", "It really knitted itself"
- *Return*; the compliment is shifted (or returned) to the first speaker, for example, "So's yours"
- *Scale down*; the addressee disagrees with the complimentary force, pointing to some flaw in the object or claiming that the praise is over stated, for example: "It's really quite old"
- *Questioning*; the addressee questions the sincerity or the appropriateness of the compliment, for example, "Do you really like them?"
- *Disagreement*; the addressee asserts that the object complimented is not worthy of praise, the first speaker's assertion is error, for example: "You look good and healthy"-- "I feel fat"
- *Qualification*; the addressee merely qualifies the original assertion, such as, but, well, though, and the use of than in order to show degree of comparison, for example, "It's all right, but Len's is nicer"
- *No acknowledgement / ignore*; the addressee gives no indication of having heard the compliment: the addressee either responds with an irrelevant comment or gives no response. Addressee can shift topic or keep quiet, for example: "You did a good job!" -- [No response]
- *Request interpretation*; the addressee, consciously or not, interprets the compliments as a request rather than a simple compliment, for example, "You wanna borrow this one too?"

### 2.3 Instagram as a Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

Instagram is mobile photo and video sharing as well as social networking service that enable the users to take photos and videos, and share them on a variety of social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. This application is also equipped with other features such as Direct Message (DM), in which the user will be able to share their photo or videos only with people they want to share with, and photo filters. Released in October 6, 2010, IG is created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Ever since it is made into public, the popularity of IG has increased, mainly for the last two years. According to the survey of Global Web Index

Summary in January 2016, IG has grown to be one of world's most popular social networking sites (SNSs) which is actively used after Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube (Chaffey, 2016). This is because SNSs today becomes more inseparable to youth lives as it offer some benefits such as online community building and defining user's identity (Kayane & Msiska, 2016).

IG's growing popularity has been made possible cannot be detached from the developments of technologies. Not to mention the growing connection of internet that becomes fast, reliable, and widely accessible for the past 10-15 years (Placencia & Lowel, 2013). Therefore many users have consistent access of IG. This indirectly shows that in today's world people are continually finding and adapting into new ways of communicating, in this case virtual communication (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). Like other SNSs who connect people, Igers will also able to connect with other Igers by 'follow' their account and they can use their list of connections to connect with other Igers. As Boyd and Ellison (2008, cited in Placencia and Lowel, 2013) state the basic function of SNSs is to connect people through some point in common. Through such social media the shared interest can be in the form of exploring art work, scientific discussion, conducting polling or distributing questionnaires (Valli, 2017) or conversing hobbies related to specific skills or abilities. When the shared interest are shown in the form of visual representation, Igers usually use particular hashtag to find their interest of related photos and videos. In IG people can interact through photo comments and direct message. The difference is that in photo comment, their interaction is visible to other Igers to see, unless they make their account private. While in direct message, Igers are able to interact with specific user they want to chat with.

As photo-initiated interaction platform, IG's written interaction occurs in comment usually, as Morrow (2006) called as "a hybrid of spoken and written language", uses informal language as in other online environments (cited in Placencia & Lower, 2011). Moreover, to recreate paralinguistic features of speech production, Igers employ what Yus (2010) refers as textual deformation which includes the use of capital letters for full words and the repetition of characters that communicate strength of feeling. Also the use of emoticons representing different facial expressions or smiley faces or hearts can communicate something about the tone of the exchange (cited in Placencia & Lower, 2011, p. 621). Thus, Instagram as means to explore the way language is deployed in SNSs is worth to explore since it enables the user to interact in such way that "more resemble" face-to-face interaction by the use of those textual deformation.

### **3. Method**

The goal of this study is to gain insight, that is exploring the depth, richness, and complexity inherent in the phenomenon (Cresswell, 2007), that is complimenting and responding occurred in social networking sites, IG. Therefore, this study is included into descriptive qualitative study without giving any intervention in the process therefore it depends on the observation which occurs naturally (Creswell, 2007). The compliments and responses are described using pragmatic approach. According to Shabani and Zeinali (2015) compliments are one type of speech acts which are subsumed under the category of positive politeness. Finally in illustrating compliments, the analysis is based on Wolfson and Manes's theory (1981) while the compliment responses are based on Herbert's theory (1986).

As Hine (2009, cited in Placencia & Lower, 2013) notes, "studies in the context of the internet are not without difficulty because of the vastness of the internet that makes it challenging to focus and it can thus be difficult to draw the boundaries of one's research" and this study was no exception. Consequently, in order to keep data manageable, this study is restricted to the several limitations. First, this study focuses on analyzing the use of compliment and its responses viewed only from what have been displayed in the photo comments of the selected IG accounts. Therefore, other social characteristics that might influence the complimenting sequence such as social/educational or ethnic backgrounds, age groups, and/or gender will not be taken into account.

