

A Study on Compliments in Thai: A Case of the Blind Auditions “the Voice Senior Thailand Season 1”*

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This study investigates the initial encounters of 30 Thai senior citizens and the four Thai musician-celebrity coaches in the blind auditions of “the Voice Senior Thailand season 1”. The analysis was drawn from studies on compliments, politeness, and face work. The analysis found that both overt-oriented and covert-oriented compliments were used extensively when the coaches evaluated the senior contestants’ vocal performances. The use of such compliments exhibits the shift from a distant relationship to a closer one. The prominent use of covert-oriented compliments as face-maintenance and face-enhancing strategies and as distance-minimization or imposition-mitigation strategies (Blum-Kulka, 2005) suggests rapport management between the four coaches and the senior contestants. Such interconnectedness of the multidirectional functions of compliments in Thai as well as face and politeness found in this study could exemplify how both younger and older generations of Thai people interact to form and shape a closer relationship in their first encounters in contemporary Thai language. This study could shed some lights on cross-cultural studies of complimenting behaviors and politeness in similar contexts or in other contexts related to younger and older generations in aging societies (e.g., workplace contexts or senior-education settings).

Keywords: Thai compliments, face work, politeness, the Voice Senior Thailand Season 1

1 Introduction

Like other nations around the world, Thai senior people or elderly refer to Thai population of persons age 60 or older (Thaitgri, 2017). Based on the Thaitgri’s report (2017), among ten members of ASEAN countries Thailand

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has reached the status of a continually and rapidly aged population which could turn Thailand into a complete aged society in 2025. In a big picture, several research findings revealed through focus groups and interviews suggest active ageing society and life which entail both independence and interdependence characteristics of the Thai senior citizens (e.g., Manatsatchakun, Roxberg, & Asp, 2018; Thanakwang, Isaramalai, & Hatthakit, 2014). The methods of focus groups and interviews in deriving such findings encourage my curiosity to explore communication in the context between Thai senior people and the younger generations, especially in their initial encounters. According to Dimock's (2019) definitions of generations and Vanichkorn's (2012) comment on Generation Y or Millennials, who were born between 1981 and 2000, the Millennials will become the majority of the workforce from 2020 onward. Consequently, communication between younger and older generations in the workplace, educational setting, mass media, and in other contexts in Thailand will be increasingly unavoidable. Not only communication across generations in workforce may become more evident, such communication in educational setting will also be on a rise (e.g., Lowell & Morris, 2019; Sánchez, Whitehouse, & Johnston, 2018). Younger or older generations will involve with transitions in reskilling and upskilling in order to develop their work-related learning, careers, and identities. As I have observed, contemporary Thai mass media have increased in numbers of older generation's leading roles in advertising and TV shows. "The Voice Senior Thailand Season 1"¹ is the good example. It was aired between March and April 2019 and the same show in season 2 has just ended in April 2020. The evidence of the show's popularity could be seen through more series of the same show and the extension of the media channels from airing via the regular PPTV channel 36 to showing through LINE TV².

The show, especially in the blind auditions, could be considered as a particularly interesting context in which it reflects communication between the Thai interlocutors where relatively younger coaches are to evaluate senior contestants' singing performances in their first encounters. The senior contestants would basically hear some evaluations from the relatively younger coaches. That means the factors of social distance-closeness and age differences would come into play when the interlocutors interact.

¹ "The Voice Senior Thailand" is the franchise of "The Voice" which is an international reality television vocal competition. The show targets vocal competitions among Thai senior people over 60 years of age from across Thailand which featured three stages of competition: the blind auditions, the knockouts, and the final shows, respectively.

² LINE TV is an entertainment website and video application which includes TV dramas, variety shows, music videos and LINE-only exclusive content.

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In the Thai culture, there is a saying as follows:

/phuu2jaj1	?aap1	naam3r@@n3	maa0	k@@n1	dek1 ³ /
adult	bathe	water hot	come	before	child

‘If you wish a good advice, consult an old man’.

Consequently, this particular context appears to go against the Thai traditional saying which every Thai parents teach their children to behave and to respect older people by not positively or negatively evaluating older people either overtly or covertly because they are more mature and wiser. Those who violate this socially acceptable act are seen as exhibiting impoliteness. Thus, when the relatively younger coaches give any evaluations to the Thai senior contestants, it could be viewed as violating such Thai social norm of politeness.

After the thorough observation of the blind auditions, compliments were found to be frequently used by the coaches to express their evaluations to the Thai senior contestants. In many studies (e.g., Wolfson, 1981; Zandstra, 2017), compliments have been shown as having significant functions in communication contexts. They are as to negotiate interpersonal meaning, build solidarity, and encourage performances among interlocutors across languages and cultures. Thus, compliments given by the relatively younger coaches to the Thai senior contestants could be assumed as to perform the same functions as those in existing literature. However, the questions of what these compliments are or how similar or different they are as compared to compliments found in the existing literature should be illuminated. To the best of my knowledge, research with a focus on compliments, communication, language and culture related to younger and older generations is scarce (e.g., Chen, 2019; Chen & Yang, 2010; Sarkhosh & Alizadeh, 2017), especially in the Thai context. Thus, to fill in the research gap, this study focused on compliments found in the blind auditions “the Voice Senior Thailand Season 1”. The study could be considered as a plausible preliminary work to contribute to cross-cultural research studies of complimenting behaviors and politeness related to younger and older generations in the same context or in other contexts (e.g., workforce context or senior-education setting) in continually aged societies.

³ To ease the process of transcribing Thai phonetic transcription to computer input, the phonetic transcription of the Linguistic Research Unit of Chulalongkorn University (LRU) system (Schoknecht, 2000) was used. The system deviates from IPA: 4 changes in the consonants, i.e., ng=/ŋ/; c=/tɛ /; ch=/tɛ^h/; ?=/ʔ/, 4 changes in the vowels, i.e., v =/w/; q=/ɿ/; x=/ɛ/; @=/ɔ/, and double letters represent length of vowels. Number 0-4 are used to mark the 5 tones, i.e., 0=mid, 1=low, 2=falling, 3=high, 4=rising conforming to the traditional names of Standard Thai tones.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Cross-cultural perspectives on compliments

According to many online versions of English-English dictionaries (e.g., Cambridge dictionary; Oxford learner's dictionary), compliment refers to a remark, polite word, good wish or an action that expresses approval, admiration or respect. In the same vein, scholars involving in complimenting behavior research (e.g., Holmes, 1986; Placencia & Lower, 2017; Wolfson, 1983) define compliments as overt or covert expressions of positive evaluation from the speaker that gives credit to the hearer. For the online version of English-Thai and Thai-Thai dictionaries (e.g., NECTEC's Lexitron-2 dictionary; Thai dictionary of royal society), giving compliments relates to polite expressions or actions of praise, admiration, or looking with pleasure. The definitions of both English and Thai compliments reflect the universality or similarity of the meaning of compliments as in the same vein as the semantic components of compliments identified by Wierzbicka (1991):

- I perceive something good about your Y.⁴
 - I want to say something good about you because of that.
 - I say: (something good about X and X's Y).
 - I feel something good about thinking about it.
 - I say this because I meant to cause you to know that I am thinking something good about you.
 - I assume that you will feel something good because of that.
- (Wierzbicka, 1991, p. 136-145).

