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Manifestation of Evil Eye Belief in Algerian EFL Learners' Compliment-responding Strategies

تجلي الاعتقاد بالعين الحاسدة في إستراتيجيات رد المتعلمين الجزائريين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على المجاملات

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Abstract

In Islamic societies, there exists the belief that a compliment can invoke the evil eye unless it is accompanied by expressions that invoke God's protection. This study aimed to investigate how Algerian learners of English as a foreign language use compliment-responding strategies, some of which are even offensive and face-threatening, to ward it off. Data were captured from 67 English-major Master 2 students from Batna 2 University using a written discourse completion task comprising four scenarios and a semi-structured follow-up interview. Qualitative analysis showed that the participants used different compliment-responding strategies: Some are non-confrontational such as "return", "scale down", and "disagreement" and others are confrontational such as when the complimentees use secular as well as religious expressions to defuse the negative effect of the evil eye. The analyzed compliment responses represent an exemplary case of the tight link between language use and cultural practices. In the light of the present study's findings, teachers of English as a foreign language are recommended to explain to their learners clearly how culture is manifested in utterances and show them which of their cultural norms should be used when speaking English and which must not be used.

ملخص

الكلمات المفتاحية:

هناك اعتقاد في المجتمعات الإسلامية بأن المجاملة يمكن أن تثير العين الحاسدة ما لم تكن مصحوبة بأدعية وعبارات تحمي من الحسد. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي كيفية استخدام متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لبعض أساليب الرد على المجاملة، والتي يعد بعضها مسيئاً ومهدداً للوجه، لدرء العين الحاسدة. تم جمع البيانات من 67 طالب ماستر 2 تخصص لغة الإنجليزية من جامعة باتنة 2 بالجزائر باستخدام تمرين إكمال الخطاب الكتابي المتكون من أربعة سيناريوهات ومقابلة لاحقة شبه ممنهجة، وقد أظهر التحليل النوعي أن المشاركين استخدموا استراتيجيات مختلفة للرد على المجاملة بعضها غير تصادمي مثل إرجاع المجاملة بطريقة مماثلة والتقليص والاختلاف والبعض الآخر تصادمي مثل استخدام المجامل لتعابير دينية وغير دينية لإبعاد العين الحاسدة. تثبت الردود المحللة العلاقة الوثيقة بين استخدام اللغة والممارسات الثقافية. على ضوء نتائج الدراسة الحالية يُنصح أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بأن يشرحو لطلابهم بوضوح كيف تتجلى الثقافة في الكلام عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية وأن يوضحوا لهم أي من أعرافهم الثقافية يمكن أن تستخدم وأيها لا يجب أن تستخدم.

الرد على المجاملة،
أساليب،
العين الحاسدة،
المتحدثون الجزائريون،
ثقافة.

1. Introduction

The evil eye (In Arabic: al-'ayn) is the belief that individuals have the power to look at people, animals, or objects and cause them harm. Its destructive power is taken extremely seriously in Islamic cultures and the Algerian one is no exception. Walking down Algerian streets, one would encounter numerous semiotic manifestations of the belief in the evil eye. Wheels are put on top of houses, cars carry bumper stickers of open palms, doors have sheep-blood prints of open palms, and many women carry jewelry with religious formulas inscribed on them, believing that they have the power to ward off the evil eye. Algerians believe that it is invoked when others express admiration toward their valuable possessions in a way that indicates envy.

However, jealousy and invoking the evil eye are different in the sense that the former is wishing to have an item similar to that of others whereas the latter is wishing others to lose the object of admiration or have it damaged. It is worth mentioning here that invoking the evil eye can be an unintentional act. In other words, people might have no control over it and may not even be conscious of why or how they perform such evil deeds (**Ghosh, 1983**). In Islamic societies, it is an important cultural pattern that compliments should be accompanied by a deferential reference to God so that they do not bring misfortune (**Harrell, Abu-Talib, & Carroll, 2003**). The present paper reports on a speech-act study analyzing Algerian speakers' responses to compliments that have potential interpretations as invocations of the evil eye in an attempt to describe and account for these responses.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language, culture, and religion

Cultures are historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols. They consist of many components which are critical for enabling individuals and groups to interact socially. A number of scholars have recognized language and religion as distinguishing and influential components of culture (e.g., Geertz, 1993; Schiffman, 1996). The

significance of religion and language is very evident in some cultures, especially those where both language and religion are perceived as sacred and hieratic. Nonetheless, the level of significance placed on each is connected to ideological factors, such as the level of secularization with the society, and the perceived intersection between religion and language in any given culture.

