CUTE YAW HAIYA—NAH!
HAWAI'I CREOLE ENGLISH
COMPLIMENTS AND THEIR RESPONSES:
IMPLICATIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL
PRAGMATIC FAILURE

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Introduction

Throughout history, a recurring theme of social conflict has been confrontations between people stemming from different cultural values, norms, and beliefs. Since language is an inherent part of behavior, research into intercultural language use attempts to reveal how these beliefs, norms, and values across cultures create interactional and communicative styles that result in cross-cultural conflict (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989). Central to the study of language is the speech act (Searle, 1969), and recent empirical studies of language use have investigated the interrelationship of linguistic and social factors that determine speech act realizations (Blum-Kulka and House, 1989; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989; Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986; Kasper, 1988; Olshatín, 1989; Wolfson, 1981 and 1989). These interrelationships that influence a speech act define a distinctive

This paper is a revision and enhancement of term projects that were originally initiated with Anne Yannotti and Kalehua Martin. Their contributions and ideas have enabled me to continue and finish this paper. A special thanks is extended to Kalehua Martin for her extensive and patient assistance in the administration of the questionnaire, and to Kalehua Martin, Naomi Takamori, and Sandy Imado for their help in data collection.

This is a revised version of a Scholarly Paper submitted for the MA degree in ESL at the University of Hawai'i. I am grateful to Professor Charlene Sato for her input, which helped me in the reformulation and development of concepts originally discussed in that paper.

Last but not least, a special mahalo goes to Professor Gabriele Kasper. Throughout the project, she was always there to provide me with her gracious and expert assistance.

communicative style which encodes a culture's beliefs and values. Wolfson (1981) shows how one such speech act, the compliment, is subject to cross-cultural variation; Americans pay compliments in situations that are unacceptable in other cultures.

Attempts to understand how a speech act is subject to cross-cultural variation begin with the concepts of sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics. Leech distinguishes between pragmalinguistics, the linguistic interface of pragmatics which considers 'the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying illocutions,' and sociopragmatics, the sociological interface of pragmatics which studies how language use is subject to specific social conditions (Leech, 1983, p. 11).

Following Leech's distinction, Thomas introduces the notions of pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure to define 'pragmatic failure' which is the inability to understand 'what is meant by what is said' (Thomas, 1983, p. 91). Pragmalinguistic failure occurs 'when the pragmatic force mapped by a speaker onto a given utterance is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned to it by native speakers of the target language' (Thomas, 1983, p. 99). An example of a pragmalinguistic failure showing an inappropriate transfer of a semantic/syntactic structure would be the Russian *konечно* 'of course' used to convey an enthusiastic affirmative. However, in English, *of course*, implies something that is obvious and can sound abrupt or even insulting as in the following:

A:  *Don’t you think this is a lovely home?*
B:  *Of course!*

In the Russian culture, *of course* would be merely the expression of an emphatic ‘yes’ but to the English-speaking addressee, it could mean—*Isn’t it so obvious – why ask?*

Sociopragmatic failure is inappropriate linguistic behavior which stems from cross-culturally different perceptions shaped by specific social conditions as in the following:

Employee:  *You’re wearing a sexy bikini. It looks great on you!*
Employer:  *Oh, thank you.*
In this instance, the compliment was perceived as too intimate considering the relationship between its interlocutors.

This paper will discuss the compliment and its response of Hawai‘i Creole English (HCE), the dialect spoken by the local-born residents of Hawai‘i, which may be subject to cross-cultural variation and pragmatic failure, but before proceeding further, a definition of a compliment cited in Holmes (1988, p. 446), would be helpful:

A compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some ‘good’ (possession, character, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer.

Sociolinguistic Context of Hawai‘i

Because Hawai‘i has a unique history that influenced its contemporary language and culture, it has been a source of interest for research by many linguists (Reinecke, 1969; Bickerton and Wilson, 1987; and Odo, 1975 and 1976). HCE is an outgrowth of Hawai‘i Pidgin English (HPE), the contact vernacular first used between the sandalwood and whaling traders and natives of Hawai‘i (Day, 1987; Sato, 1985). HPE was developed and enhanced by the influence of the various ethnic groups—Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Portuguese—who were imported to provide labor for Hawai‘i’s plantations. HPE served as the major means of communication among these various ethnic groups of diverse language backgrounds. The children of these laborers represented the first generation of HCE users, and for subsequent generations, HCE functioned as the mother tongue and medium of communication for Hawai‘i’s local-born people. With a linguistic history that has its origins in various languages, HCE evolved into a unique dialect having distinctive segmental, prosodic, morphological, and syntactic features that combined linguistic elements of the donor languages.

Sato (1985) outlines the evolution of the major historical events which influenced the present linguistic environment of Hawai‘i—an environment comprised of co-existing cultures: one represented by speakers of the dominant American English (AE) dialect and another by speakers of the subordinated HCE dialect. The term ‘culture’ is appropriate here: The AE and
HCE communities each consist of people who share a common linguistic and cultural background (Thomas, 1983) and have an implicit knowledge of 'culturally-determined expectations and interpretative strategies' shaped by the dialect's communicative style (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989, p. 1). Regardless of a specific communicative style, both speaker and hearer in either AE or HCE interactions implicitly acknowledge culturally-determined behaviors and explicitly use culturally-colored linguistic realizations.

Contemporary sociocultural dynamics have their roots in a history of class stratification where language was used to segregate Hawai‘i’s people along ethnic lines. Schooling separated the haole (Hawaiian word for white) child who spoke English from the (part-)Hawaiian child. The Asian groups, who were imported as laborers for Hawai‘i’s sugar plantations, established their own language schools in order to retain their cultural homogeneity. Finally, the English Standard School system was established for the less affluent haole families who could not afford private schooling and were unwilling to have their children interact with (part-) Hawaiian children. The lack of interaction among these ethnic groups obstructed the acquisition of English, solidified the use of HCE, and stratified Hawai‘i into a superordinate layer of AE speakers and a subordinate layer of HCE speakers.

Mass education and Hawai‘i’s economic and political growth resulting from annexation to the U.S. provided employment opportunities for plantation workers. Together with the advent of World War II, these events created the present linguistic climate of Hawai‘i. As Hawai‘i prospered because of its increased economic ties with the U.S. mainland, the use of AE by the local-born children of immigrants and plantation workers represented an embrace of the American way of life. The American way of life, now associated with economic prosperity, was on a linguistic level, represented by AE. It was in this context that anyone labeled an HCE speaker was designated as inferior in socioeconomic status to users of AE. HCE, more than ever, came to delineate class and ethnic differences among Hawai‘i’s people. Thus, throughout Hawai‘i’s history, language use has demarcated a cultural boundary by which each side’s allegiances were defined by a distinct network of linguistic, social, and pragmatic variables of its dialect.
Attempts to understand the different and unique interrelationships among these variables of the HCE dialect in this research focus on the speech act of the compliment and its response. As with anything that is unique, it is evaluated in relative terms to the general context that renders it unique. So the study of compliments and their responses in HCE begins with a look at the AE compliment and response.

