

American Learners' Compliment Responses in Japanese

Naofumi Tatsumi
Purdue University
ntatsumi@purdue.edu

Abstract

Previous research shows that compliment responses (CRs) appear to be influenced by at least the following variables: (1) the topic of a compliment (e.g., appearance, belongings, skills, etc.), (2) the relationships between the complimenter and the recipient (e.g., superior and close friend), and (3) whether or not the recipient's self-evaluation matches the compliment. With respect to American learners of Japanese, past comparative studies suggest that learners tend to deny compliments more often than native Japanese speakers. Yet, it is still inconclusive as to how learners' preference for denial is related to the three variables that may influence their CRs, and where the learners' rationale for their CR strategies comes from. The purpose of the current study is to obtain more insight into American learners' understanding of CRs in Japanese, so that the findings may aid researchers in designing a comparative study. Data were collected from American college students enrolled in intermediate-level Japanese courses. By using a multiple-choice questionnaire with some open-ended questions, the current study investigated the aforementioned three situational variables. The overall results show that the participants tended to respond to compliments according to their self-evaluation of the compliments. In the situation where participants are complimented by a superior on their ability, however, the participants were more likely to deny compliments despite their positive self-evaluation. Many participants commented that Japanese people are expected to deny compliments in order to express modesty. This is in line with what they claimed to have learned in Japanese classes and from textbooks. These findings may be useful for designing a future study that compares learners with native speakers.

Keywords: compliment responses, JFL, interlanguage, pragmatics

Introduction

Over the past 30 years, many researchers have shown an interest in pragmatics, particularly speech acts such as requests, apologies, complaints, compliments, and so forth. Compliment responses (CRs) are also one of the speech acts, and they have been studied in various languages (e.g., English, Japanese, Chinese, German, etc.). CRs of native speakers and second/foreign language (L2) learners have often been compared. Despite the growing interest in interlanguage or L2 learners' language, however, relatively little attention has been given to how American learners of Japanese respond to compliments in Japanese. Indeed, such studies are still scarce. More research on interlanguage needs to be conducted in order to better design a comparative study that compares Americans, Japanese, and American learners of Japanese.

Prior to discussing interlanguage, studies of American and Japanese CRs need to be reviewed briefly. Most of the previous studies (Knapp, Hopper, & Bell, 1984; Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Yokota, 1986; Baba, 1996; Saito & Beecken, 1997; Kume, Tokui, Hasegawa, & Komada, 2001; Shimizu, 2009) suggest that Americans tend to accept compliments while some researchers disagree (Pomerantz, 1978; Herbert, 1986). Japanese CRs, on the other hand, appear to be more complex than American CRs. It is commonly believed that Japanese people typically deny compliments in order to express modesty. However, this widely-held view of Japanese CRs contradicts the findings of many studies (i.e., Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Yokota, 1986; Baba, 1996; Terao, 1996; Saito & Beecken, 1997; Hirata, 1999; Daikuhara, 1986; Kume,

Tokui, Hasegawa, & Komada, 2001; Satoh, 2002, 2005; Ohno, 2005; Shimizu, 2009). In fact, some studies (i.e., Hirata, 1999; Ohno, 2005; Shimizu, 2009) reported that the use of negative responses (e.g., denial and disagreement) was less than 15% in their Japanese data. In Saito and Beecken's (1997) study, their Japanese participants were likely to use a mixture of three types of strategies: Positive (e.g., acceptance and agreement), Negative (e.g., denial and disagreement), and Avoidance¹ (e.g., question, topic shift, and explanation). Similarly, it is reported that characters in Japanese dramas tend to use a variety of strategies to avoid accepting compliments such as showing embarrassment and using humor (Kume, Tokui, Hasegawa, and Komada, 2001). Overall, it appears that Americans tend to accept compliments, whereas Japanese speakers are inclined to use a variety of strategies to respond to compliments.

