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***“I want to say something good about you”
—a cross-linguistic study of some polite
formulae and their acquisition
in a foreign language***

In this paper I would like to discuss some ways of expressing the Speaker's (S) good attitude towards the Hearer (H), namely *compliments* and *congratulations*. Expressing compliments or congratulating H on something S tries to tell H, using Wierzbicka's "universal semantic primitives":

“I want to say something good about you.”

What else do they have in common? Compliments and congratulations are highly formulaic. Their use is strictly determined by social context, social status of the interlocutors and their relationship (Wolfson, 1983a). While the functions of complimenting and congratulating are universal, and occur in all languages, their formulaic realizations differ. That is why it is so difficult for the learner of a foreign language to learn how to behave politely in a foreign language environment.

My paper will be divided into two parts. In the first one, I shall try to compare the use of this kind of formulae in Polish and in English. In the second part, I shall try to explain what makes those formulae so difficult for the learner of English as a second language to use correctly in the English environment.

The data for the study was obtained from different sources: personal observation, elicitation tests carried out on the advanced students of English as

a foreign language from the University of Silesia, written sources, and introspection.

1. Compliments

There are many definitions of the word compliment. *Słownik języka polskiego* (Szymczak, 1978: Vol. I, 978) defines the word *komplement* ("compliment") as "polite, often exaggerated praising; flattery". What is flattery?, someone might ask. The same source defines it as "words flattering someone's self-esteem, meant for getting into someone's favour" (Szymczak, 1978: Vol. II, 715). By definition Polish compliments are not insincere, but they can be exaggerated and the compliment giver always has good reasons to utter them. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1987 : 205) defines compliment as "expression of praise, admiration, or respect". In this definition there is nothing about insincerity, either, not to mention elements of flattery present in the Polish definition, which is interesting because in most cases complimenting entails insincerity. Definitions may differ. What is universal in the concept of the compliment one can see in the description given by Wierzbicka (1983 : 130):

COMPLIMENTS

"I say: it is possible to say something good about you.

I feel admiration for you because of that.

I say that because I want you to feel good."

Although compliments are more diverse than the formulae of greeting or thanking, they are also highly lexicalized and no longer as meaningful as they used to be. This refers both to Polish and English compliments (see 1).

1. Polish

a) *Świetnie wyglądasz.*

("You look great").

b) *Podoba mi się twoja fryzura.*

("I like your hair do").

c) *Ta sukienka jest szalowa.*

("This dress is terrific").

English

a) *You look very nice.*

You are looking extremely smart.

b) *I like the hair style!*

c) *Your dress is really terrific.*

(Blundell, Higgins & Middlemiss, 1992 :195)

Comparing Polish and English formulae we can see a great similarity of syntactic patterns. In Table 1 we can see the three major syntactic patterns of compliment formulae.

Table 1. Major syntactic patterns of compliments

| Polish | English |
|---|-----------------------------|
| a) NP $\begin{matrix} \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \text{jest} & \cdot \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \text{wygląda} & \cdot \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \text{naprawdę} & \cdot \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \text{Adj} & \cdot \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \text{Adv} & \cdot \end{matrix}$ | a) NP is/looks (really) Adj |
| b) NP mi się naprawdę podoba. | b) I really like/love NP |
| c) To (jest) naprawdę Adj NP | c) PRO is (really) a Adj NP |
| (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989 : 77) | (Wolfson, 1983a : 85) |

Yet there are some more syntactic patterns of compliment formulae which are also quite frequent (see Table 2).

Also in the case of the less frequent compliment formulae there exists a great similarity both in their form and in their "almost total lack of originality" (Wolfson, 1986 : 115).