Two major studies have been conducted on AE compliments. The first, conducted by Wolfson and Manes (1980, 1981), looked at a corpus of 686 compliments derived from everyday speech situations. This study revealed a limited number of semantic carriers and syntactic formulaic patterns found in AE compliments (Wolfson, 1983). Ninety-six percent of the data consisted of compliments using semantically positive adjectives and verbs. Though seventy-five different adjectives occurred in their data, the great majority of adjectival compliments produced only five different adjectives: *nice, good, beautiful, pretty,* and *great.* In compliments where verbs carried the semantic load, the overwhelming majority used either *like* or *love.*

These compliments revealed syntactic regularities in which over 50% made use of a single syntactic pattern:

1. NP is/looks (really) ADJ.
   
   *Your shirt is (really) nice.*

Numbers 2 and 3 below accounted for an additional 16% and 14% of their data, respectively:

2. I (really) like/love NP.
   
   *I (really) like your shirt.*

3. PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP.
   
   *That is (really) a nice shirt.*

Together, these three patterns accounted for 97% of their data.

Wolfson and Manes contend that the syntactic and semantic formulaicness of the compliment functions as a facilitator of cultural solidarity. If any irregular or unconventional semantic or syntactic structure occurs in the compliment, solidarity may weaken, creating social distance between its
interlocutors. As Wolfson (1983a, p. 86) has stated:

> It is the recognition of the function of compliments in creating and maintaining solidarity which allows us to understand why it is that speakers seem to prefer conventional patterns in compliments. If anything in the compliment or the way it is worded creates social distance, the expression of solidarity may be vitiated. The use of a formula helps avoid this potential difficulty.

Compliments also function to create and maintain rapport between the compliment giver and receiver by expressing admiration or approval. They serve to reinforce desired behavior through encouragement. Compliments, co-occurring with other speech acts, increase the force of the speech act. For example, the co-occurrence of a compliment with a greeting can (re)establish bonds between speaker and hearer. Furthermore, compliments are used to soften criticisms as in, *You're doing a good job, but could you limit your focus.*

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Universal Theory of Politeness which introduces the notions of positive and negative face, face-threatening act (FTA), and social power (P) and distance (D), can be used to elaborate on the functions of a compliment. Politeness, according to Brown and Levinson, is based on universal wants for positive and negative face. Positive face is the desire of an individual to be liked or approved of, while negative face is the desire of the individual to not be imposed upon. Compliments satisfy a hearer's positive face wants by expressing approval of or appreciation for the addressee's accomplishments, appearance, or attributes. In this sense, compliments, being largely face-supportive, serve to mitigate the impact of an FTA. In another sense, however, compliments can be perceived as an FTA where the addressee may construe the compliment as a statement of envy or jealousy which violates a hearer's negative face want of non-imposition. The concepts of social P and D indicate the force of an FTA, and measures of P and D between interlocutors have a direct bearing on the social-relational dimensions and their resultant language use. Compliments can function as linguistic mechanisms that reduce social distance and increase solidarity.

In Wolfson (1983a, 1989), measures of P and D between complimenter and respondent were factors that influenced the frequency and selection of
compliment topic. Between status-unequals, there was a disproportionate number of compliments which focused on ability, usually given from the higher status person to the lower status receiver. The greatest number of compliments were between status-equals, and in these interactions the compliment topic usually fell into the appearance or possessions category. However, Wolfson and Manes report that intimacy did not produce more frequent complimenting behavior. When intimates did compliment one another, it usually functioned as a substitution for an expression of gratitude.

Another variable that influenced the frequency and selection of a compliment topic was the sex of the complimenter and respondent. In addition to Wolfson and Manes' research, one other study conducted by Holmes (1988), focused on differences in the way women and men use compliments in New Zealand. Both studies showed that women give and receive compliments more frequently than men, and when they do, the compliment topic was usually appearance-related.

The topical selections for compliments found in the AE study provide some insights into the values of a culture (Manes, 1983). The tendencies found in the selection of compliment topics and frequency determined by the social variables of P and D between complimenter and respondent, as well as the gender of its interlocutors, suggest that a culture's social dimensions determine certain modes and patterns of speech act behavior. Like the compliment, would its response mirror the values of a culture and be subject to certain social parameters?

The second major study conducted by Knapp, Hopper, and Bell (1984), looked at nearly 1,000 compliments and responses from people representing a diversity of ages and socioeconomic strata in two geographical areas of the U.S. The response categories by order of frequency were 'acceptance,' 'acceptance with amendment,' 'no acknowledgement,' and 'denial.' (See Table 4 in Results and Discussion section).

Pomerantz (1978), in her study on compliment-response interactions, states that although it is a norm to receive a compliment with appreciation, thank you, this kind of a response conflicts with another norm called the 'self-praise avoidance' constraint. This results in a downgrade of the compliment by encoding the referent in weaker terms or displacing the credit elsewhere as in the following:
A: That's a beautiful blouse.
B: I bought it at Macy's.

Although an expression of appreciation conflicts with the self-praise avoidance constraint, Wolfson and Manes found that appreciation was the usual response of a lower-status person in status-unequal interactions.

Although the social variables of P, D, or gender that influence the selection of a particular linguistic realization may be common to all cultures, the social rules that govern their operating parameters may be culturally specific. From Wolfson and Manes' research, we have some idea of these social parameters that influence the AE compliment and response.

Research Objectives

In a bi-dialectal environment like Hawai'i where the use of a dialect accentuates cultural identity, a study of the HCE compliment and its response as influenced by culturally-determined social rules may illuminate our understanding of the specific mechanisms that underlie intercultural communication breakdown and cross-cultural pragmatic failure. The objectives of this research were chosen to address this situation.

The first objective is to present a contrastive analysis of the semantic and syntactic formulae in AE and HCE compliments and their responses. The research will then examine the frequency of compliment topics and responses in relation to gender, and the degree of P and D between complimenter and respondent.

The associated research questions follow:

1. What are the major syntactic patterns and semantic carriers in HCE compliments?
2. What are the different categories of compliment topics and responses in HCE?
3. Is the HCE compliment topic affected by gender relationship, the degree of P, and the degree of D?
4. Is the HCE response affected by gender relationship, the degree of P, and the degree of D?
From the answers to these questions, this research will then discuss some of the possible pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures that have implications for cross-cultural variation and communication breakdown between these two cultures of AE and HCE speakers.

