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Compliments and Compliment Responses in Japanese Conversation

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

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Unless otherwise acknowledged, this thesis is entirely my own work.

Akiko Yoshida
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the acts of giving and receiving compliments in Japanese conversational context. Adopting a conversation analytic methodology, it explicates how conversational participants give and receive compliments in the course of conversation. By employing the notion of initial and non-initial compliments, it reveals how compliment sequences are systematically and collaboratively organised by participants. It also proposes the distinction between substantial and non-substantial target objects of compliments, as a useful device to investigate the development of compliment sequences. While participants proffer initial compliments more often on non-substantial objects, initial compliments on substantial objects are more likely to be followed by subsequent compliments. The design of compliments and compliment responses are also examined. It is found that compliment givers tend to give compliments in a less direct manner. Instead of explicitly expressing their positive evaluation of the referent, participants make use of various devices to reduce the degree of imposition. The design of compliments may reflect the compliment giver’s concern for the recipient, in particular, concern for the recipients’ personal territory. The analysis of how participants compliment superiors, how they make use of a third party as a mediator, and how laughter appear in compliments all suggest the possibility that the act of giving compliments involves a certain degree of negative politeness. In terms of the design of compliment responses, recipients of compliments make use of various devices to deal with the dilemma caused by conflicting pressures to avoid disagreement, as well as to avoid self-praise. Instead of accepting and rejecting compliments in a direct manner, compliment recipients tend not to display their stance, while showing their concern for compliment givers. These observations indicate that the acts of giving and receiving compliments are deeply involved with interpersonal aspects.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The present study investigates compliments and compliment responses in Japanese conversation. By looking at compliments and responses within a larger conversational context, it explicates the characteristics of compliment events. To begin with, this introductory chapter provides the following preliminary information. First, I present the research questions to be addressed in the present study. Second, the definition of a compliment used in the present study will be provided. Third, I provide an overview of the data for the present study, as well as the methodology adopted. Finally, the organisation of the study will be provided.

1.0 Research questions

A number of studies so far have investigated compliments in various cultures and languages (the details of the contributions of previous studies will be outlined in Chapter 2). The findings of these studies include the syntactic and semantic features of
compliments, the relationship between compliment givers and recipients, topics of compliments, ways of responding to compliments, and so forth. There are, however, certain areas which have not been fully explored. For instance, we still do not know in what kind of context participants give a compliment, since most previous studies' analyses of compliments and compliment responses characteristically deal with them in isolation. Information about the surrounding context may be provided but tends to be limited, as illustrated by the following example:

(1) Context: Friends meeting outside a classroom.
   A: You're looking very healthy, nice and tanned.
   B: Tanned? I think that's just pink.
   (Holmes 1986: 493)

A number of questions occur to me whenever I come across this kind of data. For example, what happened just before speaker A produced this compliment? What were A and B talking about? What made speaker A compliment B’s appearance? Are A and B close friends, or are they not? Were they only two at the time of conversation, or were there other friends around them? What happened after speaker B’s response? Did speaker A contradict and produce subsequent compliments? While the “context” is provided, it seems far too little to know what these two utterances actually do. The contextual information is probably not so important if our concern is only about the contents or the linguistic features of these utterances. However, it is important if we are interested in what these utterances actually do, or in what these participants A and B are doing by exchanging these utterances, in the course of conversation.

Therefore, in the present study, I address the following questions:
(i) In what kind of situation do participants give compliments? Do they give compliments anytime in conversation, or are there any circumstantial constraints?

(ii) How do they design compliments? In what way do participants express their positive evaluation?

(iii) Who participate? A compliment giver and a recipient only?

(iv) On what kinds of topics do participants give compliments? Are there any preferable topics?

(v) How do compliment recipients respond to compliments? Do they accept or reject compliments? Do they have other options?

1.1 Definition of compliments

In essence, what is a compliment? Some studies appear to cite Holmes’ (1986) definition:

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

Elsewhere, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989: 79-80) defines the most prototypical cases of the complimenting act as follows:

(a) there is a property a related to A
In the present study, I use the following definition:

A compliment is a verbal expression produced by one participant, as a display of that participant’s positive stance towards something or someone related in some way to the other participant, addressed either directly or non-directly.

The main difference between Holmes’ (1986) definition and the one for the present study is the recipient’s (“the hearer” in Holmes (1986)) evaluation. Holmes (1986) seems to assume that a compliment giver and a recipient must share the same positive evaluation of compliments. However, shared positive stance toward a referent of a compliment cannot always be proved or disproved. We only have access to recipients’ spoken responses (or avoidance of response), and although these may appear to display a negative stance toward a referent, this apparent negative stance may simply arise from the pressure to avoid self-praise. In addition, as will be shown, there is room for negotiation to resolve this apparent discrepancy in their stances through interaction between compliment givers and recipients.
1.2 The data and methodology

1.2.1 The data

The data for the present study are comprised of about forty hours of audio-recorded naturally-occurring conversation by native Japanese speakers. The data were collected by the researcher in Japan, during the period from November 2002 to February 2003. The participants for the study are 18 male and female native Japanese speakers who are aged in their late twenties to mid-sixties. All participants speak so-called ‘standard’ Japanese (or more accurately, Tokyo dialect) most of the time. The situations of the recordings are all casual gatherings such as dinners, drinks, or afternoon teas.

Thus, unlike some laboratory-like settings where participants may concentrate on the talk itself, the participants in the data may engage in multiple activities simultaneously: most notably eating and drinking while talking. Other activities in which the participants are engaged include preparing and serving the food, washing dishes, answering the telephone, counting money, operating a camera, watching TV, and so forth. While these ‘other’ activities seem to be irrelevant to the discussion, the data show that sometimes these activities may affect the participants’ acts of giving and receiving compliments in some way. It can be said that this reflects our everyday life in which we may perform other activities while talking.

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1 Most participants (14 females and 4 males) are aged in their thirties at the time of the recording.
2 In Golato (2005) too, participants perform various activities, which sometimes affect participants’ acts of giving and receiving compliments.
Another point to be made here in terms of the features of the data is that there are more than two persons in the majority of the data. As noted earlier, in previous studies, compliments and compliment responses tend to be analysed as 'a paired action' in which only two persons are involved, as representatively illustrated by example (1). However, this is not necessarily always the case in real life. Our conversations often involve more than two participants, and participants' behaviour, including their language use and actions, can be different from those in 'two-party' conversation in many ways. For example, the data for the present study indicate that once one party gives a compliment to another party, a third party tends to participate in the activity 'voluntarily'.

1.2.2 Conversation Analysis

I adopted a conversation analytic approach to the transcription and basic analysis of the data for the present study. Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA) developed from ethnomethodology in the 1960s.\(^3\) It seeks to describe the underlying social organisation of talk (Goodwin and Heritage 1990). CA data usually consist of non-elicited, audio-taped (as well as video-taped) face-to-face spontaneous conversations. The recorded data are transcribed in detail, since "no order of detail can be dismissed, \textit{a priori}, as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant" (Heritage 1984a: 241). While transcribing audio-data in this way is a painstaking task, the transcription allows researchers to undertake

\(^3\) For a detailed introduction to conversation analysis, see Levinson (1983), and Heritage (1984a).
repeated and detailed analysis of utterances in their sequential context (Atkinson and Heritage 1984).

So far, CA has not been widely used for studies of compliment events. Only a few researchers (Pomerantz 1978, 1984; Boyle 2000; Golato 2002, 2005) have adopted CA for the analysis of compliment events. While Pomerantz (1978) focuses on compliment responses, Boyle (2000) investigates implicit compliments appearing in broadcast talk. Golato’s studies (2002, 2005) are the most detailed works on compliment and compliment responses. These studies clearly prove that CA is an effective device to explicate the complex features of compliment events. For example, as pointed out by Boyle (2000: 29), by adopting CA as their methodology, researchers are able to provide “a much less formulaic collection of compliments, partly because the machine is not limited in the way that the human memory is”. Furthermore, Golato’s (2005) investigation of how compliment sequences in multiparty settings unfold demonstrates their complicated but systematically organised features.

In addition to the effectiveness of CA, the fact that these studies all examine compliment events in Western languages6 leads us to explore compliment events in Japanese. As pointed out by Mori (1996), CA’s applicability to languages other than English has now been well demonstrated. Although the present study does not aim to make cross-cultural or cross-linguistic comparisons with other studies, the use of a CA framework allows us to make such a comparison (Golato 2005).

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4 Pomerantz (1984) deals with compliments in the larger category of assessment activities.
5 This is a mild criticism to the data-collection method which has been predominantly used for studies of compliment events: field observation.
6 These languages are, American English (Pomerantz 1978, 1984), British English (Boyle 2000), and German (Golato 2002, 2005).
1.3 Organisation of the thesis

Following Chapter 1, the current introductory chapter, Chapter 2 summarises the findings of previous research on compliments in various languages and cultures. It reveals that a number of studies contribute to a great deal of understanding of compliment events. However, details such as the roles and effects of compliments in conversation remain unclear.

Chapter 3 examines the organisation and development of compliment sequences. By employing the notions of 'initial' and 'non-initial' compliments, it reveals how compliment sequences are systematically organised and collaboratively developed by participants. It also proposes the distinction between 'substantial' and 'non-substantial' target objects of compliments. The data indicate that in multiparty conversation, (i) participants proffer initial compliments more often on non-substantial objects than on substantial objects, and (ii) initial compliments on substantial objects invite more subsequent compliments.

Chapter 4 investigates the design of compliments: in what manner participants give compliments, to whom they are addressed, and when they are given. The data indicate that the participants tend to give compliments in a less direct manner, reflecting their concern about the recipients' personal territory. In addition, it is observed that by monitoring the conversation carefully, the participants are able to give compliments in an appropriate manner, at an appropriate time in the conversation.
Chapter 5 focuses on compliment responses. The data show that the participants tend to avoid accepting and rejecting compliments in a direct manner. Compliment recipients are observed to make use of various devices strategically to manage the dilemma posed by two general principles in interaction: to avoid disagreement and to avoid self-praise. Because of this, compliment recipients tend not to make their stance clear. This attitude of ‘non-commitment’ can be one important characteristic of less-direct responses.

Chapter 6 demonstrates the interpersonal aspects of the act of giving compliments. In Chapter 6, three different but related issues are discussed. They are: the ways of giving compliments to a person of higher status, making use of a mediator, and laughter in compliments. These three issues may lead us to the following consideration: the act of giving compliments is not as simple and easy as it looks, rather, it can be an interactionally complicated and difficult practice.

Chapter 7 summarises the findings and provides possible directions of future research.
Chapter 2

Literature review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the previous research on complimenting behaviour. Since early the 1980s, a number of studies have been done on compliment behaviour in many languages, led by studies on American-English compliments. Some of the research discusses compliment events in relation to politeness, and particularly to face concerns (Chen 1993; Holmes 1998; Kim 2005, among others), while others examine cultural effects (for example, Chick 1996; Jaworski 1995; Lee 1990; Wieland 1995). In recent years, some researchers have focused on the events in context (for example, Boyle 2000; Golato 2002, 2005; Wieland 1995). In these studies, the surrounding context, including the relationship between participants, topic, and situation, becomes an integral part of the analysis of compliment events. For example, Golato (2005) emphasises the importance of analysing compliment events within the conversational discourse. Golato’s (2005) analysis shows a clear contrast with those in previous research, which tend to analyse the event in isolation.
This chapter is organised as follows. Section 2.1 focuses on the research on compliments in Western languages: American English, as well as other English varieties, and non-English Western languages. In section 2.2, I will review some studies on compliments in non-Western languages, including several recent works on Asian compliment events. Section 2.3 reviews previous studies on Japanese compliment events. Section 2.4 discusses the direction of the present study, based on the summary of findings of previous studies.

### 2.1 Studies on compliments in Western languages

In this section, I will summarise the findings of studies on compliment events in Western languages. Firstly, studies on American-English compliments will be reviewed, followed by a review of research in other English varieties. Then I will go on to the review of studies on compliments in other (non-English) Western languages.

#### 2.1.1 American English

Like studies of other kinds of speech acts (for example, requests, invitations, apologies and so on), studies of complimenting behaviour have been led by some pioneering researchers on American English (Herbert 1986, 1989, 1990; Knapp, Hopper, and Bell 1984; Manes 1983; Manes and Wolfson 1981; Pomerantz 1978; Wolfson 1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1988, 1989).
Among them, Manes and Wolfson have investigated complimenting behaviour in a series of their studies: examining the contents, the distribution, as well as the function of compliments (Manes 1983; Manes and Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1981, 1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1988, 1989). Manes and Wolfson, known as pioneers of this field of research, collected their data (comprising hundreds of compliment exchanges) through ethnographic approach. The authors claim that an ethnographic approach "makes possible a sampling of the speech behaviour of men and women of different ages and a wide range of occupational and educational backgrounds" (Wolfson 1983a: 77). Examining the collected compliment exchanges, Wolfson found that "compliments are characteristically formulaic both in terms of semantics and of syntax" in American English (Wolfson 1989:220). For example, according to Manes and Wolfson, Americans favour five common adjectives (nice, good, beautiful, pretty, and great). In terms of syntax, the following three syntactic patterns account for almost 80% of all compliments.

NP is/looks ADJ (e.g. Your hair looks nice.)
I like/love NP (e.g. I love your skirt.)
PRO is ADJ NP (e.g. That's such a pretty sweater.)

As for frequency, it is observed that Americans frequently give and receive compliments in their everyday life. In American middle-class society, "compliments occur in a very wide variety of situations and are quite frequent even among strangers"

1 Manes and Wolfson (1981: 115) state that "[i]t is our conviction that an ethnographic approach is the only reliable method for collecting data about the way compliments, or indeed, any other speech act functions in everyday interactions".
(Wolfson 1983a: 82). This kind of observation (of ‘frequency’) is sometimes not reliable, if it comes only from the native speaker’s intuitions. However, there is some evidence: the fact that foreigners often comment (mainly in negative ways, for example, as being insincere or as being too often) on the frequency of compliments in American English (see Herbert 1991; Wolfson 1981, 1983a, 1983b, among others). In terms of distribution, according to Manes and Wolfson (1981), such compliment exchanges can be observed virtually anywhere in the conversation (at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of conversation). With regard to the major function of compliments, previous research appears to arrive at certain agreement on a ‘solidarity’ related function, for example, Wolfson claims that compliments serve “to create or reaffirm solidarity” (Wolfson 1989:224). Other studies seem to be in agreement on this point, as can be seen in the similar statements such as “reinforcement and/or creation of solidarity” (Manes and Wolfson 1981: 124), “the establishment or reinforcement of solidarity between the speaker and the addressee” (Manes 1983: 97), or “establishing solidarity via speech” (Herbert 1986: 77).

Manes and Wolfson explain the relationship between the lack of originality (exemplified by the overwhelming use of the limited numbers of lexical items as well as syntactic patterns) and the basic function of compliments, i.e., the reinforcement of solidarity, as follows. By giving a compliment, the speaker “expresses a commonality of taste or interest with the addressee”, and as a result, the participants are able to create

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2 Knapp, Hopper and Bell (1984: 28) note that compliment exchanges in American English more likely to appear either at the beginning (46% of their data) and in the middle (41%), rather than at the end (14%) of the conversation.
or reinforce "at least a minimal amount of solidarity" (1981: 124). Thus Manes and Wolfson suggest that "the recognition of this function" accounts for the fact that "speakers seem to prefer conventional patterns" (1981: 124). Differently put, the use of a limited range of lexical and syntactic patterns can be accounted for by the fact that people usually recognise the purpose of giving compliments as nothing more than the reinforcement of solidarity.⁴ To justify this, Manes and Wolfson provide some instances in which "an atypical semantic or syntactic choice results in an intended compliment's not being recognized as such" (1981: 126). As an example of such a case, the authors provide an anecdote: a speaker's choice of a less common adjective (interesting) to describe the addressee's dress, instead of using common adjectives such as nice, or beautiful, caused the addressee trouble in readily identifying the comment as a compliment. What this instance suggests, according to Manes and Wolfson (1981), is that it is reasonable for the speaker to take a safer way, by relying on a formula. Thus in this case (of compliments on the dress), the speaker should have used one of the typical adjectives for commenting on clothes (beautiful, nice, and so on). Using formulaic components such as common adjectives enables the speaker to avoid the risk of having her or his intention misunderstood by the addressee. In short, American-English compliments can be seen as "social lubricants" (Wolfson 1983b: 89) in that they are serving to increase the solidarity between the speaker and addressee.


⁴ In fact, Manes and Wolfson (1981: 124) claim that the expression of solidarity is "the raison d'etre of the compliment".
2.1.2 English other than American English

So far, several researchers have examined compliments in other varieties of English. For example, Holmes (1986, 1998) investigated compliment exchanges in New Zealand English. In the data (collected and analysed ethnographically), Holmes found certain similarities with American English data, in terms both of syntactic patterns and lexical choices of compliments. Holmes (1986) notes that the formulaic nature of complimenting “may extend to other English-speaking speech communities” (1986: 491). With regard to the formulaic nature of compliments, in his contrastive study on complimenting behaviour in American English and South African English, Herbert (1989) also finds formulaic compliments in South African English, stating that, “the form of compliments appears to be identical in the two language varieties” (1989: 22). Nevertheless, Herbert demonstrates the fact that “even when speech communities share a single (or, at least, very similar) set of linguistic resources, they may differ significantly in the allocation of those resources; culturally appropriate behavior depends on knowledge of the sociocultural norms of language use” (1989: 22). For example, Herbert (1989) finds certain differences between American English and South African English, which include (i) the frequency of compliments, and (ii) the way of responding to compliments. 5

The role played by culture is highlighted by Lee (1990), who focuses on compliment events in Hawai‘i Creole English (HCE). Lee’s (1990) observations include the speakers’ use of tags in compliments, for example, ‘Eh, yaw house nice, yah?’
(Your house is nice, isn't it?). According to the author, in HCE compliments, tags "serve to seek approval of and agreement on the compliment" (Lee 1990: 130). The use of tags in compliments is interpreted as "a manifestation of a cultural value" (1990: 151). Manifestations of culture can be found in HCE compliment responses too. Lee (1990: 135) notes that the common response is denial, which "functions as a marker of cultural identity and cultural transfer". According to the author, HCE responses such as 'Nah,' or 'None' convey "a sense of modesty, which is an integral part of the cultural origins of the HCE speakers' ancestors" (Lee 1990: 135). Although it may be too premature to directly connect 'modesty' with Asian cultural values, Lee's (1990) observation is important in placing much emphasis on the role of culture in compliment events.

Before turning our attention to compliments in European languages, I would like to touch upon two studies: Norrick (1980) and Boyle (2000), since each of them has important implications for the present study. Norrick (1980) is one of a few studies that discuss nondirect compliments. According to Norrick (1980: 299), nondirect compliments "can be either indirect or figurative". Further, Norrick (1980: 302) explains why nondirect compliments are used, by employing the notion of "social maxims". While Norrick (1980) proposes four maxims, two of them seem to be particularly relevant to the present study. These two maxims are:

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5 Chick (1996) also investigated compliment responses in South African English and found some differences among different ethnic groups.

6 Having investigated American and South-African English compliments, Herbert and Straight (1989) conclude that the use of tag questions in compliments is not acceptable, since English compliments "do usually take the form of simple active affirmative declarative sentences" (Herbert and Straight 1989: 37). Their observation does not seem to apply to Hawai'i Creole English.

7 Most of Norrick's (1980) examples seem to be constructed or retrospective.
Avoid imposing your own taste as a standard.
Avoid topics of a personal nature (e.g., religion, sex life, political affiliation, income etc.). (Norrick 1980: 302)

Although Norrick (1980) does not make it clear how nondirect compliments embody these maxims, his suggestions are implicative of a risk associated with giving compliments.

While Norrick’s (1980) focus is on nondirect compliments, Boyle (2000) discusses implicit compliments. Boyle (2000) takes a different approach from that of most previous researchers who examine compliment events. Employing conversation analytic approach, Boyle (2000) collected and analysed implicit compliments, which have been neglected by the previous studies that deal “almost exclusively with explicit compliments” (Herbert 1997: 488). Boyle defines the compliments that he focuses on as follows:

These are not ‘explicit’ compliments that contain a semantically positive adjective or verb, but rather compliments that rely on the interpretive procedures for their constitution and effect. (Boyle 2000: 35)

Implicit compliments in Boyle (2000) include: (i) those referring to achievements, and (ii) those involving comparison. As the author points out, these types of compliments are unlikely to be collected through observation or field-note study. In addition, 8

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8 Yuan (2001) makes some points about the inaccuracies and limits of relying upon field notes. Yuan admits that she “was often affected by the frequent, prototypical utterances and
although Boyle (2000) finds the use of implicit compliments in radio talk, such compliments can also be found in non-institutional, ordinary conversation, as will be demonstrated later in the present study.

In 2.1.1 and 2.2.2, I have summarised studies on compliments in varieties of English. As suggested by these studies, a single speech event such as complimenting behaviour is not necessarily identical even among English-speaking communities. Furthermore, it is also true that despite the common language they use, the function of compliments may vary, due to the different cultural norms underlying each speech community. This leads us to the possibility of finding more distinctive characteristics if we look closely at the same speech event in diverse speech communities which do not share the language.

2.1.3 European languages

Partly as a result of the concentration of researcher’s attention on English compliments to date, in comparison with the extensive volume of studies of compliments in English (especially compliments in American English as noted above), very little is known about compliments in other languages. In this subsection, I will summarise the findings of previous studies on compliments in European languages.

Two contrastive studies touch on the characteristics on Spanish compliments. One is Cordella, Large and Pardo (1995) who look at Spanish complimenting behaviour as a result, may have recorded certain unconventional utterances such as inverted word orders in a conventional way” (2001: 287).
compared with that in Australian English. Their findings basically support the Bulge theory (Wolfson 1988) except for patterns shown in Spanish males. Although the numbers of Spanish compliments they analyse are relatively small (40 in total) as the authors admit, it is still interesting to look at some divergences from acknowledged patterns in English. More recently, Lorenzo-Dus (2001) compares compliment responses between Spanish and British English. Spanish responses show some characteristic patterns, for example, a request for repetition, and “an expansion of the compliment” that was “atypical in the British corpus” (Lorenzo-Dus 2001: 114).

Looking at complimenting behaviour in Polish, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989) points out some interesting features that have not been reported in the literature on American English compliments. First of all, the data shows that Polish compliments are less formulaic, and more indirect than American-English counterparts. The other findings include the existence of “two groups of informants” with regard to how frequently they compliment (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989: 76). One group is “those who consider almost any overt signal of approval or admiration as too explicit an attempt at solidarity establishment” so that “they simply try to avoid them [giving compliments]”, whereas the other group can be identified as “the habitual ‘compliment-givers’” (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989: 76). Although a clear-cut distinction between these two groups is impossible, as the author admits, such an idiosyncrasy is an issue which warrants further discussion. In particular, although the author did not

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9 According to Wolfson (1988), certain types of speech behaviour such as compliments appear more between “nonintimates, status-equal friends, coworkers, and acquaintances” than between “intimates, status unequals, and strangers” (Wolfson 1988: 32). Wolfson calls this theory the Bulge, because of the shape of the diagram.
pursue questions such as: (i) why some people tend to avoid proffering compliments, and (ii) in what kind of situations, people withhold compliments, these questions are worthy of investigation.

Another study that concerns Polish compliments is Herbert (1991) who collected 400 compliments ethnographically. According to Herbert, “compliments are rather infrequent in Polish” (1991: 386), but they are “highly formulaic” (1991: 396), thus his observations do not corroborate Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk’s findings. With regard to the function of Polish compliments, Jaworski (1995) observes that Polish compliments are more likely to be regarded as “expressions of praise” rather than “solidarity tokens” (Jaworski 1995: 69).

Nevertheless, compliments of a formulaic nature were also found by Ylänne-McEwen (1993) in Finnish. According to Ylänne-McEwen (1993), while formulaic features are found in both languages, in contrast with British compliments, Finnish compliments are longer and less frequent. With respect to frequency, Wieland (1995) also reports infrequency of compliments by French speakers. Interestingly, however, Wieland (1995) observes that French people give compliments more frequently than Americans, in a dinner party context. Another finding by Wieland (1995: 810) regarding French complimenting behaviour shows “a greater extent a concern for respecting the territorial rights of others and for having one’s own territorial rights respected (negative politeness concerns)”. This observation by Wieland (1995) is worth noting in that it implies some possible negative effects of proffering compliments, which have been overlooked by previous studies.

10 Earlier, with regard to Spanish compliment responses, Valdés and Pino (1981) also reported
As for German compliment exchanges, recently Golato (2005) has analysed compliment sequences in detail. Golato's (2005) findings include a third party’s participation in a multiparty context. That is, subsequent to the first compliment, the third party may join in the activity. According to Golato (2005), third party’s participation is constrained by preference organisation. That is, when the first compliment is given in a dispreferred environment, a subsequent second compliment does not follow. Golato (2002) also reports some characteristics of compliment responses in German. According to the author, Germans “do not engage in complimenting behavior in order to do face work” (Golato 2002: 565). That is to say, in a clear contrast with prototypical American speakers, Germans “only pay a compliment if they indeed admired or liked the item in question” (2002: 565).

Despite the fact that they examine different languages, these studies (i.e., Wieland (1995) and Golato (2002, 2005)) have a common feature in that they look at dinner-table conversations. It is, as Wieland notes, “important to take context into consideration” when studying speech acts (1995: 809). It seems clear that recording (and transcribing) the conversation enables us to take context fully into account.

This section has reviewed the works on Western languages. As Boyle (2000: 27) mildly criticises, much research “employs ethnographic methodology by Manes and Wolfson (1981)” and reproduces “the basic claim of Manes and Wolfson (1981) that compliments are formulaic”. However, some recent studies (for example, Boyle (2000)

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11 Although Golato (2002)’s corpus contains audiotaped telephone conversations, the major part of her data represent dinner-table conversations.
and Golato (2002, 2005)) demonstrate the possibilities that compliment events display more variety in many respects, depending on culture, context, and so forth.

### 2.2 Studies on compliments in non-Western languages

This section will review these studies whose focus is on compliment events in non-Western languages, including those in Asian languages.

Nelson, El Bakary, and Al Batal (1996) look at Arabic compliment exchanges and find some similarities and differences with the equivalents in American English. For example, similar to the Americans, Arabic speakers use a limited number of syntactic patterns; three syntactic patterns constitute 78% of all compliments appearing in their corpus. The other similarities with American compliments include the fact that “they were primarily adjectival” (Nelson, El Bakary, and Al Batal 1996: 117). However, in terms of the form of compliments, certain differences from American compliments are found: such as the use of “long arrays of adjectives” “elaboration” “similes and metaphors” (Nelson, El Bakary, and Al Batal 1996: 123). Further, as for frequency, Egyptians are found to exchange compliments less frequently than Americans.

Still within Arabic, Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols (1996) focus on compliment responses in Syrian. The authors report that the Syrians frequently use formulaic expressions in accepting a compliment, and the length of the Syrian compliment exchanges is much longer than the English equivalents. More recently, Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001) investigate compliment responses by Jordanian college students, and
report that “the Agreement Maxim (Leech, 1983) seems to dominate” (Farghal and Al-Khatib 2001: 1499) in their data. The authors point out that “the Arabo-Islamic social culture plays an important role” (Farghal and Al-Khatib 2001: 1499) in compliment responses in Jordanian society.

Before moving on to the overview of the previous studies on Japanese compliments, I will review some studies that investigate compliments in Asian languages. Chen (1993) is a contrastive study focusing on compliment responses between Chinese and American English. The differences as well as the similarities in the ways of responding to compliments between the two languages are discussed. The results show that, in responding to compliments, Chinese speakers’ strategies are motivated by Leech (1983)’s Modesty Maxim, while in American compliment responses, the Agreement Maxim (Leech 1983) seems to play a dominant role.12

Examining complimenting behaviour in Kunming Chinese (one of the southern Chinese dialects), Yuan (2001) uses various methods of data gathering. Although the author’s focus is on comparing the plausibility of these methods (written/oral discourse completion tests, field notes, and recorded conversations), Yuan’s (2001) findings are worth noting in many respects. For example, the result shows that respondents use a variety of means in response to compliments: these include exclamation particles, repetitions, inversions, and omissions; all of which are not commonly seen in compliment responses in American English.

Intachakura (2001) is a contrastive study on compliment events between Thai and British English using a sociolinguistic approach. According to Intachakura’s (2001)
observation, Thai speakers tend to rely on formulaic compliments. At the same time, the author finds some “compliments with similes” (2001: 115) in which celebrities or overseas people (for example, Caucasians, Japanese, and Chinese) are used for a comparison. Intachakura interprets this phenomenon as “culture-specific value judgement” (2001: 120). As for compliment responses, the deflect/evade category appears to be the most common way of responding to compliments by Thai speakers.

This section summarised the findings of prior studies on compliment events in some non-Western languages. It seems no accident that all of these studies discuss cultural aspects to some extent. It indicates, or reminds us of the important role played by culture in compliment events.

2.3 Studies on compliments in Japanese

To date, quite a few researchers have investigated Japanese compliments from various perspectives. Among them, Barnlund and Araki (1985) is recognised as a pioneering contrastive study on complimenting behaviour between Japanese and American English. By conducting interviews and questionnaires to elicit people’s own experience and perceptions of the behaviour, the authors attempted to reveal “deeper cultural premises” (Barnlund and Araki 1985: 22). Their findings include the fact that (i)

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12 Holmes (1986) points out that the Modesty Maxim overrides the Agreement Maxim in Malaysian compliment exchanges.
Americans give and receive compliments far more often than Japanese, and (ii) Japanese people tend to compliment less directly and more modestly than Americans. With regard to social distance between participants, their results show that Japanese people exchange compliments “less frequently in close relations and more often in relations that were more distant” (Barnlund and Araki 1985: 23). Based on their findings, Barnlund and Araki (1985: 25) conclude that “the rules that govern human interaction within a community are the culture”. According to Barnlund and Araki’s (1985: 25) explanation of the low frequency of compliments in Japanese, Japanese society is founded on the group rather than the individual (on which American society is founded), so that it “stresses harmonious relations, is not likely to encourage comparisons that inherently weaken group membership”.

Daikuhara (1986) is another contrastive study between Japanese and American-English compliment events. By employing an ethnographic approach, Daikuhara (1986) investigates the linguistic patterns, topic, response, and function of compliments. According to the author, Japanese compliments show “strong cultural value attached to formal attributes” found in Japanese society (Daikuhara 1986: 114). Examples of such formal attributes include the fact that the person graduated from a well-known university, or the fact that the person works for a first-class company.

