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## Прагматика речевого акта *комплимент*: проявление региональной идентичности

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**Аннотация:** Исследование прагматических особенностей комплиментарных речевых актов должно проводиться с учетом социальных параметров, включающих гендерные, статусные, возрастные и региональные составляющие. Несмотря на многие исследования, посвященные изучению региональной идентичности, вопрос об отражении региональной идентичности личности в языке фактически не нашел отражения в лингвистических исследованиях. Цель данной статьи – исследование комплиментарных речевых актов в свете теории региональной идентичности, изучение проблемы, связанной с возможным влиянием на структуру комплиментарных высказываний фактора проживания британцев и американцев на определенной территории. В работе анализируются характерные особенности комплиментов, выраженных представителями урбанистической и руралистической идентичностей. Следовательно, работа нацелена на решение следующих задач: определить речевой акт *комплимент*, термин *региональная идентичность*, выявить, как принадлежность личности к определенной региональной идентичности отражается в процессе построения комплиментов, выраженных представителями британской и американской лингвокультур. Следуя анализу современных работ, исследующих проблему региональной идентичности, в статье рассматриваются комплиментарные речевые акты из произведений современной британской и американской художественной литературы XX и XXI веков (Дж. Болдуин, Дж. Фаулз, К. Жардин, Дж. Сэлинджер, З. Смит, К. Стокетт, Р. Йейтс) на предмет изучения отражения в них региональной идентичности коммуникантов.

**Ключевые слова:** иллокутивный акт, руралистическая идентичность, урбанистическая идентичность, британская лингвокультура, американская лингвокультура

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## The Pragmatics of Complimentary Speech Acts: Aspects of Regional Identity

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**Abstract:** The research on the pragmatics of complimentary speech acts should be carried out with due account for such social dimensions as gender, status-marked, age-related, and regional constituent parts. The aim of the study at hand is to elaborate on complimentary speech acts in the light of what will be termed as 'regional identity' within the framework of this article. Notwithstanding many studies of regional identity [1], few have revealed evident account of the representation of the interlocutor's regional identity in the language. This investigation concentrates on the theory of regional identity. The aim of the study is to consider the impact of the place where people live in on the production of complimentary speech acts in the British and American linguacultures. This scientific paper analyzes the significant features of compliments produced by people of urban-related identity and rural-related identity. Therefore, the paper focuses on answering the following research questions: What is the definition of complimentary speech act? What does regional identity mean? How is regional identity reflected in the compliments paid by the British and the Americans? Following the critical analysis of current works [1] on the theory of regional identity, this paper presents complimentary speech acts collected from English and American fiction of the XX and XXI centuries: Fowles J., Jardine Q., Salinger, Smith Z., Stockett K., Yates R., in the prospect of investigation the reflection of regional identity in language.

**Keywords:** illocutionary act, rural-related identity, urban-related identity, British linguaculture, American linguaculture

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### Introduction: Complimentary Speech Acts

The notion of 'speech act' firstly appeared in J. L. Austin's (1962) work dedicated to performatives and his theory of 'locutionary', 'illocutionary', and 'perlocutionary' acts. According to J. L. Austin [2], speech acts are the ones that can be performed by saying that someone is doing so. Speech acts can be analyzed on the three levels described:

- (1) a locutionary act that is described as the performance of a statement itself;
- (2) an illocutionary act is defined as "illocutionary force" of the statement; therefore, it is considered as a social valid verbal action with a definite intention;
- (3) a perlocutionary act is perceived to be actual effect, aiming at impelling somebody to do something.

Speech acts reflect both perlocutionary and illocutionary components. Each speech act possesses significant purpose and is obviously distinguished by their illocutionary type, depending on the type of attitude expressed. The perlocutionary act concerns an attempt to get the interlocutor to form some correlative attitude and, in some cases, to act in a certain way. J. L. Austin [2] distinguishes illocutionary acts into the five categories, as Table 1 illustrates. According to J. R. Searle [3], there are the following types of illocutions, as defined in Table 2.