Table 2. Other syntactic patterns of compliments

| Polish | English |
|---|---|
| a) (Naprawdę) V _{(ty)Pan} Adj NP <i>Odwalileś kawał dobrej roboty.</i> ("You did a good job.") | a) You V (a) (really) Adj NP <i>You did a good job.</i> |
| b) (Naprawdę) V _{(ty)Pan} Adv <i>Świetnie się spisałeś.</i> ("You made a good job of it.") | b) You V (NP) (really) Adv <i>You really handled that situation well.</i> |
| c) Masz Adj NP <i>Masz takie piękne włosy.</i> ("You have such beautiful hair.") | c) You have (a) (Adj) NP <i>You have such beautiful hair.</i> |
| d) $\begin{matrix} \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \text{Co za} & \cdot \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \text{Ale} & \cdot \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \text{Adj NP} & \cdot \end{matrix}$ <i>Ale ładna spódnica.</i> ("What a nice skirt.") | d) What (a) Adj NP <i>What a lovely baby you have!</i> |
| e) Adj NP <i>Dobra zagrywka!</i> ("Good shot".) | e) Adj NP <i>Nice game!</i> |
| f) Czyż nie (jest) Adj (NP) <i>Czyż nie jest piękny!</i> ("Isn't it beautiful.") | f) Isn't NP Adj <i>Isn't your ring beautiful!</i> <i>Isn't it pretty!</i> |
| | (Wolfson, 1983b : 78) |

Compliments in different languages differ not only in their structures, but also in the functions they serve, in their distribution, and their frequency of occurrence. In this paper, the problem of distribution will not be discussed. The use of compliment formulae is pragmatically motivated. One of the major and perhaps universal functions of compliments, is making H feel good.

Another major function of compliments is creating and maintaining solidarity between interlocutors (Manes, 1983; Wolfson, 1983 a; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989). Manes (1983) calls compliments "social lubricants". This function is visible both in Polish and English data. Compliments can also be used in other functions.

They can be used:

- to open a conversation (Wolfson, 1983a)
- to be a part of or to replace greetings (Wolfson, 1983a) (see example 2)
- to strengthen or to replace apologies (Wolfson, 1983a)
- to strengthen or to replace thanks (Wolfson, 1983a) (see example 3)

2.

a) *Ale szalowa dziewczyna z Ciebie! Cześć! Jak się masz?*
(“What a smashing girl you are! Hi! How are you?”)

b) *Wow! Great Tan!*

What's the occasion? You look terrific.

(Herbert, 1989 : 7)

3.

a) *Jaki śliczny krawat! Bardzo dziękuję.*

(“What a nice tie! Thank you very much.”)

b) *Thanks for the card. We really like it.*

(Wolfson, 1983a : 88)

We can resort to complimenting the Giver (G) if we want to express our gratitude indirectly (see example 4). We use compliments to soften criticism (see example 5) (Herbert, 1989) or to make an indirect request (Herbert, 1989; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989).

4.

a) *Jest Pan bardzo uprzejmy.*

(“You are very kind.”)

b) *That was really nice of you.*

5.

a) *Bardzo dobre wypracowanie, ale mógłbyś zwracać trochę więcej uwagi na interpunkcję.*

(“It's a very good composition, but you could have paid more attention to punctuation.”)

b) *Listen, I think you're doing a good job with their classes...*

but please tell them to stay out of the office at lunch time.

(Wolfson, 1983a : 89)

It is not such an uncommon case that before we make a request, we try to lay the foundation by complimenting H or one of his belongings (see example 6). This use of compliments is a little more common among Poles than among native speakers of English.

6.

a) A: *Przepyszna tę sałatkę zrobiłaś.*

("You made an excellent salad.")

B: *Cieszę się, że Ci smakuje. Czy mogłabym Ci jeszcze dolożyć?*

("I'm glad you like it. Would you like some more?")

b) A: *I like those pants.*B: *Well, you can borrow them any time.*A: *I like your shirt.*B: *You want to borrow this one too?*

(Herbert, 1989 : 17)

While it is more typical of the native speakers of English to use compliments to reinforce desired results (see example 7). It is caused mainly by the style of "teaching through encouragement (and compliments)" (Wolfson, 1983a : 87) which is deeply enrooted in American educational traditions.

7.

a) *Joe, you did an excellent job on the report last night.*b) *John found out what the homework was, somehow, I don't know how.**But that's great, John.*

(Manes, 1983 : 97)

This function is not very popular among Poles. The main reason for it is that they have a completely different attitude to praising and complimenting in general. Many Poles do not approve of complimenting at all. The style of "teaching through encouragement (and compliments)" is most often used with pre-school or primary-school children (see example 8).