Semantically speaking, to show the 'good' feeling of the speaker toward the hearer's Y and assume reciprocity, both English and Thai compliments entail either the speaker's straightforward or implicit expressions of positive evaluation or polite expressions toward the hearer. According to many studies in compliments (e.g., Boonyasit, 2005; Manes & Wolfson, 1981), the straightforward expressions or overt compliments in English and in Thai involve similar use of recognizable positive lexical markers. The positive lexical markers refer to semantically positive words in one of the four word classes which include verbs (i.e., to like and to love); adjectives (e.g., nice, beautiful, and pretty); adverbs (e.g. well; beautifully); and nouns (e.g., expert; devotion). Speakers of either English or Thai could use these positive lexical markers in formulae or patterns. Overt compliments across cultures which contain such positive lexical markers are linguistically

⁴ Y could include the 4 basic categories: appearance, performance, possessions, and personality (Holmes, 1998; Rees-Miller, 2011; Wolfson, 1983).

realized by the following four formulae (e.g., Maíz-Arévalo, 2012; Manes & Wolfson, 1981):

- i. Declarative clause with the speaker/compliment giver in the subject position, followed by a mental process verb of ‘like’ or ‘love’, and a complimented item as direct object. For example:
[I (really) like/love NP] (e.g., I really like your earrings.).
- ii. Declarative clause with the hearer/compliment receiver in the subject position, which involve the following formulae:
[You (V) (a) (intensifier) ADJ NP] (e.g., You did a (really) great job.);
[You (V) NP (intensifier) ADV (PP)] (e.g., You wear this dress really nicely.);
[You have (a) (intensifier) ADJ NP] (e.g., You have such a very great figure.).
- iii. Exclamative clause with a semantically positive adjective modifying the complimented subject. For instance:
[What (a) ADJ NP!] (e.g., What a great car!);
[ADJ NP!] (e.g., Good job!).
- iv. Negation Yes-No Question with the complimented item in the subject position, followed by a semantically positive adjective modifying the complimented subject. For instance:
[Isn’t NP ADJ?] (e.g., Isn’t your dress pretty?).

Pragmatically speaking, [I (really) like/love NP] reflects speaker-oriented compliment. [You (V) (a) (intensifier) ADJ NP]; [You (V) NP (intensifier) ADV (PP)]; and [You have (a) (intensifier) ADJ NP] mirror hearer-oriented compliments. [What (a) ADJ NP!]; [ADJ NP!]; and [Isn’t NP ADJ?] point to object-oriented compliments. The compliment patterns across cultures mentioned above could be viewed as oriented towards speaker/compliment giver; hearer/compliment receiver; and object of compliments. Along the same line, Worathumrong (2015) proposed the Thai compliment patterns with the emphasis on such compliment orientations as follows:

- a. Declarative clause with subject + speaker-oriented

[NP	VP	NP	(intensifier)	(FP ⁵)
[chan4	ch@@@p2	thaaa2 ten2 kxx0	(cing0 cing0 lqqj0)	(na3)
I	like	posture dance you	(true true	beyond)

⁵ FP stands for final particle.

I really really like your dance step.

- b. Declarative clause with subject + hearer-oriented
 [NP copula 'be' / VP / ADJ-V NP ADJ / ADV (intensifier) (FP)]
 [khun0 sa0nqq4 raaj0ngaan0 dii0 (maak2)]
 you present report good (very)
 You presented your report very well.
- c. Declarative clause without subject + hearer or object-oriented
 [copula 'be' / VP / ADJ-V (ADJ / ADV) (intensifier) (FP)]
 [ʔ0r@@j1 (?a1)]
 delicious
 Delicious!
- d. Declarative clause with subject, Question tag + hearer or object-oriented
 [NP copula 'be' / VP / ADJ-V ADJ / ADV Tag Question]
 [song0phom4 suuaj4 nq3]
 hairstyle beautiful Tag Question
 Your hairstyle is beautiful, is it?

Many cross-cultural research studies as mentioned earlier have suggested that the use of overt or formulaic compliments which are realized through positive lexical markers or semantically positive verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and nouns in the compliment formulae are well received across cultures. It is because they could avoid misperception toward each other, even in interactions among strangers. However, cultural-bound or context-dependent perceptions on compliments could complicate this matter.

Hall⁶ (1976) categorized the two broad types of value systems of cultures which can be studied through contexts of situation, the experiences of members and speaker-hearer relationships (Firth, 1950). They are (1) high-context cultures such as Thai, which value collectivism, small talk, non-verbal cues, and indirectness or implicit meaning; (2) low-context cultures such as American, which value individualism, straight talk, verbal cues, and directness or explicit meaning. Following Firth (1950) and Hall (1976), many

⁶ In the realm of cross-cultural pragmatics studies, classic works of the 4 following proponents have generated a wealth of theoretical background in many of the studies up to present (e.g., Mustapha, 2012; Taavitsainen & Jucker, 2008) as related to the importance of contexts. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1976) proposed principles of pragmatics. Firth (1950) highlighted the significance of context of communication as related to contexts of situations and contexts of experiences of participants or speaker-hearer relationships. In Hall's (1976) theory, the key factor was context of cultures.

scholars (e.g., Boyle, 2000; Jucker, 2009; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989; Lin, Woodfield, & Ren, 2012) have argued that not all compliments may necessarily be realized in the fixed patterns. According to these scholars, the non-fixed patterns of compliments, non-straightforward or covert compliments need some contexts in interpretive procedures to judge if they could be considered as compliments. Basically, non-straightforward or covert compliments fall into the two categories below:

- i. The speaker refers to the third entity the hearer admires, works with, or has close relationship with. For example: “Your daughter is adorable.”
- ii. The speaker evaluates that the hearer has something of good quality (i.e., appearance) or performs good quality conducts (i.e., performance). For instance, “Where did you learn to sing like this?”