Another contrastive study has been conducted by Hinata (1996), who examines compliments in Japanese and Portuguese. Hinata (1996) focuses on the relationship between compliments and feelings of appreciation (kansha no kimochi). While in both languages, feelings of appreciation can be related to the action of proffering
compliments, the ways of expression are not necessarily the same. The author specifies the following situation: a friend invites you as a guest for dinner. In this hypothetical situation, according to the author, Portuguese guests tend to proffer compliments on each food in a specific manner (for example, the steak is best cooked, vegetables are so fresh, the sauce is incredible, and so on), attempting to be sincere, and be original. However, Japanese guests do not seem to adopt such specific or detailed ways of complimenting the host’s cooking, probably due to politeness concerns. Hinata (1996) further points out that Japanese ways of proffering compliments can be described as ‘overall affirmation’ (zenmen kootei), being obscure or vague. Although Hinata’s (1996) examples are either constructed or retrospective, her implications are worth noting.

Yokota (1986) compares the ways of responding to compliments between Japanese and American English. Since the author’s focus is on pragmatic transfer in language learning, the data is collected from learners of English and Japanese. The result suggests that whereas the Americans accept compliments, Japanese respondents tend to avoid straightforward acceptance. However, it is difficult to apply this result to the general tendencies possibly seen in Japanese society, due to the relatively small numbers of the participants of the study (sixty in total, including twenty Japanese native speakers). Like Yokota (1986), Saito and Beecken (1997) investigate the characteristics of compliment responses from a pedagogical perspective (the authors are interested in pragmatic transfer in American learners of Japanese). According to Saito and Beecken (1997: 373), the normative Japanese response is “a mixture of positive, negative, and

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13 The fact that Daikuhara’s (1996) data is collected from young Japanese speakers living in the
avoidance strategies”. It should be noted, however, that their data are collected through closed role-play, not to mention the small number of respondents.

More recently, Kim (2005) investigates compliment topics (home no taishoo) in Japanese and Korean conversation. Kim (2005) collects the data from university students’ conversation in both languages. According to Kim, Japanese speakers proffer compliments less frequently than their Korean counterparts. Compliment topics also differ in the two languages. Japanese speakers are less likely to proffer compliments on appearance and change of appearance, while Korean speakers favour these topics. In Kim (2005), the most preferred topic by Japanese university students is performance (suikoo). Two preferred topics, performance and action (koodoo), comprise about sixty percent of all topics by Japanese speakers. Kim’s result needs to be treated carefully since the author asked participants to proffer compliments if they have a chance to do. Still, Kim’s findings are worth considering. As for the methodology, to the best of my knowledge, Kim (2005) is the only research that analyses audio-recorded conversational data (in a non-institutional context) to investigate Japanese compliment events.

As for quantitative research, employing an ethnographic approach, Maruyama (1996) analyses 1019 compliment exchanges produced mainly by university students. Sex of participants, objects of compliments, and status differences between participants were selected as factors for analysis. Maruyama’s (1996) findings include (i) compliments occur more frequently between status-equals than status-unequals, and (ii)

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14 While the total numbers of “compliment discourses” (home no danwa) in Japanese are less than Korean, in terms of number of utterances appeared in each discourse, Japanese exceeds Korean (Kim 2005: 17).
compliments are likely to be accepted between same-sex participants. Since Maruyama’s (1996) data has been overwhelmingly collected from university students, the grade difference (for example, sophomore and freshman) stands for the status difference. However, it is rather questionable if we can relate grade differences among university students to the status differences outside of university campuses. Nevertheless, since “status relations are critical in determining the character of communicative behavior in Japan” (Barnlund and Araki 1985: 23), it is worth considering Maruyama (1996)’s result with respect to the relationship between complimenting behaviour and status relations of participants in Japanese society.

A few qualitative studies on Japanese compliments were also carried out in the last decade. Viewing compliments as one of the interpersonal expressions (taiguu hyoogen), Kawaguchi, Kabaya, and Sakamoto (1996) attempt to make a distinction between ‘substantial compliments’ (jisshitsu home) and ‘superficial compliments’ (keishiki home). According to Kawaguchi, Kabaya, and Sakamoto (1996: 15), substantial compliments are motivated by sincere admiration, whereas superficial compliments are motivated by other intentions. It does not, however, seem to be possible to make a clear-cut distinction between ‘substantial’ and ‘superficial’ compliments, when we analyse compliments in real life. In addition, since most of their data come from the authors’ introspection, their claims should be treated carefully.

The functions of compliments in specific contexts have recently become a target of investigation. For example, Kodama (1996a, 1996b) examines compliments in talk-

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15 Kim (2005) admits that in the preliminary research, he failed to collect sufficient numbers of compliment events in Japanese.
16 Only five percent of her data were collected from people other than university students.
interviews. Compliments were observed and analysed according to the speaker's institutional roles (host and guest) in interviews. Compliments are also analysed in terms of the positions in which they appear in the discourse. Through looking at the whole context instead of taking isolated compliments out of context, Kodama (1996a, 1996b) attempts to show a comprehensive view of the functions of complimenting behaviour. However, the result has to be treated carefully. Although the author collects data from talk-interviews, strictly speaking it is difficult to say that her data reflects characteristics of spoken language such as talk-interviews, since they are collected from written sources: for example, from articles on interviews (taidan kiji) in magazines. Thus, as the author admits, the validity of her data is questionable, since it is unknown "to what extent the articles on interviews reproduce the actual spoken interactions" (Kodama 1996b: 91, my translations).

Focusing on compliment responses, Terao (1996) looks at compliment exchanges in conversation. 1037 compliment exchanges in total come from two kinds of data: (i) collected from TV talk show, and (ii) observed and recorded ethnographically. In Terao's (1996) corpus, a variety of ways of expressing modesty are found, rather than direct denials of compliments, such as 'Ie ie, tondemonai (No, not at all)'. This corroborates the common understanding that people's perceptions of their own speech behaviour often do not correspond to the actual way of speaking (Wieland 1995). That is, despite the fact that "Japanese people tend to consider that such direct denials are conventional and stereotypical ways of responding to compliments" (Terao 1996: 88, my translation), in her data, people did not deny compliments. Reflecting interest in ways of responding to compliments, compliment responses have recently attracted researchers' attention. For example, Hirata (1999), Saito and Beecken (2000),

Furukawa (2003) focuses on the relationship between compliment givers and receivers, in her analysis of compliment events. According to Furukawa (2003), while Japanese compliments are commonly directed from social superiors to social inferiors, people of equal social status exchange compliments as well. Further, Furukawa (2003) proposes distinct viewpoints of compliment givers: general (shakaiteki), personal (kojinteki), and specialist (senmonteki) viewpoints. That is, Furukawa (2003) assumes that people proffer compliments from one of these viewpoints. In fact, however, it is not easy to divide all compliments in these three classes. Furukawa’s (2003) attempt is nevertheless suggestive for the analysis of Japanese compliment events, in that it implies that Japanese speakers may consider other peoples’ view when they proffer compliments. However, the fact that Furukawa collected all of her data from written sources, such as newspaper articles or novels, makes the implication less convincing, although there is no doubt that such data represent certain characteristics of Japanese complimenting behaviour to some degree.

To sum up this section, a number of studies contribute to developing our understanding of Japanese compliment events. However, most studies tend to treat compliment events as something isolated from the surrounding context. As a result, some aspects of compliment events are still not clear, for example, what triggers speakers to proffer compliments at a particular point of talk, or what happens after the recipient’s response. As Kim’s (2005) study indicates, in order to obtain comprehensive understanding of
compliment events, it is necessary to look at compliment events within the environment in which they appear.

2.4 Summary of literature review

To date, extensive research have been done on compliment behaviour in various languages. Most prior studies regard compliments as positive politeness strategies: a device to develop solidarity among participants. Yet it has not been clearly documented exactly how participants accomplish this interactional task through compliment events. By recording and transcribing conversation, recent studies demonstrate that speakers (both compliment givers and recipients) employ certain strategies, in order to cope with various interactional or situational concerns. These studies suggest that contextual information is important to the analysis of compliment events (Boyle 2000). Instead of analysing them as events isolated from the surrounding context, it is necessary to incorporate contextual information (topics, situations, the relationship between participants, and so on) as much as possible into the analysis of compliment events. By so doing, we are able to observe that participants are sensitive to such contextual or situational constraints. Participants are not, in many cases, careless about what is going on around them. It is not easy though to document this, if we isolate the events from surrounding context.

Following these lines, the present study will attempt to reveal how participants (i) employ compliments as a device to develop a good relationship with other
participants, and (ii) cope with constraints when giving and receiving compliments in conversation. Taking the surrounding context into consideration, it will draw a detailed picture of compliment events in Japanese conversation.
Chapter 3

The characteristics of compliment sequences

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the general characteristics of compliment sequences on the basis of the distinction between 'initial compliments' and 'non-initial compliments', in line with the distinction between 'initial assessments' (Pomerantz 1984) and 'non-initial assessments'. As noted by Pomerantz (1984), these two types of assessments display different characteristics. Since a compliment is a type of assessment, different characteristics are likely to be observed between 'initial compliments' and 'non-initial compliments' in my data set. Another important distinction can be drawn with regard to the nature of target objects of compliments: 'substantial objects' and 'non-substantial objects'. I demonstrate this distinction is very useful to capture the nature of target objects, as well as the development of compliment sequences. It will be shown that participants proffer more compliments on non-substantial objects, and initial compliments on substantial objects tend to be followed by subsequent non-initial compliments.

This chapter is organised as follows. In 3.1, some characteristics of initial and non-initial compliments will be summarised. In 3.2, I focus on the features of target
objects of initial compliments. Here, I propose the distinction between substantial and non-substantial objects. The following sections 3.3 and 3.4 discuss in detail compliment sequences in terms of target objects, substantial and non-substantial objects respectively. The final section, 3.5 concludes the chapter.

3.1 Initial and non-initial compliments

This section aims to provide a global picture of compliment sequences, with special attention to the distinction between initial and non-initial compliments. In addition to some background information on the notions I employ, the characteristics of initial and non-initial compliments in terms of placement, as well as their interactional roles will be summarised. In addition, the issues of similarities and differences between two-party conversation and multiparty conversation will be discussed.

3.1.1 Background

As briefly noted above, the concept of initial compliments stems from Pomerantz (1984)'s study: “Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes”. According to Pomerantz (1984: 61), the initial assessment “provides the relevance of the recipient’s second assessment”. Pomerantz (1984: 62) also notes: “[o]ne systematic environment in which assessments are proffered is in turns just subsequent to coparticipants’ initial assessments”. Thus participants are observed to collaboratively accomplish assessments in conversation.
Goodwin and Goodwin (1992: 155) also point out the interactive character of assessments, noting that assessments "can be organized as an interactive activity". These observations seem to be pertinent to the analysis of compliment sequences in the data for the present study, in which subsequent to initial compliments, co-participants provide further compliments. The interactive nature of assessment activities is fully retained in compliment sequences in the data.

In addition to noting the interactive character of assessments, Goodwin and Goodwin (1992) also point out their public character:

By virtue of the public character of this display, others can judge the competence of the assessor to properly evaluate the events they encounter (such a process is clearly central to the interactive organization of culture), and assessors can be held responsible for the positions they state. (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992: 155)

It is of importance that assessments have "public character". Through assessing something, assessors make explicit (i) that the events are assessable, (ii) their ability to assess, and (iii) their position or view on the events. In cases of the act of proffering compliments, therefore, when one gives a compliment, one is seen to let other parties know these three things. As for the last point, one's position towards the referent is always positive. Further, for the speaker of initial compliments, the first point is particularly important: to let other parties know that the events are assessable. In contrast, for the speaker of non-initial compliments, they are likely to display the second and third point, rather than the first one.
3.1.2 Distinction between initial and non-initial compliments

As mentioned earlier, it is important to distinguish initial and non-initial compliments in order to investigate how compliment sequences unfold. In 3.1.2, I will provide the definitions of initial and non-initial compliments, as well as their distinctive interactional roles in conversation.

Initial and non-initial compliments are defined as follows. While both initial and non-initial compliments are positive evaluations produced by a conversational participant on something or someone related to another participant in the same conversation, they differ in the following respects:

Initial compliments: Compliments which are produced for the first time on a particular entity during the conversation.

Non-initial compliments: Any compliments which are produced subsequent to the initial compliment, on the same entity as the initial compliment.

The following is a typical instance of compliment sequences in which both initial and non-initial compliments appear (in this example, they are marked by IC and Non-IC respectively, next to the line number).

(1) <17NNA1: 29> Cooking skill
M: Maiko, T: Takashi, E: Eriko, S: Saeko

1 [IC] M: nee kore rikisaku da ne
     hey this.one laborious.work CP IP
In the above excerpt, the target entity of these compliments is the meal (homemade meatloaf) cooked by Saeko, who is the recipient of these compliments. First, in line 1, Maiko produces a compliment on this particular meal for the first time. While serving the meal, Saeko responds to Maiko’s compliment in the next line. Subsequently, other participants, Takashi (lines 3 and 6) and Eriko (line 7) both provide compliments on the same entity. In short, subsequent to the initial compliment [IC] produced by Maiko, two other participants proffer non-initial compliments [Non-IC].

In terms of placement, therefore, initial compliments are produced at the point where no one has ever proffered a compliment on the entity within the conversation. In contrast, non-initial compliments are produced subsequent to initial compliments. Largely due to their different placements, the interactional roles of initial and non-initial

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1 Throughout the thesis, I leave most of the interactional particles *ne* found in examples as it is
compliments differ. Recall that one of the roles of giving compliments is to let other parties know that the entity is positively assessable. As noted earlier, this is a particularly important role of initial compliments. By contrast, non-initial compliments do not necessarily have this role. That is, after the initial compliment is produced, other parties are aware of this: the entity is positively assessable. Rather, the main roles of non-initial compliments are to let others know their ability to assess, as well as their position on the referent.

In addition, I argue that proffering initial compliments and proffering non-initial compliments are different practices in terms of their effect on the ongoing talk. As pointed out by Heritage (2000: 200), “going first [proffering initial assessment] can have a greater impact in implicitly establishing superior access, expertise, authority, and rights to assess the matter in question”. Going second, in contrast, that is proffering non-initial compliments, may have lesser impact, due to the presence of preceding initial compliments. In fact, for those other parties who produce subsequent compliments, it is almost impossible not to take the claim of initial compliments into account. Another way of saying this is that initial compliments establish “a context in which a second can be found to agree or disagree” (Heritage 2000: 200). As will be shown, speakers of non-initial compliments make use of preceding initial compliments as resources in many ways.

To summarise 3.1.2, while both initial and non-initial compliments share the basic property of compliments, in the case of the former (initial compliments), speakers are not provided with resources when they proffer a compliment. By contrast, speakers

in English translations. See Chapter 4 for the function of ne in compliments.
of the latter (non-initial compliments) are provided with resources that they can make use of. In this regard, giving initial compliments may require an extra effort by speakers, due to a lack of resources for making a claim.

3.1.3 Compliment sequences in multiparty and two-party conversation

In 3.1.3, I will touch upon similarities and differences of compliment sequences between multiparty and two-party conversations. Needless to say, the most obvious difference between multiparty and two-party conversations is the number of participants. In multiparty compliment sequences, there are co-participant(s) who can be engaged in the activity (to proffer subsequent non-initial compliments), in addition to the party who proffers initial compliments. In contrast, in two-party conversation, due to the absence of a third party, subsequent non-initial compliments have to be produced by the same person who produced the initial compliment. Therefore, there are two possibilities with regard to potential producers of non-initial compliments in multiparty conversation. Non-initial compliments can be produced either by (i) a third party (or third parties), or (ii) the same participant who produced the initial compliment. In two-party conversation, however, potential producers of non-initial compliments are the persons who proffered the initial compliment (that is, (ii) above). In the following, I will illustrate these three cases in order.

First, in multiparty conversation, subsequent to initial compliments, other parties may proffer compliments, as follows.²

² In this chapter, initial compliments are marked by double arrows, while non-initial
In (2), the hostess Mayumi has just served the meal. Then Yuko, one of the guests produces the initial compliment on this meal in line 2. This compliment is followed by a subsequent compliment (lines 4 to 5) produced by Shige, who is another guest.

In multiparty conversation, a participant who produced the initial compliment can later proffer subsequent compliments too, as follows.

(3) <12Y3R1: 5> Apartment
K: Kayo, H: Haruka

1→ K: yoku dekiteru yo ne: “It is well built, NE.”
2→ H: u [n.]

compliments are marked by single arrows.
In (3), Kayo first proffered a compliment on the quality of apartment (line 1). Then, in overlap with Haruka's agreeing compliment (Haruka is not the recipient of this compliment but a co-participant), Kayo further makes an upgraded positive comment on the same entity in line 3. Thus in this excerpt, non-initial compliments are produced both by the initial-compliment giver and the co-participant.

In a two-party context, as noted, due to the absence of a third party, potential producers of non-initial compliments are limited to the participant who produced the initial compliment. For example:

(4) <11A1: 46> Experience
Y: Yoshie, S: Sayuri

1➔➔ Y sono jisseki: wa (. ) sugoi yo, ima donna no? (. ) >are that experience TP great IP now how NR well
2 yappari< hijooki- hijookin ko [oshi °mitaina° as.expected part- part.time tutor like
\"That's great experience. What's your current status? Well, are you teaching as a part-time tutor or anything like that?\"
3 S [hijookin hijookin mochiron. part-time part-time of.course
\"Part-time, part-time, of course.\"
4➔ Y fuun ↑demo sugoi janai I .see but great TAG \"I see, but that's great, isn't it?\" ((continues talking))

In (4), the topic is Sayuri’s career. In lines 1 to 2, Yoshie pays a compliment on Sayuri’s
experience. This is a lengthy turn, but the first part of this turn is the compliment in question. Then in line 4, Yoshie further produces a compliment, by repeating the adjective sugoi ‘great’.

In a multiparty context, therefore, there are greater possibilities of occurrences of non-initial compliments, largely because of greater numbers of participants. However, ‘multiparty’ settings do not necessarily entail the constant presence of a third party. That is, even in multiparty conversation, where there are more than three participants, it is quite possible to have a momentary ‘two-party’ conversation. Therefore, as will be shown, in multiparty-compliment sequences, a third party (potential producer of non-initial compliments) is not always available, and this absence of a third party can be identified as one of the causes of non-occurrence of subsequent compliments.

3.2 Target objects of initial compliments

In 3.2, I discuss the issue of target objects of initial compliments in relation to the development of sequences. Speakers proffer initial compliments on a variety of things. The target objects of initial compliments in the data include a tasty dish, a fine wine, the hostess’s cooking skill, a generous attitude, an achievement in the past, a good joke, and so forth. While different researchers use different classifications of target objects, I propose a distinction between substantial and non-substantial objects. As it turns out,

3 For example, see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974: 713) for “the mechanism of
the development of compliment sequences differs in terms of the types of target objects. Here, I discuss this distinction and its effect on the unfolding of the sequence.

3.2.1 Substantial and non-substantial objects

In 3.2.1, I discuss the types of target objects. First of all, the distribution of target objects of initial compliments is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Distribution of initial compliments by target objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target objects</th>
<th>Number of instances</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance/ability</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 shows that performance/ability is the largest category in numbers (36 instances), followed by personality, possession, and appearance. However, according to this classification, the group of ‘others’ contains 49 instances, and accounts for 38 percent of all of the initial compliments. In the data, this group consists of the following

schism.”

4 I followed Holmes (1986) for this classification of target objects. In my data, ‘performance/ability’ includes cooking/sewing skills, ‘personality’ contains personal character such as generousness, ‘possession’ refers to plants, a ring et cetera, and
various types of referents: food items such as a wine brought by guests (13 instances), attitude (9 instances), utterances (9 instances), non-present family members (8 instances), knowledge or understanding (7 instances), and others (3 instances). It is probably clear that not all these referents should be classified as ‘others’. In other words, this classification is less useful in examining my data, except to grasp the tendency, or to make a comparison of target objects of compliments with those in other languages.5

Instead, I propose to divide these various kinds of target objects into two groups: substantial objects and non-substantial objects. While the former, substantial group includes food items on the table, a gift, hairdo, and so on, the latter non-substantial group contains objects such as personality, good understanding, clever utterances, or family members who are not present. It seems all too obvious that the former physically exists in front of participants at the time of conversation, while the latter does not exist, or is invisible (in a physical sense). However, as will be shown, there is a difference between these two groups in terms of the subsequent unfolding of the sequences. According to this classification, while the number of substantial objects is 49 (37.98 percent), there are 80 instances of non-substantial objects (62.02 percent). Thus non-substantial referents are more likely to become the target objects of initial compliments. Table 3.2 shows a breakdown of the substantial/non-substantial distinction.

5 'appearance' refers to hair style and so on.

A number of studies (Herbert 1991; Intachakra 2001; Lee 1990; Maruyama 1996; among others) use Holmes's classification, in order to make a comparison of target objects between
Table 3.2  Distribution of initial compliments by target objects: Substantial/non-substantial distinction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target objects</th>
<th>Number of instances</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantial objects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food item</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-substantial objects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-present family member</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>62.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>129</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

two or more languages.
Table 3.2 shows that within the substantial objects group, almost half of initial compliments are paid on food items (23 out of 49). This is followed by possessions, and appearance. In non-substantial objects, performance and personality are the most popular referents and account for about 56 percent (45 out of 80). The rest of this category includes attitude, knowledge, utterance, and non-present family member. This distribution seems to parallel Kim (2005) who investigates target objects ('compliment topic' in Kim's terms) of compliments given by Japanese university students. Kim (2005: 18) classifies target objects into the following seven groups: performance, action, possession, ability, appearance, change of appearance, and personality. In Kim (2005), the most preferred target object of compliments is performance (38.6%). Although we have to be cautious of making a comparison of the figures because of the different classifications we use, Kim's (2005) findings corroborate the tendency of target objects of the present study. For example, in Kim (2005), while substantial objects (possession, appearance, and change of appearance in his classification) account for less than 30 percent of all compliments, non-substantial objects (performance, action, ability, and personality) are predominant, comprising more than 70 percent of target objects.

As noted earlier, the difference between substantial and non-substantial objects is their physical existence at the time of the conversation. For example, a non-present family member is classified under the category of non-substantial objects, since these family members appear only in the conversation. In fact, non-substantial referents are often embedded within the talk, and thus they are not necessarily readily accessible to every participant. In other words, participants who give compliments on these objects

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6 Kim (2005) is a contrastive study of compliment topic in Japanese and Korean university
have to pick them up from the talk and bring them to the foreground. For example:

(5) <17NNA2: 11> Mother2
M: Maiko, E: Eriko, S: Saeko, T: Takashi

1 T: .h denki tsuketara tsukanai kara aa soo=
   light turn.on doesn’t.work because oh so
2 E: =↑he  [heh  
   “He heh”
3 T: [jitsuwa [soo na n da $toka  nanka$ ha ha=
   in.fact so BE NR BE or.something well
   “When I turned on the light, it didn’t work, and she said oh yes, it doesn’t
   work, or something like that, ha ha”
4 S:  [ha hah hah
   “Ha ha hah”
5 T: [=ha ha hah
   “ha ha hah”
6→ M: =erai yo ne okaasan nee
   great IP IP mother IP
   “(His) mother is great, NE.”

Here in (5), Takashi talks about his recent visit to his mother, who lives by herself. In
lines 1 and 3, Takashi explains how his mother is patient with various small troubles in
her house, such as a burnt-out light bulb (the point is that his mother does not complain
about, or ask him to fix these troubles). Having heard this, Maiko proffers a compliment
on Takashi’s mother’s attitude in line 6. Notice that careful listening and monitoring of
the talk make it possible for participants to give this type of compliment. One cannot
give compliments on these referents unless one is at least a good listener. By contrast, it
is possible that giving compliments on substantial referents (for example, recipient’s
hairdo) that are present in front of speakers at the time of conversation requires a

students.
participant's monitoring of the ongoing talk to a lesser extent. Therefore, it can be said that giving this type of compliment on non-substantial referents reflects participants' positive attitude towards ongoing conversation.

The distinction between presence and non-presence at the time of conversation may also influence the development of compliment sequences. I suspect this is due to the differing degrees of accessibility to the object. It seems to be clear that it is easier for participants have access to something that is physically present, than to have access to something that is not present (but only appears in the talk, for example) at the time of conversation. As pointed out by Goodwin and Goodwin (1992: 165), each participant "has different access to and experience of the event being assessed". In other words, when speakers assess a particular referent, in essence, they have independent access to the referent. As indicated by Heritage (2002: 200), this fact may be less significant "in contexts where the parties are joint experiencers of a state of affairs", for example, when participants share a meal. It is expected that participants have the same access to the meal when they share it. In contrast, for non-substantial objects such as recipient's personality, participants are more likely to have different access. Therefore, in terms of the degree of accessibility, substantial and non-substantial objects differ.

In short, initial compliments on substantial objects and on non-substantial objects can clearly be distinguished, in terms of their presence/non-presence, and thus their degree of accessibility.

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7 However, as it turns out, participants are observed to monitor the talk almost all the time. I will deal with this issue in Chapter 4.
3.2.2 The development of sequences in terms of target objects

In 3.2.2, I discuss the development of sequences in terms of target objects. First of all, among 115 initial compliments identified in multiparty conversation,8 while substantial objects account for 37 instances (32.17%), non-substantial objects account for 78 instances (67.83%). Thus participants give more compliments on non-substantial objects. If we look at these 115 initial compliments in terms of occurrences of subsequent non-initial compliments, 83 of them (72.17%) are followed by subsequent compliments. In contrast, 32 instances of initial compliments (27.83%) stand alone, not being followed by subsequent compliments. These figures indicate that initial compliments in multiparty context are frequently followed by subsequent compliments.

Table 3.3 summarises the distribution of these initial compliments in terms of whether they are followed by subsequent compliments.

Table 3.3 Distribution of initial compliments by target object

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature of target objects</th>
<th>Number of instances</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial objects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed by Non-ICs*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>83.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not followed by Non-ICs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-substantial objects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed by Non-ICs</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not followed by Non-ICs</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Here I exclude 14 initial compliments found in two-party conversation in my data set.
Table 3.3 shows that substantial objects are more likely to attract subsequent compliments than non-substantial objects. In fact, more than eighty percent of initial compliments on substantial objects are followed by subsequent compliments. In the case of non-substantial objects, the percentage is a little lower than that of substantial objects, yet more than sixty-five percent of them are followed by subsequent compliments.

To summarise, the participants in the data give more initial compliments on non-substantial objects, such as personality, attitude, or disposition, and so forth. In many cases, participants pick these personal attributes up from the talk, and bring them to the foreground by giving a compliment. These target objects, however, are less likely to be followed by subsequent compliments. That is, initial compliments on substantial objects such as food item are more likely to be followed by non-initial compliments in multiparty context. In terms of whether an initial compliment is followed by further non-initial compliment(s), compliment sequences can be divided into the following four types:

(i) Initial compliments on substantial objects followed by Non-ICs
(ii) Initial compliments on substantial objects not followed by Non-ICs
(iii) Initial compliments on non-substantial objects followed by Non-ICs
(iv) Initial compliments on non-substantial objects not followed by Non-ICs
In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss these four cases in detail. We first focus on (i) and (ii) in 3.3, and then on (iii) and (iv) in 3.4. It will be shown that, in most cases, the absence of non-initial compliments can be accounted for.

3.3 Compliment sequences on substantial objects

In 3.3, I focus on the development of compliment sequences on substantial objects such as food items, possessions, and so on. First I discuss the cases where non-initial compliments follow, then the cases in which subsequent compliments are absent. The fact that participants tend to give subsequent compliments on these items can be accounted for by accessibility to the object, as well as participation framework (Golato 2005).

3.3.1 The cases where subsequent compliments follow

In 3.3.1, I will focus on the cases where subsequent compliments follow an initial compliment on a substantial object. The following example is one of the typical cases in which the target object is the meal prepared by the hostess.

(6) <17NNA1: 4> Homemade dip
M: Maiko, E: Eriko, S: Saeko
1→→ E: oishii kono dippu.
tasty this dip
"Tasty, this dip."

2→ M: nani? atashi mo oishisoo da to omotte.= what I too looks.tasty BE QT think:and
"What is it? I thought it looks tasty too."

3 S: =soo kore ne (. ) eeto kani: to kuriimuchiizu to (0.6) ato (. )
so this IP well crab and cream.cheese and and
onionsuupu toka ⁰mazeru⁰ onion.soup et.cetera mix
"Yeah, this one is, well, I mixed crab and cream cheese and onion soup and other things."

4→ M: tezukuri ne?
homemade IP
"It's homemade, isn't it?"

5 S: ⁰nn⁰
mm
"Yeah."

6→ M: sasuga
excellent
"Excellent."

In line 1, Eriko gives the initial compliment on the dip. In the next line, Maiko joins in and asks what it is, then gives a compliment. While Saeko (hostess) explains how to make the dip,⁹ Maiko gives further compliments on Saeko’s effort (lines 5 and 7). This is a typical example in which the guests give a series of compliments on the meal prepared by the hostess. Golato (2005) explains this phenomenon in terms of participation framework. According to Golato (2005: 156), an initial compliment (‘the first compliment’ in Golato’s (2005) terms) on the meal prepared by the host serves as an expressions of thanks. In this kind of situation, speakers who produce subsequent compliments “perform the same action as the first compliment speaker”. This

⁹ Saeko’s response orients to Maiko’s question rather than to compliments. See Chapter 5 for this type of response.
observation is pertinent to the actions performed by Eriko and Maiko as the guests in (6). Giving compliments on food (in particular, the meal prepared by the host) serves as thanks or an expression of gratitude. In the data, in every situations where a party produces an initial compliment on food items prepared by the host (10 instances in total), subsequent compliments are forthcoming.

The category of ‘food’ includes food items brought by the guests, in addition to food prepared by the host. Speakers give initial compliments on these items (food item brought by a guest), and thus compliment sequences are generated. The following example illustrates this.

(7) <3STK1: 20> Red wine
M: Mayumi, Y: Yuko, S: Shige

1→ → M: a oishii kore doko no; minami afurika datte=
oh tasty this where LK South Africa it says
“Oh, tasty. Where does it come from? It says South Africa.”

2 Y: =sōo nano minami afur [ika
yes it.is South Africa
“That’s right. South Africa.”

3→ M: [minami afurika no o iishii yo ne=
South Africa LK tasty IP IP
“South Africa’s ones are tasty, aren’t they?”

4→ S: [umai
tasty
“Tasty.”