The relationship between language and culture has attracted communication researchers' interest since Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis was first introduced. The influence of culture on language lies in the fact that language is always used in its sociocultural context. In this regard, Nida (1998) maintains:

[L]anguage and culture are two symbolic systems. Everything we say in language has meanings, designative or sociative, denotative or connotative. Every language form we use has meaning, carries meanings that are not in the same sense because it is associated with culture and culture is more extensive than language. (p. 29)

This suggests that the same linguistic items might connote different meanings or concepts. The word dog is a case in point. In the Arabic culture, it is associated with defilement and noise, both negative concepts (**Qanbar, 2011**). By contrast, in western cultures, it is associated with loyalty and friendship. King Frederick's quote 'a dog is man's best friend', and idioms like 'lucky dog' are good proofs.

Being a core component of culture, religion also exerts an influence on people's actual use of language. This influence appears at the level of some linguistic concepts such as blessings, cursings and blasphemy (**Apte, 2001**). Blessings are specific religious expressions that imply the conferment of the divine and exemplify how their users, who are mainly religious people, believe in their (religious expressions) power. The functional nature of a blessing behavior is performative, as when the speaker utters an expression of blessing, they alter the state of affairs. In Christianity, for example, when a priest or a bishop pronounces a blessing, he intends

to confer a blessing. This might also be the case with laypersons when they sit down to eat and one of them says: ‘Lord, bless this food of which we are about to partake’. This statement adds value to the food. In Islam, blessings are not reserved for particular individuals as Islam does not have a clerical system. Consequently, Muslims use blessings frequently, integrating them into different speech acts, such as in the greeting ‘Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatu Allah wa Barakatuh’ (Peace be upon you and God’s mercy and His blessings), and as invocative acts to bring about God’s conferment or favor. However, blessings might not be seen to work appropriately or maintain their force unless they are culturally and socially realized.

Religious acts do not constitute of blessings only but cursing and blasphemy too. Cursing means invoking a supernatural power to target a person or a group of people. In Western communities, it lost its religious form and function as a result of secularization; however, it retains a function as a means of swearing and expressing anger. In the Islamic (particularly Arabic) world, cursing retains both its original religious function and a communicative function. Blasphemy, on the other hand, refers to the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God (**Pickering, 2001**). In some Western cultures, the act of blasphemy was once a widely rejected linguistic behavior, considered a prohibited use of language that might negatively affect interpersonal relationships and threaten social order. In these cultures today, religion does not prohibit blasphemy in society. In the Islamic culture, the situation is different. Religion still has the authority to legislate against blasphemy in both the public and private domains (**Hassan, 2006**). Comparing between the three religious acts, it can be said that while blessing and cursing are religious acts that reflect the effect of religion on the use of language, blasphemy reflects the effect of religion on the non-use of specific linguistic behaviors.

2.2 The speech act of responding to compliments

John L. Austin introduced the speech act theory whose notions were published in 1962 in a book entitled

“How to Do Things with Words”. According to Glaser (2014), a speech act refers to “an utterance that serves a function in communication” (p. 571). Speech acts can be sequenced in pairs such as invitation and refusal, complaint and apology, accusation and denial, compliment and compliment response, etc. These are called adjacency pairs. They are units of conversation that contain an exchange of one turn each by two speakers. The turns are functionally related to each other in such a way that the first turn requires a certain type or range of types of second turn.

Since a compliment event is a pair-adjacency speech act, it is important to define compliments before defining compliment responses. Holmes (1986) defines a compliment as “a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some ‘good’ (possession, characteristic, skill etc.), which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer” (p. 485). A compliment response, on the other hand, has been defined by Nelson, Al-Batal, and Echols (1996) as “a verbal acknowledgement that the recipient of the compliment heard and reacted to the compliment” (p. 413). Pomerantz (1978) was the first researcher to draw attention to compliment responses’ two general categories “agree with the speaker” and “avoid self-praise”. These two categories reflect his claim that compliment recipients are influenced by two simultaneous conflicting constraints: agreement and avoidance of self-praise.