**Method**

**Data Collection**

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, it was desirable to obtain as large a corpus of compliments and responses as was practically feasible. Therefore, three data collection methods were used. The first method consisted of reported compliments and responses from HCE speakers. The researcher asked the informant to recall or jot down any compliment and its response as accurately as possible. To ensure the collection of only HCE data, the investigator asked only native-HCE speakers for reported compliment-response exchanges in 'pidgin' from people born and raised in Hawai‘i. *(Pidgin is the lay term for HCE.)*

The second instrument, borrowed from Johnson (1983), used a compliment-giving elicitation method. In an attempt to draw the attention away from the complimenter in hopes of eliciting more spontaneous and natural speech, the complimenters were told that it was the responses to their compliments that were being recorded. To maintain ethical standards, complimenters and respondents were informed of the complete objectives and recordings after the compliment-response elicitation.

In the last method, natural observation, compliments and responses were recorded or jotted on a notepad immediately after their occurrence. To facilitate data collection, the researcher solicited the assistance of three field workers (Kalehua Martin, Naomi Takamori, and Sandy Imado) who had daily access to areas predominantly comprised of HCE social networks. In order to obtain authentic HCE compliments and responses, the researcher selected only field workers who were either native-HCE speakers and/or former students who received university-level instruction on HCE phonological segments, prosody, morphology, and syntax. The additional benefit of using data collectors who were native HCE speakers is that they were able to observe and collect data without arousing the self-consciousness of those being observed (Milroy, 1980; Wolfson, 1986).

This research employed a fourth data collection instrument, a
metapragmatic questionnaire designed to assess the degree of P and D between complimenter and respondent. The questionnaire was administered to 31 native-HCE speakers (See Appendix 1). The corpus reflected 19 different relationships between complimenter and replier. Accordingly, the questionnaire contained 19 complimenting situations which asked the informants to rate the degree of P and D for each one of the relationships on a scale from 1 to 7. The complimenting situations appearing on the questionnaire consisted of the most frequent topic and response categories for that particular relationship. In an attempt to maintain a certain degree of authenticity, actual speech realizations appearing on the questionnaire were retrieved from the corpus. Two relationships, other family members of different generations, consisted of various interlocutors such as grandparent-grandchild, niece-aunt, etc., in which the complimenter was either older or younger than the replier. Another relationship, other family members of the same generation, consisted of complimenting interactions between cousins and in-laws. To obtain a rating of P and D for these relationships, the researcher selected common HCE relationships, grandparent with grandchild, and cousins, to represent these three relationships. To control for the variable of sex, all situations did not specify gender except for husbands-wives and girlfriends-boyfriends.

O‘ahu, the most densely populated island, is the economical and political center of the Hawaiian Islands. The researcher concentrated data collection efforts in the west, central, and windward areas of this island. To the researcher’s knowledge as a local resident of Hawai‘i, these are the three major areas on O‘ahu containing significant numbers of HCE-speakers. Data were collected in homes, schools, work places, cocktail lounges, cars, discotheques, restaurants, and various other locales.

Subjects
The subjects were both males and females, all born and raised in Hawai‘i. Their ages ranged from 3 to 72 years old.

Compliments and responses were between friends, co-workers, husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends, students and teachers, teachers, students, siblings, strangers, acquaintances, etc., for a total of 19 different relationships found in this corpus. Compliments and responses were from
people of different socioeconomic strata and different educational backgrounds. The research yielded compliments and responses from white and blue collar workers, which included supervisors and clerical workers, secretaries, painters, tour guides and escorts, hotel employees, high school and college students, and teachers. Since Hawai‘i is a ‘melting pot,’ the compliments and responses were from diverse ethnic groups, which included Sāmoans, Hawaiians, Caucasians, Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, Portuguese, Puerto Ricans, a Hispanic, an African-American, a Tongan, and mixtures of these ethnicities.

Analysis

Percentages were calculated for the major adjectival and verbal semantic and syntactic formulae. Chi-square analyses were performed to determine whether observed differences between gender relationships and compliment topics, and gender relationships and responses were significantly different from chance distribution. The same analyses were used to determine any statistically significant differences between degrees of D or P, and compliment topics and responses. The critical value for all of these statistical analyses was set at p<.01. Yates' correction of continuity was not applied because no expected frequency was less than 5 (Brown, 1988, p. 190).

Because a compliment is usually valued by the addressee, none of the analyses considered self-compliments or third-party compliments where the compliment was not a personal reflection of the addressee. However, where it was a personal reflection, e.g., Your child is cute, these kinds of compliments were included in the analyses.

Results and Discussion

There were 309 compliments paired with their respective responses. An additional 12 compliments without their response-counterparts and an additional 3 responses without their compliments yielded a total of 321 compliments and 312 responses, respectively. The numbers of compliments and responses do not match because a compliment or response from a non-native HCE interlocutor was not counted.
Semantic and Syntactic Formulae

Table 1 presents a comparison of the semantic carriers between the AE and HCE studies. As in Wolfson and Manes' study, the most frequent positive semantic carrier in this study was adjectives. Their AE study contained 75 adjectives, while this study contained 43 adjectives. It is hypothesized that their larger corpus contributed to a larger number of adjectives. The two major adjectives from both studies were good and nice. Beautiful and cute were the third most frequently used adjectives from the respective AE and HCE studies. In the HCE corpus, beautiful occurred in only four compliments.

The other major semantic carrier was verbs. While verbs amounted to 16% of the semantic load in the AE study, they accounted for only 6.85% of the load in the HCE corpus. In the AE compliments where the verb carried the semantic load, like and love were the two most frequently used verbs. Whereas Wolfson and Manes' results showed these two verbs occurring 86% of the time, results from the HCE research showed like and love occurring 100% of the time in compliments with a verbal semantic load.

Thirty-three percent of AE compliments used intensifiers, compared to only a 23.91% usage found in HCE compliments. In the HCE compliments containing intensifiers, 68.42% of those compliments used so.

Giles (1979) cites lexis as an intralingual marker of ethnic group identity, which when used in varying degrees, serves to distinguish interaction between in- and out-group members. Of particular interest were the lexical items that reflect the uniqueness of HCE speech. One such word, ono (borrowed from Hawaiian 'ono 'delicious'), was not only used to refer to food but was also used in physical appearance compliments:

Nancy, yaw husban ono looking.
(Nancy, your husband is good looking.)