5 Y: =a-so [o nano atashi no ]nda koto nai.=
oh so is.it I tasted thing no
“Oh, is that so, I never tried it.”

6 M: [mae nimo nonda no] before too had IP
“I tried it before, too.”

7→ M: =a hontō, oishii yo oishii yo
oh really tasty IP tasty IP
In (7), participants start tasting a wine brought by two guests, Shige and Yuko. In line 1, Mayumi (one of the hosts) proffers the initial compliment on this wine. Subsequently, both Mayumi and Shige give compliments on the same wine (lines 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9). While this sequence looks similar to the previous one (they are both compliment sequences on a food item), they differ in one respect. Notice that Shige is one of the guests who brought this particular wine, therefore, he is expected to be a recipient of compliments. However, he joins in the activity and gives compliments along with Mayumi, the host. Further, the other wine-bringing guest Yuko gives compliments as well later in the conversation (data not shown).

In my data, this phenomenon (that is, the guests give compliments on the food they brought) can be found in other conversations too. They (the guests) seem to enjoy the food, and express their pleasure shared with the hosts. In other words, in (7), while the host (Mayumi) expresses gratitude, the guest (Shige) expresses his pleasure, by proffering compliments on the wine. Thus, this example suggests that the participation framework (guest versus host) observed in (6) may be relaxed in the case of compliments on food brought by the guest. In any case, however, the data shows that

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However, interestingly, the initial compliment on food item brought by the guest is always given by the host, without exception. The guests seem to withhold compliments (or expressing enjoyment) until the hosts proffer an initial compliment.
initial compliments on food are most likely to be followed by co-participants’ non-initial compliments.

The next example illustrates how accessibility to the object plays a role.

(8) <12Y3R1: 5> Apartment
K: Kayo, H: Haruka

1→→ K: yoku dekiteru yo ne::;
   well  built   IP  IP
   “It is well built, NE.”
2→→ H: un.
   yeah
   “Yeah.”

In line 1 in (8), Kayo gives a compliment on the quality of the apartment where the conversation is taking place (the owner is Rie, one of the participants). Kayo expresses her impression of the high quality of the apartment with admiration. Then in the next line, Haruka produces a non-initial compliment in the form of agreement (an agreement token un ‘yeah’). Unlike non-initial compliments found in (6) and (7), this compliment does not serve as an expression of thanks. But Haruka’s production of a non-initial compliment can be attributed to the fact that she has access to the referent. As will be shown later, if potential non-initial-compliment speakers have no access to the object, they may claim that they do not have access to the referent, or they may simply withhold subsequent compliments.

In short, participants’ production of non-initial compliments on substantial objects can be attributed to participation framework and/or accessibility to the object.
3.3.2 The cases where subsequent compliments are absent

As shown in Table 3.3, among 37 instances of initial compliments on substantial objects, in six cases, non-initial compliments are absent. Among them, while one instance is unaccountable, for the other five, we can see the reasons why non-initial compliments are not forthcoming. In other words, there are certain grounds for the non-occurrence of subsequent compliments to initial compliments. Below, I will illustrate these cases.

In the next excerpt, the recipient of the initial compliment immediately accepts it.

(9) <12Y3R1: 1> Picture2
A: Ayako, K: Kayo

1→→ A: kiree::
beautiful
“It’s beautiful.”

2 K: nee.=
yeah
“Yeah.”

3 A: =a soo a [tashi hajimete mita kyoo
oh so I first.time saw today
“Oh yeah, I noticed for the first time today.”

4 K: [soo soo.
right right
“Right, right.”

In (9), Ayako gives a compliment on the quality of pictures taken by Kayo’s digital camera (line 1). While Kayo in response agrees with Ayako, as can be seen, neither Ayako nor another party gives further compliments on the same referent. There are two
more instances in which the recipients of the initial compliments immediately accept them, then subsequent compliments are not forthcoming. Thus recipients’ acceptance of compliments may provide grounds for the absence of non-initial compliments.\footnote{11}

In the next example, the initial compliment seems to be misplaced.

(10) \textlt{4STK1: 35} Muscle + T-shirt
S: Shige, Y: Yuko, M: Mayumi

1 S: miseyoo to omotchatta no yo
try.to.show QT thought:AUX NR IP

2 chot [to ne:::
little IP
“I tried to show (it), just a little bit.”

3\rightarrow M: [o:::
[ kirei da ne, mada ne,
oh beautirul BE IP still IP
“Oooh, (it’s) still beautiful, NE.”

4 (0.8)
5 S “n?°
huh
“Huh?”

6 Y: n- (.).tiishatsu no koto?
eh T-shirt LK thing
“Eh, you mean T-shirt?”

7 S: [kono tiishatsu
this T-shirt
“This T-shirt”

8 M: [sono tiishatsu [ga
that T-shirt SB
“That T-shirt, I mean.”

9 Y: [[$kinnikukato$
muscle Q QT
“I thought you meant muscle.”

\footnote{11} Among 31 cases where non-initial compliments follow, there are no instances in which the recipients immediately accept the claim of initial compliments. This suggests that compliment recipients’ immediate acceptance may preclude occurrences of subsequent non-initial compliments.
Prior to (10), Shige was proudly talking about his upper-body muscle, and Yuko expressed her surprise, as well as appreciation. When Shige took off his jersey, Yuko jokingly told him that she knew his intention: to show off his muscle. In lines 1 to 2, Shige agrees with Yuko, by admitting that he tried to show off his upper-body muscle (notice that, however, he does not mention *kinniku* 'muscle'). Then Mayumi, who is not engaged in the talk, joins in and gives a compliment in line 3. First she expresses her surprise (*o::::: ‘oooh’*) and evaluates ‘something’ as *mada kirei* ‘still beautiful’. Due to the lack of subject (or empty topic slot (Golato 2005)), at this point, it is unclear what Mayumi refers to. This utterance, therefore, causes trouble for the participants. The short gap in line 4 provides evidence of this trouble. Further, Shige also displays he has trouble in line 5. Then Yuko comes in to offer a candidate understanding. In the following lines (lines 7 to 8), it becomes clear that Mayumi meant Shige’s T-shirt, not his muscle; she has misinterpreted Shige’s utterance in line 1, as meaning that he tried to show his T-shirt (Shige wears a T-shirt under the jersey).

The possible reason why no subsequent compliments follow this compliment on a substantial object (T-shirt) in (10) is the misplacement of the initial compliment. As illustrated, Mayumi ‘misplaced’ her compliment, resulting in trouble. In this sort of situation, participants seem to give precedence to solving the problem over giving subsequent compliments. Golato (2005) also notes that participants are very sensitive to

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12 Lines 4 to 6 can be seen as a typical repair sequence. Mayumi’s turn is a trouble-source turn, while Shige’s turn is a repair initiator. Then Yuko responds with an understanding check. See Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) for the discussion of this practice.
context, based on the observation that they do not give second compliments in
dispreferred environments. While the situation in (10) is not a typical dispreferred
environment (for example, lodging a complaint, rejecting an offer), it can be said that
participants are sensitive to the context, so that they may refrain from giving subsequent
compliments when they have some problem in interaction.

In one instance where an initial compliment is not followed by subsequent
compliments, there is no potential speaker who can proffer subsequent compliments, as
follows:

(11) <1NN: 48> Hair colour
M: Maiko, S: Saeko

1→→ M: ne sore te dooyuufuuni shite somete
hey that QT how do.and dye
2→→ soo shizen ni naru no? do- dooyuufuu na;
like natural LK become Q how
“Hey, how do you dye your hair to make it so natural?”
3
(0.8)
4 S: [ nanka: ]
well
“Well,”
5 M: [zentai ni som ]eteru?
whole LK dye
“Do you dye all of your hair?”
6
(1.0)
7 S: demo; yappari ue no hoo dake ga kurokunaru k [ara,
but you.know top LK part only SB become.black because
8 M: [u:n
mm “Mm.”
9 S: (.) chotto ue no hoo shika naranakunchau
little top LK part only don’t.become:AUX
“But, you know, because only the top part becomes black, so only the top of
it becomes black.”
In (11), Maiko gives a compliment on Saeko’s hair colour. Since this compliment is produced in the form of question, Saeko explains how she had done her hair (in lines 4, 7, and 9). Although in this conversation, there is another participant (Eriko), in this particular spate of talk, she does not participate in the conversation. In this case, therefore, non-initial compliments are not forthcoming due to the absence of potential speakers. As noted earlier, even in multiparty conversation, this phenomenon is not uncommon (Golato (2005) also points out this phenomenon as a cause of absence of second compliments).

I illustrated five cases out of six instances where no subsequent non-initial compliments follow to initial compliments on substantial objects. In these cases, the absence of non-initial compliments is accounted for: the recipient accepts the compliment (3 cases), misplacement of initial compliment (1 case) and the absence of potential producer of non-initial compliments (1 case).

In sum, more than 80 percent of initial compliments on substantial objects are followed by subsequent non-initial compliments. This suggests that initial compliments on substantial objects strongly invite subsequent compliments. In particular, it was shown that non-initial compliments on food items serve as expressions of gratitude or shared pleasure by participants. Another factor to be considered is a relatively high degree of

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13 Following this conversation, Saeko and Maiko continue to talk about hair for a while. A couple of minutes later, Eriko, who seemed to have been to the bathroom, rejoins the conversation.

14 Maiko’s design of this compliment (lines 1 to 2) may be another possible reason why non-initial compliments are absent. Since the compliment is embedded in the question, Saeko
accessibility to the object. That is, due to their physical presence, substantial objects warrant other parties to give subsequent compliments. In most cases where non-initial compliments are absent, their absence can be accounted for by recipients’ immediate acceptance of initial compliments, misplacement of initial compliments, and the absence of a potential producer of non-initial compliments.

3.4 Compliment sequences on non-substantial objects

In 3.4, I illustrate how compliment sequences on non-substantial objects develop. As noted in 3.2, among 78 instances of initial compliments on non-substantial objects, in 52 cases, non-initial compliments are forthcoming. In the remaining 26 cases, however, non-initial compliments are absent. As in the case of substantial objects discussed in 3.3, the occurrence and non-occurrence of non-initial compliments can be accounted for.

3.4.1 The cases where subsequent compliments follow

Despite their objects’ ‘non-presence’, initial compliments on non-substantial objects often attract non-initial compliments. For example:

(12) <17NNA2: 8> Taiikukai
M: Maiko, E: Eriko, S: Saeko

(recipient of compliment) seems to answer the question.
In (12), Maiko gives an initial compliment on Eriko’s attitude in line 1. Here, Maiko refers to Eriko as *taiikukai* ‘sports-type person’ and appreciates Eriko’s action performed immediately before this sequence (Eriko rose from her chair and went to the kitchen to wash her wine glass). As can be seen, Maiko further gives an explanation-like compliment in line 4. As such, a recipient’s attitude observed at the time of conversation may become a target object and invites subsequent compliments.

In the next example, while the target object is a recipients’ attitude, it is not observed by speakers at the time of conversation.

(13) <1NN: 22> Cleverness
M: Maiko, S: Saeko

1 M: demo mono wa fuyashicha ikenai ne (= but possessions TP if.increase bad IP
"But we should not increase our possessions.”

2 S: =u:]n yeah
"Yeah."

3→ M: [ichiban kashikoi yo mono fuyasanai no wa. best clever IP possessions not.increase NR TP
"Not to increase the possessions is the cleverest way (to live).”

4 (0.6)
In (13), Maiko gives an initial compliment on Eriko’s attitude (line 3). After hearing that Eriko seems to live with the minimum possessions, Maiko formulates her thought as a compliment to Eriko. Saeko then proffers a subsequent compliment in line 5 in the form of agreement with Maiko. Unlike (12), however, these speakers do not observe the action performed by Eriko. Rather, they have only listened to Eriko’s accounts. Nonetheless, speakers give compliments on these kinds of objects that are often embedded within the talk.

In addition to personal attributes such as attitude, speakers give compliments on non-present family members. For example:

(14) <7YA4: 8> Parents
T: Takako, M: Midori

1➔➔ T: waka [i ne:: otoosan
  young IP father
  “(Your) father is young, NE.”

2➔ M: [wakka: : : : i
  young
  “So young.”

In (14), the target object of compliments is Yuri’s father, who had stayed with these participants for a while and left earlier. Upon hearing he is in his mid-sixties (from Yuri), first Takako gives a compliment on his youthfulness. In overlap, Midori gives a

15 Prior to this segment, being asked by Saeko if she has possessions such as a desk or a bed,
subsequent compliment as well. In this example, therefore, Midori is able to give a non-initial compliment because she (as well as Takako) has a first-hand knowledge of the target object. However, even when they have no such knowledge, speakers may give non-initial compliments, as the next example demonstrates.

(15) <17NNA2: 11> Mother2
M: Maiko, E: Eriko, S: Saeko

1→ M: erai yo ne oka [asan nee
greatIP IP mother IP
"(His) mother is great, NE."
2→ E: [uun yeah
"Yeah."

Example (15) is taken from the same sequence as example (5). Here, as already noted, the topic is Takashi’s mother’s attitude. Subsequent to Maiko’s initial compliment, Eriko gives a non-initial compliment in line 2. Notice that, unlike Takako and Midori who had access to the object (Yuri’s father’s youthfulness) in (14), both Maiko and Eriko in (15) have never met Takashi’s mother. Nevertheless, they are able to pick up some favourable attribute from the talk (in this example, Takashi’s mother’s attitude), and give compliments on it.

In short, speakers give subsequent compliments on non-substantial objects that are often embedded within the talk. By doing so, speakers are able to display their positive attitude towards the ongoing conversation.

Eriko said that her biggest possessions are a small TV and a bar fridge.
3.4.2 The cases where subsequent compliments do not follow

As shown in 3.2, in 26 out of 78 compliment sequences on non-substantial objects, non-initial compliments are not forthcoming. This accounts for one third of this group. First, potential speakers of non-initial compliments may produce laughter instead of providing subsequent compliments.

(16) <12Y3R3: 9> Second coming-of-age day
M: Mari, A: Ayako

1→→ M: sutekina hyoogen=
  lovely expression
  "Lovely expression."
2  A: =↑ha hah hah
   "ha ha hah"

In (16), Mari gives a compliment on a particular expression produced by one participant. In line 2, latched with Mari's compliment, Ayako produces laughter. Laughter at this particular point of talk, that is, following initial compliments, can be seen as speakers' display of affiliation with the prior speaker. There are 9 instances of laughter in this environment.

Similarly, speakers may produce interjections following initial compliments, rather than providing subsequent compliments. An example is shown below.

(17) <17NNA1: 9> TOEIC2
T: Takashi, S: Saeko

1→→ T: wa sugoi ↑ha hah hah
    oh  great
"Oh, that's great, ha ha hah"

In (17), Takashi gives a compliment on Maiko's attitude. In the next line, Saeko produces lengthened hee 'I see'. Although I do not include these utterances in the list of compliments if they are produced independently,16 nonetheless, these interjections can be seen as speaker's display of her alignment/affiliation with the prior initial-compliment speaker.17 Another interjection found in this environment is oo 'oh.' Thus I find two instances, hee 'I see' and oo 'oh' of this type of utterance in the data. These interjections, as well as laughter at this particular point of talk (that is, following initial compliments) can be seen as an alternative to substantial compliments, in the form of participants' display of their alignment with the prior speaker who produces initial compliments.

In some cases, after an initial compliment is provided, there is virtually no chance for other speakers to produce compliments. For example:

(18) <17NNA3: 44> Laputa
M: Maiko, E: Eriko, T: Takashi

1 ➔ E: kurooto ppoi desu nee professional like BE IP "Sounds like professional, NE."
2 T: ( [ ]

There are several instances of interjection + adjective type compliments in the data, for example, hee sugo::i 'wow, great.'

See Goodwin and Goodwin (1992) for the extensive discussion of assessments, including nonlexical items which appear in assessments, such as 'ah:::'.
In the prior part of talk, Takashi expressed his preference for one particular film over another, more popular one (both directed by the same director). Upon hearing this, in line 1, Eriko gives an initial compliment on Takashi’s taste in films. While Takashi’s response is inaudible, in the next line (line 3), Maiko shows her disalignment with Eriko. Maiko could have shown her alignment with Eriko, by proffering a subsequent compliment on the same object, Takashi’s taste in films. Instead, Maiko focuses on the fact that the couple (Takashi and Saeko) have different tastes in films. And then Maiko asks them how they cope with the different tastes (data not shown). As such, the flow of the talk may prevent potential speakers from producing non-initial compliment. These cases account for 14 instances of the absence of non-initial compliments.

In one instance, a potential producer of a subsequent compliment implicitly claims no access to the referent.

(19) <17NNA1: 23> Staying overseas
M: Maiko, T: Takashi, E: Eriko

1→→ M: erai yo nee annatokoro ni
greatIP IP such place at
“It’s great ne, (to live) in such a different place.”

2 T: ma- mawari ni nihonjin no kata anmari inai-ar- around in Japanese LK people not.many there
“You- you don’t have many Japanese people around,”

3 E: nn kekkoo imasu yo_6
well relatively there.are IP
“Well, we have some.”

4 T: aa
Here, the topic is Eriko’s stay in one city in Australia. In the preceding talk, Eriko said that she has been there for five years. Then Maiko, who had been in the same city for a while, utters a compliment in line 1. Following this compliment, Takashi, a possible producer of subsequent compliments, takes a turn in line 2. Since he has never been there, Takashi appears to suggest that it is hard to live in the place in question, upon hearing Maiko’s compliment, which implies certain problems with living there. Thus, this excerpt indicates that a lack of relevant knowledge or information prevents co-participants from giving subsequent compliments.

In summary, on non-substantial objects too, speakers tend to give non-initial compliments. Speakers display their alignment with prior speakers who produce initial compliments, despite the inaccessibility of their objects. However, this does not indicate that the non-occurrence or absence of these subsequent compliments constitutes a display of disalignment. Rather, in most cases, the context prevents speakers from giving non-initial compliments. Otherwise, speakers may laugh or produce interjections, which can be interpreted as their display of alignment with prior speakers. It is therefore possible to see these laughter and interjections as an alternative to substantial compliments.
3.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined how compliment sequences unfold, based upon the distinction between initial and non-initial compliments. It is found that once one speaker proffers an initial compliment, co-participants tend to give subsequent compliments on the same object. The distinction between substantial and non-substantial target objects was also proposed as an effective criterion for the analysis of the unfolding of compliment sequences. The data shows that participants give initial compliments more often on non-substantial objects than substantial ones. However, if we look at the unfolding of the sequence, compliment sequences on substantial objects are more likely to develop than on their non-substantial counterparts. I argue that this can be attributed to participation framework and the accessibility to the object. The analysis also shows that, when non-initial compliments are absent, there are reasons for their absence, such as contextual features. This suggests that the occurrence and non-occurrence of subsequent compliments are not arbitrary determined, but systematically organised.
Chapter 4

The design of compliments

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I deal with the issues involved in the process of proffering compliments, in particular, (i) in what way speakers proffer compliments (i.e., explicitly or implicitly), (ii) how they make use of available resources (such as certain linguistic forms), (iii) to whom they address compliments, and (iv) when they proffer compliments. It is well observed in the data for the present study that when one proffers a compliment, one monitors the conversation carefully. By doing so, one can proffer a compliment with appropriate contents, at an appropriate time, and in an appropriate manner.

As pointed out by many studies (Boyle 2000; Golato 2005; Herbert 1997; Holmes 1986; Jaworski 1995), previous research focuses almost exclusively on direct, or explicit types of compliments. However, it is found in the data for the present study that speakers tend to give compliments in a less direct manner, using a variety of strategies. These strategies can be seen as a manifestation of the compliment giver’s concern for the recipient, in the sense that compliments are assessments on certain aspects of the recipient, thus they may be seen as a threat to the recipient’s personal
territory. This concern for the recipient can also be found in the frequent use of interactional particles (Maynard 1992) in compliments, in particular, *ne* and *yo*. Further, the issue of recipients of the compliment and addressees of the utterance will also be discussed. Although it has been thought that compliment givers normally address the recipient directly, in my data, some of them do not address the recipient. The data suggests that 'non-addressing' can be seen as a useful alternative, particularly when the speaker gives a compliment on the recipient's personal attributes. The issue of location of compliments in conversation is also examined. While it has been said that compliments occur anywhere in conversation, it does not necessarily mean speakers compliment at random. Rather, there are certain constraints. The data shows that speakers are highly sensitive to these constraints of timing when they give or withhold compliments.

This chapter is organised as follows. In 4.1, I will discuss the issue of degree of directness of compliments, and then illustrate the ways of giving direct compliments. Then in 4.2, I focus on strategies for less direct compliments. Section 4.3 will focus on the design of predicates in compliments. Section 4.4 concerns the issue of recipients of compliments and addressees of utterances. Lastly, in 4.5, the location of compliments in conversation will be examined. Section 4.6 concludes the chapter.

### 4.1 Degree of directness of compliments and direct compliments

This section discusses the degree of directness of compliments. The ways of giving compliments vary in terms of the degree of directness. As indicated by Jaworski (1995:
65), however, it is not practical to distinguish ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ compliments, “due to the fuzziness of many examples”. I too find that in my data, the distinction between the two is not so clear-cut. Rather, the degree of directness of compliments can be seen as a gradation: from the most direct ones, that may rely exclusively on adjectives that carry positive meaning, to the least direct ones, that do not rely on these adjectives at all. The data indicates that the degree of directness seems to be related to the speaker’s concern for the recipient. That is, the greater the speaker’s concern for the recipient, the less the degree of directness. Yet if they have no concern for the recipient, then it is difficult to explain why speakers give compliments in a less direct manner, at the expense of the ‘safeness’ of being readily identifiable as compliments.

As noted earlier, previous research tends to neglect less direct, implicit compliments (exceptions are Boyle 2000; Golato 2005; Lewandowska-Tomaszyczk 1989). This can be attributed, as Boyle (2000: 28) points out, to the data-collection method employed by most research, that is, ethnographic method (field observation). This restricts “the type of utterance that can be recorded to the short, the simple, the unambiguous, and the memorable”. Therefore it is not surprising that direct compliments outnumber the less direct ones, since it is very difficult to record less direct, or implicit compliments through observation. As Boyle (2000: 29) argues, audio recording and transcripts “enable the researcher to reveal the complex, local, interactive constitution of a compliment”. To take full advantage of audio recording, therefore, the present study focuses more on less direct compliments than direct compliments. Before examining less direct compliments, however, let us look at some examples of the direct

1 Lewandowska-Tomaszyczk (1989: 77) suggests that indirect compliments are “not so ‘safe’
and explicit compliments.

The most direct and explicit compliments in the data set rely exclusively on positive descriptors, typically adjectives and/or adverbs. Let us look at the following examples.

(1) M: sugoi oishisoo:
    very looks.tasty
    “(It) looks very tasty.”

(2) M: yoku dekimashita
    well did
    “Well done.”

In these utterances, speakers directly express their positive assessment of something related to the recipient. For instance, in (1), the speaker expresses her impression on the food, by using the adjective oishisoo ‘looks tasty’. Similarly, the speaker of (2) articulates her praise of the recipient’s achievement, by uttering yoku dekimashita ‘well done’. These direct and explicit compliments are pervasively found in the corpus. The advantage of this direct feature is that it is easily and unmistakably identifiable as a compliment.

In the following examples too, speakers give compliments which contain these positive descriptors, but in a somewhat downgraded manner.

(3) K: sugoku ii to omou n da yo nee
    very good QT think NR BE IP IP
    “I think (it’s) very good, NE.”

as formulaic praising (they may not be recognized as compliments by addressee)”. 73
In (3), the speaker expresses her impression of the apartment. While she describes it as sugoku ii ‘very good’, the degree of directness of this utterance is lower than that in, for example, the more direct utterance in (1). Unlike the speaker of example (1), this speaker downgrades her assessment by adding the expression to omou2 ‘I think’.

Similarly, in (4), the speaker expresses his appreciation of his wife. This utterance is similar to (2) in that the core component of this compliment is yoku yatta ‘did well’. However, it is again observed that the speaker in (4) downgrades the force of compliment, by adding the expression hoo da ‘relatively’. In addition, the speaker’s reservation can also be seen in the turn-initial hesitation marker yaa ‘well’.

In sum, the degree of directness of compliments varies. Speakers of direct compliments tend to rely on positive descriptors such as adjectives (e.g., ii ‘good’, oishii ‘tasty’) or adverbs (e.g., yoku ‘well’, sugoi ‘very’). However, the less direct ways of giving compliments may or may not rely on descriptors that carry positive meaning. Rather, they tend to rely on context, or other party’s knowledge. In 4.2, I will discuss these strategies for less direct compliments.

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2 As also pointed out in Masuoka (1991), to omou is one of expressions used by the speaker who makes her utterance less decisive.
4.2 Strategies for less direct compliments

As Lewandowska-Tomaszycyk (1989: 83) notes, less direct compliments may involve ambiguity, or, in some cases, it may not be possible to interpret them as compliments at all "without additional contextual clues". In the following, I will illustrate this. In the data, the following four strategies are found as an effective means to proffer compliments in a less direct manner.

(i) Referring to general logic
(ii) Referring to the recipient as model
(iii) Accounts
(iv) Comparison

Below, I will discuss these strategies and their characteristics, particularly in relation to the nature of target objects.

4.2.1 Referring to general logic

One of the identified ways of giving compliments less directly is to formulate the event as general logic. Speakers are found to refer to general logic related to the target object, instead of directly referring to, and focusing exclusively on, the target object itself. To put it differently, speakers try to generalise the event they observe. Let us first look at the following example.
(5) M: yappa ryouri umai tte ii yo ne::
   you.know cooking good.at TP good IP IP
   "You know, having cooking skill is so nice NE."

The situation in which this utterance was produced is a gathering of four friends. The speaker produced (5) while the hostess was serving homemade meatloaf. Thus it is clear that the utterance is triggered by this particular meal. In fact, prior to this utterance, other speakers proffer compliments that directly refer to the meal, for example, oishisoo ‘it looks tasty’, or sugoi na kore ‘this is great’. In contrast, this utterance in (5) does not directly orient to the meal itself. Instead, the speaker’s focus is on the hostess’s cooking skill, which is realised as the meal on the table. Therefore, it can be said that the speaker formulates the event she has observed as ‘it is good to have cooking skill’.

Similar formulations can be found in the next examples as well.

(6) Y: muri o shinai tte yuu no wa hitotsu no(.) kotsu
    overwork O do:NEG QT say NR TP one LK knack
    da yo nee
    BE IP IP
    "Avoiding overworking is a knack, I guess."

(7) K: karetenai shooko da yo ne
    not.withered proof BE IP IP
    uranai kinisuru tte yuu no wa un.
    horoscope care.about QT say NR TP yeah
    "That’s proof that one is not withered up NE, if you care about your horoscope, yeah."

Both in (6) and (7), the speakers give compliments on the recipients’ attitude. For example, in (6), the recipient of this compliment has said that she does not go running when the weather is bad. Having heard this, Yuri formulates her impression as a
compliment. What Yuri says seems to be generally understood as a good way of keeping fit. Similarly in (7), the attitude of the recipient of this compliment concerns her horoscope. The recipient has said that she looks up her horoscope every morning, and if it says something positive, then she tries to think that it is going to be a good day. In response to this comment, Kayo produces (7), which is a formulation of her own evaluation of such a positive attitude. What Kayo is saying is that caring about her horoscope means she is interested in her future.3

What is common to these compliments is that their speakers refer to general logic. These formulations can be summarised as follows.

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
\text{<Example>} & \text{<Attributes of recipients>} & \text{<Speakers’ evaluation>} \\
(5) & \text{ryoori ga umai (be good at cooking)} & \text{ii (good)} \\
(6) & \text{muri o shinai (to avoid extreme)} & \text{hitotsu no kotsu (a knack)} \\
(7) & \text{uranai o kinisuru (to care about horoscope)} & \text{karetenai shooko (proof of activeness)} \\
\end{array}
\]

Speakers may formulate their positive evaluation of attributes of recipients in this way. Note that, by doing so, speakers do not orient to the target object (that is, the attribute of the recipient) exclusively, as typical direct compliments do. Rather, instead of limiting themselves to mentioning (and giving compliments on) the attribute, they extend it to include generally-accepted views, such as that having cooking skill is good.

As such, referring to general logic can be seen as one of the least-direct ways of giving compliments, in the sense that it may include other people who have the same

3 In a prior part of this talk, Kayo admitted that she had stopped looking up her horoscope, implying that she is not so interested in her life.
attributes. Due to this feature, such a compliment may be heard as an obscure utterance, that is, whether the utterance is a compliment or not is unclear. One may wonder, therefore, if such an ‘obscure’ way of complimenting works. In fact, speakers sometimes may feel the fear of being too obscure, so that they try to make the point clearer. The next example illustrates this.

(8) Y: iji shiteru hito tte honto sugoi to omou midorisan mo keep do person QT really great QT think ((name)) too fukumete da kedo include:and BE but “I really respect people who keep fit, including Midori though.”

Three participants talk about the importance and difficulties of staying fit. One participant has admitted that she is much less fit than before, then Yuri has agreed with her. They have all agreed that it is very easy to lose fitness unless they try hard. Then, Yuri produces the above utterance. Yuri seems to formulate their talk so far, in the first part of her utterance. Note that Yuri could have stopped talking here: iji shiteru hito tte honto sugoi to omou ‘I really respect people who keep fit’. From the context, it is easy for other parties to interpret this utterance as a compliment to Midori. However, Yuri continues talking. The latter part of her utterance, an increment midorisan mo fukumete da kedo ‘including Midori though’, is therefore seen as evidence of the speaker’s fear of excluding Midori from a group of people iji shiteru hito ‘people who keep fit’.

As demonstrated by example (8), this way of complimenting seems sometimes not powerful enough to convey the speaker’s positive feeling to the target recipient. However, as will be shown, this ‘weakness’ is one of the important characteristics of
non-direct compliments. In effect, if speakers wish to fully express their positive feelings, they may resort to direct compliments. But speakers may also refer to general logic when they give compliments, particularly on the recipient’s personal attributes, such as skill, or attitude.

4.2.2 Referring to the recipient as model

The next way of giving compliments in a less direct manner is to refer to the recipient’s attribute as the ideal one. As will be shown, by doing this, speakers are able to imply their appreciation of the recipient’s attribute less directly.

Let us look at the first example below. Shige expresses his appreciation of Yuko’s way of communicating with him (Yuko is a co-participant who is present).

(9) S: dakara sa:: yuukosan gurai ni tsukkondekureru to sa so IP Yuko about in kindly.challenge if IP choodoii n da yo ne:: the.best NR BE IP IP “So, if (people) challenge just like Yuko does, that’s the best for me NE.”