Second, the data being analyzed only in the form of word, word phrase or sentence. Third, the photos being observed are those which related to the compliment topic of ability only. As Wolfson (1983, cited in Furko &

Dudas, 2012) found that ability and appearance are generally two topics that are utilized in everyday conversation. Fourth, the data are the photos uploaded in February 2016. The photos chosen are the one that has the most comments among photos uploaded by the each selected Iger in that period.

#### 4. Results

Complimenting in IG involves various syntactical forms and use of verbs and adjectives. Furthermore, in responding the compliment, six out of twelve types compliment were found in the data. Regarding the context of complimenting, there were four skills observed namely the ability in making origami, writing poem, drawing animal and capturing landscape.

The first skill to analyze is taken from an account in which the owner is an origami, particularly crane, maker. What makes his posts unique is that his ability to not only making cranes but also transforming them into different-like-form by decorating it. He uploaded the photo of crane decorated in frozen ice. To support his post, he also provided caption, along with various hashtags. The analysis of comments taken from this photo is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Complimenting Forms and Types of Responses on Making Origami*

Compliments	Syntactic Patterns	Compliment Responses	Types
<i>Lost you with the text but he's magical, hoarfrost on the wires and sparkly snowflakes ...I dream away [C1]</i>	VP {with} NP PRO {is} ADJ NP {I} VP	<i>Hehe, yes, text is a bit cryptic today...felt like having a "proper" journal entry [CR1] (emoticon)</i> <i>@Iger5.Thanks!^^ [CR2]</i>	Appreciation token
<i>Excellent! @Iger1[C2]</i> <i>Stunning (emoticon) [C9]</i> <i>@iger1 beautiful dream...I love it [C3]</i>	ADJ! ADJ NP {I} V PRO	<i>Thank you very much [CR3]</i> <i>@iger6 ! (emoticon)</i> <i>Thanks @iger7 (emoticon) [CR4]</i>	Appreciation token Appreciation token
<i>Ah... This is the night dance [C4]</i>	(Ah) PRO {is} NP	<i>Creatures of the night, most definitely! @iger8 Hair glistening in the moonlight [CR5]</i>	Praise upgrade
<i>Perfect for February. I used to live in the Snow Belt in Ohio and we had the most beautiful ice storms. Lively memory. (emoticon) [C6]</i>	ADJ {prep} N	<i>Hehe, true!@iger10 I love it when they bring up memories – and this one definitely has an icy presence! ^^ [CR7]</i>	Praise upgrade
<i>Well done! It looks just like ice covered tree branches (emoticon) [C7]</i>	ADJ! NP {looks} (like) NP V NP	<i>Experimenting with unusual materials is paying off for sure [CR8] @iger11! Thanks very much [CR9]! ^^</i>	Comment history Appreciation token
<i>It feels quiet and warm. [C8]</i>	PRO V ADJ.P	<i>It is a bit of a paradox, both warm and cold at the same time [CR10]</i> <i>@iger12! I did not really intend for it to exude either one, but I am glad it is having an effect! [CR11] (emoticon)</i>	Comment acceptance Comment history
<i>Wow. This has an ethereal feel to it.</i>	(Wow) PRO V NP (to) PRO	<i>Thank you [CR12] @iger13! I can tell you that those stands are definitely very fragile! [CR13]</i>	Appreciation token Scale down
<i>Looks frozen! [C10]</i> <i>Goodnight (emoticon)</i> <i>A fountain crane!!! Under the city light! Fantastic shot [C11]</i>	VP ADJ! NP! Prep NP! ADJ N	<i>Hehe, frozen in time at least [CR13]@iger14! Good night! Xx</i> [No response]	Comment acceptance No acknowledgement

The second photo is taken from a poet account when she always posts her works online in her Instagram and its complete version on her blog. Occasionally, she also uploads other's work. To distinguish her work with other, she puts signature on her every work with the 'MG'. In this post, she posted her own work entitled "In Winter Belly". By reading her caption and hashtags, we could assume that she posted that poem because of the season that is winter as the poem was posted on February. The analysis of comments taken from this post is in Table 2.