J. R. Searle [3] defines a compliment as a very common expressive speech act by which we express our feelings and attitudes. As J. Holmes [4] notes, a compliment is a positively affective speech act and a complex sociolinguistic skill. Compliments, as a rule, attribute the positive features to the addressee, and even when compliments apparently refer to a third person, they may also be indirectly complimenting the addressee [4].

J. Holmes [4] postulates three main categories of responses to compliments: 'accept,' 'reject,' 'deflect,' or 'evade.' He further examined the role of gender in the process of responding to compliment and found that males ignore or legitimately evade a compliment more often than females do.

Compliments serve as signals of solidarity [4] and, as such, one might expect them more frequently in same-sex interactions than cross-sex interactions. Perhaps, compliments are not a preferred male strategy for expressing friendship, and men therefore use them only when (as they perceive it) required by societal politeness rules (e. g. following a meal) [4]. They do not use compliments as (again in their view) 'gratuitous' personalized expressions of solidarity, whereas for women compliments function as appropriate signals of solidarity in a much wider range of contexts [4].

**Table 1. Classification of speech acts according to J. L. Austin****Таблица 1. Классификация речевых актов согласно Дж. Остин**

Illocutionary acts	Definitions
Verdictives	is a judicial act; it refers to issues of truth and falsity
Exercitives	are dealing with the giving of a decision in favor of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it
Commissives	are aimed at committing the interlocutor to a certain action
Behabitives	comprise reaction to person's behavior and describe attitudes to someone else's behavior. There are obvious connections with both stating or describing what our feelings are and expressing
Expositives	are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments, and the clarifying of usages and of references

**Table 2. Classification of speech acts according to J. R. Searle****Таблица 2. Классификация речевых актов согласно Дж. Серлю**

Illocutionary acts	Definitions
Assertives	illocutionary acts that represents a state of affairs
Directives	illocutionary acts for getting the addressee to do something
Commissives	illocutionary acts for getting the speaker to do something
Expressives	illocutionary acts that express the mental state of the speaker about an event presumed to be true
Declarations	illocutionary acts that bring into existence the state of affairs to which it refers

N. Wolfson [5] summarizes some major topics for complimenting. It falls into two major categories: 'appearance' or 'possession and ability.' He points out that the primary function of compliments is the reinforcement and/or creation of solidarity between the speaker and the addressee.

After examination of the definition of compliments in the dictionaries, it becomes apparent that compliments have many intentions. According to the OALD [6], a compliment is defined as follows:

(4) "(Countable) a remark that expresses praise or admiration of somebody;

(5) (Formal) polite words or good wishes, especially when used to express praise and admiration;

(6) Idioms: *a backhanded compliment* (North American English also *left-handed compliment*) a remark that seems to express admiration but could also be understood as an insult."<sup>1</sup>

According to "Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged" [7], "compliment is defined in (7) through (9):

(7): *a*: an expression of esteem, respect, affection, or admiration; especially: an admiring remark; *b*: formal and respectful recognition: HONOR;

(8) compliments (plural): best wishes: REGARDS ('accept my compliments', 'compliments of the season') [7].

(9) Definition of compliment (transitive verb): 9.1. to express esteem, respect, affection, or admiration to: to pay a compliment; 9.2. to present with a token of esteem complimented her with an honorary degree."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, from the perspective of our lexicographical analysis, the main intentions of compliments are illustrated below in Figure.

**Fig. The intentions of compliments****Рис. Интенции речевого акта комплимент**

<sup>1</sup> Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. U. K.: Oxford University Press, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged. N. Y.: Philippines Copyright, 1986.

P. Brown and S. Levinson claimed that a speech act of complimenting is largely a positive and polite strategy; since it lets the addressee know that he or she is being liked [6].

Not surprisingly, compliments appear to conform to P. Brown and S. Levinson's description of utterances which may be used as positive politeness devices. Positive politeness is oriented towards the hearer's positive self-image [4]. As affective speech acts with positive connotational meaning, the most obvious function of compliments is to polish the social relationship and thus increase or integrate solidarity between people [6].