Both examples, according to Grice, Cole, and Morgan (1975), may be considered as a violation of the maxim of manner. It is because in i, the hearer may interpret the utterance as an overt compliment to the hearer’s daughter and not as a compliment to him/herself. In ii, the hearer may interpret the utterance as asking for information, and not as a compliment. Maíz-Arévalo (2012) revealed that this type of compliments was frequently used in Spain among the interactants who were still distant, such as new friends, and those who were more intimates, such as family members or close friends. The difference lies in the degree of covertness in the compliments in which the more degree of implicitness applies to those who are more intimates. The use of the more covert compliments with the intimates highlights the subtle thoughts of the speaker toward the hearer in pre-selecting the given compliments by not using the overt ones, but the ones that both of them share background knowledge.

Giving compliments across culture either through overt or covert expressions, without respect to specific linguistic and cultural norms may be considered as impolite and lead to misunderstandings in interpersonal and intercultural communications.

2.2 Compliments, face work and politeness strategies

Since compliment expresses approval, admiration or respect toward the hearer, it could be viewed as to relate to the face theory and politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). Their views of the two aspects of face: positive (individuals’ wants to be integrated and accepted by the community) & negative (individuals’ wants to be unimpeded by the community) entail human interaction as potentially face-threatening act (FTA). Following Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) as to reduce such threat, compliment is considered as a positive politeness strategy. The speakers give

compliments to maintain the positive faces of the hearers or the hearers' desires to be liked or approved of. Nonetheless, when considering the definition and the use of covert compliments as previously reviewed in section 2.1, such kind of compliments may be placed as either negative politeness strategy or off-record strategy. As a negative politeness strategy, the speakers give covert compliments to maintain the negative face of the hearers. It is as to support the hearers to act as competent and independent agents. As an off-record strategy, this kind of compliments could serve to mitigate a possible face-threat for both the hearer and the speaker. According to Boyle (2000), referring to the third entity the hearer admires, works with, or has close relationship with is considered the second most common way to give compliments covertly in English as in the following instance: "You've worked with Lisa blackpink!". This non-straightforward compliment could reduce the potential threat to the hearer's negative face that often emerges in the form of embarrassment from receiving overt compliments. Although the hearers need to interpret whether or not the speakers are giving compliments to them or just asking for confirmation or making comments, based on rules of politeness (Lakoff, 1975; Shahrokhi & Bidabadi, 2013), going off record may be related to the speakers' giving options to the hearers in choosing to respond to the given compliments or not to do so. By giving options to the hearer, the speaker could maintain his/her positive face.

However, to some extent, giving overt compliments could still be considered as a FTA. Take this Thai context as an example. At a parking lot, a female teenager gave her compliment to a much older female neighbor whom they have seen each other for a very few times.

Female teenager

/paa2 txng1 naa2 suuaj4 cang0 kha1
aunt decorate face beautiful FP
ca1 paj0 naj4 kha3 nii2/
will go where FP this

'You put your make-up on beautifully. Where are you going?'

Pragmatically speaking, even when the speaker applied overt compliment as seen through the use of semantically positive adverb 'beautifully', the instance here could be perceived by the hearer who is the older neighbor as impolite. It is because of the topic of the compliment, social proximity and the age of the speaker. The teenager could be viewed as not showing respect to the elderly. In the Thai culture, compliments on physical appearance and weight from a non-intimate or a person of a younger age may not be well received. This is because the topic of physical or body appearance are considered sensitive topics and are usually reserved for complimenting among intimates or people of equal age (Worathumrong, 2015). Giving

compliments can be FTAs when associated with taboo topics in certain cultures.

Giving non-straightforward or covert compliments could also be considered as a FTA. Take this Spanish context as an example. S, female, about 30, likes new haircut with new fringe of B, female, about 25.

S: Así te pareces mucho a una amiga mía

‘You look like a friend of mine’

B: (looks puzzled)

S: Bien guapas estáis las dos

‘You both look very pretty’

B: (smiles)

(Maíz-Arévalo, 2012, p. 985)

The covert compliment S gave to B fails to make its point. Thus, the object of comparison which involves ‘a friend of mine’ is unknown to the hearer herself, who looks puzzled. The degree of covertness in this compliment entails that both of them do not share background knowledge and that it seems to pose a threat to negative face of B and S’ positive face. Consequently, the overt compliment is deployed in S’ following turn and is accepted by B’s smile.

Put it simply, the variations in directness of compliments and the degrees of FTAs as well as the kind of politeness have different weight in different cultures.

3 Research Questions and Statements of Hypothesis

This study sought to answer the two following research questions (RQ) with the formulated statements of hypothesis as follows:

RQ1: What were pragmatic structures of compliments of the Thai coaches when giving compliments to the Thai senior contestants in the blind auditions “the Voice Senior Thailand Season 1”?

Statement of Hypothesis 1: Following the value system of Thai culture (Hall, 1976) as subscribed to indirectness, the Thai coaches tended to give more covert-oriented compliment structures than overt-oriented ones to the Thai senior contestants.

RQ2: Based on RQ1, how were linguistic expressions of the overt-oriented and covert-oriented compliments realized in the pragmatic structures of compliments of the Thai coaches?

Statement of Hypothesis 2: Following the previous studies in compliments across cultures (e.g., Boonyasit, 2005; Boyle, 2000; Jucker, 2009; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989; Lin, Woodfield, & Ren, 2012; Maíz-Arévalo, 2012; Manes & Wolfson, 1981), straightforward expressions or overt compliments of the Thai coaches realized through the use of the positive lexical markers in formulae or patterns while their non-straightforward or covert compliments would refer to the third entity their compliment receiver's admires, works with, or has close relationship with; or would evaluate that their compliment receiver has something of good quality (i.e., appearance) or performs good quality conducts (i.e., performance).

4 Method

4.1 The TV show context

This study focused on the blind auditions “the Voice Senior Thailand Season 1”. This TV show was aired between March and April 2019. The airtime of the show started from 20.15hrs to 21.15hrs which was considered as airing during Thailand's TV prime time of 20:00-22:00hrs (Thansettakij, 2016). The blind auditions stage was selected to study. Approximately four hours of this stage of the show were recorded and transcribed.

At this stage, the Thai senior contestants and the Thai musician-celebrity coaches had their first encounters as strangers. The coaches heard the contestants performed, but they did not get to see them. The decisions from the coaches were based solely on voice and not on looks. If a coach was impressed by the contestant's voice, he or she pushed a button to select the contestant for his or her team in the following round. At this point, the coach's chair would swivel so that he or she could face the contestant he or she had selected. If more than one coach pushed their button, the power then shifted to the contestant to choose which coach he or she wanted to work with. If no coach pushed his or her button, the contestant was eliminated from the competition. Either being eliminated or selected, the senior contestants would have some conversations with the coaches to hear their evaluations.