With respect to American JFL² (Japanese as a foreign language) learners, previous studies (i.e., Yokota, 1986; Saito & Beecken, 1997; Shimizu, 2009) suggest that they tend to differ from both Americans and Japanese in their CR strategies. In other words, JFL learners are unlikely to transfer their first language (L1) norms into the target language (TL), but they still tend to deviate from the Japanese norms. Two characteristics of JFLs' CRs are the overuse of Negative strategy and the underuse of Avoidance strategy. Yokota (1986) and Shimizu (2009) found that their JFL participants were more likely to respond negatively than their Japanese participants. It is also reported that Japanese people tend to use Avoidance strategy more often than JFL learners (Yokota, 1986; Saito & Beecken, 1997; Shimizu, 2009). Saito and Beecken (1997) and Shimizu (2009) suspect that JFL learners' deviation from the TL norms is attributed to textbooks and classroom instruction. In fact, Saito and Beecken (1997) examined six Japanese language textbooks widely used in the U.S., and they found that all six textbooks view Japanese CRs as 'negative'. In the same vein, some JFL participants in Shimizu's (2009) study reported that they were taught to

deny compliments in their Japanese classes.

However, it would be too hasty to conclude that classroom instruction alone is held responsible for JFLs' deviation from the TL norms. It is possible that JFLs not only draw on their knowledge of CRs, but they also consider situational variables when they respond to compliments. This leads to the following research questions:

RQ 1. What situational variables are likely to affect learners' CRs?

RQ 2. How do learners perceive Japanese CRs? And what are their primary sources of knowledge?

The present study was undertaken in order to answer those research questions. The study puts its focus on the following variables:

- (a) the complimenter's status (i.e., superior or friend)
- (b) compliment topic type (i.e., the recipient's possession or skills)
- (c) the recipient's self-evaluation (i.e., whether the recipient agrees with the compliment)

Moreover, the study examined learners' primary sources of knowledge about CRs and how they are associated with learners' perception of CRs.

Methodology

Participants

Participants were recruited from the fifth and sixth semester Japanese courses (i.e., JPNS 301 and JPNS 302) at an American university in Midwest. Twenty four students participated in the study with their age ranging from 18 to 22. Excluding non-native speakers of English and students of Japanese descent, a total of 17 students (11 males; 6 females) were chosen. These students shared the following characteristics when the study was conducted.

- (a) They are native speakers of American English.
- (b) They have never studied any other East Asian languages.
- (c) They have never lived in any East Asian countries including Japan.

Some participants were familiar with German, Spanish, and French, and they had stayed in

Germany and England for a short period of time. Thus, none of the participants had prolonged exposure to Asian languages and cultures outside the Japanese class.

Instrument

An anonymous multiple-choice questionnaire with open-ended questions (see Appendix A) was used as the research instrument. The first page of the questionnaire asks about participants' demographic information (e.g., gender, age, native language, etc.). The rest of the pages contain 18 CR scenarios and 3 open-ended questions about CRs. Since two of the CR scenarios are not relevant to the research questions, they were excluded from analysis. In other words, a total of 19 items (i.e., 16 CR scenarios and 3 open-ended questions) were used for the present study. The scenarios were constructed to test how different situational variables may influence participants' CRs. Those variables are (a) the complimenter's status, (b) the topic of a compliment, and (c) the recipient's self-evaluation of a compliment.

The complimenter is someone of either higher or equal status whose gender is unspecified. Superiors used in the scenarios include the recipient's Japanese teacher, company boss, and host parents. The complimenter of equal status is always set as the recipient's close Japanese friend. The topic of a compliment basically refers to what is complimented on. The topic can be either the recipient's possession (i.e., cell phone or computer) or skills (i.e., Japanese language skills or violin skills). The third variable is whether the recipient's self-evaluation is congruent with the compliment. In the situation where you played a violin and received a compliment, for example, you may agree with the compliment (i.e., you think you did a good job) or disagree with the compliment (i.e., you do not think you played it well).

Table 1
Situation types

Complimenter's status	Topic	Self-evaluation	Number of scenarios
Friend	Possession	Agree	2
Friend	Possession	Disagree	2
Friend	Skills	Agree	2
Friend	Skills	Disagree	2
Superior	Possession	Agree	2
Superior	Possession	Disagree	2
Superior	Skills	Agree	2
Superior	Skills	Disagree	2

Table 1 shows that the 16 scenarios consist of 8 types of situations, each of which has two parallel scenarios. In order to avoid the effects of fixed response patterns, all the scenarios are randomized in a way that the same type of situation is not presented in sequence.