Within the scope of this paper, a 'complimentary speech act' is defined as a multifunctional expressive speech act showing the attitude of one person to another and having a predominantly positive connotative meaning.

### The Theory of Regional Identity

The researchers investigating the term of regional identity are convinced that place can be regarded in relation to social category within the theory of social identity [1]. It is crucial to point out that people are brought up in families, communicate in groups and socialize, forming their identities [7]. Gender, status-marked, age-related, and regional identities are fundamental for each person [8]. According to N. Flingstein, collective identities are based on the idea that some group of people accepts similarity that results in feeling of solidarity amongst people and, consequently, the sense of collective identity is socially constructed [7]. Considering the phenomenon of 'regional identity', there are two approaches according to which we judge by identity.

On the one hand, place identifications are conceived to be a person's expressed identification with a place. Within this context, place is a social category and will be subject to the same rules as a social identification within the theory of social identity because social identity comprises different social identifications. Place identification can express membership of some group of people defined by location. Taking this position into account, 'place identification' is one of the aspects of 'social identification' [1].

On the other hand, H. M. Proshansky states that 'place identity' is a separate aspect of identity in comparison with 'social identity' as person's socialization with the physical world. We agree with this statement. So, the processes operating between place and identity are the same as between groups and identity [1].

It is necessary to note that people refer themselves to a place in order to distinguish themselves from the others. Consequently, one of the functions of the place is the same as the main function that social identity possesses [1]. Thus, the place is used to maintain positive self-esteem. This is closely associated with distinctiveness [1].

Needless to say, the place is inextricably linked with the development and maintenance of continuity of self [1].

As a general rule, the further away a person is from their home, the more general an identification will be used. For example, if a person is in a foreign country, they are likely to use their nationality as their identification, whereas someone from London may call themselves a Londoner when they are in the North of England [1].

A. Paasi identifies the notion of 'regional identity' as person's identification with the region as the whole of institutionalized discourses or symbols [9–11].

The term 'identity' is ambiguous and dynamic [12]. People identify themselves with a certain location that encompasses "culture, sociality, morality, tradition and the social system specific to that region" [9–13].

It is interesting to point out that S. C. Santos defines collective regional identity as a processual but not established and fixed concept, as a projection of what a person wants to be but not his or her state at the moment [14].

A. K. Copus considers the problem of stagnant regions in the European Union [15]. J. Roose, having investigated European identification, analyses the level of identification of people living in the European Union with Europe and finds out that only five per cent of the British feel very close to Europe [16].

G. C. Prieto examines the term 'regional identity' on the institutional level and analyses the role of regional institutions in creating regional identity of a person. The scientists demonstrate that institutions form red tape that unites state representatives and assists in creating collective regional identity [17]. It is evident that modernization resulted in rural restructuring [17]. C. Ray and M. Kneafsey developed and adopted the culture economy model with four modes [18–20], while E. Hegger elaborated on the concept of regional identity in the light of regional branding. Regional branding, from this perspective, is defined as a process that stimulates the regional economy [21]. A. Lagendijk examines "the construction of regional identities by linking structurally and agency-oriented perspectives" [22].

J. Lee introduced the term of social capital and identified it with respect to rural development processes [23; 24]. A. Brigevidt proved that exclusive regionalists do not have tendency in demonstrating their attachment to Europe and fixed the correlation between cultural and political identity: when cultural regional identity decreases support for European institutions, political regional identity increases it [25].

G.A. Shusharina admits that a person feels the need in self-identification at the moment of crisis [26]. F. Knaps and S. Herrmann managed to analyze cultural markers of regional identity in an urgent socio-cultural paradigm and linked regional identity with spatial planning [27].



Taking everything into consideration, we define 'regional identity' as one of the constituent parts of social identity which witness the identification with a group of people who belong to a particular place. Regional identity, from our perspective, presents itself in language. This proves the tendency to speak dialect that reflects 'regional identity' of people.