With regard to the categorization of compliment response strategies, various taxonomies have been proposed by some researchers such as Herbert (1986), Holmes, (1988), Holmes (1993), Mustapha (2003), and Yuan (2002). The present study was based on Herbert’s (1986) taxonomy of compliment responses which consists of three main categories, including: (1) agreement, (2) non-agreement and (3) other interpretations. It was chosen in particular because the category “other interpretations” could be modified into new subscales which might correlate with features of the Algerian culture.

Table 1**Herbert's (1986) taxonomy of compliment responses**

Response type	Examples
I. Agreement	
A. Acceptances	
1. Appreciation token	Thanks; thank you
2. Comment Acceptance	Thanks, it's my favorite too
3. Praise Upgrade	Yes, it aroused all's excitement.
B. Comment History	I bought it for the trip to Arizona.
C. Transferals	
1. Reassignment	My brother gave it to me.
2. Return	So's yours
II. Non-agreement	
A. Scale down	It's really quite old.
B. Question	Do you really think so?
C. Non-acceptances	
1. Disagreement	I hate it.
2. Qualification	It's alright, but Len's is nicer.
III. Other interpretations	

Source: Herbert (1986, p. 109)

2.3 Compliments and concept of the evil eye

Despite their simplicity at the first glance, compliments can function both as positive politeness devices as well as face-threatening acts, hence their complexity. Complimenting is a kind of positive politeness strategy which addresses the hearer's positive face with the complimenter noticing the complimentee's interests and needs. However, in a darker side, it can be perceived as a face-threatening act when the complimenter is understood to envy the addressee or would like to obtain something belonging to the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The concept of the evil eye in relation to complimenting has already been outlined in previous research. To start with, Anssari-Naim (2016) asserts that religion is a cultural component that largely interferes with the realization of compliments in Moroccan Arabic. To be precise, complimenters are generally required to use an appropriate religious expression to protect the complimentee from a possible metaphysical

destructive power of admiration. Thus, we can infer that compliments in Moroccan Arabic are characterized by certain cultural constraints and seem to have a superstitious connotation and a fear of the evil eye.

Cuesta and Yousefian (2015)'s contrastive study between Arabic and Persian analyze the use of expressions against the evil eye in responses to compliments about appearance and possessions. Ten female native speakers of Arabic and ten female native speakers of Persian were requested to view two short videos in which the characters are talking about their appearance and possessions. Once they watched the videos, they were asked to recreate the dialogues in their own languages. Findings of this research confirmed that language and culture are closely related.

Also, Alsohaibani's (2012) investigation shows that compliments can be interpreted as envy in Arabic and Islamic cultures. In these cultures and many similar others, compliments can be perceived negatively by the addressee. This negativity lies in the perceived relationship between envy and the production of compliment utterances. Holmes (1988), for instance, asserts that in some Arab communities, "compliments may imply that the complimenter envies the complimentee in some way, or would like to have something belonging to the addressee" (p. 448). All these previous studies suggest the potential envy of complimenters.

With all this in mind, it seems obvious that all the above-mentioned studies have dealt with the concept of the evil eye in relation to compliments from an anthropological perspective and not a pragmatic one in the sense that they have paid little attention to the effects of this belief on the actual use of language. The present study attempts to fill in this gap and seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How is believing in the evil eye manifested in the Algerian speakers' use of compliment-responding strategies?
2. Do Algerian speakers employ certain secular and/or religious expressions against the evil eye when responding to compliments?

3. What are the religious values that stand behind the use of such expressions?

3. Methodology

3.1 Choice of the method

The present study adopts the descriptive qualitative method and not the experimental one because it aims at describing a phenomenon and not understanding causal relationships. In doing so, it collects, classifies, analyzes, interprets data and finally draws conclusions.