**Table 2***Complimenting Forms and Types of Responses on Writing Poem*

Compliments	Syntactic Patterns	Compliment Responses	Types
<3 <3 <3 <i>that's gorgeous!</i> [C12]	PRO {is} ADJ!	<i>Thank you!</i> (emoticon)	Appreciation
<i>Beautifully vivid.</i> [C13]	ADV ADJ!	@iger16 @iger17 @iger18	token
<i>heartwarming @iger2</i> [C14]	ADJ		
<i>Sometimes your posts are so stunning that I don't have words to respond; but I drink them in like water.</i> [C15]	(Sometimes) NP (are) INT ADJ	<i>Your words feed my muse</i> [CR16] @iger19	Return
<i>Elegant! Love this!!</i> (emoticon) [C16]	ADJ! V PRO!!	<i>Thank you!</i> [CR17] (emoticon) @iger20	Appreciation token

The owner of the third account analyzed is an artist who has good skill in drawing. He has uploaded more than one hundred of his works in Instagram and those quite popular proved by number of likes that exceed over five hundreds. This post shows his black and white drawing of an owl chasing mouse that 'seems' rested on his finger. A tip of a pencil shows in the corner of picture indicates the tools he used to draw it. In this post he did not write caption. The analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3***Complimenting Forms and Types of Responses on Drawing Animal*

Compliments	Syntactic Patterns	Compliment Responses	Types
<i>so cool</i> [C17]	INT ADJ	@iger21 @iger @iger22 @iger23 <i>thank you</i> [CR18] :)	Appreciation token
(emoticon) <i>you are an idol</i> [C20]	PRO (are) NP	@iger24 <i>really?</i> [CR19] <i>Thank you</i> [CR20] :)	Questioning Appreciation token

The next complimenting post was taken from one account of Iger who has ability on photography. In this post, she showed her skill of natural photography by capturing the view of a path amid trees. She also put caption and hastag to complete her photo. The analysis is in Table 4.

**Table 4***Complimenting Forms and Types of Responses on Capturing Landscape*

Compliments	Syntactic Patterns	Compliment Responses	Types
<i>How lovely</i> [C22]	(How) ADJ	@iger26 @iger @iger @iger	Appreciation
<i>Beautifully captured</i> (emoticon) [C27]	ADV V	@iger31 @iger34 @iger38 @iger @iger <i>Thank you very much!!!</i> [CR22]	token
<i>Beautiful. So green.</i> [C30]	ADJ INT ADJ.P		
<i>So beautiful &amp; lush looking!</i> [C34]	INT ADJ.P ADJ V		
<i>Great shot</i> [C34]			
<i>Awesome Sunday. Great photo</i> [C23]	NP ADJ N	@iger27 <i>Thank you so much!</i> [CR23] <i>It is a beautiful place to walk</i> [CR24]	Appreciation token Comment acceptance
<i>What a fantastic path</i> (emoticon) [C25]	(What) {a} ADJ NP	@iger29 <i>is a favorite place of mine to walk!</i> [CR26] <i>Thank you sweet friend</i> [CR27]	Comment history Appreciation token



**Table 4** ...continued

Compliments	Syntactic Patterns	Compliment Responses	Types
<i>Sounds lovely. Beautiful capture!</i> [C26]	V ADJ ADJ N!	@iger30 <i>It was quite fabulous.</i> [CR28] <i>Thank you very much!!</i> [CR29]	Praise upgrade Appreciation token
<i>Beautiful tradition...love the green!</i> [C36]	ADJ N V NP!	@iger33 @iger40 <i>Thank you my lovely friends!!</i> [CR31]	Appreciation token
<i>Oh! Take me there (emoticon) beautiful (emoticon)</i> [C31]	(Oh!) ADJ	@iger35 <i>I would love for you to join me! Perhaps one day. Thank you dear</i> [CR32]	Comment acceptance Appreciation token
<i>Love the greenness!! Fantastic capture (emoticon)</i> [C32]	V NP! ADJ N	@iger36 <i>That is my favorite part too!</i> [CR33] <i>Thank you very much!</i> [CR34]	Comment acceptance Appreciation token
<i>Incredible dear</i> [C33]	ADJ (dear)	@iger37 <i>Thank you my sweetie!!</i> [CR35]	Appreciation token
<i>Absolutely breathtaking babe</i> [C34]	ADV ADJ (babe)	@iger39 <i>Thank you so much my sweet friend!</i> [CR36]	Appreciation token

## 5. Discussion

The mechanisms of internal and external modification such as the use of capital letters or exclamation (!) mark as well as emoticons for emphasis. As these have been described as characteristic of some computer mediated genres in attempts to “recreate aspects of spoken language through graphic and orthographic means” (Herring, 1996, cited in Placencia & Lower, 201, p. 629).