### A linguistic Analysis of Compliments Given by the Representatives of British and American Regional Identities

To investigate the characteristics of compliments paid by people who live in the city (the representatives of urban-related identity) and people who live in the suburbs (the representatives of rural-related identity) the compliments from British and American fiction of the XX and XXI centuries was compiled in (10) through (19):

(10) *Nice looking, innit—nice looking babies!*<sup>3</sup>

The complimentary speech act above comprises London slang word *innit* which denotes 'isn't it, are not, have not', formed due to 'glottal stop'. This slang word is a characteristic feature of Cockney dialect and is used by young middle class Londoners to illustrate that they are "respectable"<sup>4</sup>. The utilization of word of Cockney origin refers to English regional (London) urban-related identity of the addressee.

(11) – *Oh, it's good to see you, Ned. How are you, love? You're looking well, considering. Not still smoking the dope, I hope.*

- *'Fraid so, 'fraid so. I like the flavor.*
- *It'll rob you of your ambition.*
- *I've only got the one ambition anyway.*
- *And what would that be?*
- *Marrying you, of course. Can't rob me of that now can it?*
- *Oh go on with you!*<sup>5</sup>

The representatives of London regional urban-related identity use lexical unit *dope* to denote people who do drugs called 'Marajuanna Dope'. The locutionary target uses colloquial phrase '*fraid so*' ('shortening dialect: afraid so'), which refers to shortening dialect.

(12) – *I'm going to take my dollhouse, Jennifer said that Saturday afternoon, and my doll carriage and my bear and my three Easter rabbits and my giraffe and all my dolls and all my books and records, and my drum.*

– *That sounds like quite a lot, doesn't it, sweetie? April said, frowning over her sewing machine.*

*Jennifer was sitting at her feet, playing aimlessly with torn-out linings and bits of thread.*

– *Oh, and my tea set too, and my rock collection and all my games, and my scooter.*

– *Well, but sweetie, don't you think that's quite a lot to take? Aren't you planning to leave anything behind?*

– *No. Maybe I'll throw my giraffe away; I haven't quite decided.*

– *Your giraffe? No, I wouldn't do that. We'll have plenty of room for all the animals and dolls and the other small things. It's just some of the big things I was worried about – the dollhouse, for instance, and Mike's rocking horse. That kind of thing's very difficult to pack, you see. But you won't have to throw away the dollhouse; you could give it to Madeline.*

– *To keep?*

– *Well, of course to keep. That's better than throwing it away, isn't it?*

– *'Kay, Jennifer said, and then, after a minute: I know what I'll do. I'll give Madeline my dollhouse and my giraffe and my carriage and my bear and my three Easter rabbits and my!*<sup>6</sup>

The repeated vocative *sweetie* is used in the compliment made by mother to daughter that is typical for communication between members of the family. Illustrating the belonging to American regional identity, the girl uses shortening slang form '*Kay*' derived from the lexical unit *Okay*.

(13) – *Your man's got his feet on her seat, blud.*

– *But it is your business, though? Why you tryna make it your business?*

*Who you callin' blud? I ain't your blud.*

– *I didn't say it was my!*<sup>7</sup>

This compliment is produced with the help of word *blud* which denotes 'brother' in Britain. The form '*blud*' derives from '*bredrin*' (brother); "it doesn't mean a literal brother, it's more like a friend."<sup>8</sup>

The interlocutor in the response utilizes unintelligible *tryna* (try to), contraction *calin* and the absence of auxiliary verb 'are' in the Present Continuous tense in the interrogative sentence. All these features of Cockney dialect are typical of the English, especially London, urban-related regional identity.

(14) – *Yes, wee fella. Hello, there. You'll like it out here, I think, Master JAS. Hope you'll like us.*

<sup>3</sup> Smith Z. NW. Penguin Books; Reprint edition, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Innit // Urban Dictionary. Available at: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=innit> (accessed 07.09.2014).