With respect to the multiple choice format, four CR choices were prepared for the participants to choose from, namely (a) Acceptance/Agreement, (b) Denial/Disagreement, (c) Avoidance/Deflection, and (d) Others. The participants were instructed to choose their first response to the compliment in each situation. They were also allowed to write their own response in either Japanese or English (i.e., (d) Others). For each CR choice except 'Others', a few examples are provided in Japanese with English translations. Moreover, if necessary, *hiragana*³ syllables are added to where *kanji*⁴ characters are used in order to aid participants' reading.

At the end of the questionnaire are three open-ended questions that ask about (a) how Japanese people are expected to respond to compliments, (b) what participants learned in Japanese classes, and (c) their primary sources of knowledge about CRs. All of the open-ended questions can be answered in either Japanese or English.

Procedure

Two versions of the questionnaire were used: pencil-and-paper version and Microsoft Word file version. Since the pencil-and-paper version is a printout of the Word file version, their contents are identical. The only difference between the two

versions lies in handwriting as opposed to typing on a computer. The researcher visited the participants' Japanese classes for recruitment and distributed the pencil-and-paper version of the questionnaire. The researcher also sent a recruitment letter by e-mail to the same students and attached the questionnaire, so that the participants could choose between the two versions. Most of the participants completed the pencil-and-paper version, while only four of them (i.e., 3 American participants; 1 international student) turned in the Word file version. A total of 432 CR tokens (i.e., 18 scenarios x 24 participants) were collected. Excluding ineligible participants and the two irrelevant scenarios, the remaining 272 CR tokens (i.e., 16 scenarios x 17 participants) were analyzed in the present study.

Results and discussion

The data from multiple choice questions were analyzed according to the situational variables (i.e., the complimenter's status, the topic of a compliment, and the recipient's self-evaluation of a compliment). The CR choices are rephrased as Positive (i.e., Acceptance/Agreement), Negative (i.e., Denial/Disagreement), Avoidance (i.e., Avoidance/Deflection), and Others in the analysis. The chi-square test was used to determine whether the situational variables are associated with participants' CR choices. As is shown in Table 2 and 3, statistical significance was found only in Self-evaluation at the alpha level of 0.05, $\chi^2(3, N = 272) = 57.16, p < .0001$. In other words, the participants tended to choose their CRs according to the recipient's self-evaluation of a compliment.

Table 2
Association between situational variables and CR choices

Variable	χ^2
Status (equal/superior)	5.84
Topic (possession/skills)	5.57
Self-evaluation (agree/disagree)	57.16*

* $p < .05$.

Table 3
Situational variables and distribution of CRs

	Positive	Negative	Avoidance	Others	total
Status: Equal	46 (34%)	54 (40%)	24 (18%)	12 (9%)	136 (100%)
Status: Superior	40 (29%)	67 (49%)	25 (18%)	4 (3%)	136 (100%)
Topic : Possession	47 (35%)	52 (38%)	26 (19%)	11 (8%)	136 (100%)
Topic : Skills	39 (29%)	69 (51%)	23 (17%)	5 (4%)	136 (100%)
Self-eval uation :	71 (52%)	37 (27%)	23 (17%)	5 (4%)	136 (100%)
Self-eval uation :	15 (11%)	84 (62%)	26 (19%)	11 (8%)	136 (100%)

In fact, Table 4 shows that the participants were inclined to respond either positively or negatively depending on the recipient's self-evaluation. However, this tendency does not seem to reflect the situation where the recipient is complimented on his/her skills by a superior (i.e., 'Superior Skills'). Even though the recipient agrees with the compliment in this situation, the participants tended to prefer Negative strategy over Positive and Avoidance. Due to the small data size, Fisher's exact test was used to determine whether the recipient's self-evaluation is associated with the participants' CR choices. The results show no statistical significance at the alpha level of 0.05 (Fisher's exact test, $p = 0.52$). In other words, the recipient's self-evaluation has no association with the participants' CR choices in this particular situation.