The following compliment uses onolicious, an HCE word formed as a blend of ono and delicious:

Da lunch ova hea was onolicious.
(The lunch you prepared was delicious.)
Table 1
Semantic Formulaic Patterns Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Carrier</th>
<th>Manes and Wolfson-AE Study (686 Compliments)</th>
<th>Lee-HCE Study (321 Compliments)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Semantic Carrier:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>85.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakdown of Adjectives:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>29.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>23.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>1.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cute</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>6.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Adjectives:</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakdown of Verbs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>95.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of verbs accounted for by these two words</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensifiers</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another lexical item of interest was *cute*, as it was the third most common adjective found in the HCE study. The most common syntactic pattern containing this lexical item was *You so cute*. This formulaic compliment was used to compliment children, a person’s facial expressions, mannerisms, and behavior.

Compliments from the two youngest age groups, 10–19 and 20–29, contained adjectives not found in compliments from other age groups, e.g., *bad, style(ing), slick*, and *cool*, as in the following:

_Yaw haiya look bad – all ehu kine._
(Your red hair is beautiful.) – ‘Ehu is the Hawaiian word for blondish-reddish hair.

_Oh, wow! You style, huh, today._
(Wow! You look good today.)

_You slick, ah._
(You’re looking good.)

_Yaw shades cool man._
(Your sunglasses are nice.)

Perhaps the use of these unique semantic carriers found only in these two age brackets is attributable to these subjects’ exposure to movies, videos, and music saturated with such lexis. Compliments, according to Shelton in Wolfson (1983a), differ cross-culturally in the unique usage of their adjectives, distribution, and frequency. The distribution and frequency of *cute, bad, ono, slick*, and *style* found in the HCE compliment reflect the unique language use of HCE.

In Wolfson and Manes’ corpus, 86% of their compliments with a verbal semantic carrier used *like* or *love*. These same verbs were used 100% in HCE compliments containing a verbal carrier, but with *like* being used predominantly. *Love* was found in only one of its compliments. Although the breakdown of the frequency of these two verbs is not available from the AE study, it is speculated that *love* was used more frequently in AE rather than HCE compliments for two reasons. First, with Asians, who contributed substantially to this corpus, speech embraces a communicative style that is
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indirect and conservative in expressions of affection. Clancy (1986) and (1989), in her respective studies on Japanese and Korean language use, discusses the notion that languages function as transmitters of socialization knowledge. The interactional styles of indirectness and evasiveness characteristic of Japanese, and the use of indirect WH-questions by Korean mothers to convey approval or disapproval of their children’s behavior, manifest how speech patterns structure socialization practices. Second, in HCE interaction, *love* is not often used in casual conversation but is used as an expression of deep feeling and emotion.

**Table 2**

Syntactic Formulaic Patterns
Manes and Wolfson – AE Study (686 Compliments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic Pattern</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. NP is/looks (really) ADJ</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your shirt looks (really) great.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I (really) love/like NP.</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (really) love your blouse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP.</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a great cook.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. MISCELLANEOUS</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2A**

Syntactic Formulaic Patterns
Lee – HCE Study (321 Compliments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic Pattern</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. NP V ADJ</td>
<td>29.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You look nice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. PRO (INTENS) ADJ</td>
<td>15.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (so) nice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PRO (INTENS) V NP</td>
<td>13.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (really) like your hair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ADJ NP</td>
<td>11.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice your hair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. NP (INTENS) ADJ</td>
<td>9.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your hair (so) nice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. MISCELLANEOUS</td>
<td>21.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 2 and 2A contrast the syntactic formulaic patterns of AE and HCE compliments. There were three major patterns in Wolfson and Manes' corpus that occurred 84.6% of the time and miscellaneous patterns which amounted to 15.4% of their corpus. In contrast, the HCE study contained five major syntactic formulae which totaled 78.5%. The greater number of syntactic patterns of HCE compliments is, perhaps, attributable to the fact that linguistically diverse components shaped the dialect. The different ethnic groups and their influence on the development of the dialect resulted in the greater degree of linguistic structural variability found in HCE. The formulaicness and greater number of syntactic patterns reflect both cultural solidarity and diversity, in which one solidifies relationships between its interlocutors and the other mirrors the culturally diverse components that created the dialect.

The use of tags was also found in HCE compliments where they function as confirmation checks from speaker to hearer (Sato, in press). In giving compliments, tags serve as linguistic devices that seek the addressor's validity of his/her compliment as in the following:

*Eh, yaw house nice, yah?*  
(Your house is nice, isn't it?)
*Yaw tua good, yah?*  
(Your tour is good, isn't it?)

In both compliments, tags serve to seek approval of and agreement on the compliment, in which these kinds of interactions maintain social harmony and represent linguistic devices of cultural cohesion.

**Compliment Topics and Responses**

Table 3 and corresponding Figure 1 present the frequencies and associated percentages of the different topics of HCE compliments. The majority of the compliment topics focused on physical appearance and apparel as in the following:

*Yaw haiya look nice lie dat.*  
(Your hair looks nice that way.)
You lookeen good, sista.
   (You’re looking good, girl.)
Cool yaw jams.
   (Your shorts are nice.)

Table 3
HCE Compliment Topics
(f = 321)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliment Topic</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
<td>37.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments/Skills</td>
<td>19.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel</td>
<td>16.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Attributes</td>
<td>13.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessions</td>
<td>9.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes of Others</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1
Percentages of HCE Compliment Topics

The next most frequent topic, accomplishments/skills was followed by other attributes as shown in the following:
Tanks for da food. Waz real good.
(Thanks for the food. It was really good.)

Yaw beans is so good.
(Your beans are really good.)

Everyone say you coach good.
(Everyone says you coach well.)

Oh, I neva know you can seeng.
(Oh, I didn’t know you could sing.)

You so smat.
(You’re really smart.)

You so responsible.
(You’re so responsible.)

You so sweet.
(You’re so sweet.)

The next two categories, attributes of others, and possessions, completed the corpus of topics:

Yaw boyfren good lookeen.
(Your boyfriend is good looking.)

Oh, you get one nice boyfren.
(Oh, you have a nice boyfriend.)

Eh, yaw girlfren cute.
Say, your girlfriend is cute.)

Das yaw bug – da pink one – bad, man!
(Is the pink Volkswagen yours? It’s great!)

Oh wow! Ho da nice, ah, yaw earrings. Oh wow, man! You even get macheeng necklace.
(Wow! Your earrings are nice looking, And you even have a matching necklace.)

The two most common topical categories in both the AE and HCE studies were appearance- and accomplishments/skills-related. Most of the HCE compliments on appearance focused on either hair or clothing:
Oh, nice yaw muumuu.
(Your muumuu (Hawaiian dress) is nice.)

Nice yaw haiya.
(Your hair is nice.)