3.2 Participants

Sixty seven (67) participants took part in the present study. There are Master 2 English-major students from Batna 2 University, Algeria. All of them are middle-class Muslims whose first language is either Algerian Arabic (Darja) or Chaoui. They are aged between 22 and 53 years old. Fifty-nine participants are females while eight are males. They were selected randomly from among those who were willing to participate in the study.

This sample is small but this is not an issue in the present study because of the following reasons: First, this investigation belongs primarily to in-depth qualitative research—a feature of which is that the sample is often small (Wilmot, 2005). Another reason that may justify the non-representativeness of the sample is that this study does not aim at producing a sample that is statistically representative of the larger population. It rather attempts to draw an inference from the patterns that appeared in the sample.

3.3 Data gathering tools

3.3.1 Written discourse completion task

Working with the methodological framework of conversation analysis to analyze recordings of naturally-occurring compliment responses could help more in collecting spontaneous utterances in their sequential context as they are used in real life, but this method was not used in the present study for the following reasons: First, it is rather painstaking to collect a large corpus of data samples due to the impracticality of the tool and sensitivity of the phenomenon under investigation. Second, working with this naturally-occurring data makes it difficult

to control extraneous variables such as status, power, age, etc. (Yuan, 2001). Because of these reasons, the discourse completion task was used instead for many reasons. First, it is easy to administer and suitable for collecting large amounts of data in a short time. Second, it allows the researcher to control features of the situation (Gotalo, 2003).

The written discourse completion task consists of four scenarios which are responding to: **1).** A classmate who compliments the participant on obtaining excellent scores in final exams; **2).** An acquaintance who pays a compliment on the participant's beauty/hair/eyes/tidiness, etc.; **3).** A friend who compliments the participant's new car; **4).** A friend/classmate who admires one of the participant's good personality traits.

Before piloting the discourse completion task, a copy of it was sent to two full-time university lecturers at the Sociology Department of Batna 1 University via Facebook to confirm the scenarios' sociocultural relevance to real life. The pilot study was done by administering the test to a third-year English-major intact group at Batna 2 University different from the present study's sample. This group consists of 37 students. Changes that were made as a result of piloting consist of rewording the unclear items. These items were rewritten with the help of one experienced EFL teacher at the aforementioned department. Coding of the pilot study data revealed that the four hypothetical situations were capable of eliciting compliment responses. Piloting the instrument yielded a total of 145 compliment responses. In this way, it was judged that the written discourse completion task is able to elicit the desired speech act.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was opted for in the present study because it is, in the researcher's eyes, the most practical method. In doing so, the written discourse completion task was re-administered to the pilot study's participants after two weeks under relatively the same conditions in terms of time and place. Coding the data according to Herbert's (1986) taxonomy yielded a total of 166 compliment-responding strategies in the first phase and a total of 149 ones in the second phase. The

average number of compliment-responding strategies per compliment response in Phase One was found to be 0.61, almost the same as that of Phase Two (0.59). Paired samples t-test was conducted for the mean number of compliment-responding strategies per compliment response. No significant differences between the two phases were found. This means that the written discourse completion task is capable of fairly consistently eliciting the speech act under inquiry.

After the validity and the reliability of the instrument were established, it was administered to the present study's participants in Feb. 2020 after their regular class of Discourse Analysis as the researcher was their instructor. They took about 15 minutes to fill in the test and they were insured that their answers will be handled with care and privacy.

3.3.2 Semi-structured follow-up interview

Semi-structured follow-up interviews were used as a supplementary approach to answer the 'why' questions and collect information on the participants' motives of believing in the evil eye and using certain formulas to ward it off (in case they do). Moreover, triangulation in the current study strengthens the validity and credibility of the findings. It is worth mentioning here that only the participants whose responses in the written discourse completion task imply belief in the evil eye were contacted to take part in the interview. Therefore, only 41 students were willingly surveyed. The interview primarily consists of 5 core questions suggested by the researcher: 3 open-ended and two closed-ended. However, some follow-up questions arose naturally during the interviews.