8.

a) *Narysowałeś wspaniały samochód. Ja w twoim wieku nie potrafiłem jeszcze tak ładnie rysować.*

("You have drawn a beautiful car. At your age I was not able to draw so well.")

Both in Polish and English it is quite common a case that a comment having the pattern of a compliment is easily turned into an insult or a reprimand. The comments in example 9 can be intended either as jokes or as reprimands. The intention must be expressed by the tone of voice.

9.

a) *Dobra robota! Nie widziałem jeszcze tak spalonego placka.*

("Good job! I have never seen so burnt a cake.")

b) *I really like the way you went through that stop sign.*

(Wolfson, 1983a : 92)

Compliments do not have to be sincere, and usually they are not. That is why they can be called "social lies" (Coleman & Kay, 1981, after Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989). This feature of compliments is universal. What differs cross-culturally is S's attitude towards it.

It is quite frequent among Poles that when S wants his favourable comment about H or about his belongings to sound truthful and convincing, he says that it is not a compliment, it is true.

Native speakers of English, especially Americans, use compliments much more often than Poles do (cf. Wolfson, 1983a; Herbert, 1989).

However, we can quite often hear the light-hearted responses to compliments like those in example 10.

10.

a) *A: Twoje włosy mają kolor starego złota.*

("Your hair has a colour of old gold.")

B: Ale z Ciebie komplementarz.

("What a flatterer you are.")

b) *A: Hey, you're a terrific dancer!*

B: Flattery'll get you nowhere!

(Blundell, Higgins & Middlemiss, 1992 : 198)

Politeness formulae, according to Ożóg (1990), can be divided into *direct* (explicit) and *indirect* (implicit). The former contain a performative verb. In the case of compliments it is the verb *to compliment*. The forms presented in example 11 are very rarely used, usually in very formal situations (see Blundell, Higgins & Middlemiss, 1992).

11.

a) *I must praise you for your efficiency.*

b) *I have to compliment you on your hairstyle.*

(Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989:85)

c) *My compliments on...*

d) *I must congratulate on...*

(Blundell, Higgins & Middlemiss 1992 :195)

In Polish direct compliments are never used, even though there exist the verb *komplementować* ("to compliment") and the phrase *prawić komplementy* ("to pay compliments").

Paying compliments does not require so much tact and sociocultural competence as responding to them. The Recipient (R) of a compliment, even though positively evaluated by G, is at the same time put in a difficult situation. To be polite one has to follow the rules of politeness, which in case of responses to compliments on the one hand require that he should agree with the compliment of G, while on the

other hand require that he should avoid self-praise. Pomerantz (1978) proposed a taxonomy of compliment response types:

Table 3. Taxonomy of compliment response types
(Pomerantz, 1978)

| | |
|--|--|
| 1. Acceptances | |
| a) Appreciation Token (<i>Thank you</i>) | |
| b) Agreement | A: X B: I think the same. |
| c) Praise Upgrades | A: X is good. B: X is very good. |
| 2. Rejections | |
| a) Disagreement | A: X B: I don't think the same. |
| 3. Self-praise Avoidance | |
| a) Praise Downgrades | |
| —agreement | A: X is very good. |
| —disagreement | B: X is good. |
| b) Referent Shifts | |
| —reassignment of praise | A: I want to say something (Y) about (X). |
| —return | B: I want to say it (Y) about something other than X. |

(Wierzbicka, 1991 : 137)

The English etiquette-book responses to compliments are what Pomerantz (1978 : 83) calls *Appreciation Tokens* (*thank you, thanks, thank you so much, and well thank you*).

Sometimes R of a compliment expresses also his agreement with G's comment (12b.). Pomerantz (1978) claims that this type of response is "very prevalent". In the conversation a person with whom he/she is in very close relation, he may even increase the complimentary force of the previous comment, at the same time violating the constraint to avoid self-praise (12c.). If R of a compliment does not want to accept it, usually he directly disagrees with G's comment (12d.), e.g. by pointing to "hidden flaws". He may try to downgrade, or in other words, to decrease the praise of himself (12e.). 12f. is an example of self-praise avoidance when R disagrees partly with the previous complimentary comment. The other way to avoid self-praise is to shift the credit from oneself to another referent (12g. and 12h.)