Many compliments on accomplishments/skills expressed an appreciation for a well-cooked meal:

*Thanks for da ono dinna, pops!*
(Thanks for the delicious dinner, dad!)

*Da ribs waz ono.*
(The ribs were delicious.)

Among all of the different ethnicities, food plays an important role in Hawai‘i’s culture. It is not uncommon to eat a meal consisting of Hawaiian stew, Korean kim chee (pickled cabbage), and Chinese steamed rice, topped off with Japanese tea. Food compliments in HCE mirror the ethnically diverse people and the significance of food as an integral component of HCE culture.

Table 4 and corresponding Figure 2 show a comparison of the frequency of categorical compliment responses of Knapp, et al’s AE study and the HCE study. HCE’s most common response was the acceptance with amendment, where a large number of these responses demonstrated Pomerantz’s self-praise avoidance constraint. In vast contrast, HCE’s second most frequent response, denial, was AE’s most uncommon response. Acceptance was realized in AE responses at more than twice the frequency found in the HCE corpus. The next category, no acknowledgement, showed comparable percentages between the two studies. Two other categories, denial with acceptance and defensive, were unique to this research.
Table 4
Comparison of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Response</th>
<th>Knapp, Hopper Bell-AE Study (768 Responses)</th>
<th>Lee-HCE Study (312 Responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acceptance</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>25.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ritualistic—Thank you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Embarrassed—(Blushing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Pleased—I'm happy with it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acceptance with Amendment</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>34.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Returned compliment—You do, too.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Tempered or minimized—My wife bought it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Magnified—I am good.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Confirmation—Really?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No Acknowledgement</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Denial</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>28.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Defensive</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>5.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Denial with Acceptance</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>.64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2
Comparison of Responses
The common HCE response, denial, had a diversity of linguistic realizations of which *Nah!*, pronounced [næ:], was the most common. Besides *Nah!*, denial to compliments consisted of other linguistic and paralinguistic realizations including a bilabial trill, *Stop it!, Not even close* (I don’t agree with your compliment!), *Shut up, Hah?* (You must be kidding – I don’t agree with your compliment), *None*, and *Not even*.

While the HCE compliment serves as a marker of cultural solidarity, the denial response functions as a marker of cultural identity and cultural transfer. *Nah, None, Not even*, etc., all convey a sense of modesty, which is an integral part of the cultural origins of the HCE speakers’ ancestors who were originally brought to Hawai‘i to provide labor for its sugar plantations. Many came from Asia. Gu (in press) describes the significance placed on the value of modesty in the Chinese concept of politeness which is based on ‘limao,’ the morphemic equivalent of “polite appearance.” Underlying ‘limao’ are the four notions of respectfulness, attitudinal warmth, refinement, and modesty. Modesty is seen as a maxim of self-denigration which subsumes two clauses: denigrate self and elevate others. To violate this maxim is to be perceived as arrogant and boastful.

This trait is not limited to the Chinese; the other Asian groups in the corpus also embrace this value. Leech (1983), in his Politeness Principle, talks about one of its components, the Maxim of Modesty, which when realized, minimizes praise of self and maximizes dispraise of self. He presents an example of two Japanese women, one of whom reiterates denial to a persistent compliment about her garden from the other woman. Leech says that the Modesty Maxim appears to operate more powerfully in Japanese society than English-speaking societies, where it would be customarily more polite to accept a compliment graciously.

The response category, denial with acceptance, was unique to this study shown in the following example:

A:  */Wow, nice yaw haiya!*  
(Wow, your hair is nice!)

B:  */Nah, but tanks ah.*  
(No, but thank you.)
This kind of a response served a dual purpose that allowed the respondent to express both modesty and gratitude to the complimenter.

**Gender Relationship, Compliment Topics, and Responses**

Table 5 and Figure 3 give the frequencies and corresponding percentages between the four gender relationships and the different compliment topics. There were no statistically significant differences between mixed-and uni-sex relationships as to their preferences for particular compliment topics. Females were the more frequent giver and recipient of compliments. Compliments between two males usually were possessions-related and never focused on attributes of others. Regardless of a recipient’s gender, a male complimenter tended to compliment on accomplishments/skills more than females. It is speculated that the male’s predisposition to this topic is motivated by its less personalized nature than other topics (such as physical appearance or apparel) and the differential socialization practices that inhibit males from displaying feelings or emotions more commonly expressed by the female gender.

**Table 5**

Frequencies of Compliment Topics for Each Gender Relationship

\( (f=309) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliment Topic</th>
<th>Male-Male</th>
<th>Male-Fem</th>
<th>Fem-Fem</th>
<th>Fem-Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.30</td>
<td>36.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments/Skills</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Attributes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.04</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes of Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The frequencies and percentages of different response categories among the four gender relationships are presented in Table 6 and corresponding Figure 4. Table 6A shows the variables and frequencies used in chi-square analysis. Since no acknowledgement and denial with acceptance occurred in negligible numbers, statistical analysis was restricted to the remaining four categories.

There are statistically significant differences between uni- and mixed-sex interactions with response realizations. When the male is the addressee, he never denies with acceptance; only females respond in this manner. Uni-sex interactions tend to accept with amendment more than mixed-sex interactions. The preponderance of the defensive response, a unique category of this study, is within mixed-sex relationships as in the following:

1. **Male:** How *kam you look so good today.*  
   (How is it that you look so good today.)

   **Female:** *Why? I no look good befoa?*  
   (Why? Didn’t I ever look good before?)
Table 6
Frequencies of Responses for Each Gender Relationship
\((f = 309)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Male-Male</th>
<th>Male-Fem</th>
<th>Fem-Fem</th>
<th>Fem-Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>30.43</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>35.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance with Amendment</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>39.13</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>20.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Acknowledgement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>29.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial w/Acceptance</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01 df = 3 critical value = 11.3449 \(\chi^2_{\text{obs}} = 21.3858\) (See Table 6A)

Table 6A
Frequencies Used for Chi-Square Analysis
for Gender Relationships and Responses
\((f = 288)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Uni-Sex Relationships</th>
<th>Mixed-Sex Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male-Male &amp; Fem-Fem</td>
<td>Male-Fem &amp; Fem-Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>47*</td>
<td>32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance w/Amendment</td>
<td>85*</td>
<td>23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>55*</td>
<td>30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>12*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01 df = 3 critical value = 11.3449 \(\chi^2_{\text{obs}} = 21.3858\)
The first compliment was perceived as a possible FTA violating her positive face want of approval for her appearance. In the second compliment, the respondent perceived it as a potential FTA violating his negative face want of non-imposition. Rather than being face-supportive, these compliments, instead, were face-threatening in which one violated positive face and the other violated negative face of the hearer. It is suggested that the defensive response is due to the infrequency of complimenting interactions involving a male, coupled with the typical bantering that occurs within mixed-sex interactions in HCE culture.