Prior to the above utterance, Shige has complained about a lack of sense of humour among people in Kanto region. According to Shige, when he plays the fool, the majority of people do not react as he expects; they tend to ignore it (or tend not to notice it). Shige seems to want to be challenged when he plays the fool, rather than being

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4 Midori is known by other participants as the one who keeps doing regular exercise.
5 Although Shige is from Kanto region (or Tokyo and its surrounding areas), he seems to have many friends from Kansai region (or Osaka and its surrounding areas), who tend to
ignored. As he recalls, in Kansai region, people tend to challenge a person who plays the fool. In contrast, this rarely happens in Kanto region, in his opinion. Then one of the participants (note that all of them are from Kanto region) agrees with his opinion saying that sometimes he never knows if the person who talks to him is playing the fool or not. And Shige produces the above utterance, that Yuko’s type of *tsukkomi* ‘challenge’ is just right (*choodoii*) for him.

The speaker treats Yuko as ideal, or the model in terms of challenging. Yuko in this utterance is a ‘representative’ of his ideal world, where people play the fool and challenge, not too often but not too rarely. The first point to note about this compliment is that the use of the particle *gurai* is evidence of this. The expression *Yuukosan gurai ni* ‘as much as Yuko’ is used here to illustrate the degree or extent. The second notable point about this utterance is the use of auxiliary verb *kureru* ‘(lit.) give’. The speaker could have used the verb *tsukkomu* ‘to challenge’ by itself. In that case, the speaker would seem to take a neutral position, by simply describing Yuko’s way of challenging. However, the speaker expresses his appreciation (to Yuko) by saying *tsukkonde kureru* ‘kindly challenge’. In this way, Shige describes Yuko as an ideal. As noted, since Yuko is present, Shige has the option of speaking directly to Yuko. However, formulating a compliment in this way is another option through which speakers reduce the pressure on the recipient to respond.

In the next example too, the speaker treats the recipient’s attribute as the model.

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6 Kanto and Kansai regions are often talked about as having different cultures. It seems that issues such as sense of humour or ways of talking are evidence of the distinct features of people in each region.

7 In fact, later in this talk, the participants all agree that it is almost obligatory to challenge the
Participants talk about the exercise that they all need but cannot easily do regularly. (10) is the latter part of Yuri’s utterance, which begins with an expression of her need for new exercise clothes. In the first part of the utterance, Yuri has said that she has to buy a new jersey, while laughing. Other participants, including Takako, laugh as well. Then Yuri adds the utterance in (10), which refers to Takako’s approach as showing an admirable attitude. 8

What makes the utterance a compliment is the first part of it, takakosan o minaratte ‘following Takako’. When the verb minarau ‘to learn, to imitate somebody’ is used, ‘somebody’ (in this case Takako) is understood as the one who should be followed by others. By saying this, Yuri treats Takako as the model to be followed, and she expresses her will to follow, rather than complimenting Takako directly on her attitude. Another feature that contributes to making this utterance weak and less direct is its incompleteness. A complete sentence/utterance would be something like katachi kara hairanai to, ikenai ‘we should begin with the form’. 9 In casual conversation, however, the last part ikenai is often dropped, and consequently the utterance ends with to. There is no problem with understanding the meaning. Again, by designing her utterance in

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8 The phrase katachi kara hairu ‘to begin with the form’ is not necessarily always understood as someone’s good attitude to starting something. However, later in this conversation, all of the participants express their positive attitude to it.

9 Following katachi kara hairanai to, ikenai is not only the possibility. Other possibilities include naranai, dame da, or it could end with particle ne. In any case, the meaning remains
such a way, Yuri is observed to give a compliment on Takako less directly.

The important point of this way of complimenting illustrated by the examples (9) and (10) is that they both contain the recipient’s name. Nonetheless, neither of them (Yuukosan, and Takakosan) is used as an address term. It is therefore clear that the speakers do not directly address the recipients. Rather, recipients’ names are embedded in the utterances, so that the recipients are portrayed as representatives of the speakers’ ideal world. Speakers are thereby able to give compliments less directly on the recipient’s behaviour or attitude.

4.2.3 Accounts

The third type of less-direct compliments can be found when speakers formulate a compliment as an account for the current situation, or when an event just happened during the talk. Note here that the environment where these compliments occur does not seem to need account or explanation. For example, the reason why the particular event happened is not the question or issue. That is, speakers make use of the opportunity to give a compliment while voluntarily providing an account. Characteristically, speakers tend to use the particle *kara* ‘because’. Let us look at the following example.

(11) S: hiroyukisan wa na_y yasashi(h)i kara kara

((name)) TP IP generous because

"Because Hiroyuki is generous."

the same: ‘we (or I) should begin with the form’.

82
Shige gives a compliment on the recipient’s generous character as an account of the ongoing situation. The recipient of this compliment (Hiroyuki) is the husband. He and his wife have two guests (Shige is one of the guests). Prior to this utterance, the guests were interested in the somewhat odd situation in which the couple seems to manage. The point is that they cannot use the bathtub for its usual purpose, since it is used as a water storage unit. After hearing why this is so (the wife explains that she simply does not want to waste water, so she keeps the discharged water from the washing machine in the bathtub), the speaker appears to reach his own conclusion, which is that Hiroyuki’s generousness is the cause. He then produces (11). It turns out to be heard and understood as a compliment to Hiroyuki. Note that there are other possible accounts of the situation. For example, as Hiroyuki later suggests (data not shown), the cause may be his wife’s authority over the household.

In the next example too, the speaker formulates a compliment as an account for the current situation, but in a slightly different manner.

(12) M: taiikukai wa jibun de iku kara ne, sports.type self by go because “Because sports-type person goes (and wash) voluntarily NE.”

Maiko produced this compliment as an account for the current situation. At this

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10 Because the recording was made in the middle of winter, this particular situation (the couple use the bathtub as a water storage unit) is not acceptable for the participants. In general, Japanese people enjoy bathing (rather than just taking a shower) particularly in winter. In fact, in the prior talk, Hiroyuki admitted that he wanted to bath more often, if possible.

11 Later in this sequence, Shige reluctantly accepts Hiroyuki’s account.

12 This speaker tends to refer to the recipient Eriko as taiikukai (sports-type person). Strictly speaking, the word taiikukai refers to associations of sports clubs in universities. On another occasion, the same speaker uses the word taiikukai-kei (sports-type-like) to refer to Eriko.
gathering, participants have finished the first bottle of red wine and the host has just opened the next bottle of white wine. When one of the hosts (Takashi) asks his wife what they should do with the glass (whether they should wash it or not), one of the guests Eriko rises from her seat while saying that she will wash her glass herself. The hostess (Saeko) was at a loss, perhaps because Eriko's reaction is very quick, as can be seen in the following excerpt.

(13) <17NNA2: 8> Tai kukai
T: Takashi, E: Eriko, S: Saeko

1 T: kore- <loo sun no? (.) gurasu=
this how do Q glass
"What should we do with this glass?"

2 E: =a ja kore chotto ar [atte kimasu]
oh then this a .little wash come
"Oh, then I'm going to wash this."

3 S: [a- un ]
oh yes
"Oh, yes."

4 (0.2)

5 S: $un toka itt-$ .h .hh ha ha ha .hh
yes QT say
"Yes, I mean, .h .hh ha ha ha"

Following Saeko's laughter in line 5, all participants start to laugh. Then another guest, Maiko, produces (12). It is clear that Maiko's utterance refers to Eriko's immediate action of rising from her seat and heading to the kitchen to wash her wine glass. While Maiko only refers to the recipient's action: jibun de iku 'go (and wash) voluntarily', this utterance functions as a compliment to Eriko. Note that Maiko could have said Eriko-san wa jibun de iku kara ne 'Because Eriko goes (and wash) voluntarily NE'. Instead,
Maiko refers to Eriko as *taiikukai* 'sports-type person', and as a result, the degree of directness of (12) seems to be less than that of (11).

In these examples, compliments seem to be formulated as speakers' accounts for either the current situation as in (11) or the recipient's action in the immediate past as in (12). But questions arise: (i) why do speakers do this, instead of simply complimenting the recipient's attributes? And (ii) what is the effect of this type of compliment? To answer these questions, let us compare these examples with hypothetical alternative (and more direct) compliments.

(11)  hiroyukisan wa na yasashii kara na
     ((name)) TP IP generous because IP
     "Because Hiroyuki is generous."

(11)' hiroyukisan wa yasashii yo na
     ((name)) TP generous IP IP
     "Hiroyuki is generous."

(12)  taiikukai wa jibun de iku kara ne
     sports.type TP self by go because IP
     "Because sports-type person goes (and wash) voluntarily NE."

(12)' taiikukai wa jibun de iku yo ne
     sports.type TP self by go IP IP
     "Sports-type person goes (and wash) voluntarily NE."

*Kara* in both utterances is replaced by the interactional particle *yo*, for the purpose of comparison. Shirakawa (1991) points out a close resemblance between utterance-final usage of *kara* and *yo*, in that both of them are used when speakers tell something new to other parties. In fact, both of the hypothetical sentences above sound natural enough
with replacement yo, and moreover, they seemingly function as compliments. However, it appears that between the kara and yo sentences above, there is a subtle difference. Compared with the yo sentences, the original utterances seem to be weak, partly due to the lack of main clauses. Since kara is a conjunctive particle, the canonical sentence pattern is [S1 kara S2], or [because S1, S2] in English. However, in the above utterances, there are no S2s.

With regard to the functions of kara-ending sentences, according to Shirakawa (1991), kara-ending sentences may be used to explain background (haikei no setsumei). That is, the speaker only explains the background of the event. What other parties who hear this background do is left open. This account is applicable to the above two examples (11) and (12) as well. What these speakers do with kara-ending compliments is that they formulate their utterance simply as an explanation of the current situation, rather than providing it as a direct compliment, as shown in (11)' and (12)'. As a result, they are able to weaken the force of compliments.

Another important thing to be noted is that the referents of these compliments are the recipients’ personality or attitude (as in (11) and (12) respectively). When referents are such personal attributes, speakers may make an effort not to invade the recipient’s personal territory (See Suzuki (1997) for the account of personal territory in Japanese, in relation to politeness concerns). Therefore, formulating the event as an account (i.e., kara-ending compliments) is one of the important options available for speakers who do not want to impose their opinion on recipients.
4.2.4 Comparison

So far, three different ways of giving less-direct compliments have been illustrated. The last type involves a comparison. Speakers make a comparison, that is, they compare with someone else (including themselves) in order to highlight the attribute of the recipient. As will be shown, speakers are able to reduce the degree of directness by referring to another person.13

For instance, speakers may refer to themselves, typically as representative of someone who lacks the attributes that the recipient possesses. For example:

(14) H: konkai no ne aayuu hassoo mo ne boku ni wa this.time LK IP such idea too IP I to TP ukabanakatta yo ne didn't.occur IP IP

"It didn't occur to me to do what she did at this time, NE."

(15) E: atashi wa yara- dekinai na:
I TP don't can't.do IP

"I don't. I can't do it."

In (14), Hiroyuki talks about his wife’s character, demonstrated by her actions after her father’s death. Feeling regret about her father who died of cancer, Hiroyuki’s wife Mayumi had collected information on some issues which she had encountered and struggled with, such as how to choose the best hospital. Then she made a personal report that she sent to a number of her friends. The above utterance produced by her husband refers to Mayumi’s actions. Hiroyuki admits that he had not thought of acting
in this way, and by doing so, he contrasts himself with his wife who has such a constructive idea.

Likewise, in (15), where the topic is a handmade quilt cover for birdcages, Emi expresses her inability (*dekinai* ‘cannot’) to sew. Interestingly, at first, Emi starts to say *yaranai* ‘do not’, but in the midst of her production of this word, she cuts it off (*yara-* ‘don-’) and replaces it with the probably more appropriate expression *dekinai* ‘cannot’. As a result, the speaker’s surprise at the recipient’s exceptional sewing ability becomes apparent. In short, in both examples, speakers refer to themselves and their lack of attributes, in order to underscore the recipients’ attributes. In addition to that, one notable feature of this way of complimenting is that speakers do not explicitly praise recipients’ attributes. What they do is just to imply such praise. The implicit message is: ‘You are great, because you can do what I cannot do’.

Some previous studies also observe this kind of way of complimenting i.e., by comparison. For example, according to Yuan (1998: 90), comparison is one type of “supportive element” the “presence and absence of which do not affect the compliment status of an utterance”. It appears that the following example demonstrates a typical use of comparison in Kunming Chinese;

(16) This child of yours is so good, not at all like mine who doesn’t come home until midnight.

(Yuan 1998: 95)14

13 Boyle (2000) includes comparison as one of the ways of giving implicit compliments.
14 While the original language in Yuan (1998) is Kunming Chinese, only the English
Another kind of comparison is reported in Aakhus and Aldrich (2002) who focus on 'I wish I…' type compliments. Their examples include the following:

(17) I wish my eyes were as beautiful as yours.

(Aakhus and Aldrich 2002: 409)

Notice that both in (16) and (17), speakers explicitly mention the recipient's admirable attributes, by using the assessment adjectives good and beautiful respectively. By contrast, both in (14) and (15) taken from the data set, such positive descriptors are absent. Instead, those admirable qualities are highlighted implicitly, without such direct positive descriptors.

Furthermore, in some cases, speakers may refer to their family member, in order to make a contrast with an admirable person. An example is shown below.

(18) T: uchi no chichioya ni hanashite agetai

home LK father to tell want.to

"I want to tell my father."

In this example, Takako refers to her father, mentioning her wish to tell him what she has heard. This utterance is a compliment to her friend's father who has talked about how he and his wife are staying fit, largely due to the regular exercise they both enjoy. Having heard that, Takako and the other participant both express their amazement. Then Takako produces the above utterance. It is clear from the context that she is contrasting her friend's father with her own father. By doing so, she highlights the positive aspect of

translation is shown here.

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her friend’s father. Here, Takako does not mention how fit her father is, however, it is implied that her father does not exercise (and she wishes him to exercise). Again, in this utterance, there is no explicit mention of the attribute of the recipient (i.e., his high level of fitness), but it is implied.

In addition to referring to themselves or their family members, there is another way of making a comparison: referring to someone who is highly regarded. Take the following as an example.

(19) H: marichan te sa:, ano(.) sakaimiki ni chotto niteru, ((name)) TP IP well Sakai.Miki with a.little resemble
    “Well, Mari resembles Sakai Miki a little bit?”

Here, the speaker refers to the actress, Sakai Miki, and points out the recipient’s (Mari’s) resemblance to the actress. While the speaker shows her uncertainty (indicated by a micro-pause before the name of the actress, and half-rising intonation), her message is clear: Mari resembles Sakai Miki, the actress. Unlike earlier examples we saw in which speakers refer to self or a family member, in this example, the speaker employs the name of a celebrity, and by doing so, tries to suggest that the recipient is good looking.

This type of comparison is also found in Intachakra (2001), in his corpus of Thai compliments. The following is taken from Intachakra (2001):

(20) You still look as handsome as Brad Pitt even now.15

(Intachakura 2001: 115)

15 The original example is in Thai.
Again in (20), the speaker explicitly expresses the recipient’s attributes as ‘handsome’, in addition to referring to the celebrity’s name. As shown above, by contrast, in (19), such positive descriptors, for example, *kirei* ‘beautiful’ or *kawaii* ‘pretty’ are absent. Such attributes are only implied, by indicating similarities with the actress.

In summary, referring to other persons to make a comparison is seen as an alternative to a more direct way of complimenting. Speakers may refer to their own lack of admirable attributes, or may refer to someone who is admirable. In either case, by doing so, speakers are able to highlight recipients’ attributes less directly. It was found that the examples in the corpus are weaker in force, mainly due to a lack of positive descriptors, than the examples of comparisons in literature, which contain these adjectives (e.g., beautiful). These ‘weak’ comparisons allow the speaker to avoid imposing their assumption too much on the recipient.

To sum up this section, four different ways of giving less direct compliments are identified. It is found that the less direct compliments are overwhelmingly used when speakers praise recipients’ personal attributes: for example, personality, disposition, attitude, and so on. These personal attributes are not detachable from the recipient herself. It is observed that speakers show their concern about, or respect towards, recipients’ personal territory when they proffer compliments on these attributes. These ways of complimenting in the less-direct manner are a manifestation of such concerns.
4.3 Design of predicates

This section focuses on predicate components in compliments. Predicate components, mainly adjectives such as oishii ‘tasty’ or sugoi ‘great’ are arguably core components of compliments. In addition, unlike English adjectives, in Japanese, adjectives can be followed by other elements, mainly “interactional particles” (Maynard 1992: 183). For example, the adjective oishii ‘tasty’ can often be found in compliments as the following forms: oishii ne, oishii yo, or oishii. While in the first two cases, interactional particles are added, in the last case, the adjective is used as it is, without being accompanied by these particles. Furthermore, while all three may be translated as ‘it’s tasty’, they are not the same in nuance, as will be shown shortly. In what follows, I will discuss two cases, namely, (i) predicate components accompanied by interactional particles yo, and ne, and (ii) the ones without these particles.

4.3.1 Predicate components

Let us first examine a distribution of forms of predicate component in one hundred and twenty-nine initial compliments in the data for the present study, summarised as Table 4.1.

16 A list of the predicates including interactional particles will be shown in Table 4.1.
Table 4.1  Distribution of forms of predicate components in initial compliments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ne(^{17})</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yo</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>janai</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other(^{18})</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bare</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution indicates that the predicate components of initial compliments are often followed by interactional particles, that is, *ne*, *yo*, *na*, and *wa*. Among them, *ne* is clearly predominant over other particles. What is interesting is the relatively high percentage of bare predicates (49 cases, 37.98 percent). This high percentage contradicts Maynard (1993), who reports that the incidence of bare predicates (*hadaka no da-tai* in her terms) in casual conversation is less than twelve percent. This may suggest that one characteristic of Japanese compliments is reduced use of interactional particles, as will be discussed in 4.3.3. In addition to the use of interactional particles and the bare form of predicates, there are a few minor cases, namely, *janai* 'isn’t it’ (6 cases, 4.65 percent) and other expressions (16 cases, 12.40 percent). But first, let us look at some characteristics of the use of particles, in particular, the most dominant one, *ne*.

4.3.2  Use of interactional particles

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\(^{17}\) The number of *ne* (47 instances) includes cases with and without combination with other particles.

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In 4.3.2, I focus on compliments whose predicates are accompanied by interactional particles. The fact that nearly half of the predicates appear with interactional particles (58 out of 129 instances) indicates that these particles play certain roles in giving compliments. First of all, let us look at the breakdown of distribution of interactional particles.

Table 4.2  Distribution of interactional particles of initial compliments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particles</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ne</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>81.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yo</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 shows the distribution of interactional particles appearing in initial compliments. Among fifty-eight instances in total, overwhelmingly, *ne* is used (47 instances). It accounts for more than eighty percent of all interactional particles used. While the second most used particle is *yo* (6 instances, 10.34%), *yo* is far less common than *ne*. Other particles, namely *na* and *wa*, seem to be minor.

In order to compare these distributions with those in other studies, let us take Maynard (1993) for example. Let us first consider *ne*. Maynard’s (1993: 184) conversational data shows that *ne* accounts for about forty percent of occurrences of particles.¹⁹ Thus, in my data, *ne* occurs twice as much as Maynard (1993)’s corpus. As shown in Table 4.2, *ne* is clearly the most preferred particle for predicates in initial

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¹⁸ Others include noun-ending utterances, questions, and incomplete utterances.
compliments. Following are some examples of *ne* in initial compliments in two-party conversation.

(21) E: sakura san wa kenami ga ii no ne,
((bird’s name)) TP feathers SB good NR IP
“Sakura has nice feathers, NE.”

(22) E: hontoni kenkoo guzzu sugoi ne:
really health equipment great IP
“You really have lots of health equipment, NE.”

In the above examples, the speakers use *ne* at the end of utterances. By doing so, speakers express their positive feelings about recipients, while at the same time, they display their commitment to involving other parties (Lee, in preparation), in these cases, the recipients of the compliments. For example, in (21), Emi gives a compliment on the feathers of one of the birds (the recipient keeps two birds, Sakura is one of them). The same speaker gives a compliment on the recipient’s good collection of health equipment in (22). These utterance-final *ne* can be seen as a manifestation of the speaker’s effort to involve the recipient in the activity (assessment). The following shows the recipient’s response subsequent to these *ne*-ending compliments.

(23) <9Cl: 6> Bird’s feathers
C: Chihiro, E: Emi

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19 Maynard’s (1993) numbers of particles include the cases of *kantoo joshi* (insertion particles).
20 According to Lee (in preparation), the main function of *ne* and *yo* is to signal the speaker’s attitude to invite the involvement of the listener. The two particles are, however, different from each other in the manner of inviting involvement: *ne* is to align the listener with respect to the conversational contents and pace, while *yo* is to reinforce the speaker’s position as a speaker.
1 E: sakura san wa kenami ga ii no ne,
    (bird’s name) TP feathers SB good NR IP
    “Sakura has nice feathers, NE.”

2 ➔ C: un >sakura san wa< kenami ga ii n da kedo ne,=
    yeah sakura TP feathers SB good NR BE but IP
    “Yeah, Sakura has nice feathers, but” ((continues))

In both cases, Chihiro is the recipient of compliments, and her turn begins with the
agreement token un ‘yeah’. Thus we can see that in her response, the recipient aligns
with the compliment giver, whose utterance ends with ne.

In multiparty conversation too, speakers use ne for the same purpose.

(25) M: nee kore rikisaku da ne
     hey this.one laborious.work BE IP
     “Hey, this is laborious work NE.”

(26) A: a honto da sugoi kireini utsuru n da ne,=
     oh really BE very beautifully taken NR BE IP but
     “Oh, but it can take really beautifully NE.”
In (25) and (26), speakers express their positive evaluation on recipients’ cooking ability and high quality of pictures respectively. Here, too, speakers use *ne* attempting to invite other party’s involvement. However, unlike two-party interaction, in multiparty conversation, the recipient of the compliments is not the only possible target of this invitation. Rather, there are other potential targets of invitation to involvement. For example, in addition to the recipients, there are two, and three other participants in (25) and (26) respectively. In these situations, often it is observed that ‘other’ participants participate in response to this invitation, as follows.

(27) <17NNA1: 29> Cooking skill
M: Maiko, S: Saeko, T: Takashi

1 M: nee kore rikisaku da ne
   hey this.one laborious.work BE IP
   “Hey, this is a laborious work NE.”

2 S: kita [naku naku- ya aji ga mitenai kara wakannai
   becomes.messy no taste SB try:NEG so know:NEG
   “It becomes mes-, well I didn’t try its taste so I don’t know.”

3 T: [nn
   hmm
   “Hmm”

(28) <12Y3R2: 1> Pictures
A: Ayako, M: Mari, K: Kayo

1 A: a honto da sugoi kireini utsuru n da ne\(\_\) demo.=
oh really BE very beautifully taken NR BE IP but
   “Oh, but it can take really beautifully NE.”

2 M: =bikkuri. (.) sugoi kirei da yo ne\(\_\)
   amazing very beautiful BE IP IP
   “It’s amazing. It’s really beautiful NE.”
In (27), subsequent to the compliment produced by Maiko, the recipient Saeko starts to talk. In line 3, just after Saeko starts to talk, Takashi also produces a brief agreement token. It is possible that Maiko’s compliment, ending with ne, invited both responses. While Saeko responds as the recipient of the compliment, Takashi does so as co-participant who agrees with the producer of the preceding compliment. In (28), immediately after Ayako’s utterance (a compliment on the quality of pictures), Mari (co-participant) shows her alignment with Ayako’s assessment. Mari expresses her agreement with Ayako, by first expressing her surprise and then recycling a part of the prior compliment (sugoi kirei ‘very beautiful’). Note that Mari also ends her utterance with ne, indicating that she also invites the other party’s involvement (and again, Ayako takes the turn, data not shown). As such, ne-ending compliments in multiparty context allow co-participants, as well as recipients of compliments, to participate in the activity.

Next, let us consider the use of yo. Unlike ne, the use of yo is very minor (6 instances, about ten percent) in initial compliments. What this limited number of yo-ending compliments suggests is that, the inherent nature of yo (that is, that it may be used by a speaker “to enhance his/her position as a deliverer of utterance contents” (Lee, in preparation)) is not consonant with the act of giving compliments. Nonetheless, it is worth looking at these instances of yo, particularly in order to make a comparison with the use of ne.21 Let us consider the following examples.

(29) <11A1: 46> Experience
Y: Yoshie, S: Sayuri

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21 Maynard (1993: 183) points out the “prominent interactional nature” shared by ne and yo.
1. Y .h demo moo oshieretanai.
   but already teach TAG
   “But you’ve already taught, haven’t you?”

2. S maa ne[œ]
   well IP
   “Well, yeah.”

3→ Y [sono jisseki: wa (.) sugoi[œ]
   that experience TP great IP
   “That’s great experience,” ((continues))

(30) <17NNA1: 8> TOEIC
M: Maiko, S: Saeko

1. M dakara omotta yoriwa yoku dekita to omou.
   so thought than well did QT think
   “...so I think I did better than I expected.”
   ((three lines omitted))

5→ S: ee? maikosan$dekiru n desu yo$
   eh Maiko can.do.well NR BE IP
   “Eh? You can do well, Maiko.”

Both utterances (yo-ending compliments) appear in response to the recipients’ self-deprecatory utterances. In (29), for instance, the recipient of this compliment (Sayuri) had expressed her uncertainty about her future career. In response to this rather pessimistic, humble utterance, Yoshie appears to reassure her, pointing out that Sayuri has already started her career in teaching (in line 1). While Sayuri shows her halfhearted agreement in line 2, Yoshie produces a yo-ending compliment in line 3, and thereby further insists that Sayuri has useful experience. Similarly, in response to Maiko’s humble assessment of her own ability in English in line 1, Saeko, who knows Maiko well, including her English proficiency, contradicts it. First she shows her surprise (ee ‘eh’) in rising intonation. Then Saeko produces a yo-ending compliment, asserting that
Maiko can do well.

Thus in both instances, interactional particle *yo* is effectively used to make a strong claim of the speakers’ assertion. According to Lee (in preparation), when *yo* is used, the speaker is committed to enhance her position as a deliverer, which can be denoted as, for example, ‘let me tell you’, ‘listen to me, I want you to know’, and so forth. These features of *yo* nicely fit this context where the compliment giver is confronted with the recipient’s self-deprecation.

Another environment where *yo*-ending compliments are used is shown in the next example.

(31) M: seeseki sugoku ii n desu yo gai-daigaku no record very good NR BE IP university LK
“Her record was excellent, at university.”

This instance is one of the cases where the recipient of the compliment and the addressee of the utterance are not the same person. Here, Maiko addresses the recipient’s husband, in the presence of his wife (the recipient of this compliment). Unlike earlier examples (29) and (30), in this instance, there are no contradictory views. Rather, the speaker initiates the sequence, by telling the husband his wife’s excellent academic record. As the husband shows his expected status of unknowing recipient (not shown here), it is clear that the utterance in (31) is produced as an announcement. The use of *yo* fits this environment as well, because of its assertive nature. That is, the person who uses *yo* appears to feel it necessary to inform the addressee, assuming that

22 I will discuss the issue of addressees and recipients in 4.4.
the addressee does not know what she or he is going to say. Moreover, the fact the addressed party of this compliment displays his alignment with Maiko (data not shown) demonstrates that, like ne, yo invites other party's involvement.

In summary, both interactional particles yo and ne are frequently used in compliments. This can be attributed to the speakers' principal strategy of inviting other party's involvement, when they give compliments. It is observed that in multiparty conversation, the invited party (mainly by ne) is not only the recipient of compliment. Co-participants are also encouraged to take part in the activity. In addition, the fact that the use of ne exceeds the use of yo may be accounted for by the essential function of ne, which is to signal alignment with the other party.

4.3.3 Bare predicates

In my data, as noted earlier, the bare form of predicates is also found. Uehara and Fukushima (2004) discuss hadaka no bunmatsu keishiki “bare sentence-final form” in casual conversation. According to Uehara and Fukushima (2004), speakers choose bare sentence-final form when they judge that they do not need to show their concern about the addressee, in other words, their concern about the addressee is temporarily suspended. Although the authors do not provide the possible reasons why and when speakers think this, certainly their observation is applicable to the analysis of my data as well. A temporary suspension of concern about addressee would explain the relatively high number of this phenomenon (49 instances out of 129 total occurrences, accounting for nearly forty percent. See in Table 4.1 for the distribution).

As mentioned earlier, one important (but rather neglected) aspect of the act of
giving compliments is that it may threaten the recipients’ personal territory to some extent. A few researchers point out this possibility. For instance, Henderson (1996: 200) notes that compliments “may be viewed as a demonstration of lack of respect for an individual’s privacy” in African-American English. Similarly, Norrick (1980: 302) suggests some “maxims” with regard to giving compliments, including the following: “Avoid imposing your own taste as a standard”. These statements indicate the possible risks of threatening the recipient’s personal territory in some way, when a speaker gives a compliment.

In Japanese, the non-use of interactional particles may be one effective way of avoiding undesirable imposition. That is, without these particles, the utterance may lose the sense of direct involvement with the recipient. As a result, such utterances may sound like monologues, due to the lack of these particles. In other words, the absence of interactional particles gives these utterances “dokuwa-teki nyuansu ‘monologue-like nuances’” (Uehara and Fukushima 2004: 115). Let us look at some examples.

(32) sugo::i
     great
     “Great.”

(33) a oishisoo
     oh looks.tasty
     “Oh (it) looks tasty.”

(34) erai
     excellent
     “(It’s) excellent.”

(35) omoshiroi
     funny
     “(It’s) funny.”
Both (32) and (33) are uttered when the food is served. The speakers express their surprise, as well as appreciation through these utterances. In response to the other party’s action (in these cases, serving food), speakers spontaneously react to it, by giving compliments. Likewise, the speakers of compliments both in (34) and (35) immediately react to the other party’s talk. As Maynard (1993) observes, in such situations, speakers may not have time to arrange or constitute their utterance properly. Similarly, Uehara and Fukushima (2004) note that speakers may lose concern for recipients momentarily. Thus, it is possible to observe these compliments with bare predicates as a result of such temporary lack of concern for other parties.

However, one may argue that the essential nature of compliments contradicts these monologue-like compliments, which apparently result from lack of concern for other parties. Here, it is informative to make use of Uehara and Fukushima’s (2004) explanation of bare particles. The authors’ observations of bare particles indicate that the content of the utterances which contain them is often something related to speakers’ personal territory (and this is also the reason why those utterances are monologue-like), such as their impression, feeling, thought, judgment, or experience. By employing bare predicates, speakers simply express those sentiments, without forcing them on other parties. This account is useful to the current analysis of bare predicates in compliments, given the fact that compliments are one such expression of personal feelings.