The interlocutors involved 30 senior contestants and the four musician-celebrity coaches. 18 senior contestants, who were 15 males and 3 females, were selected to perform further in the following round. The rest of the contestants was eliminated. The ages of all contestants ranged from 60 years old to 82 years old. The four musician-celebrity coaches included 3 male coaches and one female coach: Stamp (Sp) 37-year-old male coach; Parn (Pn) 43-year-old female coach; Kong (Kg) 51-year-old male coach; and Tam (Tm) 67-year-old male coach. The age range of the coaches could reflect a relatively wider gap in age between the senior contestants and the coaches.

4.2 Instruments and procedures

To build the compliment corpus for this present study, the data were obtained through video recordings and transcribing based on such recordings of the TV show. These two methods had their own advantages. The video recording method allowed the researcher to (re)observe natural occurring conversations in the TV show while the transcribing method was not accidentally tainted by the researcher as it could occur with the “notebook technique⁷” used by many scholars (e.g., Herbert, 1989, 1990; Holmes, 1986, 1988; Rose, 2020 ; Wolfson, 1983). Although the drawback of the video recording could be that the sample of the speech act under investigation is likely to be relatively small (Wieland, 1995, p. 797), the data suits the two research questions of this present study.

The video recordings of the TV show were transcribed by the researcher. Following Firth (1950) and Halliday and Hassan (1976), the transcription of the conversational exchanges focused on the notion of context of situation: what was going on; who the interlocutors were and their relationship. The kind of language used either oral or written according to Halliday and Hassan (1976) has not been taken into account since all the exchanges in this present study were in oral mode. All in all, out of 159 exchanges 192 tokens of compliments were collected including both overt and covert compliments.

4.3 Data analysis

The nature of the conversational exchanges in the TV show was in sequences. In order to decide whether all parts in the sequences served as compliments and were of equal importance, head acts or H and supportive moves or S (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Wiroonhachaipong, 2000) were used to analyze the data.

Head acts or Hs were defined as the nucleus of a particular speech act or the part that functions to realize the act independently (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). In this study, H was the nucleus of a compliment and was realized through positive lexical markers or semantically positive words in one of the four word classes which include verbs (i.e., to like and to love); adjectives (e.g., nice, beautiful, and pretty); adverbs (e.g. well; beautifully); and nouns (e.g., expert; devotion). The H could also be realized through positive clauses (e.g., /phom4 nap3thv4 lqqj0/ ‘I respect (you).’)

Supportive moves or S were defined as modifications that preceded or followed the H and affected the context in which the H was embedded

⁷ The “notebook technique” is the method in which the researcher memorizes and writes down the compliment as soon as possible after the event (Jucker, 2009; Rees-Miller, 2011, p. 2677).

(Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). In this study, these modifications included following categories:

- non-straightforward compliment refers to a compliment in which the context plays an important role in interpretive procedures to judge if it could be considered as a compliment. This type of compliment could fall into (a) the speaker’s reference to the third entity the hearer admires, works with, or has close relationship with. For example: “You sing just like Frank Sinatra.”; and (b) the speaker’s evaluation of the hearer who has something of good quality (i.e., appearance) or performs good quality conducts (i.e., performance). For instance, “Are you really here for the Voice Senior?” Without the context, the hearer could evaluate this non-straightforward compliment as asking general questions or as initiating a conversation;
- external modifications: interjections (e.g., wow) or address terms (e.g., uncle; coach);
- opt-out or non-verbal cue, e.g., smiling, laughing, or giving thumbs up.

Table 1 illustrates the framework of analysis and examples of Hs and Ss in the pragmatic structures of compliments.

Table 1. Analysis Framework of Pragmatic Structures of Compliments

Pragmatic Structure of Compliments	Example of the Thai Token
1. H Only	
Single H	H /dii0/ good
Multiple Hs	Good H /siiang4 dii0 maak2/ voice good very Your voice is very good.
	H /phom4 chaap2 maak2/ I (male speaker) like very I like it very much.
2. H+S	
	H /siiang4 baat1 caj0 maak2 lqqj0 khap3/ voice cut heart very beyond FP Your voice has stuck sharply in my heart.
	S /k@@@2 jaak1 ruuam2 ngaan0 duuaj2/

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	so want together work with So I want to work with you.
3. H+S+H	<p>H /pha0lang0 siiang4 dii0 maak2/ power voice good very Your powerful voice is very good.</p> <p>S /fvk1 thii2 naj4 maa0 khap3/ practice at where come FP From where did you practice it?</p> <p>H /phom4 ch@@@p2 maak2 khap3/ I (male speaker) like very FP I like it very much.</p>
4. S+H	<p>S /hoo4/ hoo wow</p> <p>H /sut1 jot2/ reach edge topmost or awesome</p>
5. S+H+S	<p>S /hoo4/ hoo wow</p> <p>H /sut1 jot2 lqqj0 khap3/ reach edge beyond FP topmost or awesome</p> <p>S /chvv2 ?alraj0 khap3/ name what FP What is your name?</p>
6. S Only	
Single S	<p>S /phuud2 maj2 ?@@@k1 lqqj0/ speak not out beyond I am speechless.</p>
Multiple Ss	<p>S /woow2/ woow</p>

wow

S
Smiling

When the more H-oriented structures of compliments were used, the more indication of overt-oriented compliment structures or of directness the coaches performed. Conversely, when the more S-oriented structures of compliments were realized, the more indication of covert-oriented compliment structure or of indirectness the coaches were exhibited.

5 Results and Discussion

The overall pragmatic structures of compliments used by the four coaches was illustrated in table 2.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Pragmatic Structures of Compliments Used by the Thai Coaches

Pragmatic Structures of Compliments		
H-Oriented Compliments	Token	%
H Only	40	20.83
Single H	28	14.58
Multiple Hs	12	6.25
H+S	13	6.77
H+S+H	0	0
Subtotal	53	27.60
S-Oriented Compliments	Token	%
S Only	81	42.18
Single S	29	15.10
Multiple Ss	52	27.08
S+H	55	28.65
S+H+S	3	1.56
Subtotal	139	72.40
Total	192	100

Table 2 illustrates that the four Thai coaches preferred the use of the S-oriented compliment structures (72.40%) over that of the H-oriented ones (27.60%). The S Only structure was the most preferred structure among the coaches when giving compliments (42.18%), followed by the S+H structure (28.65%), and the H Only structure (20.83%), respectively. The least preferred structure of compliments was S+H+S (1.56%). Quantitatively speaking, the findings answer RQ1 and confirm hypothesis 1 that the Thai coaches tended to give more covert-oriented compliments than overt-oriented ones to the Thai senior contestants.

A closer look at the linguistic expressions constituted the H-oriented and S-oriented compliment structures would lend a great support to the explanations of how these compliments were realized which would illuminate RQ2. Examples 1, 2, and 3 illustrate the linguistic expressions of compliments which are realized in the form of non-straightforward compliments through the S Only and S+H compliment structures. S could be realized in hypothetical structure as shown in example 1, in negative construction as exhibited in example 2, and in speech act as illustrated in example 3.