Table 4
Situation types and CR choices

	Positive	Negative	Avoidance	Others	total
Equal Possession Agree	21 (62%)	4 (12%)	7 (21%)	2 (6%)	34 (100%)
Equal Possession Disagree	1 (3%)	24 (71%)	2 (6%)	7 (21%)	34 (100%)
Equal Skills Agree	20 (59%)	8 (24%)	4 (12%)	2 (6%)	34 (100%)
Equal Skills Disagree	4 (12%)	18 (53%)	11 (32%)	1 (3%)	34 (100%)
Superior Possession Agree	20 (59%)	6 (18%)	8 (24%)	0 (0%)	34 (100%)
Superior Possession Disagree	5 (15%)	18 (53%)	9 (26%)	2 (6%)	34 (100%)
Superior Skills Agree	10 (29%)	19 (56%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)	34 (100%)
Superior Skills Disagree	5 (15%)	24 (71%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)	34 (100%)
total	86 (32%)	121 (44%)	49 (18%)	16 (6%)	272 (100%)

In ‘Superior Skills’ situation, it seems right to presume that the participants’ decision was influenced by the combination of the two variables: ‘superior’ as the complimenter and ‘skills’ as the topic. This combination appears to prompt the participants to respond negatively. In other words, even if the recipient agrees with the compliment, the combination of ‘superior’ and ‘skills’ variables was so strong that many participants were prompted to choose Negative strategy in spite of the recipient’s self-evaluation. Therefore, it can be suggested that a combination of two situational variables may attenuate the effects of another variable.

With regard to the open-ended questions, the first question is: *How do you think Japanese people are expected to respond to compliments?* The majority of the participants (i.e., 15 out of 17) mentioned ‘denial’, and some of them added ‘avoidance’ as an alternative strategy. Thus, the results suggest that the JFL learners’ general perception of typical Japanese CRs is denial.

The second question is: *In any Japanese class you have taken before, have you learned how to respond to compliments in Japanese? If so, what did you learn?* More than half of the participants who answered this question wrote ‘denial’, and some of them added ‘acceptance’ and ‘avoidance’

as alternative strategies (see Appendix B). Moreover, one of the participants indicated that Japanese people are expected to deny compliments when the complimenter is a superior. This comment may partially explain why Negative strategy was preferred in ‘Superior Skills’ situation.

Instead of CR types, three participants reported the actual phrases they claimed to have learned in class. These are: いいえ (“No.”), まだまだです (“I am not that good yet.”), たいしたことない (“It is nothing special.”), おかげさまで⁵ (“Thanks to your concern.”) and すみません⁶ (“Excuse me.”; “I’m sorry.”; “Thank you.”). The interpretation of this data should be made with caution since the data are only from three participants. Even so, none of them claimed to have learned ありがとうございます (“Thank you (very much).”), which can also be used as an appropriate CR.

The third question is: *Have you learned or heard anything about Japanese compliment responses? If so, from what sort of resource you gained knowledge? Japanese textbook, internet, book, magazine, Japanese friends or else? If possible, please be specific, such as the title of the book you read.* More than half of the participants who answered this question mentioned classroom instruction (i.e., classes, teachers, and textbooks) as their source of knowledge. It appears that most learners draw on the knowledge they gained from classroom instruction.

With the data from all three questions combined, it can be interpreted that classroom instruction is the participants’ primary source of knowledge, and what they claim to have learned in class is to deny compliments. Thus, this may account for their general perception of typical Japanese CRs. In fact, Table 4 shows that the number of Negative strategy is nearly one and a half times more than that of Positive strategy. Although comparison with native Japanese speakers is still necessary, the results seem to support Saito and Beecken (1997) and Shimizu (2009) who suspect that JFL learners’ deviation from the TL norms is attributed to classroom

instruction. Furthermore, the underuse of Avoidance strategy (see Table 4) also appears to support the previous studies (Yokota, 1986; Saito & Beecken, 1997; Shimizu, 2009) that found the similar results. Therefore, it can be suggested that teachers should minimize their bias toward negative CRs (i.e., denial and disagreement) and provide a variety of CR strategies for their students.

Limitations and future research

The present study has several limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. Below is a list of the limitations.