These explanations seem to be compatible with the speaker’s (i.e., compliment giver’s) perspective. Now let us consider bare-predicate compliments from the recipient’s perspective. As pointed out by previous studies (for example, Herbert 1989; Holmes 1986; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989; Pomerantz 1978), recipients of
compliments may feel uncomfortable, or embarrassed, partly due to the pressure to respond. That is, normally, the recipients of compliments are expected to reply in some way. Although a non-verbal response such as a smile may be effective, in many cases, if a verbal response to compliments is absent, particularly in two-party interaction, the absence is likely to be treated by participants as some sort of problem. Therefore, recipients of compliments are obliged to provide some kind of verbal response.

Here, there is room for monologue-like compliments with bare predicates as a useful alternative to particle-ending compliments that require some sort of response. They may work like this, from the recipient’s point of view: having heard and recognised a compliment given to her, a recipient is not obliged to respond to it, since it is produced as if it were a monologue. The following excerpt illustrates this.

(36) <12Y3R1:1> Picture
R: Rie, K: Kayo, H: Haruka, M: Mari

1 R: minikusa sono mama=
ugliness that as
“Ugly, as it is.”
2 K: =he he he kaw [aii
cute
“He he he (it's) cute.”
3 R: [hhhh
“Hhhh.”
4 H: shoonen poi=
boy like
“Looks like a boy.”
5 K: =un
yeah
“Yes.”
6 M: demo nanka kamera no hoo no,
but well camera LK side LK
“But well, it’s the camera, ((continues))”
In response to Rie’s self deprecatory utterance (in line 1), both compliments in lines 2 and 4 are produced in monologue-like manner. That is, both of adjectives kawaii ‘cute’ and shoonen poi ‘boyish’ appear as it is, not followed by any particles. Rie, the recipient of these compliments first produced a laugh-like sound in line 3. In response to Haruka’s compliment in line 4, however, Rie does not respond verbally. Instead, Kayo produces a brief agreement token un ‘yeah’, then Mari starts to talk in line 6 and they move on to the next topic. The sequence could have been different, for instance, if Kayo said kawaii yo ‘It’s cute’ in line 2, instead of using bare predicate kawaii. If this was the case, Rie could be under more pressure to respond. As such, bare-predicate-ending compliments allow speakers to express their positive feeling towards recipients, without ‘forcing it on them’. Further, from recipients’ point of view, such compliments may allow them not to respond, at least in verbal forms.

This section focused on speakers’ design of predicate components in compliments. Roughly, there are two possibilities: predicates with or without interactional particles. The interactional particles ne and yo are used to enhance shared feelings among participants. By contrast, the non-use of interactional particles gives the appearance of not explicitly invoking other parties’ participation, yet manages at the same time to invite that participation.
4.4 Whom they address

This section addresses the issue of distinction between addressees and recipients of compliments, that is, whom speakers address when they give compliments. Do speakers always directly address the target recipient of the compliment? Or, do they have other options? In literature, this distinction (addressee/recipient) has not been thoroughly discussed so far. One possible reason for this lack of interest seems to be the assumption that all compliments are directly addressed to recipients. However, the data indicates that it is premature to assume that speakers always directly address their target recipients. Rather, in some cases, speakers clearly address their co-participant, in the presence of target recipients. Moreover, speakers sometimes do not specify one particular addressee. In what follows, I will illustrate three different cases where: (i) the speaker directly addresses the recipient, (ii) the speaker addresses someone other than the recipient, and (iii) we cannot detect exactly whom the speaker addresses.

It is possible to discuss these cases in relation to one of the rules of conversation; that of turn-allocation techniques, or speaker selection (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). According to Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974: 701), “[a] current speaker may select a next speaker (as when he addresses a question to another party); or parties may self-select in starting to talk”.23 Simply put, a current speaker may or may not have

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23 Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974: 716) include the following compliment/rejection pair as one example of adjacency pairs, which has “the property of possibly selecting next speaker”.

A: I’m glad I have you for a friend.
B: That’s because you don’t have any others.

In this case, speaker A is understood to select B as next speaker. It is clear because of you in A’s utterance. However, in some of my Japanese data, partly due to the lack of personal pronouns such as you, it is less clear whether the current speaker selects other party as next
selected next speaker when she or he stops talking. If next speaker is not selected, another party selects herself/himself as next speaker. For example, in both (i) and (ii) above, current speakers (i.e., compliment givers) select someone as next speaker. In the case of (iii), however, speakers select no one as next speaker.

Before moving on to the analysis, let me briefly explain some relevant facts to the third case, that is, where the current speaker does not select other party as next speaker. In many cases, it is not easy to see to whom a person talks, due partly to Japanese grammar. Unlike English, in Japanese, person pronouns are not an obligatory part of an utterance. For example, in English, one normally says ‘You are good at cooking’, whereby it is clear that this is addressed to the person who cooked the meal. In Japanese, while the equivalent of ‘you’ in English is ‘anata’, this second-person pronoun is hardly used in conversation. Equally, with regard to the third-person pronoun, again in English, one normally includes ‘she’, as ‘She is good at cooking’. In this case too, it is clear that the person addresses someone other than the one who cooked the meal. While the Japanese equivalent of ‘she’ is ‘kanojo’, the use of kanojo in conversation is also uncommon. Take the following utterance as an example of what happens instead. In a multiparty conversation, one participant made a comment on the hostess’s cooking skill as follows:

(37) M: joozu da nee
good.atBE IP

In this sense, Japanese is a highly context-dependent language with respect to the interpretation of the subject of the predicates. In addition, the language makes use of syntactic devices (e.g., -tai ‘want to’ for subject first person). See Nariyama (2002) for details of subject ellipsis in Japanese.
"Good at NE."

We can tell from the context what this person talks about: the speaker enjoys the food prepared by the hostess and expresses her appreciation. However, given the possibility that addressee and recipient (of compliment) are not necessarily the same person, it is less clear whether she directly addresses the recipient (hostess), due to the absence of 'you are', as noted earlier. As a result, it is quite possible to see this utterance as one addressed to another guest who enjoys the food together with the speaker. In short, this utterance could either be heard as 'She is good at cooking', or, 'You are good at cooking', in multiparty settings. Given this dual possibility, it is premature to translate the above utterance automatically as 'You are good at cooking'. This is the reason why I consider the utterance (37) as belonging to the category (iii) above; the cases in which speakers select no one as next speaker.25

4.4.1 A specific addressee: the recipient

If the compliment contains certain elements, then it becomes clear that the current speaker selects the target recipient as next speaker. One such case is found when compliments appear in the form of questions or inquiries about the referent, for example:

(38) <1INN: 48> Hair colour

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25 One can also select next speaker by using eye gaze. For the discussion of this systematic way of selecting next speaker, see Goodwin (1981).
Example (38) is taken from multiparty conversation where three participants are involved. The topic is Saeko’s natural hair colour. Here, speaker Maiko formulates her utterance in (38) as a question, or request for information specifically addressed to Saeko. Although Maiko does not use address terms such as Saeko’s name, this utterance is undoubtedly understood as one addressed to Saeko. First, her use of proterm sore ‘that’ is understood as Saeko’s hair from the context. Second, and more importantly, Maiko asks how Saeko did her hair in order to look so natural. Since Saeko is the only person who can provide the requested information, Maiko can be seen to select Saeko (the recipient of the compliment) as next speaker.

The other way of making it explicit that the speaker is directly addressing the recipient is to use address terms.

(39) <17NNA2: 69> Cake2

S: oishii: maikosan
tasty ((name))
“(It’s) tasty, Maiko.”

Four participants taste some dessert, including a cake brought by Maiko. It is clear that Saeko directly addresses Maiko. Here, Saeko comments on the tastiness of the cake and
adds Maiko’s name afterwards. But why did she need to append the address term? The following full transcript of the surrounding talk may help to clarify the circumstance where Saeko needed to add Maiko’s name.

(40) <17NNA2: 69> Cake2
M: Maiko, E: Eriko, S: Saeko

1 M: he he [$do [techno- dotchino$ hoo [koo$] which which direction "he he, which, which direction?"

2 S: [a-
oh "Oh,"

3 E: [.h heh .hh heh ".h heh"

4→ S: [oish [ii: maikosan tasty ((name)) ",(It’s) tasty, Maiko."

5 E: [$toshi ni yotte$ year in depends

6 chigau n desu [tte different NR BE QT "It depends on the year, they say."

7 M: [aa.
oh "Oh.”

8 S: ko [re this "this"

9 M: [oishi [i? >a honto$ yokatta.< tasty oh really good "Tasty? Oh, really? That’s good."

10 S: [un. nanka yeah well "well, yeah.”

Prior to this segment, Maiko and Eriko were engaged in talk about a kind of sushi.
Eriko has said that people eat this particular sushi facing towards a ‘certain direction’ *(aru hookoo)*. Since Eriko does not specify in which direction they should face, Maiko, in line 1, asks Eriko about it *(dotchi no hookoo ‘which direction’)*, while laughing. In line 3, Eriko also starts to laugh, then provides the requested information in lines 5 to 6 while laughing. Thus the target recipient of Saeko’s compliment (Maiko) was engaged in talk with another party.

In this situation, in line 2, Saeko first produces a brief change-of-state token a ‘oh’ (Heritage 1984b), followed by the utterance in question in line 4. Saeko needs to convey her message to Maiko while attempting not to interrupt the ongoing talk. In such cases, addressing the target person is effective, as is shown by Maiko’s response, which can be seen in line 9. Maiko replies to the compliment, first by repeating Saeko’s word with rising intonation *(oishii? ‘tasty?’)*.26 Further, she produces a brief request for confirmation *(a honto ‘oh really’) then expresses her feeling of relief *(yokatta ‘that’s good’)*. Therefore, in this example, it is observed that the compliment giver Saeko selects the compliment recipient Maiko as next speaker, and Maiko responds.

In sum, speakers may select the recipient of compliments as next speaker. This is accomplished either by formulating compliments as questions, or by using address terms.

### 4.4.2 A specific addressee: other than the recipient

In multiparty settings, speakers may select someone other than the recipient of the

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26 Although it is not clear if Maiko’s acknowledgement token *aa* in line 7 responds to Saeko’s
compliment as next speaker. In other words, such compliments are not directly addressed to the recipient. Firstly, consider the following example.

(41) <17NNA1: 68> Academic record

M: seeseki sugoku ii n desu yo gai-daigaku no.
record very good NR BE IP university LK
"Her record is excellent, at university."

This utterance is taken from the same extract as the previous one. Here, Maiko’s utterance refers to participant Saeko’s good performance at the university. Three participants, Maiko, Saeko and Eriko had spent some time at the same university. Since they have been close friends since then, the fact that Saeko had an excellent academic record is known to both Maiko and Eriko. On the assumption that Saeko’s husband Takashi does not know this, Maiko specifically addresses Takashi. Let us look at the talk that follows the above utterance.

(42) <17NNA1: 68> Academic record

M: Maiko, E: Eriko, S: Saeko, T: Takashi

1→ M: seeseki sugoku ii n desu yo gai-daigaku no.=
record very good NR BE IP university LK
"Her record was excellent, at university."

2→ T: =a sore wa ↑hatsumimi [ha ha ha ha ha hah
oh that TP news.to.me
"Oh, it’s news to me. ha ha ha"

3 S: [hu hu huh

comment or Eriko’s answer, I suspect it nicely copes with both of them.

It is interesting that Maiko uses non-past tense ii ‘good’ rather than yokatta ‘was good’ even though the questioning event happened in the past (several years ago). Nevertheless, it adds some vividness to this description.
Takashi demonstrates his status of unknowing recipient (Goodwin 1981) in line 2. Immediately after hearing Maiko’s utterance, Takashi says that it was news to him, by using the expression *hatsumimi* (news, or literally ‘the first ears’). Thus we can see that Maiko’s assumption of Takashi’s state of knowledge (that Takashi does not know Saeko’s good academic record) was right.

In this example, the speaker selects a specific participant as next speaker, in the presence of the target recipient, and as a result the selected speaker speaks next. Note that the recipient of this compliment, Saeko, just laughs in line 3. Saeko’s reaction is not inappropriate. That is, due to the design of the compliment, Saeko does not need to reply to it directly. In other words, the recipient is exempted from the ‘obligatory’ task of replying to the person who complimented her. In this sense, selecting other party as next speaker can be seen as one way of reducing the pressure on compliment recipients to respond.

In the next excerpt, too, a similar pattern can be observed. This time, however, the compliment takes interrogative form.

\[(43) \langle 17\text{NNA}1: 12 \rangle \text{ Cooking skill} \]

M: saekosan ryouri (.) joozu desho?  
Saeko cooking good.at TAG  
"Saeko is good at cooking, isn’t she?"

The same participants as in the above examples enjoy food prepared by Saeko. Here,
too, Maiko addresses Saeko’s husband, Takashi. Unlike the previous example, in which Maiko tells him of Saeko’s good performance, here Maiko asks for Takashi’s confirmation that his wife is good at cooking. The background of this utterance is that (i) Maiko knows Saeko is good at cooking, and (ii) Saeko and Takashi got married several months ago. Through this utterance (again, in the presence of Saeko), Maiko accomplishes two different things. First, she seeks confirmation of her belief by Takashi, and second, she informs Saeko that she positively assesses her cooking skill. Note that Maiko could have spoken exclusively to Takashi, for example, when Saeko is out of reach of the conversation. In that case, it would not be possible to consider this utterance as a compliment. Rather, it would simply be a request for confirmation of her belief.

To sum up, speakers may select some specific participant other than the recipient of the compliment as next speaker. This practice allows speakers to avoid imposing their evaluation on the recipient. In other words, by addressing another party in the presence of recipients of compliments, speakers are able to soften the force of compliments.

4.4.3 Non-specific addressee(s): next speaker non-selected

Finally, there are cases where we cannot detect whom the speaker addresses, in other words, the speaker (compliment giver) has selected no one as next speaker by the end of the utterance. As mentioned earlier, given the principle of speaker selection, if the

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28 We can see this because Takashi responds to this utterance (data not shown).
current speaker stops speaking and has selected no one as next speaker, anyone can select themselves as next speaker. As a result, in the case of giving compliments, recipients of compliments are able to be relieved of some pressure to reply to compliments. Consider some examples.

(44) E: oishii kono dippu.
    tasty this dip
    “Tasty, this dip.”

(45) M: kakkoii na::
    cool IP
    “(It’s) cool.”

In (44), the speaker expresses her appreciation of homemade dip prepared by the hostess. Likewise, in (45) the speaker expresses her impression of the talk of the recipient, who has explained how he and other people perform in the Tai Chi competition.

In both compliments, there is no indication that the current speaker selects someone as next speaker. To be more specific, while it is clear that these utterances are produced as compliments, neither speaker selects either the recipient or another party as next speaker. As noted earlier, in these circumstances, anyone present can start to talk at the end of these compliments. Let us look at what happens subsequent to these compliments.

(46) <17NNA1: 4> Homemade dip
E: Eriko, M: Maiko

1  E: oishii kono dippu.
tasty this dip
“Tasty, this dip.”

2 M: nani? atashi mo oishisoo da to omotte.
what I too looks.tasty BE QT think:and
“What is it? I thought it looks tasty, too.”

(47) <7YA3: 31> Taikyokuken
M: Midori, T: Takako

1 M: kakkoii n [a:::
cool IP
“(It’s) cool.”

2 T: [ne:::::
I.know
“I know.”

Both in (46) and (47), the speaker who took the next turn is a co-participant, not the recipient of these compliments. These co-participants express their agreement with the prior compliments. It is possible to see this as a result of the current speakers’ effort not to impose their assessment on the recipients.

In this section, we have seen cases where the current speaker (a compliment giver) selects (i) the recipient as next speaker, (ii) other party, and (iii) no one as next speaker. In a multiparty context, (i) is useful for compliment givers when they would like to address the recipient specifically. It can be said that, from the compliment givers’ point of view, choosing (ii) or (iii) enables them to involve other parties. On the other hand, from the compliment recipients’ point of view, they may be less uncomfortable if they are not selected as next speakers. Therefore, selecting another party (ii), or no one (iii), can be seen as possible ways of reducing the level of constraint imposed on the
recipient.

4.5 Interactional situations in which speakers give compliments

This section discusses the placement of compliments in conversational discourse. The question to be addressed here is, in what kind of situations in discourse do speakers give compliments. In literature, it is said that compliments “may occur at almost any point within an interaction” (Manes and Wolfson 1981: 115). Other researchers claim that compliments “tend to occur at the openings and closings of speech events” (Holmes and Brown 1987: 530). Those observations may be correct. However, these researchers employ an ethnographic approach (field-note observation), and seem to overlook the precise locations of occurrences of compliments. As Holmes (1986) points out, it is true that “more information about the surrounding discourse is needed than can be provided with a notebook approach” (Holmes 1986: 505). It is thus necessary to locate the exact point at which compliments occur and do not occur, in order to explicate the functions of compliments in conversation. For example, although in American English, “it is perfectly appropriate for any of the participants to interrupt the conversation to give a compliment” (Manes and Wolfson 1981: 125), in my Japanese data, speakers do not seem to do that. The data indicates that conversational participants are aware of appropriate places in which to give compliments, as well as inappropriate points of talk for giving compliments.29

29 Golato (2005: 4) also notes that participants “are keenly aware of the placement” of the
Therefore in this section, I will investigate the precise locations of occurrence and non-occurrence of compliments, in relation to surrounding context, particularly with reference to topic. In what follows, I will discuss two cases: (i) compliments in reference to the ongoing talk in 4.5.1, and (ii) compliments without reference to the ongoing talk in 4.5.2. I argue that even in the latter case, speakers are fully aware of, and sensitive to, the local context.

4.5.1 Compliments in reference to the talk

Speakers’ sensitivity to the surrounding context, including other party’s feelings, is clearly seen in compliments occurring in response to other party’s self-deprecation. As pointed out by Pomerantz (1984), compliments may appear immediately after the prior speaker’s self-deprecation. Prior speakers’ self-deprecations put their recipients in a difficult position, since recipients face the dilemma of whether to agree or disagree with the prior speaker. It is observed that recipients of prior speakers’ self-deprecations proffer a “new characterization” of the event or feature negatively described by the prior speaker, in order “to invalidate the prior self-deprecation” (Pomerantz 1984: 88). Such new characterisation can take the form of compliments. For example:

(48) <17NNA2: 64> Domestic character
M: Maiko, E: Eriko, S: Saeko

\begin{verbatim}
1     S:  maa demo benkyoo ni wa muitenak(h)atta
      well but study for TP suited.for:NEG
\end{verbatim}

complimenting turns.

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In line 1, Saeko states that she was not suitable for study.\textsuperscript{30} Overlapped with Saeko’s post-utterance laughter, Maiko starts to talk in line 4. Maiko states that Saeko is smart \textit{(atama wa ii)}\textsuperscript{31}. In line 5, Eriko also joins in with this remedial activity by denying Saeko’s interpretation, saying that ‘we don’t mean that’ \textit{(sooyuu imi ja nakute)}. Further, in the next line, again in overlap with Eriko’s incomplete utterance, Maiko repeats exactly what she has said in line 4. So in this example, co-participants collaboratively attempt to remedy an interactionally difficult situation created by the prior speaker’s self-deprecation. Compliments can be seen to provide good resource for participants in managing such a situation.

Note that the timing of giving compliments is important in these circumstances.

\textsuperscript{30} This utterance is a part of Saeko’s response to compliments given to her. Prior to this segment, the other participants praised her domestic character, and Saeko started to disagree with them.

\textsuperscript{31} Particle \textit{wa} here in \textit{atama wa ii} ‘be smart’ represents contrast. Saeko is recognised by other participants as someone who is very smart but has some problems in her word choice or limited vocabulary. In addition, the fact that Maiko does not complete her utterance but leaves it as incomplete suggests that Maiko has certain reservations.
Given the importance of maintaining a good atmosphere in conversation in general, ignoring or leaving such negative statements (for example, self-deprecation) is not desirable for the participants. Compliments are employed in such situations, in order to restore shared good feelings among participants, in addition to restoring the recipients’ positive self-image. The timing and design of these compliments demonstrate that speakers are sensitive to the atmosphere of conversation, as well as other party’s feelings.

Other party’s self-deprecation is not the only case where speakers give compliments immediately after. Speakers may also give compliments immediately after, as well as in reference to, other forms of talk. Here, too, the timing is important. Take the following excerpt as an example.

(49) <3STK2: 31> Popularity
H: Hiroyuki, S: Shige

1  S:  moteta no ne?
   were.popular NR IP
   “You were popular, NE?”

2  H:  ya: tada cho (.) tada yukizuri da to omou kedo
   no just litt- just casual BE QT think but

3  densha n naka de sawararete sa:=
   train LK inside at was.touched IP
   “No, well, I think it’s just a casual thing, but I was touched in the train,”

4→ S:  =yukizuri ka mata ii kotoba da ne yukizuri tte
   casual IP again good expression BE IP casual TP
   “Yukizuri. That’s a good expression NE, yukizuri.”

Participants in this fragment are two males. In talk prior to that shown in (49), Hiroyuki has talked about his awful experience. Hiroyuki relates his experience of being molested
in a train, telling that a middle-aged man touched his body. In response to this rather embarrassing story, Shige, his friend, jokingly praises Hiroyuki by saying that he was popular (*moteta*) among men. While Hiroyuki tries to emphasise that, because it happened to him only once, he is not attractive to men, Shige insists that Hiroyuki was popular among men. Shige’s utterance in line 1 is the last part of his comical assertion. Then, in lines 2 to 3, Hiroyuki responds, again attempting to assert that he is not attractive to men. In this utterance, he describes the event as casual (*yukizuri*). It is this particular expression *yukizuri*, which attracts Shige’s attention. In the next line, Shige immediately picks up this expression, and positively assesses it. First, he repeats the target expression, and then compliments Hiroyuki’s use of it by saying that it is a good word (*ii kotoba da ne*), further, he repeats the expression, *yukizuri tte*.

As such, speakers may notice some element within the prior talk and give compliments on it. Some such elements are more serious than others, in terms of their potential to have a negative effect on the entire atmosphere of the talk. For example, clearly, a compliment in (49) is less crucial than compliments in (48), in terms of the degree of immediacy. However, there are still certain levels of immediacy in cases such as (49). For instance, it is possible for the speaker to come back to the prior talk itself and give a compliment on it; *ii kotoba datta ne* ‘that was a good expression’. In this case, the effect of complimenting would be different from the original (and the immediate) one.

Therefore, the action of noticing some elements in the other party’s talk and giving compliments on it may be seen as a manifestation of speakers’ positive attitude towards the ongoing talk. It is not possible to give such compliments unless they monitor the talk carefully. Such careful monitoring is a prerequisite to the giving of
compliments in reference to the other party’s talk.

4.5.2 Compliments without reference to the talk

So far, we have observed that speakers give compliments in reference to other party’s talk. Their constant monitoring of the context, particularly of the other party’s utterances, makes this possible. In 4.5.2, I will look at the opposite case: compliments without reference to the talk. In particular, the focus will be on compliments on food, as compliments on food in the data set well demonstrate how participants give compliments without reference to the talk. At first glance, speakers appear to give compliments freely on food, regardless of the surrounding talk. However, as will be shown shortly, speakers are still aware of the surrounding context, when they give or withhold compliments.

In my data, compliments on food have been pervasively found; for example, before starting to eat, while eating, and even after finishing the food, speakers give compliments on food. It appears that there are no circumstantial constraints for speakers to give compliments on food, that is, compliments on food seem to occur regardless of the current topic, out of the local context. However, if we closely examine these compliments on food with respect to the surrounding topic, we can find certain constraints inhibit participants from giving compliments on food. That is to say, speakers are not completely free from circumstantial constraints on expressing their appreciation of food. In these cases, too, they are observed to constantly monitor the surrounding context. In particular, they seem to be cautious about the current topic, when they give compliments on food. In the following, I will briefly illustrate such
topic sensitivities displayed by participants, by using a part of one data segment.

The data segment below is chosen because it contains a series of compliments on one particular element, the red wine. In addition, this particular segment shows that participants talk about a wide variety of topics, from casual ones to serious ones. The idea is to draw a rough picture of the occurrence and non-occurrence of compliment sequences, in relation to ongoing topics. In this segment, there are four participants; two hosts and two guests. The focus will be on four compliments on the red wine, along with the context in which they occur. Note that each compliment is followed by subsequent compliments, resulting in compliment sequences.

First of all, Mayumi (one of the hosts) produced the very first compliment on this particular wine brought by the guests, as follows.

(50) <3STK1: 20> Red wine (i)
H: Hiroyuki, M: Mayumi

1  H: >konna dekkai jagaimo ga gorogoro haitt [etara< moo such big potato Sub many if.there.are no.longer “...and if there are so many big potatoes in it, I no longer-”

2→ M: [a

oh

3  oishii kore doko no; minamiafurika datte tasty this where LK South.Africa it says “Oh, it’s tasty. Where does it come from? It says South Africa.”

At this point in which Mayumi gives a compliment, participants had been talking about their likes and dislikes of one particular Japanese dish called nikujaga ‘stewed meat with potato’. Hiroyuki’s utterance in line 1 is the last part of his comment on this dish. Before this utterance comes to an end, Mayumi starts to talk, making a positive remark
on the wine.

Then, about twelve minutes later, the other host Hiroyuki comments on the tastiness of the same wine:

(51) <3STK1: 30> Red wine (ii)
H: Hiroyuki

1 H: genba toka soto ni motteku toki nanka su:gu denchi
   site and outside to carry time et.cetera soon battery
2 mottekanakya dame da mon ne\(\)\(\)
   should.carry no BE NR IP
   "When we go to the site or outside we always have to carry spare batteries."
3
4→ H: a >oishii oishii oishii<
   oh tasty tasty tasty
   "Oh (it's) so tasty."

Hiroyuki’s utterance in lines 1 to 2 is a part of the current topic: the advantages and disadvantages of using digital equipment. Hiroyuki complains about the inconvenience of digital cameras that require frequent changes of batteries (in lines 1 to 2). Since no one takes the turn, a short lapse occurs here. Then in line 4, Hiroyuki starts to talk; giving a compliment on the red wine.

Next, about twenty-six minutes after (50) was produced, one of the guests Yuko also expresses her appreciation of the wine, as follows:

(52) <3STK1: 52> Red wine (iii)
S: Shige, Y: Yuko

1 S: soo soo soo (.) inoi sa [n wa kansai no hito.
   yes yes yes ((name)) TP kansai.region LK person
   "Yeah, yeah, Mr. Inoi is from kansai region."
Here, the ongoing topic was one of their friends. Since Hiroyuki is the only participant who has not met Mr. Inoi, he has asked if Mr. Inoi is from Kansai region. In line 1, Shige confirms Hiroyuki’s guess. Before Shige’s turn comes to the end, Yuko starts to talk and positively assesses the wine.

Finally, the other guest Shige makes a comment on the wine.

The ongoing topic here is the issue of smoking in the office. Hiroyuki’s utterance in line 1 explains why he had to clean ashtrays every morning, when he started to work for the

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Umakatta is past tense of umai ‘tasty’. While the meaning is the same, some male speakers use umai instead of oishii. Whereas other speakers in this excerpt (including male speaker Hiroyuki) prefer to use oishii ‘tasty’, this speaker tends to choose umai.
office. It is followed by immediate reactions: laughter and confirmation by Yuko and Mayumi respectively. Then, after a short lapse, in line 5, Shige takes a turn. While he compliments the red wine as other parties did, one noticeable difference between prior examples and this compliment is that Shige uses the past tense of the verb. Thus we can safely assume that, at the time when Shige produces (53), the participants had finished the wine.

As such, a series of compliments on the wine occurred over time. The following is a summary of occurrences of the four compliments shown above. As mentioned earlier, the participants talk about a variety of things in this segment. This summary only shows the ongoing topics at the times when speakers initiate compliment sequences. They are: a dish called nikujaga; the use of digital equipment; a friend and his sense of humour; and smoking habits in the work environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ongoing topics</th>
<th>Compliments on the red wine</th>
<th>Time lapse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A dish</td>
<td>(i) a oishii kore doko no, &quot;Oh it's tasty ...&quot;</td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital equipment</td>
<td>(ii) a oishii oishii oishii, &quot;Oh it's so tasty&quot;</td>
<td>26 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A funny friend</td>
<td>(iii) honto i- warukunai ne..., &quot;It's go- this is not bad...&quot;</td>
<td>37 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>(iv) umakatta ne aka ne, &quot;The red was good&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to this part of talk, Mayumi had asked if male workers were assigned to jobs such as wiping desks, cleaning ashtrays and so forth, since normally they are assigned to female workers.

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As for the timing of giving compliments, while (ii) and (iv) occur after a lapse, in cases (i) and (iii), speakers break in with a compliment. These observations may indicate that speakers are comfortable with interrupting ongoing talk, when they pay compliments on food. As for topics, none of these compliments relate to the ongoing topic. In other words, it appears that there is no topical constraint that inhibits the act of giving compliments on food.

However, the data also suggests that there are some constraints on giving compliments depending on the nature of the ongoing topic. Admittedly, it is extremely difficult to show the reasons for absence of events (that is, non-occurrence of compliments). Nevertheless, the recording as well as the transcribing of conversation entitles us to speculate upon the reason why compliments did not occur during particular stretches of talk. For example, there is a rather long thirty-seven minute lapse between (iii) and (iv). As noted, it is clear that when Shige uttered (iv), they had finished the wine. However, speakers including Shige did not pay compliments immediately after finishing the wine, rather, it seems that they withheld them. But what made the participants withhold compliments on the wine they enjoyed?

I argue that this is at least partially because speakers were talking about serious matters. The topical flow of their talk after Yuko’s compliment (iii) is summarised as follows. It started with New Zealand wines; then, excessive use of agricultural chemicals; the War Memorial in Hiroshima and the ideal education regarding what happened in the past; the Japanese government’s foreign policies on North Korea; and politicians’ lack of credibility. And then they came to the issue of smoking, in which the

34 In (51), the location of the compliment looks like the end of the topic. However, speakers
compliment (iv) occurred. In general, these issues, particularly those such as foreign policies or the past wars and related tragic memories can be seen as too serious to discuss lightheartedly. In fact at times some participants seem to talk about these issues eagerly, resulting in a few debates. As a result, there is virtually no occasion for them to give a casual compliment, for instance, a compliment on food. Recall that the topics when the above four compliments occurred were less serious than the government’s foreign politics and so forth.

The above observations indicate that participants are again fully aware of the ongoing talk. They seem to know when they should give compliments and when they should withhold them. Compliments on food appear to occur regardless of what they talk about, however, speakers may withhold giving compliments on food due to certain topical constraints.

To sum up this section, speakers give compliments either with or without reference to the talk. In the former case, speakers are observed to orient directly to the other party’s talk, and are thereby able to show their positive attitude towards the ongoing talk. In the latter, speakers also demonstrate their sensitivity towards the ongoing talk. In any case, therefore, it is observed that participants who give compliments monitor and are fully aware of the surrounding context.