12.

- a) A: *That's beautiful.*
B: *Thank you.*
- b) A: *Oh, it was just beautiful.*
B: *Well thank you. I thought it was quite nice.*
- c) A: *Isn't he cute?*
B: *Oh he's adorable.*
- d) A: *You did a great job cleaning up the house.*
B: *Well I guess you have not seen the kids' room.*

- e) A: *That's fantastic.*
B: *Isn't that good?*
- f) A: *Good shot.*
B: *Not very solid though.*
- g) A: *You're a good rower, Honey.*
B: *These are very easy to row. Very light.*
- h) A: *Yer lookin good.*
B: *So'r you.*

(Pomerantz, 1978 : 84-105)

The Polish responses to compliments can be put into the same categories (see examples 13).

- 13.
- a) A: *Świetnie dzisiaj wyglądasz.* ("You look great today.")
B: *Dziękuję.* ("Thank you.")
 - b) A: *Ale szalowa torebka.* ("What a smashing handbag.")
B: (hesitation) *Dziękuję. Mnie też się bardzo podoba.*
("Thank you. I like it very much, too.")
 - c) A: *Bardzo ładnie, że zdałeś ten egzamin.* ("It's nice that you've passed this exam.")
B: *Czyż nie jestem genialny?* ("Am I not a genius?")
 - d) A: *Bardzo ładny ten sweter zrobiłaś.* ("The sweater you've knitted is very nice.")
B: *Nie gadaj głupstw. Popatrz jaki krzywy ścieg!*
("Don't talk nonsense. Look! What uneven stitches!")
 - e) A: *Przepyszny jest ten placek.* ("This cake is delicious.")
B: *Wydaje mi się, że mi całkiem niezłe wyszedł.*
("It seems to me that I baked it all right.")
 - f) A: *Dobrze mu odpowiedziałeś.* ("You talked back to him very well.")
B: *On tego nie zrozumiał.* ("He didn't understand a word.")
 - g) A: *Fajną sobie tę sukienkę uszyłaś.* ("You've sewn a tip-top dress.")
B: *Gdybym nie miała takiej rewelacyjnej maszyny, nic by z tego nie wyszło.* ("If I hadn't had such a marvellous sewing machine, it would not have worked out.")
 - h) A: *Do twarzy Ci z tym kokiem.* ("This bun suits you.")
B: *Dziękuję. Tobie też ładnie w tej fryzurze.*
("Thank you. This hair-do suits you, too.")

To the taxonomy proposed by Pomerantz, Herbert (1989) added four more categories, namely, *Comment History*, *Question Response*, *No Acknowledgement*, and *Request Interpretation* (see example 6b). In the *Comment History* type of response, R agrees with the complimentary comment, and tries to impersonalize its complimentary force by giving various details (see examples 14a, 15a).

Question responses are usually intended either to provoke “an expansion/upgrade of the original assertion” or “to question the sincerity/ motives” of G of the compliment (see examples 14b, 15b).

Using No Acknowledgement type of response R does not accept the complimentary force of the comment and tries to change the topic of the conversation (see examples 14c, 15c.).

14.

- a) A: *I love that outfit.*
B: *I got it for the trip to Arizona.*
- b) A: *Nice sweater.*
B: *You like it?*
- c) A: *That's a beautiful sweater.*
B: *Did you finish the assignment for today?*
(Herbert, 1989 : 13-17)

15.

- a) A: *Ale masz fikuśne buty. Fantastyczne.*
 (“What funny shoes you have. Fantastic.”)
B: *Mama mi je kupiła w Warszawie.*
 (“My mother bought them in Warsaw.”)
- b) A: *To bardzo interesujące wypracowanie.*
 (“That’s a very interesting composition.”)
B: *Naprawdę się Pani podoba?* (“Do you really like it?”)
- c) A: *Masz piękne oczy.* (“You have beautiful eyes.”)
B: *Czy skończyłeś pisać ten list?*
 (“Have you finished to write this letter?”)