- (1) No comparison with target language speakers (i.e., native speakers of Japanese)
- (2) Lack of learners' rationale behind their CRs
- (3) Possible influence of the multiple-choice format
- (4) Lack of actual performance

First, since the study was conducted to prepare for designing a comparative study, no comparison with Japanese speakers was made. Even so, without the Japanese normative data, it is difficult to interpret whether learners' CRs are target-like or not. For future research, the findings of the present study can be used to design a study that compares Americans, Japanese, and JFL learners. Second, the present study only investigated learners' general understanding of Japanese CRs and the influence of classroom instruction. It is still uncertain how learners tailor their CRs to particular situations. In order to gain more insights into learners' interlanguage system, it is necessary to investigate what criteria learners base their decision upon when responding to compliments in Japanese. Third, the multiple-choice format might have influenced the data. In the questionnaire, all the CR choices except 'Others' are accompanied by a few examples such as *ありがとう* ("Thanks.") and *いでしょう?* ("Isn't it nice?") for Acceptance/Agreement. These examples might have influenced the participants' decision-making. Future studies should validate the findings of the

present study with different data collection methods. Lastly, since the focus of the present study is upon learners' pragmatic knowledge, not their actual performance in a naturally-occurring conversation. Natural data or spontaneous oral data may yield different results. This is because what learners know about CRs does not always reflect what they can do under the pressures of conversational encounters.

Conclusions

The results of the present study have shown that the participants' CR choices are associated with the recipient's self-evaluation of a compliment. The learners tended to respond positively when the recipient agrees with the compliment, while they were inclined to respond negatively when the recipient disagrees with the compliment. The only exception to this tendency observed in the data was the situation where the recipient is complimented on his/her skills by a superior. It appears that the combination of the two variables (i.e., 'superior' and 'skills') tend to attenuate the effects of the stronger variable (i.e., 'self-evaluation').

The findings of this study also shed light on the learners' perception of Japanese CRs. The majority of the participants reported 'denial' as the typical Japanese CR, which is in line with what they claimed to have learned in Japanese classes. Indeed, the results of the multiple-choice questions show that the number of Negative strategy surpassed all the other choices (i.e., Positive, Avoidance, and Others). The results are in favor of Saito and Beecken (1997) and Shimizu (2009) who claim that JFLs' deviation from the TL norms is associated with classroom instruction. It is thus suggested that teachers should reevaluate their own teaching of Japanese CRs.

Footnotes

(1) Basically, it is a strategy to avoid accepting or denying a compliment. Some examples are listed below.

Question/Confirmation:

e.g. Really?; Do you think so?

Topic shift:

e.g. A: Nice camera.

B: My friend bought the same camera and he...

Explanation:

e.g. A: Nice camera.

B: The old one broke and I had to buy a new one for the trip to...

(2) JFL (Japanese as a foreign language) learners normally study Japanese in their home countries, while JSL (Japanese as a second language) learners study Japanese in Japan.

(3) Hiragana syllables are one of the three Japanese written scripts along with katakana and kanji.

(4) Kanji characters are Chinese characters used in Japanese.

(5) The expression おかげさまで is typically used to express appreciation to the interlocutor who has paid attention to the improvements of the speaker's situation or health condition. The participant who wrote おかげさまで reported in the previous question that "Denial or attributing success to the complimenter." Therefore, this learner's intention behind the use of おかげさまで may be to attribute the recipient's success to the complimenter.

(6) The expression すみません has a few different meanings. It can be used to draw one's attention (e.g., "Excuse me."), to apologize (e.g., "I'm sorry."), or to show gratitude (e.g., "Thank you.") depending on the situation. Therefore, the participant who wrote すみません probably meant to use it as a display of gratitude although the present author believes that すみません is not commonly used to respond to compliments.

References

- 大野 敬代 (2005) 「「ほめ」の意図と目上への応答について—シナリオ談話における待遇コミュニケーションとしての調査から—」『社会言語科学』第7巻2号, 88-96.
- 佐藤響子 (2002) 「ほめに対する好まれる返答形式にかんする一考察—「ホント? ありがとう」」『横浜市立大学紀要 人文科学系列』9号, 101-126.
- 寺尾留美 (1996) 「ほめ言葉への返答スタイル」『日本語学』第15巻5号, 明治書院, 81-88.

平田真美 (1999) 「ほめ言葉への返答」『横浜国立大学留学生センター紀要』6号, 38-47

横田淳子 (1986) 「ほめられた時の返答における母国語からの社会言語学的転移」『日本語教育』58号, 203-223.