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returned to the same topic after terminating the compliment sequence.
4.6 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the overall issues regarding design of compliments: in what way speakers give compliments, to whom, and when. Participants are found to be sensitive to the surrounding context, including other parties' feelings, ongoing topics, and the entire atmosphere of the conversation. Speakers make use of various means to address these things. While giving compliments has been considered one of the positive-politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987), these observations indicate that, in Japanese, the act of giving compliments is nonetheless related to negative-politeness concerns as well. Typically, speakers' concern for not imposing their evaluation on recipients can be seen in many respects of their design of compliments. Participants design compliments in a way which is based upon their constant monitoring of the surrounding context.
Chapter 5

The design of compliment responses

5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the design of compliment responses, that is, verbal expressions used by compliment recipients in Japanese. In particular, the focus will be on response types deployed as certain ‘strategies’ by recipients. As indicated by Pomerantz (1978) and other scholars, when one responds to compliments, one’s responses are likely to be constrained by two preferences. One is a preference for agreeing with the prior speaker, in this case the compliment giver, and the other is a preference for avoiding self-praise. These two preferences are also relevant to Leech’s Agreement Maxim and Modesty Maxim respectively (Leech 1983). While the former encourages maximum agreement between self and other; the latter favours minimum self-praise. Given the conflicting nature of these preferences, it is not easy to satisfy both at the same time, as shown in prior studies (Chen 1993; Herbert 1986; Holmes 1986; Knapp, Hopper, and Bell 1984; Yu 2003; among others). For example, if a recipient wants to agree with the compliment giver (that is, to follow the agreement maxim), she accepts the compliment, thus inevitably praising herself. In contrast, if a recipient wants to avoid self-praise (that is,
to follow the modesty maxim), then she necessarily disagrees with the compliment giver, whereby she fails to accept the compliment. Therefore, it seems that recipients need to make use of certain strategies to tackle this dilemma.

To reiterate, the task of compliment recipients is to manage the dilemma. Given this, one possible, and perhaps the best solution is to respond to a compliment non-directly; that is, to avoid overt acceptance of compliments, and to avoid overt rejection of compliments. It is thus interesting to see what kinds of strategies are adopted by recipients (although ‘direct’ responses are also found in the data set). As for distribution, in my data, three types of responses are observed: direct responses, non-direct responses and others (including laughter, and no response). These types account for 24% (direct responses), 60% (non-direct responses), and 16% (others) of total responses.¹

This chapter is organised as follows. In 5.1, first we look at direct responses. There are two kinds: one is outright acceptance, and the other is outright rejection of compliments. Both can be seen as responses which do not employ strategies for coping with the dilemma induced by two conflicting preferences. In other words, by providing such direct responses, recipients are seen to ‘ignore’ one of these preferences. In 5.2, I discuss non-direct responses and offer five strategies for formulating this type of response: they are re-assessment, using another party’s voice, questioning a compliment assertion, proffering one’s own account, and warranted non-response. All of these can be seen as manifestations of recipients’ efforts to manage the dilemma. Section 5.3 shows a case where the recipient modifies her original response, in order to illustrate the

¹ As noted earlier, this study focuses on verbal expressions. Due partly to this, the ‘other’
interational process of opinion negotiation found in compliment sequences. The final section, 5.4, concludes the chapter.

5.1 Direct responses

In this section, the characteristics of direct responses will be illustrated by some examples. There are two types of direct responses: 'outright acceptances' and 'outright rejections'. As indicated by their names, the former is a type of response in which a recipient directly expresses her acceptance of a compliment, while in the latter, a recipient directly rejects a compliment. Characteristically, both of them are often brief, and contain no elaborations.

First, let us look at examples of direct acceptances.2

(1) <17NNA3: 49-50> Wedding party
M: Maiko, T: Takashi

1 M: demo tottemo ii kanji no ne; but very good atmosphere LK IP
   ["nanka° somewhat
   "But it was held in a very cosy atmosphere, I guess.”

2> T: [aa soo desu ne; [ee.
   yeah right BE IP yes
   “Yeah, that’s right, yes.”

3 S: [aa.
   yeah

2 category is not included in the analysis.

2 Throughout the chapter, arrows indicate responses in question.

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In example (1), participants talk about a wedding party of Takashi (husband) and Saeko (wife), which was held earlier. Line 1 is the last part of Maiko's compliment, which evaluates the atmosphere of the wedding party as very cosy (tottemo ii kanji). In response to this compliment, Takashi, the husband, straightforwardly agrees with Maiko, by simply saying that *aa soo desu ne ee* ‘yeah, that’s right, yes’. This response can be seen as outright acceptance of the compliment. In other words, the recipient shows his agreement with the positive evaluation of the referent proffered by Maiko and accepts it, as it is. Similarly, in (2), the recipient Chihiro accepts the compliment on the comfortableness of her massage chair, with multiple *soo* ‘yes, right’. In both examples, recipients’ agreeing turns overlap with the last part of compliments, thus recipients are seen to display their alignment with the prior speaker, that is, the compliment giver. As for linguistic features, brief agreement tokens such as *aa* ‘yeah’, *ee* ‘yes’, and *soo* ‘right’ are often used in this type of response.

As shown in both examples, when recipients accept compliments in a direct
manner, their responses tend to be short with agreement tokens, and do not contain any elaboration. These features of this type of response (direct acceptance) can be attributed to the design of the compliments. That is, these compliment givers pursue confirmation from the recipient of attributes of the referent, while giving compliments. For instance, in (1), Maiko guesses the atmosphere at the wedding party the recipient held (note that Maiko did not attend the party). Likewise, in (2), Emi also supposes the massage chair is comfortable to lie down, after listening to Chihiro’s explanation. In response, the recipients confirmed the compliment givers’ conjectures; ‘yes, the atmosphere was good’ and ‘yes, the chair is comfortable, as you guessed’ respectively.

Differently put, recipients appear to focus on the compliment givers’ attitude of seeking confirmation from them. Recall that both compliments in (1) and (2) were uttered in rising intonation, suggesting that there may be room for negotiation. Non-elaborative brief agreement tokens fit an environment where the confirmation is due, or expected.

By the same token, recipients may reject the compliment in a direct manner. Consider the following examples.

(3) <17NNA1: 8> TOEIC
S: Saeko, M: Maiko

1 M da[kara omotta yoriwa yoku dekita to omou. so thought than well did QT think “… so I think I did better than I expected.”
2 T: [he:::] I see “I see.”
3 E: fu [::::n] uh huh

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4 T:  [hee [::
    uh huh
    "Uh huh."
5 S:  [ee? maikosan $dekiru n des [u yo$
        eh Maiko can.do NR BE IP
        "Eh? You can do well, Maiko."
6→ M:  [>dekinai dekinai dekinai<
        can't can't can't
        "No, no, I can't."
as can be seen, Maiko simply repeats *dekinai* ‘(I) can’t’ three times. All of these features make this response a very strong, outright rejection of compliment.

Similar features are also observed in (4), where Shige gives a compliment on Yuko’s potential (to achieve something in general, but not specified). In line 2, Yuko takes the turn, starting with a disagreement token *iya* ‘no’. This turn-initial *iya* strongly indicates the impending disagreement. She goes on, and explicitly denies Shige’s claim by telling that she does not have potential (*kanoosee wa nai yo*). Therefore, these two examples are similar in two respects: (i) the referents (recipients’ personal attributes), and (ii) recipients’ disagreeing responses. These recipients use the negative form of the corresponding descriptors (that is, *dekinai* ‘can’t’ as opposed to *dekiru* ‘can’ in (3), and *nai* ‘don’t have’ as opposed to *aru* ‘have’ in (4) respectively). In addition, in terms of the timing of production, recipients react quickly to the compliment. In (3), Maiko takes the turn without waiting for the completion of the compliments, while in (4), there is no gap between the compliment and Yuko’s subsequent response. These features indicate recipients’ urgency, when they reject the prior compliment. It seems that recipients are not comfortable when their personal attributes such as ability are topicalised by compliments, so that they may try to minimise their own discomfort by rejecting compliments in such an outright manner. In such cases, recipients’ preference for avoiding self-praise appears to override their preference for avoiding disagreeing with the compliment givers.

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4 The use of the interactional particle *yo* also contributes to the assertiveness of this utterance. See Maynard (1993) for the functions of *yo*.
In 5.1, we have seen cases in which recipients either accept or reject the compliment in a direct manner. It reveals that in these cases, responses tend to be very brief, containing no elaboration. In addition, the design of compliments is observed to play a part in constraining the way of responding. While the 'conjecturing' compliments tend to be directly accepted, recipients are observed to reject 'assertive' types of compliments. Another interesting observation in these direct responses is that there may be certain correlations between the referent and the recipient. For instance, in the case of outright acceptance, the distance between referents and recipients is not so close. By contrast, when recipients directly reject compliments, referents tend to be close to them (or, more accurately, a part of themselves): for example, ability in (3) and potential (4).  

5.2 Non-direct responses

In this section, five types of non-direct responses will be examined. While each of them is distinctive in its features, the features of these response types can roughly be characterised as 'non-commitment'. That is, recipients tend not to make their stance clear, although in some cases they indicate their stance to some extent. By leaving their stance equivocal, recipients are able to save their own face (non self-praise), as well as compliment giver's face (non disagreement). In this regard, non-direct types of responses can be seen as a result of recipients' effort to seek some kind of solution to the dilemma of two conflicting preferences. As will be shown, these responses work

5 Maruyama (1996) points out that compliments on personality or skill are unlikely to be
effectively as strategies to deal with the dilemma.

5.2.1 Re-assessment

The first identified strategy is re-assessment, whereby recipients of compliments may re-assess the same referent as in the compliment in their own terms. An example is shown below.

(5) <1NN: 12> S’s husband’s reliableness
M: Maiko, S: Saeko, E: Eriko

1 M: fu::::::n demo tanomoshii janai; demo sooyuu no tte sa,=
   I see but reliable isn’t he but such NR QT IP
   “I see. But he must be reliable, mustn’t he, if he behaves like that,”
2 E: =un
   yeah
   “Yeah.”
3 M: yat [te kurenakutemo ii noni ]
   do if does not do good although
   “since he doesn’t have do it.”
4→ S: [yaa dakara nanka- ]
   well because somewhat
   “Well, because, well”
5→ S: (.) nanka chotto sore wa furui na tte yuu ka=
   well little that TP old fashioned IP QT say or
   “it’s a bit old fashioned, I think,”
6 M: =aa sooyuu has [soo ga?
   oh such idea SB
   “Oh, you mean, that kind of idea?”
7→ S: [chotto. un.=
   little yes
   “A little bit. Yeah.”

accepted, comparing with compliments on appearance or possessions.
In the preceding part of example (5), Saeko talks about her honeymoon to Europe. According to Saeko, her husband (not present) tended to take the initiative during the trip, for example, when they checked in the hotel, or when they ordered at the restaurant. Having heard that, in line 1, Maiko starts to make a comment, through which she positively evaluates Saeko’s husband as *tanomoshii* ‘dependable/reliable’. While Eriko shows her agreement in line 2, In line 3, Maiko adds an increment, pointing out that there is no need for him to act in this way. Just after the beginning of Maiko’s increment, Saeko also starts to talk in line 4, with the hedging particle *yaa* ‘well’. In this utterance in lines 4 and 5, Saeko describes her husband’s attitude as *furui* ‘old-fashioned’. What Saeko does here is to re-assess or re-characterise the referent of the compliment. She neither directly agrees nor disagrees with Maiko; rather, Saeko leaves Maiko’s positive assessment as it is. This is an important feature of this type of response; while the recipient provides a ‘new’ characterisation of the referent, she does not completely reject the assessment given by the complimenter.

Another feature of this type of response is that recipients tend to show hesitations. For example, in (5) above, Saeko’s response contains multiple hedging expressions. These expressions include hesitation markers *yaa* ‘well’ at turn-initial position, *nanka* ‘somewhat, well’ twice in turn-internal position, *chotto* ‘little,’ and turn-final *tte yuu ka* ‘or so’. In effect, if we remove these hedging expressions, the rest of the utterance is clearly the essence of Saeko’s response: *sore wa furui na* ‘that is old-fashioned’, which would become a strong disagreement, thus interactionally undesirable.

Example (5) above is an instance of a recipient’s re-assessment through which
she looks at the referent from a different angle. As well as looking at (and focusing on) a different aspect of the same referent, recipients also re-assess the same referent as a form of qualification. In the following two examples, recipients qualify the compliment they received. In (6), for instance, the target object of the compliment is Yuri’s ability to speak German on the telephone. In line 1, Takako expresses her admiration, by saying sugoi ‘great.’ In response, Yuri focuses on the fact that she has trouble with listening (lines 2 to 3).

(6) <14YA: 2> German
t: Takako, Y: Yuri
1 T: =su↑go [::::i
   great
   “That’s great.”
2→ Y: [k↑kenai n da kedo ne↓i mukoo no
   can’t hear NR BE but IP the person LK
3→ $itteru koto wa ne↓$ saying thing O IP
   “I can’t hear what the other person says, though,”

In this case, therefore, while Takako’s compliment sugoi ‘great’ seems to incorporate all aspects of language ability including listening, Yuri makes it clear that one of these aspects is a weak point (according to her), by explicitly mentioning kikenai ‘cannot hear’. Likewise, in (7) below, the recipient mentions the negative aspect of her attribute.

(7) <17NNA2: 63> Domestic character
M: Maiko, E: Eriko, S: Saeko
1 M: i↑ma made ne, hitori de ita no ga okashii
   now until IP single in stayed NR SB strange
In this example, Maiko and Eriko jointly compliment the domestic character (kateiteki) of Saeko. In response, when Saeko first starts to talk in line 5, apparently she tries to reject it, by saying sonna ‘(I’m not) like that’. While Eriko further shows her strong agreement with Maiko’s compliment in the next line, Saeko resumes talking in line 7 and claims that she was not suited for study. Her use of hesitation markers maa ‘well’ as well as tte yuu ‘say’, indicates the recipient’s reluctance to provide her own assessment.

Both in (6) and (7), recipients are found to qualify the compliments given to them. They do not explicitly reject the compliment; rather, recipients leave as it is (as

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6 According to Yamane (2002), maa ‘well’ (a Japanese filler) is typically used to express speakers’ hesitation when they talk about themselves.
also shown in (5)). When Yuri qualifies the compliment, for instance, in case of (6), she implies: ‘well, I may be great if you say so, but I cannot listen to them’. Similarly in (7), the implication of Saeko’s response would be: ‘I may be a domestic type of person as you said, but I was not suited to study’. In other words, recipients first implicitly accept the compliment given to them, then add the point they think is important. In addition, note that both recipients laugh when they qualify the compliment. According to Hayakawa (1999), environments where laughter appears in conversation include: when speakers talk about themselves; and when speakers want to hide their feelings of embarrassment. Thus, it appears that recipients’ laughter in (6) and (7) is a manifestation of their effort to deal with the awkward situation.

In sum, in 5.2.1, we have seen cases in which recipients re-assess the referent of the compliment. They re-assess it either by looking at the referent from a different angle, or by qualifying the force of the compliment. All in all, recipients are observed to leave the original compliment as it is, rather than reject it. This is an important aspect of this type of response in that recipients display their respect for compliment givers, by trying not to disagree with them. In addition, their effort to reduce or diminish the force of the original compliment can also be observed characteristically in their use of hedging expressions such as *nanka* ‘well,’ *maa* ‘well,’ as well as laughter.

### 5.2.2 Using another party’s voice

The second strategy is ‘to use another party’s voice’. Recipients may incorporate

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7 The relationship between compliment events and laughter will be dealt with in Chapter 6.
another party’s words in their responses to compliments. It appears that, by quoting another party’s comments, the degree of commitment becomes lower than that shown by expressing their own feelings in their own words. In other words, this strategy allows recipients to avoid revealing their own thoughts or feelings. Consider the first example.

(8) <12Y3R1: 3> Apartment
K: Kayo, R: Rie, H: Haruka,

1  K: sugoku ii to omoun da yo ne[e
  very good QT think NR BE IP IP
  “I think it’s really good.”
2→ R: [demo nee,
  but IP
3→ saikin (.) ano suunin no (.) onaji (.) manshon no hito to=
  recently well several LK same apartment LK people with
  “Well, but when I saw a couple of residents of this apartment recently,”
4  H: =[un
  yeah
  “Yeah.”
5  K: =[u:nº
  uh huh
  “Uh huh.”
6→ R: tamani “au to°.hh ↑a:: zuibun okane haratta noni
  occasionally meet when ah certain money paid although
7→ yasubushin desu na:: ↓toka tte.
  poorly.built BE IP and QT
  “(they) complained, something like ‘we paid good money for this, but it’s a cheaply-built work, and so on.”
8  H: he:::
  uh huh
  “Uh huh.”

In (8), three participants talk about Rie’s apartment that she purchased several years ago (the location of this recording is the apartment in question). Line 1 is the last part of
Kayo’s compliment on the high quality of the apartment. In a slight overlap, in line 2, Rie starts to respond to it. In this lengthy turn, Rie talks about her recent experience in which she had a chat with her neighbours. The focus should be on her talk in lines 6 to 7, where she apparently quotes her neighbour’s words. In line 6, Rie utters *tamani au to* ‘when (I) meet them occasionally,’ then inhales, before shifting the pitch. It is here she started to quote her neighbour’s words. The quoted portion is: *a:: zuibun okane haratta noni yasubushin desu na::* ‘we paid good money for this, but it’s a cheaply-built work’. Then Rie shifts pitch again (and marks the end of quote), and ends her talk with *toka tte* ‘and so on’.

In Rie’s utterance, there is no explicit mention of who this neighbour is, nor whether this person is male or female. Nevertheless, Japanese native speakers can assume that this person was a middle-aged man. Firstly, we can assume that there is a certain distance between Rie and the person with whom Rie talked, from her use of polite form *desu* ‘be’. As pointed out by Maynard (1989: 37), polite endings such as *desu* “appear in directly quoted speech spoken to a social superior or in speech that takes place in less casual situations in which normally polite forms are expected”. Secondly, Uyeno’s (1972) observation of the combination of *desu* and *na* (that is, *desu na* ‘is’) supports our assumption. According to Uyeno (1972), the use of *desu na* is limited to male speakers of certain age. As for the wording, the key word in Rie’s response is the pejorative expression *yasubushin* ‘cheaply-built work’, which is a

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8 Rie appears to imply she had more than one occasion where she and other residents complained about the poor quality of the apartment, by referring to her neighbours as *suunin no onaji manshon no hito* ‘several residents of this apartment’ in line 3. Thus, the quoted part in line 6 is understood as representative of her neighbours’ words, rather than a specific person’s words.
negative term to describe the apartment. This could be a very strong expression of disagreement, if Rie used it as her own word. For instance, Rie could have said: *konno no yasubushin da yo* ‘This is just a cheaply-built work’. Instead, by designing her response in such a way, she was able to avoid friction with the complimenter, while implying that the quality of the apartment is not as good as it looks.

In the next example, too, another party’s voice is strategically used by the recipient.

(9) <12Y3R2: 2> Sakai Miki  
H: Haruka, M: Mari, A: Ayako,  

1 H: sakki omotta n da kedo marichan te sa:, a.little.while.ago thought NR BE but Mari TP IP  
2 ano(.) sakaimiki ni chotto niteru; well Sakai.Miki with a.little resemble  
“Well a while ago I thought that Mari resembles Sakai Miki a little bit?”  
3\(\rightarrow\) M atashi sa: konaida, I IP the.other.day  
“I was, the other day,”  
4 H: "un" uh huh  
“Uh huh.”  
5\(\rightarrow\) M: sore o iwareta no wa hajimete na n da ke[do, that O was.told NR TP first.time BE NR BE but  
“although it’s the first time I’ve been told that,”  
6 H: ["un" uh huh  
“Uh huh.”  
7\(\rightarrow\) M: iwasakihiromi no, Iwasaki.Hiromi LK  
“Iwasaki Hiromi’s”  
8 (.)  
9 A: he he
In (9), Haruka proffers a complimentary comment to Mari in lines 1 to 2. Haruka points out the resemblance between Mari and an actress Sakai Miki. In response to this compliment, the recipient, Mari, starts to talk in line 3. Note that Mari’s way of starting to talk is unusual as responding to compliments (atashi sa: konaida ‘I was, the other day’), in that it does not appear to have any connection with the compliment. However, it turns out that this part of the utterance is a preface to her story, then in line 22, Mari finally reaches her point: recently she was told by her friend that she resembles Iwasaki Hiromi, another actress (this actress’s name is first introduced in line 7). The first part of this turn nitenai? ‘(you) resemble her, don’t you?’ is introduced as her friend’s words. In short, in response to the compliment, Mari employs another party’s words.

In both examples (8) and (9) above, the recipients design their response by incorporating another party’s voice, instead of directly expressing their own feeling. In effect, in both cases, it is difficult to determine whether they agree or disagree with the compliment giver. While in (8), Rie’s response appears to be a mild disagreement because of the word yasubushin ‘cheaply-built work’, Mari’s response in (9) is more obscure, since it contains no such ‘negative’ lexical elements. Mari simply provides her

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9 Here, Mari talks about the former TV programme in which the actress Iwasaki Hiromi appeared. According to Mari, while Mari did not watch this, one of her friends watched
friend's opinion, instead of expressing her own. However, to reiterate, these responses are similar in that they neither agree nor disagree with the compliment giver.

In 4.2.2, non-direct responses that employ direct quotation by two different speakers are illustrated. While incorporating another party's words into speech (or direct/indirect quotations) is pervasively found in everyday conversation (Horiguchi 1995; Kamada 2000; Tannen 1989; among others), in this particular context, making use of another's voice has a special interactional meaning. Compliment recipients are seen to be strategically making use of another party's voice as "a way of proposing the 'objectivity' of the account" (Mandelbaum 1993: 259). Putting it differently, this strategy allows these recipients to take a neutral stance, rather than leaning towards either agreement (acceptance) or disagreement (rejection). As such, it is shown that quoting another party's voice is a very useful strategy for avoiding direct response to compliments.

5.2.3 Questioning compliment assertion

The next non-direct type of response is 'to question the compliment assertion'. Recipients of compliments may ask compliment givers whether they are honest; in other words, recipients seek a confirmation. To do this job, recipients often use the anaphoric proterm soo, as in the next example.

(10) <7YA4 8> Parents
T: Takako, Y: Yuri, M: Midori

replays of this programme.
1 T: waka [i ne:: otoosan young IP father “So young, your father.”
2 M: [wakka::=i= young “So young.”
3 Y: =.hh he he $soo$?= so “.hh he he (do you think) so?”
4 T: =u [:n. yeah “Yeah.”
5 M: [uun. yeah “Yeah.”

In (10), both Takako and Midori give compliments on the youthfulness of Yuri’s father. Yuri’s response in line 3 starts with a short inbreath. Then she starts to laugh before uttering soo ‘so’ in question intonation, while laughing. This is a typical example of recipients’ questioning the compliment giver’s assertion in neutral stance, by using proterm soo. As was observed by Golato (2005) in her German data, these types of responses do not display recipients’ epistemic stance. That is, recipients take a neutral stance, in terms of compliment assertion provided by compliment givers. In (10) above, for instance, while Takako and Midori assert that Yuri’s father is young, Yuri neither agrees nor disagrees with them.

In addition to soo, honto ‘really’ is also used by recipients who question the compliment givers’ assertion, as shown in the next example.
(11) <3STK1: 30> Red wine
H: Hiroyuki, M: Mayumi, Y: Yuko

1  H: a >oishii oishii oishii<
oh tasty tasty tasty
“Oh it’s so tasty.”

2  M: oishii yo [ne,
tasty  IP  IP
“Tasty, isn’t it?”

3→  Y: [honto?
really
“Really?”

4  H: n oishii yo kore
mm tasty  IP  this.one
“Mm, tasty, this one.”

In (11), participants are tasting the wine that Yuko and Shige (who do not appear in this excerpt) brought as a gift. In lines 1 and 2, Hiroyuki and Mayumi (the hosts) proffer compliments on the wine. Then in line 3, Yuko replies by asking them if it is so, with a rising intonation honto ‘really’. Here, as with soo in (10), honto displays the recipient’s neutral stance towards the compliment givers’ assertion.

Note that, in both expressions soo and honto, intonation and tone is crucial, in order to determine the speakers’ attitude. Of course, it is impossible for analysts to judge the speaker’s mental attitudes, for example, to what extent this speaker is doubtful about the prior speaker’s sincerity: we can never know. Yet there are certain keys in the utterance, including intonation. For example, certain responses containing soo or honto can display the recipient’s epistemic stance. If pronounced in a doubtful tone as well as in falling intonation, soo ka naa ‘is that so? (I doubt it)’ can be interpreted as showing

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10 The formal version of soo, soo desu ka ‘is that so’ is also found in the data.
the recipient’s negative stance towards the compliment giver’s assertion. Likewise, soo

deshoo ‘isn’t it so?’ in rising intonation is likely to be heard as the recipient’s display of
positive stance towards it. Instead of using those stance-taking questions, recipients in
my corpus normally take a neutral stance when they question the compliment giver’s
assertion. As a result, they are able to avoid showing disalignment with compliment
givers.

Finally, recipients repeat or recycle a part of the compliment when they question
the complimenter’s assertion.

(12) <17NNA2: 69> Cake2
S: Saeko, M: Maiko

1 S: sugoi furesshu
very fresh
“(It’s) very fresh.”

2 M: furesshu?
fresh
“Fresh?”

3 S: u:n
yeah
“Yes.”

In (12), participants are eating dessert after the dinner. In line 1, Saeko proffers a
compliment on the freshness of the cake Maiko brought, by saying sugoi furesshu ‘(It’s)
very fresh’. In response, Maiko asks Saeko furesshu? ‘(Is it) fresh?’.

Recipients at times repeat a part of the compliment to question the compliment giver’s assertion. In this
particular example, this brief response seems to accomplish two aims simultaneously: to
question the compliment giver’s assertion, and to downgrade the force of the
compliment. That is, although the compliment in line 1 describes the cake as sugoi
furesshu 'very fresh', in response, Maiko asks Saeko if the cake is fresh, rather than asking if it is very fresh.\textsuperscript{11}

In short, by using terms such as soo and honto, or by repeating a part of the prior compliment, recipients question the compliment assertion. In any case, recipients are observed as setting themselves in a neutral position, instead of showing their epistemic stance. Such a practice seems to be effective, in terms of being able to avoid explicit disagreement and self-praise. Another point of this type of response shown in all of above three examples is that it results in securing compliment givers' confirmation.

5.2.4 Proffering one's own account

The fourth strategy is 'to proffer own account'. Recipients may voluntarily provide some relevant information on the referent, or on the questioned situation. As will be shown, responses in this category are commonly explanatory. For example, such proffered information can be background information about the situation, as in the next example.

(13) <7YA4: 8-9> Parents
M: Midori, Y: Yuri

1 M: \textit{aa:: 'yappari goryooshin wakai wa.'}  
\textit{oh as.expected parents young IP}  
"Oh, you know, your parents are so young."

2→ Y: \textit{futari tomo honto supootsu ningen datta kara ne;}  
both too really sports people BE because IP

\textsuperscript{11} I have another similar example, in which the compliment giver uses sugoku 'very' to describe the attribute, while the recipient disregards sugoku and simply repeats the adjective.
In line 1 in (13), Midori gives a compliment on the youthfulness of Yuri’s parents (goryooshin) who left earlier. In response to this, Yuri replies by mentioning the fact that both of them played sports a lot (futari tomo honto supootsu ningen datta). This may be one of the reasons among others, why her parents are able to stay youthful. It seems that Yuri provides this information as an account, by using the particle kara ‘because’. In other words, her use of kara indicates that Yuri provides this information as grounds or an account for the youthfulness of her parents, the referent of compliments.

In the next example, too, the recipient provides some background information.

(14) <14YA: 5> TV programme
Y: Yuri, T: Takako, M: Midori

1 Y: .hh honto takakosan geinoo kankei
    really Takako entertainment relation
2 $kuwashii yo ne $ know.well IP IP
   “Takako is really well informed about entertainment-related matters.”
3→ T: huh huh atashi moo ne, meisaku-gekijoo sugoi
    I well IP ((name of TV programme)) very
4→ suki de sa:
    love and IP
   “Huh huh I really loved Meisaku-Gekijoo,”
5 Y: °un°
    yeah
   “Yeah.”
6→ T: kekkoo nijuudai demo miteta ( )
    quite twenties even watched
   “and I watched it even in my twenties.”
7 M: fu::n

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In this excerpt, three participants talk about how they all enjoyed a particular children’s TV programme: *Meisaku-gekijoo* ‘Theatre of famous stories’. In lines 1 to 2, Yuri proffers a compliment on Takako’s extensive knowledge of this programme, in a surprised tone, by saying that *geinoo kankei kuwashii* ‘well informed about entertainment-related matters’. Takako, in response to this, starts to talk in line 3. In this response (in lines 3, 4, 6), Takako says that she loved the programme in question so much that she watched it even in her twenties. Unlike the recipient in the previous example, Takako does not use the particle *kara* ‘because’. Nevertheless, this response can be understood as the recipient providing her own account of why she is so well-informed. According to Takako, it is because she loved it so much (*sugoi suki datta*).

In the next example too, the recipient provides her own account, but in a slightly different way.

(15) <3STK2: 18> Drinking behaviour
H: Hiroyuki, M: Mayumi, Y: Yuko,

1 H: mayumi chan te honto ne, (.)
   Mayumi TP really IP
2 >ichido to shite ne< yoppatte midareta toko
   once LK do IP get.drunk lose.herself figure
3 mita koto nai mon ne=
   saw thing no IP IP
   “Mayumi is, I have never seen her get drunk and lose herself, never.”
4 M: =†heh heh heh heh heh

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12 A discrepancy between the referent in the compliment and that in the response can be attributed to the design of this compliment. See Chapter 4 for this type of compliments.
“He heh heh heh”

5 Y: a::[::::]
oh
“Oh.”

6 M: [atashi nechau n da yo yoppara nu to
go to sleep NR BE IP get drunk if
"Unfortunately I tend to go to sleep when I get drunk.”

In (15), the referent of the compliment is Mayumi’s admirable behaviour when she is drunk. Hiroyuki (Mayumi’s husband) proffers this compliment in lines 1 to 3, by telling that he has never seen Mayumi behave outrageously. In line 4, Mayumi starts to laugh, before making a comment in line 6, which is overlapped with Yuko’s lengthy acknowledgement. Here, Mayumi tells what happens when she is drunk: she inevitably goes to sleep. This may be one of the reasons why she never loses control when she is drunk, among others.