**Power (P) and Distance (D)- Compliment Topics and Responses**

Based on the results from the metapragmatic questionnaire, tables 7 and 8 indicate the means derived from the 31 questionnaires for the ratings of P and D between the complimenter and respondent for the 19 different relationships found in the corpus. One person did not answer question 11 for P, and one person did not answer question 19 for P and D. These tables also indicate
which relationships were collapsed, with their resultant means, due to similar measures of $P$ and $D$. Each scale of $P$ and $D$ contained four groups of relationships having graded degrees of $P$ and $D$ extending from a negative to a positive value, as in $-P$ to $+P$ and $-D$ to $+D$.

Table 7
Assignment of Power Ratings to Relationships
(N = 31)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Number</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Power Mean</th>
<th>Collapsed Relationships (Numbers)</th>
<th>Mean of Collapsed Relationship</th>
<th>Grade of Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other Family Members: Complimenter is younger than Respondent</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>= 1-2</td>
<td>= 2.29</td>
<td>$-P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Child-Parent</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Employee-Employer</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Student-Teacher</td>
<td>3.00 = 3-5</td>
<td>= 3.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Acquaintances</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Girlfriend-Boyfriend</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wife-Husband</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Strangers</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>4.32 = 6-15</td>
<td>= 4.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Boyfriend-Girlfriend</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Husband-Wife</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Other Family Members: Same Generation</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Teacher-Student</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Employer-Employee</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Other Family Members: Complimenter is older than Respondent</td>
<td>5.68 = 16-19</td>
<td>= 5.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Parent-Child</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$+P$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8
Assignment of Distance Ratings to Relationships
(N = 31)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Number</th>
<th>Relationship Description</th>
<th>Distance Mean</th>
<th>Collapsed Relationships (Numbers)</th>
<th>Mean of Collapsed Relationships</th>
<th>Grade of Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wife-Husband</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>–D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Husband-Wife</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Boyfriend-Girlfriend</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other Family Members:</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complimenter is younger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>than Respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parent-Child</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1–9</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Girlfriend-Boyfriend</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other Family Members:</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complimenter is older</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>than Respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Child-Parent</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Other Family Members:</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>10–12</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same Generation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Acquaintances</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Student-Teacher</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>13–18</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Employee-Employee</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Teacher-Student</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Employer-Employee</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Strangers</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>+D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 and corresponding Figure 5, Power and Compliment Topics, reflect the frequencies and percentages of different topical realizations among the groups having varied degrees of P. The groups in which P = 2.29, 3.20, and 5.48 represented asymmetrical relationships, and the group, P = 4.28, represented symmetrical relationships. The different measures of P bore no statistically significant differences for the selection of specific compliment topics. Asymmetrical relationships have a tendency, as percentages indicate, to compliment either on accomplishments/skills or physical appearance. As the measure of P increases between complimenter and recipient, there is a corresponding likelihood to compliment on physical appearance topics and a decreased likelihood to compliment on apparel-related topics.

An examination of the relationship between P and the compliment topic encodes the dynamics of status between the interlocutors. In asymmetrical relationships of +P and −P, one of the more common topics, accomplishments/skills, maintains and reflects the power differential between complimenter and recipient as in the following:

1. Parent: You too good. [This compliment was given after the son cleaned the garage.]
Child: Nah!

2. Teacher: You da bes!
   (You’re the best!)
Student: You, too!
   (You are, too!)

In the AE study, a disproportionate number of compliments were accomplishments-related, but in the HCE corpus, physical appearance compliments between status-unequals were also common. Moreover, the topics, apparel and physical appearance, were the most common topics found in both status-equal and status-unequal relationships of power. The range of compliment topics in both symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships suggests the strength and need of enacting positive politeness strategies and perpetuating cultural solidarity in HCE culture that transcends any power variances between interlocutors.
Table 9
Frequencies of Compliment Topics for Each Power Group
\((f = 309)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliment Topic</th>
<th>(-P)</th>
<th>(P = 2.29)</th>
<th>(P = 3.20)</th>
<th>(P = 4.28)</th>
<th>(P = 5.48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Attributes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes of Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5
Percentages of Compliment Topics for Each Power Group

The differences in responses due to varying degrees of \(P\) between interlocutors were statistically significant. Table 10 and corresponding Figure 6 show the frequencies and associated percentages, while Table 10A indicate the response categories and the relationships that were collapsed for the
nominal variables used in chi-square analysis. Asymmetrical relationships of P exhibited a greater tendency to accept or accept with amendment, while symmetrical relationships showed a greater likelihood to deny compliments more than asymmetrical relationships. This denial category revealed the greatest statistically significant difference of usage among the groups having varying degrees of P between complimenter and respondent.

**Table 10**

Frequencies of Responses for Each Power Group

\( (f=309) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>(-P)</th>
<th>(P = 2.29)</th>
<th>(P = 3.20)</th>
<th>(P = 4.28)</th>
<th>(P = 5.48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>(f)  (%)</td>
<td>(f)  (%)</td>
<td>(f)  (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>3* 30.00</td>
<td>63* 24.14</td>
<td>11* 39.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance with Amendment</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>6* 60.00</td>
<td>87* 33.33</td>
<td>10* 35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Acknowledgement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>13 4.98</td>
<td>5 17.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>1* 10.00</td>
<td>82* 31.42</td>
<td>1* 3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial w/Acceptance</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2 .77</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>14 5.36</td>
<td>1 3.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*p<.01 df = 2 critical value = 9.2103 \(\chi^2\)obs = 12.3359 (See Table 10A)
Table 10A
Frequencies Used for Chi-Square Analysis for Power and Responses
(f = 272)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Asymmetrical Relationships</th>
<th>Symmetrical Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>16*</td>
<td>63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance w/ Amendment</td>
<td>21*</td>
<td>87*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>82*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01 df = 2 critical value = 9.2103 \( \chi^2_{obs} = 12.3359 \)

Figure 6
Percentages of Responses for Each Power Group

It is suggested that acceptance is the most frequent response in asymmetrical relationships because it allows the maintenance of the power structure, as well as an expression of gratitude. In neutral relationships of \( P \), a typical response was the denial which has its roots in modesty predominant in the value systems of Asian cultures. The denial functions to maintain the neutrality of power between addressee and addressor in these relationships.
An examination of the relationship between the measure of D and the selection of compliment topics yielded no statistically significant differences, although relationships of a +D value complimented only on possessions or apparel, while relationships of a −D value complimented usually on physical appearance or accomplishments/skills. Regardless of the measure of D between interactants with the exception of D = 6.23, physical appearance, apparel, and accomplishments/skills were the most common compliment topics. See Table 11 and Figure 7.