Baba, J. (1996). *A study of interlanguage pragmatics: Compliment responses by learners of Japanese and English as a second language*. Doctoral Dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin.

Barnlund, D. C. & Araki, S. (1985). Intercultural encounters: the management of compliments by Japanese and Americans. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 16, 9-26.

Daikuhara, M. (1986). A study of compliments from a cross-cultural perspective: Japanese vs. American English. *The PENN Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 103-134.

Herbert, K. (1986). Say "thank you" or something. *American Speech*, 61(1), 76-88.

Kume, T., Tokui, A., Hasegawa, N., & Komada, K. (2001). A comparative study of communication styles among Japanese, Americans, and Chinese: Toward an understanding of intercultural friction. *Graduate School of Language Sciences (COE) Report* (pp.361-402), Kanda University of International Studies. Available from <http://coe-sun.kuis.ac.jp/contents.htm#1-A>

Knapp, M. L, Hopper, R., & Bell, R. A. (1984). Compliments: A descriptive taxonomy. *Journal of Communication*, 34, 12-31.

Pomerantz, A. (1978). Compliment responses: Notes on the co-operation of multiple constraints. In J. Schenkein (Ed.), *Studies in the organization of conversational interaction* (pp. 79-112), New York: Academic.

Saito, H. & Beecken, M. (1997). An Approach to Instruction of Pragmatic Aspects: Implications of Pragmatic Transfer by American Learners of Japanese. *The Modern Language Journal*, Fall 81, 363-77.

Satoh, K. (2005). Japanese compliment response behavior: An aspect of Japanese facework. *The Bulletin of Yokohama City University, Humanities Series, Vol.57, No.3*, 49-74.

Shimizu, T. (2009). Influence of learning context on L2 pragmatic realization: A comparison between JSL and JFL learners' compliment responses. In N. Taguchi (Ed.), *Pragmatic competence* (pp.167-198). Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.

Appendix A

Compliment response questionnaire with example discourse situations

Demographic information (Please mark only one box with.) If you are using a computer, please double-click the box and choose "turn on".

1. Age _____
2. Gender: Male / Female
3. Nationality _____
4. Native language _____
5. Do you speak any other languages besides English and Japanese?
 Yes What language(s)? _____
 No
6. Have you lived in other countries outside the U.S.?
 Yes What countries? _____
 How long? _____
 No

Explanation of the response choices

(a) Acceptance/Agreement: e.g. 「ありがとうございます」"Thank you."; 「いいでしょう?」「Isn't it nice?»; 「うまくいってよかったです」"I'm glad that it went well." etc

(b) Denial/Disagreement: e.g. 「いえ、いえ」"No, no."; 「いやあ、そんなことはない(です)よ」"Nah, I don't think so."; 「たいしたことない(です)よ」"It's nothing special" etc.

(c) Avoidance/Deflection: e.g. 「えっ、ほんとう(ですか)?」「Oh, really?»; 「えっ、そう(ですか)?」「Oh, you think so?»; 「田中さんの英語(えいご)も上手(じょうず)ですよ/上手だよ」"Mr. Tanaka, your English is also good."; 「この服(ふく)、ボーイフレンド/ガールフレンドがえらんでくれました/えらんでくれたの」"My girlfriend/boyfriend helped me pick this clothes."; 「私(わたし)が買(か)ったんじゃない(だけ)けど/じゃない(んですけど)」"I didn't buy it.", etc.

(d) Others: (Please print clearly in Japanese or English): e.g. 「ありがとうございます。でもほんとうは使(つか)いにくい(んです)」"Thank you, but it's actually not user-friendly"; 「専攻(せんこう)が薬学(や

くがく)だからね」"Because I major in pharmaceutical sciences." etc.

What would be your first response to the compliment in the following situations in Japanese?

Please mark only one box with. for each situation. If you are using a computer, please double-click the box and choose "turn on".

Discourse situations (Examples)

1) While in the U.S., you took many Japanese classes and studied very hard. Your hard work paid off, and you became quite fluent in Japanese. Now you are staying with a host family in Japan. Your host parents compliment you on your Japanese proficiency.