As it can be seen in the examples presented above Polish responses to compliments can be put into the same categories as their English counterparts, but their frequency of occurrence differs. Self-praise avoiding responses are prevalent, especially those which downgrade the praise of R, or which reject the compliment or disagree with its force.

Example 16 is one more kind of response, called by the author *Indirect Self-praise* in which R of a compliment sounds very conceited, accepts, and agrees with the comment and at the same time shows his deep conviction that it is truthful. Such a response is possible only between close friends, peers, or sometimes in jocular contexts.

16.

- A: *Ostatnio bardzo ładnie wyglądasz .*
 (“You look very nice recently.”)
- B: *Wiem.* (“I know.”) (meaning: I agree with you. I think the same.)

There is a special kind of compliments which are always insincere, namely *white lies*. If one wants to be polite and not to hurt the feelings of H in the sense of positive politeness and spare him/her feelings of embarrassment and shame, he has to resort to telling white lies. So white lies and their Polish equivalent *grzecznościowe kłamstwa* ("polite lies") (Ożóg, 1990) are formulae pragmatically motivated (Ożóg, 1991) (see example 17).

17.

a) A: *Jak Państwu smakował obiad?* ("Did you enjoy the dinner?")

B: *Przepyszny.* ("Delicious.") (Even if you did not enjoy it at all.)

b) A: *Podoba Ci się krawat?* ("Do you like the tie?")

(given by A as a birthday present)

B: *Piękny. Takiego właśnie szukałem.* ("Beautiful. That's just what I looked for.") (Even if you find it terrible)

Using Wierzbicka's semantic primitives we can formulate the definition of white lies.

WHITE LIE

I say it is possible to say something good about you.

I think I have to say something good about you, because I do not want to say something bad about you.

I say that because I want you to feel good.

White lies in Polish and English are used more or less in the same contexts which depend on idiosyncratic rather than cultural factors.

The frequency of their occurrence is conditioned by the relationship of the interlocutors. The more formal the relationship of the interlocutors is, the more white lies they use.

2. Congratulations

It is very difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between compliments and congratulations. Congratulations can be treated as compliments given after different kinds of performance on the part of H (Wolfson, 1983).

Only the phenomena complimented on or congratulated on differ, sometimes they overlap. Thus, we compliment our interlocutors on their appearance, possessions, good work, etc., but we may congratulate them on good work, achievements, a newly-born child, etc. Wierzbicka (1983 : 130) describes congratulations in the following way:

CONGRATULATIONS

“I know that something happened that is good for you
 I think that it happened because you did it
 I think that you are glad because of that
 I say: I’m glad because of that, too
 I say that because I want you to feel good.”

Like compliments, congratulations are used to realize certain functions in the conversation. They are used:

- to create friendly atmosphere of the conversation (Ożóg, 1990)
- to create solidarity between interlocutors (Ożóg, 1990)
- to open a conversation
- to be a part of or to replace greetings
- to reprimand H for bad behaviour or to insult him (see example 18).

18.

- a) *Gratuluje. Nie można już tego było bardziej zepsuć.*
 (“I congratulate. You couldn’t spoil it more.”)
- b) *Congratulations. What have you done with your hair?*

As most politeness formulae, congratulations can be expressed directly (by means of a performative verb) or indirectly. Both in Polish and in English direct formulae are most frequent especially in formal situations (Ożóg, 1990; Brundell, Higgs & Middlemiss, 1992) (see examples 19 and 20, except for 19f, which is restricted to informal situations, and 19g and 20e, which can be used in every context).

19.

- a) *Gratuluje Panu tak udanego wystapienia.*
 (“I congratulate you on such a good presentation.”)
- b) *Szczerze gratuluje nowego samochodu.*
 (“I sincerely congratulate (you) on a new car.”)
- c) *Gratuluje z okazji urodzin syna.*
 (“I congratulate (you) on the birth of your son.”)
- d) *Proszę przyjac moje najszczersze gratulacje.*
 (“Please accept my most sincere congratulations.”)
- e) *Niech mi będzie wolno pogratulować Panu.*
 (“Let me congratulate you”)
- f) *No to, pogratulować. Naprawdę udało Ci się.*
 (“So, to congratulate. You really did it.”)
- g) *Gratulacje.* (“Congratulations.”)