Table 11
Frequencies of Compliment Topics for each Distance Group
(f = 309)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance Groups</th>
<th>D = 1.84</th>
<th>D = 3.08</th>
<th>D = 3.93</th>
<th>D = 6.23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliment Topic</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31.82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>37.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments/ Skills</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24.24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Attributes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes of Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unlike the AE study where Wolfson and Manes report that intimates did not favor complimenting interactions, the HCE corpus reveals the frequency of this speech act in relationships having a -D value. This tendency to compliment in intimate-D to close-D relationships, usually on apparel or physical appearance, suggests the pervasiveness of HCE cultural cohesion across social interactions having differential measures of D. Since compliments on apparel tend to be more common, and therefore more formulaic, and compliments on possessions are more impersonal than physical-appearance compliments, these compliment topics provide a more conservative and appropriate means of obliging a hearer's positive face wants in +D interactions. For instance, where Nice yaw dress (Your dress is nice) or Oh, da soup good! (Oh, the soup is good!) are appropriate compliments between strangers, Oh, you so cute (Oh, you're so cute) represents overly aggressive and negative face-threatening behavior.

Table 12 and corresponding Figure 8 present the frequencies and respective percentages among the different response categories for each D group. There were statistically significant differences for the different response categories and groups of D shown in Table 12A. -D relationships tended to
accept or accept with amendment, and +D relationships only accepted compliments, while relationships with a 3.08 value preferred the denial response.

Table 12
Frequencies of Responses for Each Distance Group
\( (f = 309) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>D = 1.84</th>
<th>D = 3.08</th>
<th>D = 3.93</th>
<th>D = 6.23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>24*</td>
<td>44*</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance with Amendment</td>
<td>22*</td>
<td>74*</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>52.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Acknowledgement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>35.48</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial w/ Acceptance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01  df = 4  critical value = 13.2767  \( \chi^2 \text{obs} = 24.0608 \)  (See Table 12A)

Table 12A
Frequencies Used for Chi-Square Analysis for Distance and Responses
\( (f = 269) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>D = 1.84</th>
<th>D = 3.08</th>
<th>D = 3.93</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>24*</td>
<td>44*</td>
<td>8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance w/ Amendment</td>
<td>22*</td>
<td>74*</td>
<td>12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>77*</td>
<td>2*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01  df = 4  critical value = 13.2767  \( \chi^2 \text{obs} = 24.0608 \)
As mentioned previously, Asians who place a high value on modesty contributed substantially to this corpus, and the denial of a compliment is a manifestation of this expression of modesty. The acceptance and acceptance with amendment responses in -D relationships is perhaps due to a lesser need for precautionary measures in demonstrating modesty in these closer interactions where solidarity is firmly pre-established. However, this same kind of response, which was the sole response in the +D interactions, functions as an expression of gratitude and strongly supports Leech's Maxim of Agreement, which when combined with other maxims, forms his Theory of Politeness. The response thank you indicates a strong desire to manifest politeness behavior between interlocutors having a large degree of distance between them.

**Implications for Cross-Cultural Miscommunication and Pragmatic Failure**

There are similarities between the two dialects in that both have semantic and syntactic formulae which function to maintain solidarity and diminish distance among their members. As with AE compliments, HCE compliments, generally being face-supportive, perpetuate the notion of positive face.

The tests for distance, power, and gender bore no significant differences from chance distribution for the selection of particular compliment topics, but were statistically different for the response categories at p<.01. The unique
responses, denial with acceptance, and the statistically significant differences for the defensive and the denial categories, is evidence of a unique language reflecting Hawai‘i’s multiethnic composition and their accompanying values.

But such uniqueness may be the source of miscommunication, pragmalinguistic failure, and sociopragmatic failure between the speakers of these two dialects. Compared to AE, HCE uses a larger number of unique syntactic formulaic patterns and semantic carriers that have been shaped by the influence of the donor languages—an influence which accounts for the present structural variability of HCE. The presence of morpho-syntactic distinctions (Giles, 1979) and distinct contextualization conventions such as syntactic and lexical choices and interactional processes (Gumperz, 1982) are interpreted and identified by cultural schemata. In an environment where different dialects activate distinct cultural schemata, this can lead to miscommunication and perpetuate misunderstanding.

Some of the semantic carriers found within the HCE corpus such as *love*, *ono-looking*, and *bad* can be the causes of pragmalinguistic failure if used in speech between members of these two dialects. In each case, the pragmatic force mapped onto its AE usage has no equivalence in HCE. An HCE respondent may find the *love* for a blouse perplexing since it is not a person; the AE hearer would find it impossible to ‘eat’ someone who is delicious; and the AE recipient may misinterpret the word *bad* as a face-threatening insult rather than a face-supporting compliment. All of these mismatched linguistic transfers between the two dialects may cause, at the least, bewilderment, and at the most, cultural alienation between these two groups of speakers.

The different semantic and syntactic formulae define two distinct communicative styles. In an environment like Hawai‘i, containing speakers of different dialects, these distinct communicative styles not only lead to cross-cultural pragmatic failure and communication breakdown, but perpetuate the cultural allegiances that have their roots in a history of linguistic differences.

Regardless of culture or language, resultant speech act realizations are influenced by the same social variables, such as power and distance between speaker and hearer, and gender of both speaker and hearer. However, the manner in which these variables impact resultant language use is subject to culturally-determined social rules, norms, and values. Like the distinct semantic and syntactic expressions, different intercultural social parameters can cause and perpetuate cross-cultural pragmatic failure and interethnic
differences. The (para)linguistic responses of *nah, Why-ah no look good befoa*, or the bilabial trill from an HCE respondent could be sources of sociopragmatic failure if used in social contexts guided by a different set of social norms. Its sociopragmatic force is subject to misinterpretation because the hearer is unaware of its underlying social values (e.g., modesty) that motivate such expressions. In an AE-HCE complimenting interaction, the *Nah* response may be misinterpreted as unappreciation or sarcasm to the AE complimenter when in fact, it is simply a manifestation of a cultural value.