Your first response to the compliment would be:

(a) Acceptance/Agreement :<Examples> 「ありがとうございます」"Thank you"; 「そう言ってもらえると嬉しいです」"I am pleased to hear that." etc.

(b) Denial/Disagreement: <Examples> 「いえ、いえ」"No, no."; 「まだまだですよ」"I still need to work on it."; 「たいしたことないですよ」"It's nothing special" etc.

(c) Avoidance/Deflection: <Examples> 「えっ、ほんとう(ですか)?」「Oh, really?»; 「えっ、そう(ですか)?」「Oh, do you think so?»; 「友達(ともだち)のアリスさんの方(ほう)がもっと上手(じょうず)ですよ」"My friend, Alice, speaks Japanese much better.", etc.

(d) Others: (Please type or print clearly in Japanese or English):

2) You are working in a Japanese company. Your Japanese boss walks by your desk and notices your new cell phone. It is the latest model, and you think it was a great buy. Your Japanese boss looks at your new cell phone and compliments you on it.

Your first response to the compliment would be:

(a) Acceptance/Agreement :<Examples> 「ありがとうございます」"Thank you."; 「いいでしょう?」「Isn't it nice?»; 「私(わたし)も気(き)に入(い)っています」"I like it, too." etc.

(b) Denial/Disagreement: <Examples> 「いえ、いえ」"No, no."; 「そんなによくないですよ」"It's not that good."; 「たいしたことないですよ」"It's

nothing special” etc.

(c) Avoidance/Deflection: <Examples>. 「えっ、ほんとうですか?」 “Oh, really?”; 「えっ、そうですか?」 “Oh, do you think so?”; 「社長(しゃちょう)のケータイほどよくないですよ」 “It’s not as good as yours, boss”; 「友達(ともだち)がえらんでくれたんです」 “My friend helped me pick this one”, etc.

(d) Others: (Please type or print clearly in Japanese or English):

3) You are an aspiring violinist, majoring in music in college. You have just finished your violin recital, and you think you did a great job. Your Japanese teacher happened to be in the audience, and s/he compliments you on your performance.

Your first response to the compliment would be:

(a) Acceptance/Agreement :<Examples> 「ありがとうございます」 “Thank you.”; 「うまくいってよかったです」 “I’m glad that it went well” etc.

(b) Denial/Disagreement: <Examples> 「いえ、いえ」 “No, no.”; 「まだまだですよ」 “I still need to work on it.”; 「たいしたことないですよ」 “It was nothing special” etc.

(c) Avoidance/Deflection: <Examples> 「えっ、ほんとうですか?」 “Oh, really?”; 「えっ、そうですか?」 “Oh, do you think so?”; 「でも田中さんにはかないませんよ」 “But I’m no match for Mr. Tanaka.”, etc.

(d) Others: (Please type or print clearly in Japanese or English):

Open-ended questions

1) How do you think Japanese people are expected to respond to compliments?

(Please type or print clearly in Japanese or English)

2) In any Japanese class you have taken before, have you learned how to respond to compliments in Japanese? If so, what did you learn?

(Please type or print clearly in Japanese or English)

3) Have you learned or heard anything about Japanese compliment responses? If so, from what sort of resource you gained knowledge? Japanese textbook, internet, book, magazine, Japanese friends or else? If possible, please be specific, such as the title of the book you read.

(Please type or print clearly in Japanese or English)

Appendix B

What the JFL participants claim to have learned in Japanese classes.

Participant #	
1	It depends on the situation and person
2	downplay one's achievements and deny
3	「いいえ」「おかげさまで」
4	deny a lot of compliments to be humble
5	「まだまだです」「たいしたことない」「すみません」 Be modest
6	deny a compliment from a superior but if insisted, show appreciation
7	「まだまだ」
8	deny or thank you
9	to deny or reflect compliments, Be humble
10	avoidance
11	most were deflective
12	be humble and deny compliments you or your family might receive
13	deny so as not to sound conceited
14	Although since I’m used to saying thank-you to compliments in English, I sometimes do this if I receive praise in Japanese.
15	A bit; mostly to deny it or accept it as long as you acknowledge that other people helped.
16	Yes, specifically to compliments about Japanese proficiency. The book suggested denying the complement.
17	(No response)