<sup>5</sup> Smith Z. NW...

<sup>6</sup> Yates R. Revolution Road. Vintage, 1961.

<sup>7</sup> Smith Z. NW...

<sup>8</sup> Blud // Urban Dictionary. Available at: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=blud> (accessed 07.09.2014).

– No doubt about that, copper, said his wife. Hey! JAS – I like the sound of it. James Andrew Skinner, aka Jazz. Spelled J-A-Z-Z. That's what we'll call him. Yes, Bob?<sup>9</sup>

The compliment is paid in informal communication. The parents are happy to see the newborn baby. The addressor calls his son 'wee fella' utilizing the Scottish word 'wee' in the meaning of 'tiny', which demonstrates the belonging of the interlocutor to Scottish regional identity.

(15) – For the **bootiful** young lady **hupstairs**... And for the **heven** more lovely one down<sup>10</sup>.

This praise comprises the words corrupted by the accent: *bootiful* (beautiful), *hupstairs* (upstairs), *heven* (even). The author illustrates the accent with the help of graphical means, emphasizing the character's English regional settlement identity.

(16) – Hey, cutie<sup>11</sup>.

This greeting speech act contains complimentary vocative *cutie* in the meaning 'someone who you might think is attracting', which marks American regional identity of the speaker. The word 'cutie' is a colloquial lexical unit with the diminutive suffix '-ie' derived from a frequently used American expressive adjective 'cute'<sup>12</sup>.

(17) – Where the hellja get that hat? he said.

– New York.

– How much?

– A buck.

– You got robbed. ... Up home we wear a hat like that to shoot deer in, for Chrissake, he said. That's a deer shooting hat... Your folks know you got kicked out yet?

– Nope.

– Where the hell's Stradlater at, anyway?

– Down at the game. He's got a date. I yawned. I was yawning all over the place. For one thing, the room was too damn hot...

– The great Stradlater, Ackley said.

– Hey. Lend me your scissors a second, willya? Ya got 'em handy?..

– Get 'em a second, willya? Ackley said, I got this hangnail I want to cut off.

...

– You have a damn good sense of humor, Ackley kid, I told him. You know that? I handed him the scissors. Lemme be your manager. I'll get you on the goddam radio... How 'bout using

the table or something? I said. Cut 'em over the table, willya? I don't feel like walking on your crumby nails in my bare feet tonight. He kept right on cutting them over the floor, though. What lousy manners. I mean it.

– Who's Stradlater's date? he said. He was always keeping tabs on who Stradlater was dating, even though he hated Stradlater's guts.

– I don't know. Why?

– No reason. Boy, I can't stand that sonuvabitch. He's one sonuvabitch I really can't stand.

– He's crazy about you. He told me he thinks you're a goddam prince, I said. I call people a "prince" quite often when I'm horsing around<sup>13</sup>.

The informal complimentary speech acts of the representatives of American regional identity contain expressive adjective *great* in the meaning "(used of persons) standing above others in character or attainment or reputation", colloquial cliché phrase "*he's crazy about you*", the phrase "*you're a goddam prince*", expressing admiration and a flattering comparison with a taboo word *goddam* in the meaning "adj. something of a negative value" and a taboo word *damn* which reveals "a sort of sentence enhancer."<sup>14</sup>

We can observe the following regional features of the representatives of the American youth group in the dialogue: the use of the lexical unit *hellja* (hel), slang word *a buck* (slang for "money"), colloquial exclamatory phrase for *Chrissake*, slang phrase *kick out* (to eject or dismiss someone), colloquial words *folks* (usually refers to one's parents, although sometimes broadened to include other relatives and even friends), *nope* (slang for "no") and *ya, willya* ("you"), slang exclamation *Where the hell*, colloquial word *a date* ("when a guy and a girl spend time alone together"), shortening '*lemme*' (an abbreviation of 'let me'. This phrase is likely used by modern youths<sup>15</sup>), shortenings *bout* (about) and *em* (them), vulgarisms *lousy* (extremely bad or poor) and a *sonuvabitch* (= son of a bitch), American idiom *to horse around* (Casual rough play).