Example 1: During the conversation with the 67-year-old male contestant, Sp said:

S
Sp: /too0 khvn2
grow up
S
phom4 ca1 thee2 haj2 daj2 aang1 phii2 ciaap3 khap3/
I will smart give can like brother Jeeab FP
‘(When) I grow up, I will be smart just like you.’

The underlined hypothetical structure in example 1 suggests the meaning ‘wish to be like the hearer’ of Sp, the younger coach because of the senior contestant’s ability to fulfil such a good performance. In regard to politeness and face work, this non-straightforward compliment could be viewed as an off-record compliment. It reflects a very high level of politeness (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1978; Lakoff, 1975; Leech, 1983; Tannen, 1984) because it could allow more than one interpretation toward the given compliment. These contextual and interpretive-based compliments, thus, could support face-threat avoidance or could be considered as using face enhancing strategy. Such kind of compliments were observed to occur when the much younger coaches gave compliments to the more senior contestants.

Example 2: During the conversation with the 74-year-old male contestant, Pn, said:

S
Pn: /maj2 tham0ma0daa0 cing0 cing0 kha1/
not ordinary true true FP
‘truely truely not ordinary’

Without the context, the contestant could evaluate this non-straightforward compliment of Pn as a comment. However, this compliment was uttered right after the contestant ended his story on his everyday swimming and singing practices. The coach may have an impression that the contestant has been actively involved in such practices with ease when

compared to other elders in her experience. Instead of uttering a positive and straightforward statement of ‘You are special.’, example 2 illustrates the negative construction of ‘not ordinary’ which could invite the hearer to interpret or consider the degree to which the fact of ‘being an extraordinary person’ points that ‘You are special.’ does not indicate such degree. Semantically speaking, the reduplication of intensifier *truely* reflects the intensity added to the statement in the domain of the truth of the matter.

Example 3: During the conversation with the 82-year-old male contestant, Pn realized the age of the contestant and said:

S

Pn: /rak3saa4 rang2kaj0 jang0ngaj0 kha3
 take care body how FP

S

thvng4 jang0 daj2 jang0 duu0 sa0maat3 kha0naad1 nii3/
 reach to can to look smart size this
**‘How do you take care of your body? You still still look
 so smart like this.’**

In example 3, surprisingly, Pn, the younger female coach started her turn by asking the older male contestant about his body maintenance. This topic of body is typically considered as a taboo topic. It could be possible that in this contemporary time the perception of body topic is not directly related to sexual issues which originated such taboo, but is shifted to associate with health issues, a more positive perception. Nonetheless, Pn did not directly give an overt compliment on the topic. Instead, she used S in the WH-question form to seek the content information relating to the way in which the contestant has maintained his healthy body. S here involves the speech act of asking for information which could be viewed as an interactional device to minimize the distance between the coach and the senior contestant. By using the S as such, it could invite a possible interpretation from the senior contestant in giving some advice in maintaining a healthy body to the coach and a possible weakening of such topic’s force. This allows Pn to avoid threatening the contestant’s negative face, to preserve both parties’ positive faces, and to minimize the social distance between the two of them. Following the question, Pn, then gave the overt compliment oriented toward the hearer using the compliment pattern of declarative clause with subject + hearer oriented and the positive adjective ‘smart’ as italicized.

Overall, the positive lexical markers in the present corpus are seen as to reflect semantically positive words carried by the five word classes: adjectival verbs (Matisoff, 1973; Prasithrathsint, 2000); adjectives; verbs; adverbs; nouns. This positive lexical marker ‘smart’ is an adjective which was borrowed from English. In relation to the topic of appearance, the

meaning of ‘smart’ in English and in Thai remains similar. In English, smart means having a clean, tidy/neat, and stylish appearance (e.g., Cambridge dictionary). For the meaning in Thai, it refers to having stylish appearance or good taste in appearance (e.g., NECTEC’s Lexitron-2 dictionary). Apart from ‘smart’, other words, such as ‘idol’ and ‘aura’ were also found in the data. The meaning of ‘idol’ in Thai are similar to the English definition of ‘idol’ which is a person who is loved, admired, or respected a lot (e.g., Oxford learner’s dictionary), while the meaning of ‘aura’ has a preferred meaning in Thai. In English, ‘aura’ is defined as (i) a feeling or character that a person or place seems to have or (ii) a type of light that some people say they can see around people and animals (Cambridge dictionary) whereas in Thai its meaning appears to be the combination of (i) and (ii). It means that (the individual) having some kind of good power/energy the other person can see around him/her. For these lexical markers which were borrowed from the English language, the data suggests some significant characteristics or linguistic outcomes of language contact (Sankoff, 2001) at the lexical level as the globalized world wheels which results in lexical borrowing in the Thai language of compliments and their use in the contemporary Thai media.

Concerning intensification, ‘smart’ was emphasized by the use of *italicized* intensifier. The booster (e.g., Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985) /*kha0naad1*/ ‘size’ or as equivalent to the English structure of *so ADJ like* reflects the degree of quantity of the intensifier and leaves open how big the size or /*kha0naad1*/ can be. The use of this booster was followed by the deixis /*nii3*/ ‘this’ that points to the closer proximity which is the context both the compliment giver and receiver needs to share the same information of what ‘this’ refers to. The use of such intensifier could be seen as to emphasize the force of the coach’s compliment and to minimize the distance between the two parties.

Examples 4, 5, and 6 illustrate how the linguistic expressions of compliments are realized through the S+H+S compliment structure.

Example 4: After the 71-year-old male contestant introduced himself, Pn said:

S	S				
Pn: / <u>lung0 bun0</u>	<u>hoo4</u>				
uncle boon	huu				
	H			S	
<u>chv2</u>	<u>phr@3</u>	<u>maak2</u>	<u>lqqj0</u>	<u>na3 kha3</u>	<u>lung0 bun0/</u>
name	beautiful	very	beyond	FP	uncle boon
<u>‘uncle Boon wow your name is very beautiful</u>					<u>uncle Boon’</u>

Example 5: After some conversational exchanges with the 71-year-old male contestant, Kg said:

mii0 kwaam0sa1ngaalngaam0
have elegance

S

bxxp1 frxxng3 si0naa0traa2 lqqj0 na3 khaap3/
like Frank Sinatra beyond FP

‘feel that Mr. Teddy is elegant like Frank Sinatra’

In relations to discourse and politeness, Sp used the hedge or preface /ruu3svk1 waa2/ ‘feel that’ in order to start his turn. Such hedge or preface could invite an interpretation that the following foregrounding compliment may sound off to the hearer but the speaker hopes that he will not be offended by it. Interestingly, the use of the hedge or preface as shown in this example and other variations of ‘I think’ as found in the present study were observed to be employed when the coaches who were a lot younger gave compliments to senior contestants. Thus, the hedge and the attention getter could be considered as a mitigating device or as a downgrader (e.g., House & Kasper, 1981).