The tendencies to respond in a certain manner conditioned by a particular measure of power, distance, or gender relationship between complimenter and recipient build a profile of interactional patterns that at times differ between these two cultures. In asymmetrical relationships in the AE study, the complimenter is predisposed to topics that focus on ability; however, the research from this study shows that the HCE speaker in status-unequal relationships has a tendency to select compliment topics that are either physical-appearance or ability-related. In the AE study, intimates did not engage much in complimenting situations, but did so in HCE interactions. There may be underlying social constraints that generally prohibit physical appearance compliments between status unequals or general complimenting behavior between intimates in the AE culture, but social norms that allow these same complimenting situations in HCE. The social constraint in one culture may be the social norm in the other. Occurrences of these differential social rules that govern language use represent the general theme underlying cross-cultural pragmatic failure which eventually lead to misunderstanding and communication breakdown between the two cultures.

Conclusion

The differences found in the speech act of the compliment and its response between AE and HCE speakers may be the cause of some very real miscommunication problems. Such differences call for a need to be aware of cross-cultural variation in communicative styles that perpetuate the tensions and misunderstanding between these two co-existing cultures.

To alleviate these problems, affective barriers that result from cross-cultural variation need to be recognized, and recognition can take its roots in the education of Hawai‘i’s people. Strong opposition from articulate forces in
Hawai‘i’s community in Fall, 1987, deterred Hawai‘i’s Board of Education from implementing a hard stance against the use of HCE in Hawai‘i’s public schools. Sato (in press) writes, "Public discourse concerning English in Hawai‘i has been transformed, and public policy can no longer ignore the linguistic systematicity and cultural significance of HCE." HCE’s properties and functions point out the need to establish and implement culturally appropriate teaching curricula for HCE-speaking children. But considering cross-cultural differences, we need to extend culturally appropriate methodology to the concept of cross-cultural awareness. An educational philosophy that embraces an awareness of cross-cultural variation can accommodate and provide AE and HCE speakers with a conduit for positive communication and interaction.

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Revised April 1990
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References


Appendix 1

First Name: ____________________________ Sex: Male ___ Female ___
Born and Raised in Hawaii? Yes___ No___ Age: ___

Read each of the situations beginning on the next page consisting of a compliment and its responses. For each situation, give a number from 1 to 7 which corresponds to your idea of the social distance and power between the complimenter and replier based on your knowledge of local culture. Use the following scales:

1. Social Distance:
   1 = Intimates
   2 = between 1 and 4
   3 = Aquaintances
   4 = between 4 and 7
   5 = Strangers

2. Social Power:
   1 = Complimenter is lower in status to Replier
   2 = between 1 and 4
   3 = Aquaintances
   4 = between 4 and 7
   5 = higher status to Replier

In rating each situation, consider the following:

a. the relationship and the roles between the complimenter and replier. In one situation the complimenter may be a parent and the replier the child, but in another situation there may be reversed roles where the complimenter is now the child and the replier is the parent. Please be sure to rate each situation according to the specific roles of the complimenter and the replier and the relationship between these two people. Please keep this in mind when rating Power.

b. although given only compliments and their responses on this questionnaire, your rating of the distance and power between the complimenter and replier should be representative of your idea of distance and power whether what is spoken is a compliment, a criticism, an expression of thanks, or any other kind of speaking exchange.

The situations begin on the next page.

THANK YOU
1. Two co-workers employed at the Prince Kuhio Hotel are talking to one another.

Co-worker A: You have small feet.

Co-worker B: Das da only ting small about me.

Distance between complimenter and replier = ______

Power between complimenter and replier = ______

2. A husband and wife are preparing dinner arrangements for guests.

Husband: Everything good, honey.

Wife: I neva wen make anything.

Distance between complimenter and replier = ______

Power between complimenter and replier = ______

3. Two friends are talking to one another at home.

Friend A: You took one permanent. Look nice.

Friend B: (shakes head) Nah. Nah.

Distance between complimenter and replier = ______

Power between complimenter and replier = ______

4. Two siblings (brothers and/or sisters) are talking to one another at Hino's.

Sibling A: Nice your hair.

Sibling B: You tink so?

Distance between complimenter and replier = ______

Power between complimenter and replier = ______

5. A child's report card has just been shown to the parent.

Parent: You doin good in school, yeah?

Child: I tink beda den las time.

Distance between complimenter and replier = ______

Power between complimenter and replier = ______
6. Two spouses are talking to one another about each other.
   Wife: You’re so smart.
   Husband: Das why I married you.
   Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
   Power between complimenter and replier = _____

7. A student has just entered a classroom
   Teacher: You get one new hairstyle. I like om
   Student: (smiles) Thank you. (Looks down)
   Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
   Power between complimenter and replier = _____

8. A boyfriend goes to Tsuki’s to pick up his girlfriend.
   Boyfriend: I like your hair dis way.
   Girlfriend: Yah, I know, I like it, too.
   Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
   Power between complimenter and replier = _____

9. A parent is wearing a new Crazy Shirts T-shirt.
   Child: Pretty bad your shirt.
   Parent: Umm.
   Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
   Power between complimenter and replier = _____

10. A grandchild has just walked into the house with a new haircut.
    Grandparent: Oh cute, dat looks really cute.
    Grandchild: (smiles)
    Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
    Power between complimenter and replier = _____
11. A student walks up to a teacher.
   Student: You always so happy.
   Teacher: Thank you.
   Distance between complimenter and replier = ______
   Power between complimenter and replier = ______

12. A boyfriend is feeling better from an ongoing cold.
   Girlfriend: You feel beda today?
   Boyfriend: Yah.
   Girlfriend: Well, you look beda.
   Boyfriend: Yah.
   Distance between complimenter and replier = ______
   Power between complimenter and replier = ______

13. Two people who recently met a couple of months ago are eating at B's house.
   A: Chris, good.
   B: Yah, eat. Chicken too salty -- and I wen foget put hau yau on top.
   Distance between complimenter and replier = ______
   Power between complimenter and replier = ______

   Employer: You gettum ah.
   Employee: What you tink?
   Distance between complimenter and replier = ______
   Power between complimenter and replier = ______
15. Two coaches are talking to one another.

Coach A: Everybody say you coach good.

Coach B: (Looks down and smiles)

Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
Power between complimenter and replier = _____

16. Two people who never met before are talking to one another at Lex Brodie’s.

A: Your car bad ah.

B: Oh yeah, tanks.

Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
Power between complimenter and replier = _____

17. An employer walks by an employee.

Employee: Your outfit look nice.

Employer: Tanks, ah.

Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
Power between complimenter and replier = _____

18. Two cousins are at a picnic at Sand Island celebrating a birthday for the child of Cousin B.

Cousin A: Beautiful da cake.

Cousin B: If I put om in da back of da truck and da ting wen slide, my wife goin kill me!

Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
Power between complimenter and replier = _____

19. A grandchild and grandparent are talking in the kitchen

Grandchild: I love dat shirt.

Grandparent: Really, you tink so?

Distance between complimenter and replier = _____
Power between complimenter and replier = _____