### 5.1 Adjectives and verbs for complimenting

In conveying the positive evaluation or positive semantic load in complimenting skill or ability, particular verbs –representing verb of liking- and adjectives –representing any semantically positive adjective- are used (Wolfson & Manes, 1981). Thus, the finding of this research reveals that mostly Igers express their positive evaluation by using adjectives rather than verbs.

On the use of adjectives, *beautiful* is the most adjectives applied by Igers in showing their positive evaluation, following by *great* and *lovely*. Other commonly used adjectives such as *good*, *nice*, *stunning* etc. (see appendix 1) also found in the data. This finding is in line with Wolfson and Manes’s (1981) that adjectives like nice, beautiful, good, pretty and great are the most frequent adjectives used in face to face complimenting. Hence, it can be concluded that to reinforce compliment force similar adjectives can be used in both face to face and online contexts. Moreover, it also reveals that Igers use particular adjectives for particular photo. For instance, on the ability of creating unique crane, there are adjectives that are not found in other three photos such as *magical* (datum 1) and *ethereal* (datum 9).

The use of verb for complimenting such as *love* is found in some data accompanied by the use of adjectives for instance in “*beautiful dream...I love it*” (datum3). This finding is also similar to Manes and Wolfson’s (1981). In order to emphasize the positive semantic load of compliment, Igers may also use intensifier such as *so* and *absolutely*, as in datum 14 *so cool* and datum 24 *absolutely breathtaking*. In addition, it also can be reinforced by the use of external modification in the form of emoticon, for instance in datum 11 <3<3<3 *that’s gorgeous!*. Emoticon <3 in online context represents heart or love. Further, in emphasizing, some Igers write the comment by adding extra character or exclamation mark (!) as in C19 (nice) and C32-datum 22 (Love the greenness!!) and even exclamation mark and emoticon such as in C18-datum 2 *Great! (emoticon)*.

The finding of intensifier and emoticon for emphasizing positive semantic load in online compliment found in this research is similar to Placencia and Lower’s (2011) who conducted their research in the same online

context but in different platform that is Facebook (FB). These finding shows that complimenting, in term of intensifier and emoticon using, both in IG and FB is a common practice. Thus, this practice may also occur in other platform of social media such as Twitter, Path etc.

In brief, to realize the compliment force in IG, Igers tend to use adjective rather than verb. As for emphasizing, they use intensifier and emoticon as well as adding extra characters. This way of writing show that one of characteristics in online context is its informality which involves the pragmatic awareness of the speakers. It supports Duan's finding (2011) that the involvement of pragmatic awareness in complimenting context affects the successful interaction. In this case, Igers are aware that they were involved in cross-cultural communication when they express compliments in online setting so that the diction they choose is on the framework of their pragmatic competence.

### 5.2 Syntactical pattern of IG Compliment

Concerning syntactic aspect of complimenting behavior in American English, Manes and Wolfson (1981) formulated nine pattern of complimenting. Among the patterns; some are not found in this study. The first pattern is *How ADJ* "How lovely" in datum 16 that represents an exclamation. This pattern is in line with Placencia and Lower (2011) in their FB data. The second one is in the form *ADV ADJ* that has four occurrences in C13, C22, C27 and C35 as in example "*beautifully vivid.*" The construct of the compliments are short and straightforward which is also found in the compliments expressed through Facebook pages (Masoumzadeh & Ghanadi, 2016).

The most frequent pattern is *ADJ NP* which different from Manes and Wolfson's finding that the dominant pattern is *How ADJ*. Adopting Placencia and Lower's (2011) method in highlighting the variations identified in the data, the following is the analysis of the formed sub-patterns.

- *Pattern 1: NP {is, looks} (really) ADJ.*
- *Pattern 2: I (really) {like, love} NP and I {love} PRO*
- *Pattern 3. PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP and PRO is (really) ADJ!*
- *Pattern 8. ADJ! or ADJ (PREP) N and INT ADJ*

Apart from the pattern of compliment above, C1 shows different syntactic pattern in the sentence: *Lost you with the text but he's magical, hoarfrost on the wires and sparkly snowflakes ..... I dream away.* Similar construct exists in C 4, C7 C8 and C12 referring to the use of indirect or implicit compliment. That direct compliment is used more extensively compared to indirect compliment is also found in British Facebook page compared to Iranian Facebook page (Masoumzadeh & Ghanadi, 2016).