The expression nechau must play a role here. Nechau is a colloquial version of neteshimau13 ‘it is unfortunate to go to sleep’. Thus, instead of saying neru n da yo ‘I go to sleep,’ by saying nechau n da yo ‘unfortunately I go to sleep,’ the speaker expresses her disappointment about the fact that she cannot stay awake when she drinks.14 Therefore, although Hiroyuki finds Mayumi’s behaviour admirable, Mayumi responds to it by implying that it is simply impossible for her to stay awake. Mayumi provides her own account of the attribute in this way.

As the term ‘account’ characteristically implies, this type of response can be interpreted as ‘a reason why it is so’. Recipients may or may not use kara ‘because’. If

13 Backhouse (1993: 147) explains the use of the auxiliary verb shimau as to describe “an unwanted happening”.

14 Later in this sequence, Mayumi again expressed her disappointment of being unable to stay
*kara* is used (as in (13)), the recipient is understood as explicitly providing the reason. Even when *kara* is not used, as shown in (14) and (15), their response can still be heard as ‘a reason why it is so’. This can be verified by the fact that *kara* ‘because’ is nicely fitted these responses produced originally without *kara*. For example:

(14)’ T: atashi meisaku-gekijoo sugoi sukidatta kara sa
I ((name of the programme))very loved because IP
“Because I really loved Meisaku-Gekijoo.”

(15)’ M: atashi nechau kara ne yopparau to
I go.to.sleep because IP get.drunk if
“Because I tend to go to sleep when I get drunk.”

These modified responses seem to be natural enough for each sequence.

To summarise, in response to compliments, recipients may proffer their own accounts. Despite the lack of explicit signs of acceptance of compliments (such as agreement tokens), these recipients should be understood as implicitly accepting compliments, since this practice of providing accounts does not make sense, unless recipients accept (although implicitly) the compliments given to them. In this regard, this strategy can be interpreted as acceptance-implicative, while maintaining its neutral epistemic stance.

### 5.2.5 Warranted non-response

The last type of non-direct response found in the data set is ‘warranted non-response’.

awake, in contrast with people who can stay awake and have fun until late.
Recipients do not always respond to compliments. Despite our intuition or general expectation that compliments are normally followed by verbal responses, recipients may choose not to respond to compliments in certain circumstances.\(^\text{15}\) This section deals with such cases where recipients withhold a response. As will be demonstrated, there are several sequential contexts where this happens, but all in all, it can be termed as 'warranted non-response', since recipients are observed to be warranted not to respond to compliments.

In prior studies, this type of response, or to be more accurate, 'absence of response' has been observed but has been treated as a marginal case (Holmes 1986; Golato 2002; Pomerantz 1978; Yuan 1998; among others). In addition, no reasons or accounts for such absence are provided.\(^\text{16}\) As far as my data is concerned, however, this type is the largest group of non-direct responses, accounting for about twenty-five per cent of all of non-direct responses. It is not appropriate, therefore, to deal with this type as simply marginal, or insignificant. Further, it is possible to specify some of the circumstances where it happens, at least to some extent.\(^\text{17}\) It will be shown that recipients do have reasons why they withhold responses.

Firstly, the data shows that when questions co-occur with compliments, answering the question almost always takes precedence over responding to compliments. The next example illustrates this.

\(^{15}\) I acknowledge the possibilities of non-verbal responses such as nods, smiles.

\(^{16}\) An exception is Holmes (1986). Holmes (1986: 492) observes that when compliments are followed by other utterances such as questions, recipients are allowed not to reply to compliments. Holmes treats it as "legitimate evasion".

\(^{17}\) One of the reasons why most prior studies fail to indicate the context where recipients choose to ignore the prior compliment is their data-collection method. As has been pointed out by Golato (2002) and Yuan (2001), through field observation (that is, by jotting down utterances as well as contextual information, as soon as possible after the exchange took place), it is not possible to record exactly what happens in
(16) <11A1: 46> Experience

Y: Yoshie, S: Sayuri

1 Y .h demo moo oshieteru janai.
but already teach TAG
“But you’ve already taught, haven’t you?”

2 S maa ne|e`
well IP
“Well, yeah.”

3 Y [sono jisseki: wa (.) sugoi yo` ima donna no? (.) >are
that experience TP great IP now how NR well

4 yappari< hijooki- hijookin ko [oshi “mitaina”
as.expected part- part.time tutor like
“That experience is great. What’s your current status? Well, are you
working as a part-time tutor or anything like that?”

5→ S [hijookin hijookin mochiron.
part-time part-time of.course
“It’s part-time, part-time, of course.”

In this excerpt, two participants talk about Sayuri’s career. In the preceding part of talk, Sayuri has told that she is pessimistic about her future career. Yoshie’s utterance in line 1 is thus understood as her attempt to reassure Sayuri, by pointing out the fact that Sayuri has already started to teach at university. This utterance gains Sayuri’s reluctant agreement maa ne ‘well, yeah’. Then in slight overlap with Sayuri’s utterance, in line 3, Yoshie takes a turn again.

Yoshie’s turn in lines 3 to 4 consists of three TCUs (Turn-constructional units): (i) compliment: sono jisseki wa sugoi yo ‘that experience is great’, (ii) request for information: ima donna no? ‘what’s your current status?’ and (iii) candidate answer: are yappari hijooki- hijookin kooshi mitaina ‘well, are you working as a part-time tutor or
anything like that?’ At two TRPs (transition-relevance places) within this turn, that is, both between (i) and (ii), and (ii) and (iii), Sayuri, the recipient of the compliment, could have taken a turn. However, the point at which Sayuri actually starts to talk is not these places, but in the middle of the last TCU. To be more specific, Sayuri starts to talk after hearing the word *hijookin* ‘part-time’.

As noted, Yoshie seems to provide this word as a candidate answer to her own question: ‘what’s your current status?’

What Sayuri does in line 5 is to confirm Yoshie’s guess: “Yes, I work part-time, of course’. Sayuri affirmatively confirms Yoshie’s guess, first by repeating the word *hijookin*, and further by adding an adverb *mochiron* ‘of course’. Note that, this turn only orients to Yoshie’s question. The preceding compliment, therefore, receives no response. This is a typical example, where showing that a compliment is immediately followed by a question, as a result, while the question is answered, the compliment is likely to be left unacknowledged. Notice that, in such cases, the absence of compliment responses is not treated as ‘unusual’ or ‘noteworthy’ by participants. Rather, participants including compliment givers simply accept it.

It may be that contiguity (Sacks 1987) plays a part. What we can see here is “a contiguity of question and answer” across successive turns (Sacks 1987: 58). As Sacks (1987) observes, while questions (and answers) can be parts of turns with other things, when the question occur at the end of the turn, the corresponding answer tends to occur at the beginning of the answerer’s turn. However, the placement of a question does not

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18 This word *hijookin* ‘part-time’ itself can be used as a noun, but in this case, it turned out that it was a part of a compound noun: *hijookin kooshi* ‘part-time tutor’.

19 Notice that there is a micropause after Yoshie’s question component *ima donna no?* ‘what is your current status?’ Yoshie seems to expect Sayuri to provide the answer here. However, due to the delay (or lack) of Sayuri’s answer, Yoshie provides a candidate answer: *hijookin kooshi*
fully explain the compliment recipient’s behaviour in the next example.

(17) <17NNA3: 14> Morning exercise
M: Maiko, T: Takashi, S: Saeko, E: Eriko

1 M: e nani o kikkake ni sooyuu koto o hajime [yoo to well whatby start with such thing O begin QT
“Well, what did make you start such things?”

2 T: 

3 S: saisho wa-
first at “At first,”

4 T: n [n.
mm “Mm.”

5 S: [kare no hoo ga yattete, hh de isshoni yattemiyoo to he LK side SB did.and and together do try QT
omotte yattara
thought did “he started it and I thought I would do it with him,”

6 M: demo erai ne ichiban samui jiki ni haj [imete but excellent IP most cold time at start “But you are excellent, since you started it in the coldest season.”

7 E: 

8 T: [nande
why

9→ T: [nande
why

10→ hajimeta no ka zenzen $oboetenai kedo$ started NR Q at.all can’t.remember but “I can’t remember at all why I started it though.”

Saeko and Takashi are a married couple (wife and husband respectively), and Maiko
and Eriko are their guests. Here, they talk about morning exercise that the couple do

‘part-time tutor’.
every morning since they started it a while ago. According to Saeko and Takashi, there is a TV programme of exercise every morning including the weekend, so that they wake up at half past six and turn on the TV, and exercise together. In line 1, Maiko asks how they got involved in this particular activity. In response to this, Takashi starts to talk (inaudible) but in line 3, Saeko takes the turn and answers the question. Following this, in line 7, Maiko makes a complimentary comment, on the fact that they started the exercise in December, which is mid winter, the coldest time of the year in Japan. While Eriko shows her agreement, Takashi resumes talking in line 9: *nande hajimeta no ka zenzen oboetenai kedo* ‘I can’t remember at all why I started it though’.

Takashi’s utterance in lines 9 and 10 continues the answer to the question asked by Maiko in line 1. Recall that although Saeko provided the answer earlier (in lines 3 and 5), it is not a complete answer, in the sense that it is her version. Maiko’s question was “what made you two start”, and Takashi seems to want to provide his version. Moreover, since Saeko mentioned earlier (in lines 3 and 5) that her husband started first (*saisho wa kare no hoo ga yattete* ‘at first he started it’), Takashi seems to feel responsible for telling his own reason for starting the exercise. Although the content of the answer is that he does not remember at all why he started it, nevertheless, he answers the question. This example suggests that, while questions strongly require answers (regardless of their placement), compliments do not. It also indicates that recipients make use of this opportunity (to answer the question) as ‘an exemption’ from responding to compliment. In other words, non-response to compliments is warranted.

So far, we have seen cases where recipients are inclined to attend the questions that occur around the compliment. This seems to be a useful strategy for recipients in that they can show their positive attitude to the ongoing interaction and other parties,
even though they do not respond to the compliment. However, this strategy is not always available for them, since, obviously, not all compliments are accompanied by a question. Recipients may yet find a way to warrant their non-response to compliments. For example, in the next excerpt, the recipient addresses the prior speaker’s inappropriate word choice.

(18) <17NNA3: 1> Training
M: Maiko, S: Saeko, T: Takashi, E: Eriko

1 M: sugoi omoi n desu ne:: jaa kitaete rasshaimasune zuibun very heavy NR BE IP then train BE IP well “It’s very heavy, I guess you train very hard.”
2 S: datte motteru toki no nanka ude no shinkei toka because hold time LK well arms LK nerves or.so
3 sugoi yo nee. amazing IP IP “Because when (you) hold these, nerves on your arms are amazing, NE.”
4→ T: aa. (.) ude no [shinkei tte nani [$shinkei tte$ yeah arms LK nerves TP what nerves TP “Yeah. (.) What are nerves of arms, what are nerves?”
5 E: [shi- ner-
6 S: [a?
5 6 E: “Ner.” what “What?”

The participants in example (18) are the same as those in (17). Here, the topic is a pair of dumbbells belonging to Takashi. Maiko’s turn in line 1 consists of her comment on its heaviness, and Takashi’s supposedly high level of training. Saeko takes a turn in the next line, and seems to support Maiko’s compliment, by telling what she witnesses when Takashi trains with the dumbbells. Apparently, here, Saeko’s intention was to
point out how big Takashi’s arm muscles (ude no kinniku) are. However, in fact Saeko fails to select the right word; instead of “muscles”, she says “nerves” (ude no shinkei).

In response to these compliments, in line 4, Takashi starts to reply with a brief acknowledgment token aa ‘yeah’. Then he restarts after a micro pause, and points out Saeko’s wrong word choice, asking ude no shinkei tte nani shinkei tte ‘what are nerves of arms, what are nerves?’ Takashi also starts to laugh while repeating the key word shinkei ‘nerve’. Subsequently, since Maiko further makes it clear that it must be kinniku ‘muscles’, not shinkei ‘nerves’ Saeko wanted to say (not shown here), all of the participants laugh altogether. Therefore, in this case, the recipient (Takashi) can be seen to grasp the opportunity of ‘nitpicking’ at the prior utterance instead of responding to compliments.

In the next example, the recipient also picks up an utterance other than the compliment given to her.

(19) <17NNA2: 58> Round off
M: Maiko, S: Saeko, E: Eriko

1 M: yoku wakatta ne:: .h
   well noticed IP
   "You noticed it."

2 S: demo minna nita yo [ona ( ) kara
   but all.of.us similar kind because
   "But because all of us are similar ( )"

3 M: [sasuga da yo
   excellent BE IP
   "Excellent."

4→ E: soo. nee:: [koko ni iru hitotachi wa moo minna ne≤=
   yeah right here in present people TP well all IP
   "Yeah. Right. Everybody here is, you know;"

5 M: [minna doosedai da yo minna

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all.of.us same.generation BE IP all
“All of us are the same generation.”

6 M: =soo da yo
so BE IP
“Right.”

In line 1 of example (19), Maiko proffers a compliment to Eriko on her good guess. While Saeko takes a turn in the next line and comments on the fact that they (all of the participants) belong to the same age group, Maiko continues her talk to add sasuga da yo ‘excellent’ in line 3. At this point, therefore, there is a slight discrepancy between Maiko and Saeko in terms of their orientation: while the former orients to Eriko’s good guess, the latter’s orientation is to the characteristics which they share.

In this situation, Eriko, the recipient of the compliment, apparently attends to Saeko’s utterance, not to Maiko’s compliment. There are three TCUs in Eriko’s turn in line 4. First she expresses her agreement soo ‘yeah’ in falling intonation. Then she seems to upgrade the degree of her agreement with nee:: ‘right’. At this stage, however, it is not clear with whom Eriko agrees, Maiko or Saeko. It is unclear until she produces the last TCU koko ni iru hitotachi wa moo minna ne ‘everybody here’,20 which clearly displays her orientation towards Saeko’s utterance in line 2. Interestingly, at the same time as Eriko’s launch of the last TCU, Maiko also starts to talk, showing her agreement with Saeko. What this example indicates is that the situation may arise in multiparty settings, in which compliment recipients have the option of not orienting to compliments. As can be seen, it is relatively easy for recipients to choose to respond to another utterance rather than the compliment. Again, the person who proffers a

20 As this translation indicates, strictly speaking, it is still not clear what Eriko refers to.
compliment (as observed in the preceding two examples), does not appear to orient to the absence of response as problematic.

Simply put, compliment recipients grab a chance to warrant ignoring the compliment given to them. In other words, verbal activities other than responding to the compliment (for example, answering a question) may take precedence over the activity of responding to the compliment. In the next example too, another activity allows the recipient to avoid responding, but this time it is non-verbal activity.

(20) <12Y3R2: 1> Pictures taken by built-in camera of mobile phone
A: Ayako, M: Mari, K: Kayo

1 A: a honto da sugoi kireeni utsuru n da ne demo.=
   oh really BE very beautifully taken NR BE IP but
   "Oh, but it can take really beautifully."

2 M: =bikkuri. (.) sugoi kiree da yo ne=
   amazing very beautiful BE IP IP
   "It's amazing. It's really beautiful, NE."

3 A: =u::n ko [re dattara-
   well this if
   "Well, if this is the case,"

4 K: [doo deshoo ka ((shows Ayako’s photo to her))
   how BE Q
   "How about this?"

5 (0.5)

6 A: hee: [:i:
   I see
   "I see."

7 H: [e motto okkiku toreba ii noni.
   oh more bigger if you take good though
   "Oh you should come closer."

8 K: soo da ne ( )
   right BE IP

However, evidently, she does not respond to the compliments given by Maiko.
“You are right. ( )”

In this extract, three participants are looking at pictures taken by the built-in camera of Kayo’s mobile phone. In lines 1 to 2, both Ayako and Mari who seemingly are impressed by high quality of those pictures, give compliments on it. In the next line, Ayako initiates another turn but ceases talking in the middle of her utterance, probably because of Kayo’s action in line 4. Here, Kayo offers the next picture to Ayako while telling *doo deshoo ka* ‘how about this?’

Recall that Kayo is responsible for the quality of the pictures that they are looking at. This utterance produced by Kayo in line 4, as well as the action (offering another picture), does not respond to the prior compliments. Rather, Kayo appears to ignore the compliments and continues her ongoing activity. While it can be said that Kayo was busy operating her camera, it is difficult to assume that she failed to hear these compliments. It is more feasible to think that Kayo does hear what Ayako and Mari said, but deliberately chooses not to reply to them. If recipients are engaged in some activities (other than talking), such activities may take priority. It is not important whether they are ‘really’ too busy to respond to compliments. What is important is that recipients may use their ongoing activities as an ‘excuse’ for not replying to the compliments.

None of the recipients in 5.2.5 responds to the compliments given to them. It appears that recipients are too busy engaging in their own activity or pursuing some other concern to respond to the compliment. However, it is worth noting that none of

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21 Kayo’s this utterance may be heard as a kind of invitation to further compliments. However, as can be seen in lines 6 to 8, nobody gives subsequent compliments.
these recipients discontinues ongoing interaction. On the contrary, if not reacting to the compliment, recipients still display their intention to attend to the interaction, clearly evidenced by such responses as, for example, answering questions. Therefore, there is no sign of interactional breakdown. Moreover, it is also notable that none of the compliment givers treats recipients’ non-response as problematic. In this regard, this ‘warranted non-response’ can be a very useful strategy in responding to compliments.

In this section, five different non-direct responses are identified: re-assessment, using another party’s voice, questioning the compliment giver’s assertion, proffering one’s own account, and warranted non-response to the compliment. These response types are commonly utilised by recipients to express their basic attitude: non-commitment. However, while re-assessment is disagreement-implicative, providing one’s own account is considered an agreement-implicative strategy. Neither of them is, of course, explicit agreement nor disagreement. Rather, like the other three types, they are strategically used by recipients and understood as their display of neutral stance towards compliments.

5.3 Responses in the course of opinion negotiation process

In the above discussion, each response type has been illustrated as an individual occurrence. In some sequences, as has been shown throughout the thesis, it is not unusual for recipients to receive multiple compliments (on the same referent) to deal with. In such cases, it is observed that compliment givers and a recipient negotiate their
opinions. Through the process of negotiations, recipients may modify or alter the initial response. It is important to examine the processes through which participants accomplish ‘consensus’. In the following, one excerpt will be shown to illustrate how participants in compliment sequences negotiate their opinions. To be more specific, it will be demonstrated how recipients are obliged to modify their response in accordance with compliment givers’ guidance.

(21) <3STK2: 71> Variation
S: Shige, M: Mayumi, H: Hiroyuki

1 S: <ma::yumichan wa nee, (.) kawatteru yo ne:::>=
    Mayumi       TP    IP    different    IP    IP
    “Mayumi is unusual, NE.”

2→ M: =$ee:: [:$  
    eh
    “Eh?”

3 H:   [hora.=  
    you.see
    “You see?”

4→ M: =futsuu   ja [nai:,  
    normal    TAG
    “I think I’m normal.”

5 S:   [henka   mo aru shi [:.  
    variety too have and
    “There are varieties, and,”

6→ M:   [soo kanaa.  
    so I.wonder
    “Is that so.”

Mayumi is the compliment recipient in (21). In prior part of talk, participants talked about one of their friends who is a little bit unusual but good-natured. They agreed that this type of person would be ideal for a partner, then Hiroyuki (Mayumi’s husband)
indicated that Mayumi is also like that. This is the background of Shige’s compliment in line 1, through which he points out Mayumi’s unusual character. In this particular context, it is therefore clear that the adjective kawatteru ‘unusual’ carries positive meaning, although it does not necessarily do so in other contexts.

In response, Mayumi first expresses surprise in line 2, while laughing. Then in line 4, she contradicts Shige, by mildly asserting that she thinks she is normal. Overlapped with this turn, in line 5, Shige further comments on Mayumi’s attitude. After hearing this, in line 6, Mayumi almost withdraws from this argument, by saying soo kanaa ‘is that so’ in falling intonation. At this point, Mayumi appears to admit her unusual character.

Thus, in this example, the recipient was obliged to modify her response. A surprise token ee ‘eh’ aside, Mayumi was observed to express her own assessment (that is, a disagreeing re-assessment) as the first reaction to the compliment: futsuu ‘normal’, against kawatteru ‘unusual’. However, her next response soo kanaa ‘is that so’ can be understood as questioning the compliment giver’s assertion. We never know, of course, if Mayumi was fully convinced by Shige. Nevertheless, the point here is that she modified her initial reaction, or, to be more accurate, she was obliged to do so.

Such processes, where participants negotiate their views or opinions, underline the fact that compliment sequences are one variety of opinion-negotiation sequences (Mori 1996). In compliment sequences, as in other opinion-negotiation sequences, it is

22 It is not quite clear what Shige means here. However, note that this sequence began with Hiroyuki’s comment on his preference for ippuu kawattete henka ga aru hito ‘a person who is a little bit unusual and has some variations’ in prior part of talk (data not shown). Thus Shige follows this comment, by pointing out that Mayumi is (i) kawatteru ‘unusual’ and (ii) henka mo aru ‘there are variations’.

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not surprising to see that different participants have different opinions on the same referent. However, participants attempt to pursue some sort of agreement. To be more specific, the party initiating the sequence (compliment giver) may need agreement from all other participants, including the compliment recipient. Therefore, as illustrated in (21) above, when the recipient displays disagreement, compliment givers seem to try to convince her. In a multiparty context, participants tend to work together, that is, other participants join in. As a result, the 'isolated' recipient may downgrade or even retract disagreement.

In this section, a negotiation process by compliment givers and recipients is illustrated. Recipients of compliments may come to be aligned with compliment givers. This is not surprising, given the fact that compliment givers initiate compliment sequences. It is realised that because they initiate the sequence, they tend to have 'authority' to determine which way it will go. Recipients, on the other hand, are not unhappy with the consequences, since in any case, they end up by being convinced that they have good attributes.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with behaviour of compliment recipients. In addition to direct

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23 Recall that this sequence was originally initiated by Hiroyuki, who had indicated that his wife Mayumi is unusual. Hiroyuki's turn in line 3, hora 'you see?' shows this. Therefore, although Shige is the only person who gives compliments on the transcript, Hiroyuki is considered as another compliment giver.
responses, it is observed that recipients of compliments use a variety of non-direct responses, in order to deal with the dilemma, induced by two conflicting preferences. It is acknowledged that it is difficult to reconcile these conflicting preferences: (i) avoiding disagreeing with others, and (ii) avoiding self-praise. However, the data shows that recipients find certain resources and employ them, as useful strategies. By employing these strategies, recipients are able to avoid the extremes of outright acceptance and outright rejection of compliments. These strategies thus allow recipients to display neither stance. As a result, recipients are able to show their concern for compliment givers. Among these strategies, warranted non-response to the compliment is of importance, as it nicely represents how recipients make use of the surrounding context where multiple things are happening simultaneously to warrant their non-response. Answering a question instead of responding to a compliment is a typical example. In addition to those strategies, compliment responses within the process of opinion negotiation are illustrated. This reveals that the disagreeing recipients of compliments may be obliged to modify their initial response, aligning with compliment givers' assertions. It also underlines the necessity and importance of analysing compliment responses within the sequence.

To summarise, Japanese compliment recipients make use of a variety of strategies to deal with the dilemma. All of these strategies can be seen as compliment recipients' display of consideration both for the ongoing interaction and the other participants, including the person who proffered the compliment.
Chapter 6

Interpersonal aspects of giving compliments

6.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the interpersonal aspects of the act of giving compliments. As has been observed throughout the thesis, the acts of giving and receiving compliments are deeply intertwined with participants' circumstantial and interpersonal concerns in many ways. For example, participants are aware of when they should give compliments, or when they should refrain from giving compliments: they do not give compliments at random. The fact that compliments do not occur when participants talk about serious topics indicates that they are sensitive to the surrounding context when they give compliments. We also have seen that participants carefully design compliments, depending on the referent. For example, when the referent is the recipient's personal attribute (for instance, personality, attitude, or disposition), the speaker tends to give a compliment in a less direct manner. In contrast, when the referent is not strongly related to those personal attributes of the recipient, participants tend to give compliments directly. This suggests that participants show concern for the recipient's personal
Participants’ interpersonal concern for recipients’ personal territory can be particularly apparent in a situation where compliment recipients are high in status. In my data, participants are observed to make an effort not to infringe on recipient’s personal territory, when they give compliments to their superiors. It suggests the possibility that giving a compliment can be a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson 1987), in the sense that it inevitably imposes one’s assessment upon recipients, to some extent. While such territorial concerns may also be seen in other situations where no superiors are involved, it is particularly conspicuous in the ways of giving compliments to persons of higher status.

This possibility (that giving a compliment can be a face-threatening act) is further evident in another way of giving compliments. Participants recurrently address another party than the compliment recipient when available, seemingly making an effort to reduce the degree of imposition on recipients. As pointed out by Brown and Levinson (1987), the degree of imposition of a particular speech act varies from culture to culture. Thus there is a possibility that the act of giving compliments may impose to a higher degree in Japanese culture than in other cultures such as English-speaking cultures. I will briefly discuss this issue, by referring to two studies concerning face-threatening acts. There are striking similarities between ways of giving compliments in my data, and ways of performing interactionally difficult acts such as lodging complaints, or expressing criticisms.

Finally, I will touch upon the issue of laughter in compliment sequences. While in previous studies, laughter in compliment sequences has been neglected, as far as my data is concerned, participants frequently laugh when they give and receive
compliments. I argue that laughter often plays the role of reducing the level of tension created by the act of giving compliments.

This chapter is organised as follows: In 6.1, the ways of giving compliments to high-status persons will be discussed. It is found that speakers recurrently refrain from directly addressing their superiors when they give compliments to them. I argue that this way of giving compliments is a manifestation of speakers' respect for recipients' personal territory. Section 6.2 discusses the act of giving compliments as possibly interactionally difficult, and thus a face-threatening act, by looking at the similarities between the act of giving compliments and other acts, such as making complaints. In particular, I focus on refraining from addressing the target recipient, or making use of a third party as mediator, as a useful strategy. Section 6.3 examines laughter in compliment sequences. In the corpus, it is observed that both compliment givers and recipients frequently laugh. In some cases, although there are no 'laughables', they still laugh. I will demonstrate that laughter can be seen as a device for reducing the tension created by the act of giving compliments. In addition, it is observed that laughter can contribute to enhancing participants' shared feeling. Section 6.4 concludes the chapter.

6.1 Compliments to persons of higher status

This section focuses on compliments given to superiors. In my data, there is a segment in which one participant's parents participate. In this particular conversation (about one-hour long), there are five participants: three female friends (Midori, Takako and Yuri).
and Yuri’s parents. They are celebrating New Year’s day at Yuri’s place.¹

If we closely look at compliments given to Yuri’s parents both by Takako and Midori, there is a clear tendency: compliment givers, i.e., Takako and Midori, address each other rather than directly addressing Yuri’s parents who are superior to them. For example:

(1) <7YA3: 32> Taikyokuken
P: Yuri’s father, M: Midori, T: Takako

1\ P hh. detara mazu kanarazu shoo morau he heh heh heh
if.she.goes anyway without.fail prize receive
“… but whenever (she) takes part, (she) wins a prize without fail, he heh heh heh”

2\ M: [he:::
uh huh
“Uh huh.”

3\ T: [he::: sug [oi ne::
uh huh great IP
“That’s great, NE.”

4\ M: [sugoi ne::
great IP
“(That’s) great, NE.”

In this part of the talk, Yuri’s father talks about how he and his wife have enjoyed Taikyokuken (Tai Chi) since they started it several years ago. His utterance in line 1 is the last part of his lengthy turn. Here, he refers to his wife who regularly wins the Taikyokuken competition. When he finishes his talk with laughter, Midori and Takako start to talk at the same time in lines 2 and 3. While both turns begins with hee::: ‘uh huh’, Takako goes on to say sugoi ne::: ‘great, NE’. In overlap, Midori also utters sugoi

¹ It is the second time both Midori and Takako have met Yuri’s parents.
ne:: ‘great, NE.’ Both of them express their admiration of Yuri’s father’s story (or Yuri’s mother’s performance) by using the adjective sugoi ‘great’. The point of these compliments is that neither Takako nor Midori directly address the compliment recipient. Instead, both speakers address each other. We know this because sugoi is the non-polite form. Given that in Japanese both polite and non-polite forms are used in speech, when Midori and Takako directly address either Yuri’s father or mother, they are expected to use a polite form (using desu in line 2), as Takako does below in non-compliment example (2).

(2) <7YA3: 28>
P: Yuri’s father, T: Takako

1 P ima wa doko ni orareru n desu ka
   now TP where in live:POL NR BE Q
   “Where do you live now?”

2    T: atashi wa tonai desu hai.
   I TP within.Tokyo BE yes
   “I live in Tokyo, yes.”

Returning to the discussion of sugoi ne in (1), if these two instances of sugoi ne were directly addressed to Yuri’s father, they would be expected to contain the polite form, desu.

The following is another example relating to Yuri’s parent: Takako and Midori give compliments on food prepared by Yuri’s mother. Here, in addition to ne, bare form is also used for the same purpose.

(3) <7YA3: 35> Osechi2
T: Takako, M: Midori
In (3), three participants (Takako, Midori as well as Yuri) eat late lunch prepared by Yuri’s mother. It is not an ordinary lunch, but *osechi ryōri* (special festive food for the New Year). Both Takako and Midori comment on how tasty it is. Again, they are observed to address each other, instead of directly addressing the person who prepared it, Yuri’s mother. As in (2) above, the compliment giver Takako uses non-polite form. Takako’s turn in line 1 begins with lengthening *oishii* ‘tasty’, which is followed by a positive assessment of the food. She ends this utterance again with a non-polite form (*da* ‘be’). Takako’s utterance in line 1 does not specifically address anyone, due to the lack of interactional particles such as *ne* (the particle *ne* could have been used both after *oishii* and at the end of this utterance). In terms of speaker selection, therefore, Takako finishes her utterance without selecting anyone as next speaker (see Chapter 4). But Midori who shares the action (that is, eating) with Takako selects herself as next speaker, and quickly shows her alignment, in line 2. By uttering stand-alone *ne*, Midori
displays her agreement with Takako. Then Takako and Midori start to talk at the same time: while Takako reconfirms the point (the food is tasty), Midori makes it explicit by uttering *oishii nee* ‘tasty *NE*’.

As such, this part of the talk in (3) is highly self-contained, in that both speakers address each other, and simply consolidate their point. To put it differently, neither of them addresses Yuri’s mother despite the fact that it is Yuri’s mother who prepared the food, and that she is present. It seems that there would be nothing wrong with saying, for example, *kore oishii desu* ‘this is tasty’ directly to Yuri’s mother, by using the polite form. However, not only in this fragment, but in other parts of the conversation as well, there is not a single instance of the combination of *oishii* plus *desu*, which would have been found if compliments were directly addressed to Yuri’s mother.