In qualitative data gathering tools, validity and reliability are generally not held to be applicable to evaluate the findings but rather, rigor is associated with trustworthiness. Although there have been debates among qualitative researchers for decades, no unified approach to describing the criteria for quality has emerged clearly yet. It might be that there is no single method that can be identified as the nature of qualitative research makes it difficult to reach consensus on common criteria for assessing its quality (Bowen, 2005). Peer face validity checking

and peer coding were opted for to ensure the trustworthiness of the interview findings. Two full-time EFL teachers at the English department of Batna 2 University were requested to check the interview and give their opinions of whether or not it seems to "measure" what it claims to "measure". They were asked to check the clarity of the questions too. They showed positive opinion on the clarity of wording and ensured that they are unambiguous, not biased and not leading.

Analysis of the three open-ended questions was done through content analysis. The categories and themes were subject to intra-coder reliability checking. The practice followed in the present study to check it was as follows: The researcher randomly chose about 20% of the transcripts and made three copies of them. She coded the first copy according to the devised coding scheme. After about three weeks, she coded the second copy of the data. The correlation between the two codings was calculated using Krippendorff's alpha and PRAM software. The result was 0.79. It is not perfect but it can be still considered acceptable (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). The third copy of the sample data was coded by a second coder, a full-time EFL teacher at the English Department of Batna 2 University whose research direction is Anthropological Linguistics. She was not told about the present study's research questions and objectives. The correlation between the main coder's (The researcher's) coding and the second coder's coding was used as an index of inter-coder reliability. It was also calculated using Krippendorff's alpha. The value was found to be 0.70. Therefore, coding can be claimed to be systematic and consistent.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted individually in the researcher's office after making sure that they were scheduled at a convenient time and location for the interviewees. The researcher started by chatting with them to establish rapport and trust and then she provided a brief explanation of the research study and the interview agenda. Next, the interviewer reminded the interviewees that their answers will be handled with care and privacy and started audio recording their answers.

4. Results and Discussion

Coding the data of the written discourse completion task yielded of total of 268 compliment responses. Some of them are made up of a number of strategies. However, only those responses which imply belief in the evil eye were considered in the present study and the rest were disregarded. What follows are examples of the first category.

4.1 Manifestation of the concept of the evil eye in compliment-responding strategies

Under the main category of “agreement”, the two compliment-response sub-strategies which could imply an intention of warding off the evil eye are “reassignment” and “return”. One of the respondents who was complimented on owning a nice car replied by saying, “Actually, my dad bought it for me”. Here, the complimentee tried to say that she did not buy the car using her own money. This semantic strategy is used by Algerian speakers to move the complimenter’s attention away from big-budget possessions. In “return”, some of the present study’s participants repeated the same compliment, yet attaching a religious formula. For example, when one of them was complimented on being clever, she said, “Mashaallah, you too are intelligent”. Adding this religious formula aims in the first place to remind the complimenter that it should have been used by him/her and in the second place to invoke God’s protection from the evil eye.

Under the category of “non-agreement”, the strategies “scale downs” and “disagreements” were employed by the present study’s participants believing that they could prevent the destructive power of the evil eye. For example, in one situation a participant was complimented on purchasing a new car, and the response was: “It a second-hand one. Most of its pieces are not original and people told me this brand consumes lots of petrol”. This response, which is not necessarily truthful, aims to show that the second-hand car is not worth envy and hence the evil eye is believed to be warding off. Another participant who was complimented on her graceful body replied by disagreeing. She said, “No, no, I don’t agree with you. I hate my figure”. Here, these untruthful

utterances are not considered ill-intended lies since the complimentees intend to evade the invocation of the evil eye and save the complimenter’s faces rather than deceive them. Like “reassignment” and “return”, “scale downs” and “disagreements” are two non-confrontational strategies that maintain harmony between the participants.

Confrontation, a strategy that can be grouped under the category “other interpretations” was used by the present study’s respondents. For example, when a participant was complimented by a classmate on obtaining excellent scores in final exams, her response was “Stop envying me”. This strategy is aggressive and face-threatening. By using it, the complimentee risks to break his/her relationship with the complimenter.

Asking the complimenter to stop envying is not the only confrontational strategy employed by the present study’s participants. Using secular and religious formulas solely is also face-threatening. Religious formulas are utterances that are either citations from the Quran or that involve the mentioning of God, such as *I seek refuge in the Lord of daybreak and And from the evil of an envier when he envies*. In such responses, the recipient of the compliment seeks God’s protection against the evil eye. In the present study, when a participant was complimented on having a long thick hair, she replied by saying, “Allahu Akbar” (In English: *God is greater* or *God is the greatest*).