20.

- a) *I must congratulate you.*

- b) *Let me / May I congratulate you.*
- c) *Please accept my warmest / heartiest congratulations.*
- d) *I'd like to be the first to congratulate you.*
- e) *Congratulations on the LG contract.*

(Blundell, Higgins & Middlemiss, 1992 :197)

In informal situations Polish congratulations usually take the form of indirect formulae which, nevertheless, can be interpreted as such by H.

English indirect formulae are also used in informal situations (see example 21).

21.

Polish

English

a) *Ogromnie się cieszę.*

a) *I was delighted to hear about.../that...*

("I'm extremely delighted.")

(Leech & Svartvik, 1975 : 154)

b) *To fantastycznie.*

b) *Fantastic!/Terrific!*

("That's fantastic.")

c) *Dobra robota.*

c) *Well done, Mandy!*

("Good job.")

Nice one, Mandy!

d) *Co ja słyszę. Ale sukces.*

d) *It was great to hear...*

("What I hear.

What a success.")

(Blundell, Higgins & Middlemiss, 1992 : 197)

As it was said before we offer congratulations on something that H did or achieved; in English it usually does not include personal belongings, e.g. car, house, etc., which can be congratulated on in Polish (see example 19b).

As we have to respond to compliments, we have to respond to congratulations. Congratulation responses do not differ much from compliment responses, and they will not be discussed here.

3. The acquisition of second language polite formulae

When the individual wants to learn a foreign language, he must, "in addition to acquiring a new vocabulary and a new set of phonological and syntactic rules, learn what Hymes (1972) calls the rules of speaking: the patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour of the target language (TL)" (Wolfson, 1983b : 61). As it happens during the acquisition of vocabulary, phonological and syntactic rules, to facilitate the learning process the learner often applies the prior knowledge of the native language (NL) to present subject matter. In this case we are dealing with the process called *pragmatic transfer* - "...transfer of L₁ sociocultural communicative competence in performing L₂ speech acts or any other aspects of L₂ conversation, where the speaker is trying to achieve a particular function of language" (Beebe et al.,

1990 : 56). This one, like all other kinds of transfer, can be either positive or negative. Positive pragmatic transfer will not be discussed here, because it is not possible to isolate the acquisition accomplished with positive transfer from the one accomplished without it (see Beebe et al., 1990; Kasper & Blu-Kulka, 1993). Negative pragmatic transfer, called also *communicative interference* (Wolfson, 1983b) poses many problems both for learners and for their teachers. For learners, negative pragmatic transfer can sometimes mean communication breakdown, or even in less serious cases it can reflect badly on them as persons (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Thomas, 1983).

The lack of sociocultural competence can pose many problems to the learner in the foreign language environment, where native speakers follow “the rules of speaking” unconsciously, but are able to recognize when non-native speakers have broken one of them, and usually blame them for inappropriate or impolite behaviour rather than for the lack of linguistic competence (Wolfson, 1983b). One might ask when the learner of a foreign language resorts, consciously or unconsciously to pragmatic transfer from his NL? He does it when:

- he perceives his NL and TL to be similar (Bialystok, 1990),
- he incorrectly associates one of the rules of speaking of his NL with the rule to be learned in TL,
- he lacks linguistic competence (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983),
- he lacks sociocultural competence,
- he perceives one of the rules of speaking or a speech act as universal (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983).

For teachers, negative pragmatic transfer, like other kinds of negative transfer is a challenge. Teaching the rules of speaking is a difficult task, because the norms of polite behaviour proposed by etiquette books considerably differ from actual behaviour of native speakers. What to teach is a dilemma that the teachers of a foreign language have to resolve.

Let us consider the acquisition of English complimenting and congratulating formulae, and responses to them by Polish advanced learners of English.

