

Activity: Compliments in English

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Role Play

Context

While the context can be adapted, this sample activity was designed for learners of English in a high school or college context with intermediate-high to advanced low proficiency. It is intended to be a review towards the end of the unit on compliments, perhaps before they write a final paper on the topic. Students have already been exposed to and discussed several of the materials in this collection, and can demonstrate the differences in power, distance, and severity when giving or receiving compliments. They can also recognize gender disparities in expectations in terms of compliments, as well as when a compliment is sarcastic or backhanded.

IPIC Chart

<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Students will be able to produce and recognize typical sentence structures and vocabulary associated with various types of compliments (e.g. physical location, personal belongings, personal appearance, compliments to express gratitude).</p> <p>Students will be able to produce and recognize the differences in power, distance, and severity that affect the type of compliment that can be given appropriately in English.</p>	<p>Analysis</p> <p>Students will be able to assess their current scenario and recognize whether it is appropriate to give a compliment.</p> <p>Students will be able to assess their current scenario and recognize what type of compliment is appropriate.</p>
<p>Awareness</p> <p>Students will be able to interpret an interlocutor's compliment towards them and determine the most appropriate next course of action.</p> <p>Students will be able to interpret an interlocutor's reaction to their compliment and determine the most appropriate next course of action.</p>	<p>Subjectivity</p> <p>Students will be able to articulate why they chose a divergent or aligned expert speaker norm in a compliment exchange for a given context. They can also explain whether it aligns with their identity and level of comfort.</p> <p>Students will be able to recognize that how they are perceived is influenced by how they give or react to a compliment and understand how their interactions affect their relationships with others.</p>

Activity Instructions

Observe

Students will watch a clip the instructor displays on a projector called "[Giving a compliment: 3 examples](#)". After seeing the three examples of three pairs of people giving and receiving compliments in different contexts in the video, the teacher asks comprehension questions of the whole class. Some example questions are *Where did the first conversation take place? What places did the speaker recommend that her friend shop at for sweaters? What did Vivian compliment Ted on?*

Analyze

Then, the teacher can transition into asking the students' opinions of whether or not they would use the same strategies as the models in the video did and ask follow-up questions to find out why or why not students would want to use the strategies themselves. The teacher can provide their own perspective as well for the compliment function norms of American English.

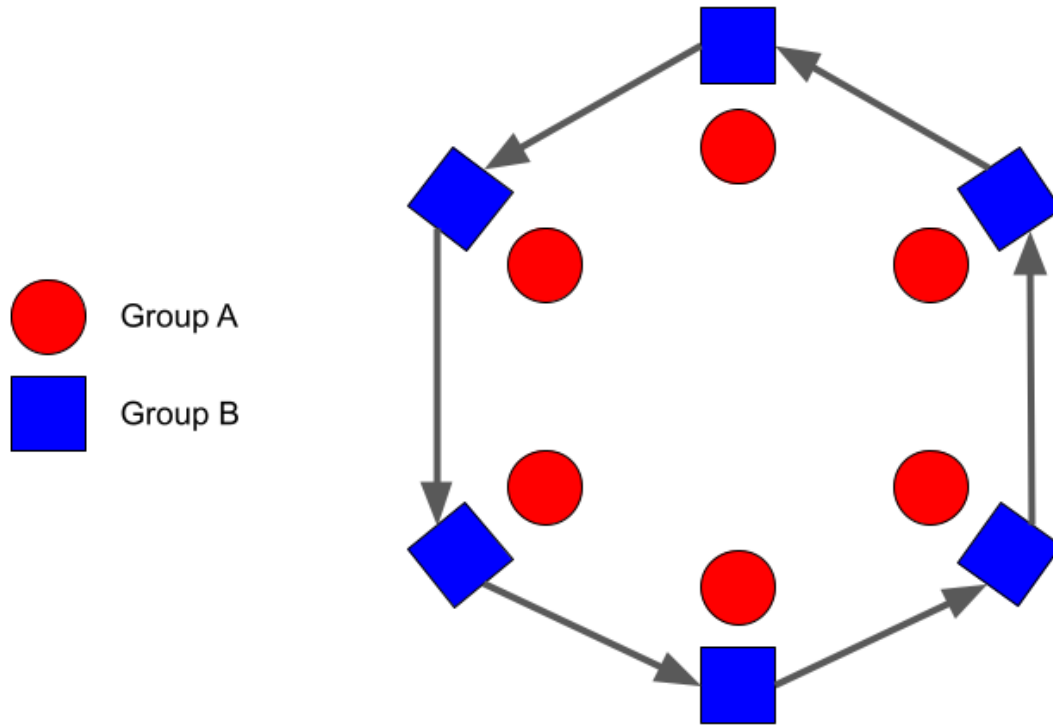
Extend: Fluency Circle

1. Have students organize seating arrangements into a circular shape. If using desks, instruct them to create an inner and outer circle with desks facing each other with five pairs of students in each complete circle.
2. Divide students into two groups: Group A and Group B. Have Group A remain in their seats throughout the activity while Group B rotates to the right when instructed.
3. Using the prompts, display one of the scenarios on the board in which Group A and Group B are given two different roles, where one partner must decide how to compliment the other. The students will be able to choose which version of the scenario they wish to act out. The students must use appropriate pragmatic norms that they have learned in class to choose a strategy for both how to give the compliment and how to respond to the compliment. The compliment can be within a larger conversation, with a greeting, small talk, etc., to review previous concepts.
4. After 2-3 minutes, instruct Group B to move one desk or table to the right to pair with a new partner. Make yourself available to students for any clarifying questions while you walk around the room observing their interactions.
5. Repeat steps 3-4 until Group B has rotated around the circle completely.

The large diagram below is a visual demonstration of what the classroom setup might look like, with Group A remaining in their seats while Group B rotates about the room. The two diagrams to the right indicate examples of the scenarios to be displayed on the board, which would allow students to choose

Keywords: compliments, refusals, acceptance, classroom/work interactions

the variation of a given scenario that they would most like to act out. More examples of scenarios are available [here](#).



1

Option A: Partner A is visiting their **boss'** (Partner B) house for the first time. Partner A's intention is to compliment Partner B's living space.

Option B: Partner A is visiting their **friend's** (Partner B) house for the first time. Partner A's intention is to compliment Partner B's living space.

2

Option A: Partner B notices that their **female colleague**, Partner A, got a new haircut. Partner B's intention is to compliment Partner A's new look.

Option B: Partner B notices that their **male colleague**, Partner A, got a new haircut. Partner B's intention is to compliment Partner A's new look.

Assessment and Feedback

Student performance will be observed by the teacher with the following criteria:

- Is the student actively participating in the role-play activity?
- Is the student acting respectfully towards their partner? Is there a relatively equal amount of speech being shared between partners?
- Is the student using appropriate language for the context?
- Is the student responding appropriately to the utterances of their interlocutor?

The most important criteria are the first two. Learners should be participating actively and respectfully more than anything. While it is important that students practice what they have learned, it is not as important that they get everything accurate. Instead, they should be demonstrating their ability to react appropriately to the context and the utterances of their partner.

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Based on how actively the students are participating, a great way to give feedback to learners is to award mini-stickers (placed on their desk) for doing a good job and larger stickers for taking risks and trying innovative strategies in their role plays. This is a great way to make sure your feedback is formative without having to use a rubric for class participation.