IG compliments resembles face-to-face compliments in American English in terms of their formulation, but it presents certain differences too. These differences can be linked to the informal online characteristics of IG, and other online platforms, in which abbreviated communication is common. Thus, Igers have a tendency to compliment using short comment or as Holmes (2013) called it as "minimal pattern". It goes with the characteristic of IG that is all about photos and videos focusing on visual content that attracts short comments. Moreover, the variation found in the data, including new pattern and the different patterned or "indirect" compliment also indicates that in IG people compliment in various ways unlike in Manes and Wolfson's finding.

### 5.3 Types of Compliment Responses

The finding shows that there are six out of twelve types of compliment responses proposed by Herbert (1998) employed by Igers in responding the compliment on skill. Those are appreciation token, comment acceptance, comment history, return, question, and no acknowledgement. Among those six types, four of them belong to the category of agreement. Moreover, the one that is mostly used is appreciation token type.

Appreciation token are the most response that is used by the Igers who post their best works eliciting positive comments. In appreciation token, complementee answers the compliment by using gesture such as nodding or saying "Thank you" (Herbert, 1989). However, in online context where users interact with means of comment, complementees show their gratitude by accepting and reply to the compliment by typing back "*Thank you*", "*thank you very much*" and other kind of thanks. This is also a similar fact found in the complimenting in Chinese context (Cai, 2012).

The next type that is commonly found in IG is comment acceptance which is also subsumed under the category of agreement. Igers instead of just replying with "*thanks*" usually provided another comment that related to the compliment. For instance in the complimenting sequence below (datum 22):

*C : Love the greenness!! Fantastic capture*

*CR: That is my favorite part too! Thank you very much!*

Since complimentee states that he loves the greenness, complimentee then replies it by saying that she also loves the greenness. It shows that complimentee not only accept and agree with the compliment force but also offers relevant comment on the topic (Herbert, 1989). This type mostly tags along with the appreciation token, while only some stands alone.

Igers accept the compliments as they do not concern to background of the complimentee, for instance age. Age can be a factor influencing the way to respond compliments as mentioned in Shirinbakhsh and Rasekh (2012). In their study, the Persian young adult talking to older person tends to choose refusal strategy to respond compliments as a way to show politeness.

Among the responses, comment history is also found for instance in CR13 "*I did not really intend for it to exude either one, but I am glad it is having an effect*". No acknowledgment type under the categories of non-agreement also exists in CR21 and CR14. As have been mentioned that in online context is characterized as asynchronous interaction (Placencia & Lower, 2011) where complimenter and complimentee is online in different place and probably different time. Thus, it is possible that complementee does not reply to the compliment. Herbert (1989) asserts that in this type, complimentee gives no indication of having seen the comment, let alone the compliment. It because either complementee does not aware that there is unreplied comment or the comment had been overlapped by other notifications of their other posts.

Reassignment is not found in this study. Similarly, there is no comment under the category of non-agreement such as scale down, disagreement, and qualification. Igers mostly agree with the compliment force directed to them. Thus, most used type of compliment responses paid by almost all of Igers is appreciation token.

## 6. Conclusion

Compliments on skill or ability in Instagram are mostly short by the use of minimal syntactic pattern and realized by the use of adjectives rather than verbs. Compared to the comments in other platform such as Facebook which can be commented longer, in IG the comments consist of the 'main' compliment act and sometimes followed by any other supporting information. Thus it can be said that compliment in online context resembles the one in face to face context. Yet in IG, the way Igers compliment is various compared to the compliment behavior observed by Manes and Wolfson in American English context. It is proved by varieties of syntactic patterns found in the data.

Regarding to the Igers' behavior in responding to the compliment, it can be concluded that Igers more likely to agree with the compliment force on skill or ability directed to them. It occurs as they don't concern with the background of the complimentee that might influence the politeness strategy to choose. In doing so, they apply types of responds categorized under agreement such as appreciation token and comment acceptance. On the other hand, it is rare for Igers to respond by disagreeing and even none of them responding with request type. It implies that Igers acknowledged their own ability since in IG, it is a common practice to post the best works. In

addition, Igers can select their followers so that they can get positive responses. Therefore, they may expect that they will receive positive evaluation in the form of compliment.

As this study only examines compliment and compliment response on topic of skill or ability, further studies need to elaborate in other topics and consider to focus on users with particular social, educational or ethnic backgrounds and/or age groups. Hence, the finding can be compared whether it has similar result. The finding of this study cannot provide any results on the basis of demographics of the comentators such as age, gender, social and cultural background. Personal information of Igers are not accessible as it belongs to IG policy to preserve Igers privacy. Accordingly, other researchers should elaborate similar study using another data collection method to get clear picture concerning any cross cultural involvement in complimenting events through social media.

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