Unlike the deictic expression the other two coaches used in previous examples, the deixis found in this example was social deixis which is referred to as social identity in speech events (Levinson, 1979). This social identity deixis was in the form of /khun0/ or Mr., followed by the hearer’s nickname, as in /khun0 thed3dii2/ ‘Mr. Teddy’. Based on politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), the use of /khun0/ or ‘Mr’ exemplifies negative politeness strategy as the speaker attempts to avoid face threat toward the negative face of the hearer or as imposition-mitigation (Blum-Kulka, 2005) strategy. Interestingly, since /khun0/ or ‘Mr’ was co-occurred with /ted3dii2/ ‘Teddy’ which was the senior contestant’s nickname, /khun0 ted3dii2/ ‘Mr. Teddy’ could be viewed as to exemplify the hybrid politeness strategy of negative and positive politeness, which allows a shift to a closer distance between the two parties while a respect in the older hearer is still preserved.

In English and in Spanish covert compliment data (e.g., Boyle, 2000; Maíz-Arévalo, 2012), one way in which people pay implicit or non-straightforward compliments involves the speaker’s reference to the third entity the hearer admires, works with, or has close relationship with. This is also evident in the Thai compliment corpus of this study as the italicized expressions shown in Example 6 /...bxxp1 frxxng3 si0naa0traa2/ ‘...*like Frank Sinatra*’. In this case, the coach referred to Frank Sinatra as the third entity whose version of ‘Can’t Help Falling in Love’ song was selected by the senior contestant to perform. It could be implied that the contestant admired Frank Sinatra.

Examples 7 and 8 illustrate the use of Multiple Ss structure which is the second most preferred compliment structure.

Example 7: During the conversation with the 63-year-old male contestant, Tm said:

S	S	S
Tm: / <u>chi3iii3</u>	<u>?oo2hoo4</u>	<u>phra3caaw2</u>
shee	oh ho	god
	S	
<u>phqng2 khqj0 hen4</u>	<u>khon0 thaj0</u>	<u>r@@ng3 daj2 bxxp1 nii3/</u>
have never seen	person Thai sing	can like this
<u>'shee wow god (I) have just met a Thai person who could sing like this'</u>		

In example 7, Tm imitated the way the male contestant, who was four years younger than him, performed the song by singing /chi3iii3/ 'shee', followed by uttering /?oo2hoo4 phra3caaw2/ 'wow god'. The interjections /?oo2hoo4/ 'wow' and /phra3caaw2/ 'god' could be viewed as similar to the use of English interjection 'oh my god'. In relation to discourse, such use of the interjections could be to express (i) the speaker's subjective sentiments; and (ii) communicative intentions of calling the hearer's attention or attention getters. It is observed that this use could occur across the show, especially when the coaches expressed excitement and surprise as well as to simultaneously called attention of the contestants. Syntactically speaking, the interjections were found either in the initial or final positions.

Apart from the use of interjections, the italicized non-straightforward compliment /phqng2 khqj0 hen4 khon0 thaj0 r@@ng3 daj2 bxxp1 nii3/ '(I) have just met a Thai person who could sing like this' could invite a possible interpretation and a good impression from the hearer that his performance is approved by the speaker as having the highest quality of all.

Example 8: During the conversation with the 63-year-old male contestant, the contestant told the coaches that he volunteered at several hospitals to sing for patients who were waiting to see the doctors in the waiting area. The contestant also highlighted that when he saw happy faces of the patients, he was happy. The reactions of Sp, Pn, Kg, and Tm were:

S	S
Sp: ' <u>awwww</u> ' with <u>clapping his hands</u>	
S	S
Pn: <u>smiled</u> while <u>clapping her hands</u>	
S	S
Kg: ' <u>wooo</u> ' with <u>hand clapping</u>	
S	S
Tm: <u>smiled</u> while <u>clapping his hands</u>	

The interjections ‘awwww’ and ‘wooo’ were used together with non-verbal cues of hand clapping and smiling. The co-occurrence of interjections and non-verbal cues could be perceived as to convey a more powerful message of approval and encouragement for the contestant’s act of volunteer and his philosophy of happiness.

Apart from the S-oriented structures discussed, the compliment corpus of this study also reveals the use of the H-oriented structures by the coaches at 27.60% with the H Only structure as their most preferred structure at the highest frequency of 20.83%. The coaches’ preferences towards this type of structure could suggest that it is possible that the overt compliments alone could be given. It is observed that the H Only structure was used at the beginning of the conversation when the majority of the coaches selected the contestants as illustrated in example 9. Regardless of the consensus in selections, the structure would also be used after some turns of interactions as shown in examples 10 and 11.

Example 9: While the 82-year-old male contestant was singing his song, all coaches pushed their buttons to select this contestant for his or her team in the following round. When the contestant ended his performance and the coaches’ chairs swiveled, Sp was the first coach to start the conversation, followed by Pn, Kg, and Tm, respectively.

H
Sp: /sut1 i@@t2/
reach edge
‘topmost’

H
Pn: /mii0 sa0taaj0 maak2/
have style very
‘very stylish’

H
Kg: /thee2 maak2/
smart very
‘very smart’

H
Tm: /thee2 cing0cing0 lqqj0/
smart true true beyond
‘really really smart’

Semantically speaking, the use of *very* and *really* involves concepts of quantity as in ‘very’ and of truth, authenticity, and certainty as in ‘really’. Such use clearly maximizes the intensifying effects in these given overt compliments. The series of overt compliments shown could exemplify an

intensification through the use of positive adjectives—/sut1j@@t2/ ‘topmost’; /mii0 sa0taaj0/ ‘stylish’; and /thee2/ ‘smart’—in the similar metaphorical concept of visual perception. This H Only structure was used when all coaches or the majority of the coaches turned their chairs as to see the selected contestants for the first time. While going for the overt compliments appears to avoid ambiguity and entail honesty and directness on the speakers parts, it can also threaten the hearer's face in this circumstance of far social distant relationship and age difference and at the beginning of the conversation. However, it is possible that when there is a collective approval of one person's performance (i.e., all coaches gave similar structure of compliment.), overt compliments could be deployed regardless of the age or social distant factors. The consensus of all the coaches which is similar to put one overt compliment after another or adding up to a series of compliment could help to intensify the given compliments even more. It is observed that the use of multiple positive adjective as found in this example occurs when the coaches of younger age give compliments to the contestants of older age and vice versa.