(18) – You're aces, Ackley kid, I said. You know that?

– Wise guy. Someday somebody's gonna your<sup>16</sup>.

The complimentary speech act "*You're aces*" includes slang expressive American adjective *aces* in the meaning "Excellent!

<sup>9</sup> Jardine Q. Skinner's Trail. London: Headline Book Publishing, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Fowles J. The French Lieutenant's woman. London: Guild Publishing, 1979.

<sup>11</sup> Stockett K. The Help. N. Y.: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Cutie // Urban Dictionary. Available at: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Cutie> (accessed 07.09.2014).

<sup>13</sup> Salinger J. D. The Catcher In The Rye. Penguin Books, 1951.

<sup>14</sup> Damn // Urban Dictionary. Available at: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=damn> (accessed 07.09.2014).

<sup>15</sup> Lemme // Urban Dictionary. Available at: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=lemme> (accessed 07.09.2014).

<sup>16</sup> Salinger J. D. The Catcher In The Rye...

Very good!" and a colloquial phrase *somebody's gonna* that is typical for the representatives of American regional identity.

(19) – *Happy birthday, Mae Mobley Two!*

*She laugh and say,*

– *I am Mae Mobley Three!*

– *You sure is! Now blow out them candles, Baby girl. Fore they run up in you grits*<sup>17</sup>.

The Afro-American compliment is expressed in the speech act of congratulation dedicated to Birthday. The illiterate locutionary target uses complimentary vocative *baby girl* (a nickname for only the most rare and unique girl out there), shortening *fore* in dialect meaning "before", phrasal verb *to run up* in the meaning "to suddenly approach someone"<sup>18</sup>, colloquial usage of personal pronoun *you* instead of possessive pronoun "your", grammar mistakes: absence of "–s" ending of the verb in third personal singular form in the Present Simple tense (*She laugh and say*), misuse of the verb "to be" in singular form with the personal pronoun "you" (*You sure is!* instead of "You sure are!").

## Conclusion

Despite the fact that there are theories about social identity, yet there is little theorizing about the role of place in identity and the reflection of regional identity in manifestation of complimentary speech acts. Regional constituent part is important while investigating pragmatic aspect of complimentary speech acts.

Frequency in usage of complimentary speech acts by the representatives of British and American linguacultures depending on their belonging to urban-related and rural-related regional identities is illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3. Frequency in usage of complimentary speech acts in the light of regional identity**

**Таблица 3. Частотность употребления речевого акта комплимент в свете региональной идентичности**

Lingua-cultures	Regional identity	
	urban-related	rural-related
British	95 %	5 %
American	84 %	16 %

This article has been aimed at studying peculiarities of compliments paid by the British and Americans, possessing urban-related and rural-related identities and speaking *British English*, *American English*, *Cockney*, *Estuary English*, and *Black English* accents.

The results of the research prove that 'regional identity' presents itself in the language and the tendency to use certain dialect that reveals regional identity of the person has been fixed [8]. This is also reflected in complimentary speech acts [28].

The compliments paid by the representatives of 'urban-related identity' comprise national slang, national forms of address, and certain dialect words and phrases, whilst less frequent compliments paid by the representatives of 'rural-related identity', especially by uneducated people, are sometimes challenging for understanding due to the accent, mispronunciations, the usage of different substandard words, non-standard contractions and grammar mistakes.

Shortenings and taboo words are utilized by the youth, belonging to urban-related identity. The American urban-related representatives also tend to use American slang words and vocatives.

Thus, the compliment utterances of the representatives of 'urban-related identity' are not the same as the compliments paid by the representatives of 'rural-related identity'.

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<sup>17</sup> Stockett K. The Help...

<sup>18</sup> Run up // Urban Dictionary. Available at: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Run%20up> (accessed 07.09.2014).



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