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**Culture- and gender-specific use of compliments by Russians and Americans.**

In this paper I will discuss the problem of differences in understanding the role of compliment (C) and the use of it by young Russians and Americans. Although C is recognized as a cooperative speech act in which the speaker tries to establish or maintain good relations with the communicative partner, the frequency, the forms of expressing C and types of responses to it vary considerably. The objective of this paper is to investigate the differences in compliment behavior of young people in Russia and the USA. My hypothesis, based on empirical observations, was that the behavior in “compliment situations” by Russians and by Americans is largely determined by the specific cultural, social and communicative norms of the society, and by gender and age factors.

To confirm this presupposition I carried out extensive research among the students of Moscow Linguistic University and Voronezh Universities in Russia and in Saint Louis University in the US. The participants were asked to respond to the stimuli in three types of questionnaires aimed at eliciting their understanding of C, forms of expressing C and responses to C in various situation.We distributed 100 copies of each questionnaire in each gender and in each national group (total 1200). The responses were tallied and analyzed and in some cases followed up by interviews in which the respondents gave a more extended explanation of their understanding of C. The data revealed significant differences (as well as some similarities) in compliment behavior between Russians and Americans and basically confirmed the original hypothesis.

In the conclusions I will discuss most important findings in the forms of expressing C and responding to C: their structure, frequency and pragmatic functions. I will also compare the culture-specific understanding of C by Russians and Americans and their motivation of performing this speech act.