Syntactically and pragmatically speaking, example 9 illustrates the Thai compliment pattern of declarative clause without subject + hearer or object-oriented, which is paralleled to the findings in other cross-cultural studies of compliments (e.g., Maíz-Arévalo, 2012; Manes & Wolfson, 1981) in which the compliment patterns reflect semantically positive adjectives referring to complimented subjects.

Overall, semantically speaking, the positive adjectives found in this study seem to have their metaphorical extension which derived from the four metaphorical concepts. They are myth, excitement, visual perception, and embodiment (i.e., heart). The use of positive adjectives involving mythical concept speaks of the speaker's mind or imagination toward positive qualities or things that the hearer performs or possesses (e.g., /sut1j@@t2/ ‘amazing’). The use of positive adjectives containing excitement concept (e.g., /sut1j@@t2/ ‘awesome’ or /sa0nuk1/ ‘fun’) points to the speaker's feeling of eager enthusiasm in the hearer's positive qualities. It is observed that the positive adjectives containing perceptual sense (e.g., /sut1j@@t2/ ‘topmost’; /fiiaw3/ ‘catchy’; /thee2/ ‘chic’/ ‘stylish’; /naa2rak3/ ‘cute’) is the most frequently used metaphorical expressions in the coaches' compliments. It is to represent the speaker's perception on positive qualities of the hearer or things that the hearer possesses.

Interestingly, the positive adjective /fiiaw3/ ‘catchy’ was observed to have a high frequency of use across the show. According to the Thai National Corpus (Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2019, December 10), during 1998-2007 /fiiaw3/ ‘catchy’ was used to mean a speedy sound which passed by and caught attention of the hearer, such as a motorcycle sound from a fast motorcyclist or whistle sound, which could be interpreted as either having negative or positive connotation.

Later until now, its meaning has extended from the auditory perception to visual perception. Based on the observation from the Corpus, currently /fiiaw3/ ‘catchy’ could also refer to a person’s appearance which is quite unique, trendy and catches the eyes of the speaker. This lexical marker has contained positive connotation and has been used as a compliment toward the hearer’s physical appearance. It is possible that since the nature of the show is related to the vocal performance and the coaches also look at the appearances of the contestants after their performances ended, the word could be used extensively and for positive connotation.

Pragmatically speaking, the use of mythical, excitement, and visual perception metaphorical concepts in the Hs of the compliments could be viewed as to focus on the hearer-oriented and object-oriented perspectives. Through the two perspectives, Maíz-Averelo (2013, p. 746-753) put the hearer-oriented perspective as giving “true or unquestionable fact”, and the object-oriented perspective as “ellipsis or co-constructing evaluation”.

While the three metaphorical concepts express the speaker’s perceptual and mental experience as well as positive feelings through sensations, the heart speaks of the metaphorical location of a feeling or emotion in human’s body or embodiment. The heart or /caj0/ concept represents in the Hs of the compliments could be viewed as to conceptualize “a living organism or personification” (Perez, 2008, p. 42). The heart could be stuck or captive as exemplified in example 10.

Example 10: During the conversation with the 62-year-old female contestant, Sp said:

H

Sp: /siiang4 baat1 caj0 maak2 lqqj0 khap3/
voice cut heart very beyond FP

‘Your voice has very much stuck into my heart.’

The heart in example 10 could also be perceived as to conceptualize the core place where something important happens because the heart is vital for human survival and is situated in the chest almost close to the center of the body (Perez, 2008). The heart expressions as shown in example 10 can reveal significant aspects of affective and emotive in giving compliments of the Thai coach by using sensations and embodiment. Pragmatically speaking, the use of heart metaphorical concept in the H of the coach’s compliment concentrates on the speaker-oriented perspective or as Maíz-Averelo (2013, p. 746) called, giving “affective fact”. In this regard, the underlined verb phrase ‘stuck into my heart’ found in the H of the coach’s compliment could be categorized among the verbal processes of affection (e.g., ‘to like’ or ‘to love’) and is thus oriented towards the speaker’s “affective fact” of the hearer. Syntactically and pragmatically speaking, the compliment structure of example 10 was also considered as to fit declarative clause with subject +

hearer-oriented [NP VP NP intensifier final particle], which is paralleled to the findings in other cross-cultural studies of compliments (e.g., Maíz-Arévalo, 2012; Manes & Wolfson, 1981) in which the compliment patterns point to the good quality the hearer holds.

Apart from the Hs as the positive lexical markers which prevail in this present corpus, the use of Hs as the positive clauses was also found as illustrated in example 11.

Example 11: At the end of the performance of the 74-year-old male contestant, Tm appeared to be the only coach who pushed his button to select this contestant for his team in the following round. When the contestant was asked to introduce himself and all the coaches realized his age. Tm said:

H

Tm: /dii0caj0 maak2 lqqj0 thii2 thii2 daj2 lvvak2 daj2 lvvak2
 glad very beyond that that can select can select
phii2 chaaj0 khon0 nii3/
 older brother chai person this
'very glad that that (I) selected that (I) selected this brother'

Quantitatively speaking, the use of Hs as the positive clauses was below two per cent. The reason for the least preference could be because the positive clauses found in the present corpus were oriented toward the speaker while the common Thai compliments tend to orient toward the hearer or the object the hearer possesses to create or maintain a closer proximity. When a compliment is oriented toward the speaker rather than the hearer, the close proximity between the two parties may not be reached. This finding was paralleled with the studies of Worathumrong and Luksaneeyanawin (2015, 2016) which found that positive clauses were used among non-intimates in the context of high achievement of performance or unexpectedly high quality of performance, such as qualifying for graduation, receiving a promotion, or performing a show. Thus, when the context was along the same line as an unexpectedly high quality of performance of the 74-year-old contestant, it was likely that the non-intimate, i.e., the coach used the positive clause to give his compliment to the contestant, another non-intimate.

Apart from the social proximity factor, the age difference could be another factor influencing the use of positive clauses. Another positive clause /phom4 nap3thvv4 lqqj0/ 'I respect (you)' was given to a 72-year-old male contestant on his singing performance by Sp. The positive clause could be viewed as to exhibit humbleness and reverence of the speaker towards the hearer whose age is much older than the speaker through the use of the positive verb /nap3thvv4 / 'to respect'. In Thai culture, apart from parents and teachers, people usually give respect to the elderly. It is, thus,

linguistically and culturally acceptable that the coach would give such compliment to the senior contestant.

6 Conclusion

This study examined the compliments found in the first encounters of 30 Thai senior contestants and the four Thai musician-celebrity coaches in the blinds auditions “the Voice Senior Thailand season 1”. Although the pragmatic structures of compliments in this study suggest the use of both overt-oriented and covert-oriented compliments when the coaches interacted with each senior contestant after his/her vocal performance ended, the more covert-oriented compliments were given throughout the show. The pragmatic structures of compliments which were illustrated from examples 1 to 11 subscribe to the previous study of Manes and Wolfson (1981). It is that compliments can occur at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of an interaction. A closer look into the linguistic expressions which constitute the H-oriented and the S-oriented structures of compliments exhibits universality of the compliments found in this present Thai corpus as compared to those found in existing English literature review, and points to cultural specificity of the Thai compliments.