The English compliments they use do not differ much in their form from the Polish ones but the Polish compliments are more diverse than the English ones. This is not due to the difference in the two languages, but probably due to the lack of linguistic competence of the learners. The compliments used in English are more formulaic. This can be explained by the fact that in their NL the learners feel more competent and create utterances more freely than in the foreign language, in which they tend to stick to formulaic expressions learned before. Most responses to compliments in English are made by means of Appreciation Token, but we should not attach too much importance to it, because the character of their responses is conditioned by economy of language rather than by the English etiquette.

The other most common responses are of the Rejection-Disagreement and Praise Downgrade types. This can be accounted for by the occurrence of negative pragmatic transfer from Polish, where these types of responses are prevalent. Negative pragmatic transfer occurs also in the case of responses to congratulations.

The learners responding in English very often use the Rejection-Disagreement and Self-Praise Avoidance types of response, they express disbelief in their success. They try to downgrade their achievements and to reassign praise to other referents, as it is typical in Polish.

In all these cases negative transfer is found in the frequency of occurrence of the formulae. Trying to make their compliments sound more truthful and more convincing the learners add often that it is not a compliment, it is true. In this case we are dealing with the negative transfer of the content of the formulae.

4. Conclusions

This contrastive study helps us to see the differences in complimenting and congratulating in Polish and in English.

These differences may be divided into two categories:

—the differences in the content of the formulae,

—the differences in the frequency of their occurrence.

This paper also makes us aware of the cultural norms and etiquette of our own language, Polish, which we take for granted. The awareness of our own cultural norms and linguistic etiquette may help greatly in understanding and acquiring the norms of another culture and its language. This knowledge can be useful both for the learners and the teachers of English as a foreign language, as the process of the acquisition of the cultural norms of another language poses special problems for them.

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Ewa Jakubowska

**„Chcę powiedzieć coś dobrego o tobie” –
studium kontrastywne wybranych zwrotów grzecznościowych
oraz analiza ich przyswajania w języku obcym**

Streszczenie

W artykule omówiono wybrane sposoby wyrażania pozytywnego stosunku Mówiącego do Słuchacza, mianowicie *komplementy*, *gratulacje* i *kłamstwa grzecznościowe*. Została przeprowadzona analiza kontrastywna wymienionych formuł grzecznościowych w języku polskim i języku angielskim. Porównano także reakcje słowne na komplementy i gratulacje.

W drugiej części pracy przedstawiono trudności związane z przyswajaniem tych formuł grzecznościowych przez uczących się języka obcego. Problem ten został zilustrowany wynikami testów przeprowadzonych przez autorkę wśród studentów anglistyki.

Zaprezentowane studium kontrastywne pozwala nam dostrzec różnice w prawieniu komplementów i gratulowaniu w języku polskim i języku angielskim. Różnice te można podzielić na dwie kategorie:

- różnice w treści formuł,
- różnice w częstotliwości ich występowania.

Ewa Jakubowska

**"Ich möchte etwas gutes über dich sagen" –
Kontrastiv Studie ausgewählte Höflichkeitswendungen
und Analyse ihrer Aneignung in der Fremdsprache**

Zusammenfassung

Im Aufsatz wurden die ausgewählten Äußerungsarten der positiven Stellungnahme des Sprechenden dem Zuhörenden gegenüber, d.h. *Komplimente*, *Glückwünsche* und *Höflichkeitslügen* besprochen. Es wurde eine kontrastive Analyse der erwähnten Höflichkeitsformen in der polnischen und der englischen Sprache durchgeführt. Auch die verbalen Reaktionen auf Komplimente und Glückwünsche wurden verglichen.

Im zweiten Teil des Aufsatzes wurden die mit der Aneignung der Höflichkeitsformeln beim Erlernen der Fremdsprachen verbundenen Schwierigkeiten dargestellt. Dieses Problem wurde mit den Ergebnissen der von der Autorin unter den Studenten der Anglistik durchgeführten Tests belegt.

Das dargestellte Kontrastivstudium erlaubt die Unterschiede im Komplimentieren und Beglückwünschen in der polnischen und der englischen Sprache zu bemerken. Die Unterschiede können in zwei Kategorien geteilt werden:

- Unterschiede im Inhalt der Formel,
- Unterschiede in der Häufigkeit ihres Vorkommens.