Secular formulas, on the other hand, are formulaic utterances that are believed to ward off the evil eye, but they do not involve direct mentioning of God. They are used to remind the complimenter that the compliment might cause harm to the complimentee. One popular secular formula in the Algerian culture which was used by the present study’s respondents in *khamisa* (In English: five). Users of this formula believe that the number five itself fights the evil eye. This strategy was realized in two ways: First, directly by uttering *khamisa* (E.g., When a participant was complimented on obtaining good scores in final exams, she replied “Khamisa”). Second, indirectly by embedding it within utterances (E.g., Responding

to the compliment of the same situation, another participant said, “Good marks require hard work. I get up every day at five o’clock”). The first way of realization is more offensive and face-threatening than the second one.

Although the analyzed responding strategies are culture-specific, results of this study are in line with Mughazi’s (2000) study which finds that complimentees in high-context cultures which value social harmony might use face-threatening compliment-responding strategies to protect themselves against the evil eye.

4.2 Motives of using religious and secular formulas in compliment responses

The participants’ responses to the question of “Why did you use religious expressions when responding to compliments” showed that the main motive is warding off the evil eye. All the respondents interviewed reported that Islam said that if compliments are to be produced, they should be performed with the use of religious expressions. In other words, they were aware of the existence of the evil eye and the performativity of religious expressions and invocations to prevent it. The two major religious resources that they referred to in their answers are the Holy Quran and the Prophet’s sayings. The following extracts demonstrate this:

It’s important that God’s name is mentioned whenever something is admired. God said “when you entered your garden, you should have said: it is God’s will; there is no power but in God.” (Extract from interviewee 1).

The evil eye is exists in Hadith. Our prophet [PBUH] said in the meaning of Hadith “The evil eye is real, and if anything were too vertake fate, it would be the evil eye. It can take a man to his grave and a camel into the cooking pot”. That’s why we must always protect ourselves from the evil eye if the speaker does not utter God’s name. (Extract from interviewee 5).

These extracts show that the respondents’ motivation to use religious expressions in compliment responses is deeply rooted in religion. Theologically speaking, belief in the evil eye is rooted in many Quranic and prophetic discourses. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said, “The evil eye is real, and if anything were too

vertake fate, it would be the evil eye.”

5. Conclusion

Although compliments might be seen as face-flattering acts in many cultures, in Islamic societies it is believed that they could invoke the evil eye. The compliment-responding strategies investigated in this paper prove that language and culture are closely related. Moreover, they confirm that the speech act in focus needs to be understood in the corresponding cultural and pragmatic code and therefore, it cannot be interpreted apart from its social and cultural context. Based on these findings, English as a foreign language teachers are recommended to follow the practical points below to help their learners avoid negative sociopragmatic transfer:

- Draw their learners’ attention to the importance of pragmatics in learning English;
- Explain to them clearly how culture is manifested in utterances;
- Show them learners explicitly how different contextual factors yield distinct meanings;
- Show them the commonalities and differences between their own cultural norms and those of the target culture;
- Teach them which of their cultural norms should be used when speaking English and which must not be used

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Witten Discourse Completion Task

Dear students,

This discourse completion task is part of a piece of research. It will not be scored. Please write down the exact words you would say in the following hypothetical situations. As there is no right or wrong answer, please respond to all the situations as honestly as you can. Thank you so much for your cooperation.

Situation 1: A classmate compliments you on obtaining excellent scores in final exams

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Situation 2: An acquaintance pays a compliment on your beauty/hair/eyes/tidiness, etc.

Situation 3: A friend compliments your new car

Situation 4: A friend/classmate admires one of your good personality traits

Appendix 2: The follow-up interview

Please answer the following questions freely.

1. How often are you complimented by others?
2. Have you ever encountered a compliment situation that involved a verbal invocation of the evil eye? If your answer is yes, when was the last time?
3. What did you say or how did react in that situation?
4. Do you usually use certain expressions to ward off the evil eye of complimenters?
5. Why do you use them?

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