I noted earlier that the addressee of some compliments uttered in multiparty context cannot be precisely identified. This is partly accounted for by the fact that participants stick to the non-polite form among friends. For instance, a compliment *sugoi ne* ‘great, NE’ can be understood as being addressed directly to the recipient, as well as being addressed to other co-participants. However, as can be seen here, the addressee becomes clear when the recipient of compliments is a superior. As we saw in example (1), it is impossible to consider this *sugoi ne* as a compliment directly addressed to Yuri’s father. In contrast, had they used polite form and said *sugoi desu ne*, it would have become clear that the addressee of this compliment was Yuri’s father, not the other co-participants. Likewise, although in other multiparty contexts, a compliment

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2 As noted in Tanaka (2000b), turn-initial *ne* can be used to endorse the prior speaker’s characterisation.

3 Similarly, there is no single instance of a combination of *sugoi* ‘great’ plus *desu* ‘be’ in this
oishii ne ‘tasty NE’ is ambiguous in terms of the addressee, in example (3), we can identify the addressee. We know that it is not the compliment recipient, who is superior to the speaker, due to the lack of desu ‘be’. In fact, within this segment, Midori and Takako produced a total of twenty-seven compliment turns on something related to Yuri’s parents, in their presence. Among them, there is only one compliment which contains the polite form, and thus can be identified as addressed directly to Yuri’s father. In other words, in more than ninety-five percent of cases, Midori and Takako did not directly address Yuri’s parents.

So, what does this phenomenon indicate? Why are the participants so reluctant to address their compliments directly to recipients who are superior to them?

While no prior studies on Japanese compliments have dealt intensively with this issue, there are some useful suggestions in studies concerning politeness. For example, Sugito (1996) finds that some people tend to avoid directly addressing a person who is superior to them, because they think it (direct addressing) is not polite. According to Sugito (1996), some people show their reluctance to ask a superior person what she or he is reading (this was a hypothetical situation examined in ethnographic interviews conducted by Sugito). The author’s purpose in conducting the interviews was to investigate the linguistic patterns used by people when they ask someone what she or he is reading. The informants’ answers (indicating that they withhold action itself out of politeness concerns) surprised the author. This finding implies that at least for some people, the simple act of making an inquiry to superior persons is impolite, and thus

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4 This compliment was formulated as a reference to general logic (see Chapter 4), and thus is identified as a compliment produced in a less direct manner.
Another observation relevant to this issue (that of avoiding directly addressing superiors) is found in Yoshioka (2001) who investigated the politeness behaviour of high-school students. According to Yoshioka (2001), who conducted interviews with high-school students, their answers to the questions asked by the author tend to orient to peer students, rather than to the author. For example:

(4)
A: author, B and C: female high-school students

1 A: shiiku toka sakumotsu toka yuu no wa nani o shiiku suru n desu ka?
   “You talked about keeping animals or growing crops, but what do you keep?”
2 B: shiiku wa moo niwatori nee
   “(As for keeping animals, we) keep chickens, NE”
3 C: niwatori bakka
   “Only chickens.”
   (Yoshioka 2001: 114, my translation)

In (4), in response to A’s question, first B replies. It is clear that B’s utterance is an answer to A’s question, since it provides information that A seeks. However, it is also clear that B does not address A, as indicated by the absence of polite ending desu ‘be’. If B addressed A, she would be expected to use the polite form, for example, the end of utterance would be niwatori desu ne ‘we keep chickens’. Instead, B addresses her peer student C, out of expectation of C’s support, rather than answering the question by herself. The fellow student C, provides support as expected and endorses B’s reply. Thus, in this question-answer sequence, speakers B and C are observed to collaboratively answer the question asked by A. Notice that C’s utterance in line 3 also
lacks *desu* ‘be’, which is obligatory when she addresses A, since A is superior to her in terms of age, as well as status. Thus we can see a striking resemblance between the manner of giving compliments in my data set by Midori and Takako, and high-school students’ manner of answering the questions of a superior, found in Yoshioka (2001).

According to Yoshioka (2001), these students in the interview are managing an interactionally difficult situation. Addressing each other instead of directly addressing the superior can be seen as one good strategy for dealing with the difficulty. The important point noted by Yoshioka (2001) is that the author did not find it (this way of communicating) very impolite, despite the fact that the students tended to talk each other, instead of talking directly to the author. This is partly due to the fact that the students did not refuse communication with the author: on the contrary, they clearly show their intention to communicate (in their own ways) with him.

What is informative in those two studies is that in Japanese, there may be some politeness concern for the superior person. It is observed that directly addressing superiors can constitute a threat. Therefore, it is possible to see that Midori and Takako’s ways of giving compliments to superiors also stem from this concern. If they think direct addressing would be less polite, then they either avoid the action itself (by withholding compliments), or choose an alternative: addressing each other. Although it is impossible to identify the former case (of withholding compliments, that is, non-occurrences of action), we can see both Midori and Takako choose the latter, addressing each other. One may argue that this way of giving compliments is not polite. However,

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5 Yoshioka (2001) reports that in the follow-up interviews, the students admit that they are not confident in their use of *keigo* ‘polite speech’. Due to this lack of confidence, these students might fear making mistakes, thereby being impolite.
in my data, as far as an appropriate politeness level is concerned, I cannot see any problem\(^6\). Moreover, the fact that no communication breakdown or other sort of problem (e.g., misunderstanding) is observed further suggests the effectiveness of this way of giving compliments.

To summarise, participants tend to avoid giving compliments directly to their superiors. Instead, they address each other, in the presence of the superiors. Such ways of giving compliments indicate the possibility that the act of giving compliments can be face threatening, in terms of invading the compliment recipient's personal territory.

### 6.2 Making use of third party as mediator

In 6.1, we observed that participants tend not to directly address superiors, when they give compliments. This can be seen as a manifestation of their concern for not imposing their opinion on superiors. It also suggests that, despite the fact that giving compliments is considered a positive politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987), it is not so straightforward in the case of Japanese. Rather, as far as my data is concerned, Japanese ways of giving compliments are similar to the ways of doing face-threatening acts such as making complaints or making accusations. In this section, therefore, I will further discuss this possibility: that giving compliments can be face threatening.

In literature concerning interactionally difficult acts such as making complaints, \(^6\) Recall that Yoshioka (2001) also finds that non-addressing is not impolite, as long as the
expressing criticisms (both are considered typical face-threatening acts), it is reported that participants often make an effort to reduce the degree of threat (Azuma 2001; Brown and Levinson 1987; Kang 1998; Roulston 2000; Sifianou 1993; Tannen 2004; among others). There is no doubt that a complaint or criticism can be a great threat to the other party if it is carried out very straightforwardly. As an effort to reduce or minimise the degree of threat, participants tend to adopt some sort of strategies. Making use of another party as a moderator, if available, is one very effective strategy. Among the above-mentioned studies, two are particularly relevant to the current discussion: Kang (1998) and Tannen (2004). Both indicate that the role of a moderator is significant, in order to reduce the level of tension in interactionally difficult situations. Their observations are fully applicable to what happens in my data set as well.

As discussed in 6.1, in multiparty conversation, participants may address a third party when they give compliments in the presence of target recipients. Examples have already been given in (1) to (3), but a further example is provided below. Here, there are no superiors involved.

(5) <17NNA1: 68> Academic record
M: Maiko, S: Saeko, T: Takashi

1→ M: seeseki sugoku ii n desuyo gai- daigaku no.= record very good NR BE IP university LK "(Her) record was excellent, at university."
2 T: =a sore wa ↑hatsumimi [ha ha ha ha ha hah
oh that TP news.to.me
"Oh, it's news to me. ha ha ha"
3 S: [hu hu huh

participants display their intention to communicate with the superior.
In (5), Maiko is telling Takashi the fact that Saeko did well at university in line 1. Despite the lack of explicit reference to Saeko’s name, it is clear that Maiko refers to Saeko, as the addressed party’s Takashi’s reaction indicates. Takashi shows no sign of failing to understand of the reference. Then Saeko, the target recipient of this compliment starts laughing in line 3. Given the context, it is clear that Saeko is the target of Maiko’s compliment, although Maiko addresses Takashi. While this way of addressing (or non-addressing the target recipient) has not been reported in prior studies on compliments, similar phenomena are observed in some studies on multiparty interaction. For instance, Kang (1998) identifies “triadic exchanges” (1998: 383) as something recurrently found in multiparty context. According to Kang (1998: 384), in triadic exchanges, “a speaker addresses a ‘mediating addressee’ (or ‘mediator’) to communicate a message to another co-present addressee(s), or ‘target’”. If we look at example (5) based on this framework, while Saeko is the target of Maiko’s utterance, Takashi is a mediator. Further, Maiko’s message is successfully communicated to Saeko, who reacts by laughing in line 3.

What is interesting here is that, as mentioned earlier, this kind of communication is often found in sequences where interactionally difficult acts are involved. For example, in Kang (1998), it was found in acts such as teasing, criticism, blaming, and insults. In other words, participants are found to use this way of communicating when they carry out these interactionally difficult acts. In order to avoid causing a threat, instead of directly addressing the target person, they address a mediator, aiming at reducing the impact of these potentially face-threatening acts such as criticism.
In line with this argument, the fact that Maiko addresses Takashi (mediator), but not Saeko (target) indicates that the act of giving compliments can also be an interactionally risky business. Of course, it is not appropriate to treat all compliments as face threatening, since the degree of imposition varies according to several factors, for example, the distance between compliment givers and recipients, or the nature of referents. When the referent of compliments is personal attributes such as ability, skill, performance, personality and so on, the degree of imposition can be higher than, for example, compliments on belongings or clothes. Maiko’s way of complimenting Saeko’s excellent performance in (5) is to make use of Takashi as a mediator, in order to reduce the degree of imposition.

This type of communication can be found not only in multiparty context, but also in two-party interaction. Participants may refrain from directly addressing the recipient when they give compliments. Consider the next example.

(6) <9Cl: 6> Caring birds
C: Chihiro, E: Emi

1→ E: .hh he:::(.) kimitachi kawaigatte moratteru ne:::=
hmm you.guys be.cared kindly IP
“Hmm. You guys are very much cared for, aren’t you?”

2 C: =soo ne: kahogo dakara ne: right IP too.protective since IP
“Right. I know I am overprotective.”

In (6), Emi talks to the birds, instead of talking to the owner of the birds, Chihiro. It is clear that this utterance orients to the birds, as indicated by the fact that Emi addresses
the birds as *kimitachi* 'you guys', and that she uses the giving-and-receiving verb *morau* ‘(lit.) to receive (from another person)’. Note that Emi could have said the same thing directly to Chihiro, for example, *zuibun kawaigatte ageteru ne:* ‘(you) care for them very well’. If this had been the case, it would be a prototypical compliment addressed directly the recipient. However, in (6), Emi addressed the birds.

Tannen (2004) observes this type of communication in which family pets are involved. According to Tannen (2004: 400), it is “a discursive strategy by which family members, in communicating with each other, speak through non-verbal third parties”. While Tannen (2004) discusses several cases where family members use their pet dogs as resources to mediate their interaction, one of the examples is particularly relevant to the current discussion. In the example called “Buffering a complaint”, the husband lodges a complaint against his wife. Instead of doing this directly, the husband “addresses his complaint to the dog, thus buffering (although still communicating) the criticism” (p. 414). Although the husband is fully aware of the fact that the dog does not (or cannot) respond to him, he talks to him, in the presence of his wife. Therefore, again we observe this type of communication (non-direct addressing) in interactionally difficult situations, since direct complaints or criticisms can be a significant threat to the recipient. In line with this argument, Emi’s way of giving compliments in (6) can be seen as attempting to lessen the impact by using the birds as mediators.

While compliment givers’ practices in (5) and (6) are similar in that they make use of mediators as a resource, there is a clear difference between mediators’

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7 Chihiro keeps two birds.
8 Although Tannen’s (2004) examples are all taken from family discourse, it seems that this type of communication in which animals or preverbal babies are involved can occur outside
characteristics: one is human, the other is non-human. In the former, as shown in (5), the mediator is expected to respond (as Takashi did), while in the latter, a non-human mediator is not expected to respond to the utterance. From the target recipient’s point of view, it seems that the target recipient in the latter case may be under more pressure to respond, due to non-response from the mediator. However, in effect, there is no significant difference between the two cases. In both cases (whether the mediator is human or not), target recipients may or may not respond with an utterance. In some cases, they just laugh. As Roberts (2004: 440) argues, the point is that the talk (in this case, a compliment addressed to non-human mediator) is designed in such a way that “there is little pressure on coparticipants to take up the talk”. This way of giving compliments appears to work in a similar manner, regardless of the characteristics of mediators.

To reiterate, both in Kang (1998) and Tannen (2004), participants strategically use mediators if available, in order to accomplish interactionally difficult tasks. As shown, certain resemblances can be found between those behaviours (criticising other party, or making a complaint) and the ways of giving compliments in my data. Given these similarities between the behaviour of criticisms and complaints and that of compliment givers in my data, it can be said that the act of giving compliments also involves some interactional difficulty. If so, it is not surprising if participants seek ways of escaping those difficulties; and one of them is making use of a third party as mediator.
6.3 Compliments and laughter

One of the characteristics of compliment sequences in my corpus is that the participants frequently laugh. Given that my data is taken from conversations in casual settings between close friends or family, it is not surprising to find a fair amount of laughter. However, in previous research, very little attention has been paid to laughter in compliment sequences. Thus in 6.3, I will briefly discuss laughter in compliment sequences.

Laughter in conversation is recognised as a sequence “in which speaker of an utterance invites recipient to laugh and recipient accepts that invitation” (Jefferson 1979: 93). More recently, Glenn (2003: 153) also points out that laughter “can display involvement or interest and help with relationship or interaction “maintenance’”. As indicated by these studies and many others, laughter plays an important role in interaction.

As noted earlier, previous studies of compliments rarely discuss laughter. One exception is Wieland (1995: 806) who observes that a compliment recipient “buffers the force of total agreement by laughing after responding”. Wieland (1995: 807) also notes that laughter is “an indication of her embarrassment at having received a compliment”.9

In my data, in addition to recipients, compliment givers laugh as well. While fully recognising the importance of recipients’ laughter, I limit myself to the discussion

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9 Hayakawa (1999) also notes that people laugh when their territory is in danger. Compliment recipients’ laughter may be related to their embarrassment when the other party tries to invade their territory.
of the possible relationship between compliment-giving and laughter. The main reason
to do so is that recipients' laughter is more likely to be reactive, rather than initiative,
given that compliment recipients do not initiate the sequence. Therefore, recipients' laughter will only be discussed in association with compliment givers' laughter. In the following, after showing the distribution of laughter, I will address two questions: (i) why compliment givers laugh, and (ii) what the effect of that laughter is.

As mentioned earlier, laughter frequently appears in compliment sequences, in fact, among a total 146 multiparty-compliment sequences identified in my data, fifty-four of them (37.0 percent) contain laughter. By saying 'contain laughter', I mean that at least one party (among compliment givers, compliment recipients, and other co-participants) laughs in the sequence. In these fifty-four sequences, therefore, it is observed that one or more parties laugh. The fact that we can see laughter in almost forty percent of all sequences indicates that laughter may play a certain role in this particular context. However, here I will focus on sequences in which compliment givers laugh.

There are twenty-four sequences in which compliment givers initiate laughter. It accounts for about forty-five percent of all of compliment sequences where laughter can be found (24 out of 54 sequences). Let us look at whether other participants' laughter follows to compliment givers' laughter or not. Table 6.1 shows the distribution of subsequent laughter in terms of who laughs, in these twenty-four sequences.

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10 Note that I exclude two-party conversation from the analysis. One of the reasons why I focus on multiparty conversation is that there are significant differences from two-party conversation, in terms of participant structure. For example, while in two-party conversation, there is only one person who can follow the compliment giver's laughter, there are "others present who may take up laughter" in multiparty conversation (Jefferson 1979: 93).
Table 6.1  
*Subsequent laughter(s) in compliment sequences initiated by compliment giver's laughter in multiparty conversation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person(s) who laugh</th>
<th>Numbers of sequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No subsequent laughter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient only</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-participant(s) only</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both recipient and co-participant(s)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What we can see from the distribution is, first of all, that only three cases are identified as sequences in which no laughter followed subsequent to compliment giver’s laughter. In other words, in twenty-one sequences (87.5 percent), at least one participant subsequently laughs. It indicates that compliment giver’s laughter is powerful enough to provoke co-participants’ collaborative laughter. Further, in more than half of sequences (13 cases, or 54.2 percent), both recipients and co-participants subsequently laugh. Some such sequences contain some humorous features, so that it is natural for participants to laugh. The next example demonstrates such characteristics.

(7) <12Y3R1: 2> Nori nori  
H: Haruka, R: Rie, K: Kayo, A: Ayako

1  
H: *norinoride maiten da. (.) nori dakeni.=*  
*with.rhythm roll BE seaweed because*  
*“Rolled with rhythm, since it's seaweed.”*

2  
K: *=umai=*  
*clever*

---

11 In my data, there is no sequence where only co-participants (that is, neither a compliment giver nor a recipient) laugh.
“It’s clever.”

3→ R: =$uma i$ ha [ha ha ha clever
“Clever, ha ha hah”

4→ A: [ha ha [ha hah ha ha hhhh
“Ha ha ha ha hhh”

5→ H: [hu huh huh huh hhhh
“Hu huh huh”

Haruka’s utterance in line 1 of example (7) is a word play. It humorously describes how the hostess (Rie) rolled avocado rolls (norinori de ‘with rhythm’), in seaweed (nori). This utterance is well appreciated by co-participants. In line 2, first Kayo expresses her appreciation (umai ‘clever’), that is immediately followed by Rie’s repetition with laughter. Other participants follow as well. Their mirthful, shared laughter clearly contributes to creating a happy atmosphere.

While the above example is a typical case in which we can see humorous features such as jokes, puns, and so on (or laughables, see Glenn 2003), in some sequences where participants laugh, we cannot see any humorous or laughable matters. Consider the following examples.

(8) <7YA3: 31> Taikyokuken
T: Takako, Y: Yuri, M: Midori, P: Yuri’s father

1 T: uchi no chichioya ni (.) $hanashite ageta [i$ he he [heh heh heh home LK father to tell want.to
“I want to tell my father, he heh”

2 M: [u::n
hmm
“Hmmm.”

12 According to Sacks (1974), laughter marks a joke’s completion.
In (8), Takako gives a compliment on Yuri's father's fitness by mentioning her own father. Takako starts laughing after placing a micropause in the middle of her turn ($ indicates laughing while talking). In line 2, while Takako still talks, Midori produces an agreement token without laughing. Then still in overlap, both Yuri (co-participant) and Yuri's father (compliment recipient) start laughing at the same time in lines 3 and 4. Thus they (Yuri and Yuri's father) affiliate with Takako's laughter, while Midori disaffiliates with it. In (9), Yuri gives a compliment on Takako's extensive knowledge of a particular TV program in line 1, while laughing. In this case, Midori (co-participant) and Takako (recipient) start laughing at the same time, in the middle of Yuri's utterance in line 1. These participants (Midori and Takako) thus display strong affiliation with
Yuri's laughter. Further, Yuri's subsequent compliment (lines 4 to 5) also contains laughter.

Let us address the first question: why do speakers laugh when they give compliments? What provokes their laughter? Hayakawa (1999) notes that speakers may laugh when they make a comment on the conversational partner.¹³ According to Hayakawa (1999: 180), speakers laugh in order to (i) mitigate the tension of invading the partner's territory, or (ii) moderate their consciousness of imposing. As has been argued, it seems to be clear that the act of giving compliments involves invading the recipients' personal territory, to some extent. Thus this account is well applicable to the current discussion.

For example, Takako in (8) gives a compliment on Yuri's father's high level of fitness. By using a comparison (see Chapter 4 for this type of compliment), it is observed that Takako attempts to reduce the degree of imposition, since the recipient of the compliment is a superior. Yuri in (9) does not appear to have such concern, because the recipient of compliment is Takako, her friend. However, as noted earlier, the referent of this compliment is Takako's extensive knowledge on entertainment-related matters. A person's knowledge of some particular thing, taste for something, or attitude toward something, is an important part of the person. Thus, as has been discussed, compliment givers may make an effort to show their respect when they give compliments on these referents. Yuri's laughter can also be seen as a result of such an effort. In short, compliment givers may laugh in order to mitigate the tension created by invading

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¹³ Hayakawa (1999) argues that making a comment on the conversational partner means invading the partner's territory (aite no ryooiki ni fumikomu).
recipients' personal territory.14

Second question: what kind of effect does this laughter produce? To answer this question, of course we have to look at the entire sequences, both initiated by compliment givers (Takako in (8), Yuri in (9)). According to Jefferson (1979: 80), these sequences may be characterised as “invitation to laugh and acceptance”. In both (8) and (9), it is observed that compliment givers invite laughter, and other parties accept the invitation.15 As a result, they share laughter. According to Glenn (2003: 84), shared laughter “can display co-orientation or alignment of laughers”. In multiparty compliment sequences, participants tend to show affiliation with others. Therefore, it can be said that shared laughter initiated by compliment givers contributes to further enhancing participants’ shared good feelings.

In sum, compliment givers may laugh in order to mitigate the tension created by invading recipients’ personal territory. By giving compliments while laughing, participants seem to attempt to (i) reduce the degree of imposition, and (ii) invite other party’s laughter. In many cases, it appears that they are successful in both. In particular, when their invitation to laugh is accepted by other participants, their shared laughter contributes to creating or enhancing good shared feelings among all participants. In this sense, the compliment giver’s laughter plays an important role.

14 As for Takako’s laughter in (8), another factor may be involved. Notice that Takako mentions her father. According to Hayakawa (1999), speakers may laugh when they talk about something belong to their own territory. That is, they may feel embarrassed when they reveal themselves, so they may laugh in order to mitigate the tension or embarrassment.

15 An exception is Midori in (8).
6.4 Conclusion

This chapter touched upon interpersonal aspects of the act of giving compliments. Firstly, we observed participants' ways of giving compliments to superiors. Participants recurrently address each other rather than compliment recipients, when they give compliments on something related to superiors. It was found that this is one strategy for avoiding imposing their assessment on the recipient. Secondly, another way of giving compliments by making use of a mediator was discussed, in relation to other acts, such as making complaints. These ways of giving compliments can be seen as manifestation of compliment givers' effort to respect recipients' personal territory. In addition, the issue of laughter in compliment sequences was briefly discussed. It can be argued that laughter plays an important role in the act of giving compliments. Laughter may reduce the tension of invading recipients' territory, as well as contributing to enhancing shared feeling among participants in compliment sequences. All in all, these observations suggest that the act of giving compliments requires concern for interpersonal relationship. In particular, concern for the recipient's personal territory seems to be crucial for 'successful' compliment sequences.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Summary of findings

This thesis has examined compliments and compliment responses in Japanese conversational context. After providing some preliminary information in Chapter 1 and literature review in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 explored the organisation of compliment sequences. By adopting the notions of initial and non-initial compliments, it revealed how compliment sequences are collaboratively organised by participants. The data show that in multiparty conversation, participants tend to proffer subsequent non-initial compliments, following initial compliments. That is, once a party gives an initial compliment, another party may proffer compliments on the same referent as the initial compliment. This suggests potential participants of compliment sequences are not limited to a compliment giver and a compliment recipient; rather, co-participants' contribution cannot be disregarded. The data also indicate that even in two-party conversation, compliment sequences are not as simple as 'a compliment and a compliment response', as has been observed in most previous studies.

In Chapter 3, I also proposed to distinguish between substantial and non-
substantial target objects of compliments. The data suggest that in multiparty conversation, (i) participants proffer initial compliments more often on non-substantial objects than on substantial objects, and (ii) initial compliments on substantial objects invite more subsequent compliments, than those on non-substantial objects. I argued that participants tend to give subsequent non-initial compliments on substantial objects mainly because they have access to the object at the time of conversation. In addition, in the case of food items as target objects, participants are observed to give compliments as their expression of gratitude, or expression of pleasure. In contrast, participants may or may not have access to non-substantial objects at the time of conversation, unlike food items. Therefore there are fewer opportunities for co-participants to give subsequent compliments. Nonetheless, the fact that more than 80 percent of initial compliments are followed by subsequent compliments suggests that in Japanese multiparty conversation, initial compliments strongly invite other party’s involvement. In short, most compliment sequences can be seen as products of participation (Pomerantz 1984), systematically and collaboratively developed by the conversational participants.

Chapter 4 examined the design of compliments: how Japanese speakers design and give compliments. I focused on four issues: (i) in what ways participants give compliments, (ii) how they make use of available resources, such as certain linguistic forms, (iii) to whom they address compliments, and (iv) when they give compliments. The data indicate that participants tend to give compliments in a less-direct manner, reflecting their concern for compliment recipients. In fact, some of these less-direct compliments are so implicit that it is difficult to discern them from other non-complimentary utterances. These less-direct compliments can be seen as a manifestation
of participants' efforts to respect the recipient's personal territory. It is also found that
the frequent use of interactional particles indicates participants' effort to invite other
party's involvement, when they give compliments.

The issue of compliment recipients and addressees of utterance is also discussed.
The data suggests that participants do not always address directly recipients, when they
give compliments. They may address other party, or in some cases, it is not clear to
whom they address compliments. These observations also indicate participants tend to
invoke other party's involvement. I also discussed the location of compliments in
conversation. The analysis shows that participants are so sensitive to the context that
they are fully aware when they give or withhold compliments. All in all, their design of
compliments reflects participants' concern about the surrounding context, including
recipients' feelings, ongoing topics, and the atmosphere of the conversation.

Chapter 5 investigated compliment responses. It is said that when responding to
compliments, recipients are faced with a dilemma: to avoid both disagreement and self-
praise (two general principles in interaction). It is difficult to deal with these conflicting
preferences simultaneously. If the recipient accepts the compliment, she has to praise
herself. If she rejects the compliment, she ends up disagreeing with the compliment
giver. The data show that participants employ a number of strategies to manage the
dilemma. The following strategies are identified: re-assessment, using another party's
voice, questioning compliment assertion, proffering one's own account, and warranted
non-response. These strategies allow compliment recipients to display neither stance:
they show neither outright acceptance nor outright rejection of compliments. Among
these strategies, 'warranted non-response' is found to be particularly useful. While
displaying their orientation to the ongoing interaction, compliment recipients who
employ this strategy are able to avoid responding to compliments. To summarise, Japanese compliment recipients are observed to manage the dilemma by making use of various devices.

Chapter 6 discussed the interpersonal aspects of the act of giving compliments. Three different but related ways of giving compliments are examined. First, the data show that when complimenting persons of higher status, participants tend to address each other, instead of addressing the person directly. By doing so, participants are observed to manage the dilemma: to express their positive feelings, and to avoid imposition. Second, participants may make use of a mediator when they give compliments. Here, again participants avoid addressing compliment recipients directly; instead, they address another party. The use of mediators is identified in prior studies as one good strategy to reduce the degree of imposition when participants perform face-threatening acts, for example, making a complaint or expressing criticism. Given the similarities in terms of the use of mediators between these face-threatening acts and the act of giving compliments, I argue that there is a possibility that the act of giving compliments can be face threatening. Third, I touched upon the issue of laughter appearing in compliments. Laughter may play an important role in the act of giving compliments, in terms of either reducing the tension of invading recipients' territory, or enhancing shared feeling among participants. In sum, these observations in Chapter 6 suggest the possibility that giving compliments can be an interactionally difficult practice, which requires participants' effort.

In conclusion, by looking at compliments and compliment responses in the course of conversation, the present study reveals that all the participants are sensitive to the surrounding context when they give and receive compliments. For example,
participants do not give compliments in a haphazard fashion. Participants seem to know when compliments are given or withheld. Participants' sensitivities to the context also allow them to make the best use of context as resources when they give and receive compliments.

7.2 Directions of future studies

There are several possible directions of future research based upon the findings of the present study. Admittedly, since the data for the present study are all taken from casual conversation between friends and family members, the findings are limited in a way. But it is interesting to compare the findings of the present study and those in other settings. For instance, I am particularly interested in how participants organise compliment sequences in formal settings where participants are not familiar with each other, or where participants of different statuses are involved. It is also interesting to examine the roles of compliments in institutional settings, for example, broadcast talk, service encounters, classrooms, and so forth. In addition, regarding the nature of data, I think it is necessary for future study to incorporate visual data for the analysis of compliments and compliment responses. As the analysis of laughter in compliment suggests, other non-verbal factors such as eye gaze or gestures also seem to be involved.

Another possibility is cross-cultural comparisons. It is interesting to compare the findings of the current study and those in other languages and cultures. Given that the act of giving and receiving compliments is deeply related to culture, it is not surprising
to find a lot of significant differences (as well as certain similarities) in various aspects of compliments from one culture to another. Although some studies have already conducted cross-cultural comparisons, it is unfortunate that none of them use naturally-occurring data. It is interesting to compare, for example, how participants in two different cultures give and receive compliments in casual settings, such as in a dinner-table context.

It is also worth pursuing pedagogical concerns. Saito and Beecken (2000) point out that the descriptions and instructions for responding to compliments in teaching materials (of Japanese language) do not reflect the ways in which native speakers' responded to compliments in their data. There seems a discrepancy between what native speakers do and what the teaching materials instruct the learners to do. In this sense, too, I strongly believe that we need to collect and investigate naturally-occurring data.
Appendix 1

Abbreviations

BE   Copula ('be')
IP   Interactional particle
LK   Linker
NEG  Negative
NR   Nominariser
O    Object marker
Q    Question marker
QT   Quotative marker
SB   Subject marker
TAG  Tag-like element
TP   Topic marker
Appendix 2

Transcription conventions

[ ] Overlap. The point of onset is marked with left-hand square brackets, and the point at which overlap stops is marked with right-hand square brackets.

= Latched. Contiguous stretches of talk between which there is no gap and no overlap.

(0.0) Intervals. They are measured in tenths of a second and placed within curved brackets.

( ) A very short pause or micropause is indicated by a period between brackets.

. A falling terminal contour, a ‘final’ intonation.

, A continuing contour.

? A rising contour.

words Stress is indicated by underlining.

: Drawl or the lengthening of a sound is marked through colons.

°words° A softer talk than the surrounding talk.

- An abrupt cutoff or glottal stop is represented by a single dash.

 hh Audible aspirations.

 . hh Audible inhalations.

>words< A faster talk than its surrounding talk.

$words$ Laughing while talking.

( ) An inadequate hearing of the talk.

(( ))) Vocalisations that cannot be satisfactorily transcribed, or references to other contextual features or occurrences, or prosodic features.

→ A feature of interest referred to in a text can be highlighted by a right pointing arrow.

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