In regard to RQ1, as hypothesized, following the value system of Thai culture (Hall, 1976) which is subscribed to indirectness, the Thai coaches tended to give more covert-oriented compliments than overt-oriented ones to the Thai senior contestants. The S Only and the S+H structures were observed to be used prominently at the beginning of the conversation and in other exchanges of interactions. It could not be pinpointed from the data that gender differences between the coaches and the contestants affect the level of directness or indirectness of the given compliments. However, the present corpus allows a conclusion that to some extent the age differences between the coached and the contestants affect the level of directness or indirectness of the given compliments. The older the contestants were, the younger coaches used the more covert-oriented compliments. Interestingly, Tm, the oldest coach, tended to prefer the more covert-oriented compliments. When giving overt compliments, Sp, the youngest coach and Pn, the second youngest coach, were more likely to use English borrowing words.

Concerning RQ2, as hypothesized, straightforward expressions or overt compliments found in this study are along the same line as in the previous studies of compliments across cultures (e.g., Boonyasit, 2005; Maíz-Arévalo, 2012; Manes & Wolfson, 1981). The compliments were realized through the positive lexical markers (i.e., adjectival verb; adjective; adverb; verb; and noun although the adjectival verbs prevail) in formulae or patterns of declarative clause with subject + speaker-oriented; declarative clause with subject + hearer-oriented; and declarative clause without subject + hearer or

object-oriented. The declarative clause with subject, question tag + hearer or object-oriented (e.g., *Your hairstyle is beautiful, is it?*) or the negation yes-no question with the complimented items in the subject position, followed by adjectives modifying complimented subjects (e.g., *Isn't your dress pretty?*) was not found in this study. It could be because the question tag in this structure and the negation yes-no question structure are usually employed by the speaker as to check information or to ask if someone agrees with him/her. This pattern is found to occur in the context of close proximity, such as close friends (Worathumrong, 2015). Consequently, it is very unlikely for the use of these two compliment patterns in this context of study which is the first encounters among interactants. The non-straightforward or covert compliments were found to reflect the speaker's reference to the third entity the hearer admires, works with, or has close relationship with as exhibited in example 6; or the speaker evaluates that the hearer has something of good quality (i.e., appearance) as illustrated in example 1 or performs good quality conducts (i.e., performance) as shown in example 7. The findings were paralleled to the English and Spanish compliment corpora.

The preference toward the S-oriented compliment structures or more covert-oriented compliments over the H-oriented ones or overt-oriented compliments could be viewed as to relate to the face work and politeness phenomena which suggest the functions of such compliments as face-maintenance and face-enhancing strategies, similar to the results in the other cross-cultural studies mentioned earlier. A closer look into the linguistic expressions in the S sees non-straightforward compliments (e.g., speech acts; hypothetical expressions; negative constructions); external modifications (i.e., deictic expressions or attention getters—kinship terms and social identity; hedges/prefaces); and opt-out or non-verbal cues (e.g., smiling; clapping hands). They emphasize the S functions as mitigation: distance-minimization or imposition-mitigation in the coaches' compliment forces. Interestingly, the hybrid use of face enhancing, distance-minimization and imposition-mitigation strategies as in example 6 could be highlighted as to reflect specificity of pragmatic strategy of younger Thai speakers in this study in order to create a much closer relationship to older Thai speakers. In relation to discourse, these Ss could be viewed as interactional devices to exhibit rapport management between the four coaches and each senior contestant. The dynamic of these interactional devices lends a great support to the multidirectional functions of compliments as to construct, maintain, reproduce, transform, or negotiate interpersonal relationship with some possible hybrid use of face enhancing, distance-minimization and imposition-mitigation strategies. The interconnectedness of the compliment functions, face work, and politeness found in this study could mirror how both younger and older generations of Thai people interact to form and shape a closer relationship in their first encounters or to effectively manage or enhance rapport.

Inasmuch as this present study has its limit in exploring compliments, the study is believed to offer some insights into teacher-student communication process in senior education contexts, especially in the first encounter or in breaking the ice. When younger teachers interact with older adult students, compliments discussed in this study could add considerable depth to the new generation teachers’ understanding of rapport building to bridge the gap of communication with the older students from across generations. The younger teachers could build learning climates to match the older learners’ needs. In giving compliments using the S Only structure or hybrid structure of S+H, the younger teachers could be trained to promote themselves not as teachers, but more as facilitators and friends or family members to those students. Using compliments in this light could satisfy both negative face and positive face of the older learners. The use of S-oriented compliments could be perceived as to downplay the power asymmetry in interactions between teachers and students across generations. In this regard, the example of the attention getter ‘Mr. Teddy’ as a hybrid politeness strategy between negative and positive politeness strategy could be of use. It is because the use of this deictic expression focuses from the speaker’s perspective or as Caffi and Janney (1994, p. 356) describes, the “proximity phenomena”, which is “a sort of bridging category between indexicality and emotivity”. The use of ‘Mr. Teddy’ is indexical of the speaker’s proximated position with the hearer as a respectful individual using the social identity term ‘Mr.’ while emphasizing the positive feeling and attitude of the speakers towards the hearers by calling him by his nickname. In the first encounter among the teacher and the students, the declarative clause with subject, question tag + hearer or object-oriented (e.g., Your hairstyle is beautiful, is it?) or the negation yes-no question with the complimented items in the subject position, followed by adjectives modifying complimented subjects (e.g., Isn’t your dress pretty?) should be avoided. It is because these patterns are found to occur in the context of close proximity, such as close friends.

For future research, it is interesting to explore more in depth into non-straightforward compliments as interactive devices. Although non-straightforward compliments found in this study could be considered as using off-record strategy in order to avoid FTAs, these off record compliments when co-occurred with overt compliments which are considered as politeness strategy are also observed to strengthen the interpersonal relationship between the coaches and the senior contestants. To bring to light of why the more covert-oriented compliments were preferred, a metapragmatic questionnaire containing the randomly selected linguistic expressions of compliments found in this study could be designed, validated by some experts, and launched to a pilot group of younger and older people from different generations. Then, some interviews could be conducted to support the findings from the questionnaire completion. Moreover, compliment responses should also be taken into accounts whether or not the senior

contestants approve of the given compliments. All in all, this study could shed some lights to cross-cultural studies of complimenting behaviors and politeness in similar context or in other contexts related to younger and older generations in continually aged societies (e.g., workforce context or senior-education setting).

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