

**”THANKS FOR THE COMPLIMENT”  
APPRECIATIVE UTTERANCES AND RESPONSES  
IN HUNGARIAN AND ITALIAN DISCOURSES  
(A POSSIBLE COGNITIVE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS)**

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**Abstract**

*Polite linguistic behaviour belongs to everyday interactions, to the utterances of social interactions, and typical manifestations of this behaviour include appreciative utterances, compliments, praises to our communication partner and related responses.*

*This paper will attempt to delineate a possible analysis of responses to appreciative utterances. It focuses on responses to compliments, but for this it is necessary to consider appreciative utterances as well. The theoretical frame of the analysis is based on cognitive stylistics (Tolcsvai Nagy 2005) beyond pragmatics that gives a functional approach to language by directing attention to the connection between cognitive and socio-cultural conditions. Primarily this is a stylistic analysis, however; based on pragmatic research, it aims to show its stylistic adaptability. To interpret the utterances is important to know the context of the interaction which is part of the meaning. As language prompts for the construction of meaning in particular contexts with particular cultural models and cognitive resources (Fauconnier 2003, 2004), it is not independent of the context (on the notion of context, see Tátrai 2004, 2011: 51–67).*

*In the first part of the paper, politeness in a broader theoretical framework will be interpreted as well as its relationship to style, focusing on socio-cultural factors as determinants of stylistic meaning. In chapter three, interpretations of the concept of compliment and its cultural dimensions will be reviewed. In chapter four, which contains the empirical analysis and discusses responses to compliments, its relationship with the socio-cultural factors (particularly those of situation and value) will be examined.*

**Keywords:** politeness, compliments-responses, style patterns, socio-cultural factors (situation and value), discourse completion test

**1. The aim, the method, the theoretical issues of the analysis**

The phenomenon of polite linguistic behaviour studied in this paper invites some interesting observations, for example by comparing the polite *linguistic* features of everyday interactions of different speech communities, or by observing social and cultural, gender and age differences.

The main purpose of the paper is to show in what type of utterances and how the responses to compliments (related to external properties, appearances, internal values or the result of the communication partner’s work) are realised, in what style they are formed in various types of interpersonal relationships (peer relationships or subordinate and superordi-

nate social relations) and situations (the linguistic interaction is part of social cognition: cf. Tolcsvai Nagy's paper in this volume).

### 1.1. The aim and the method of the analysis

The aim of the analysis is to interpret the phenomenon of appreciative utterances and (contextually related) responses, as well as to delineate the socio-cultural dimensions and the style characteristics of responses to compliments in the Hungarian and Italian languages. The relationships created between the interlocutors and the conditions in a situation have influence on the construal of statements, on the style of utterances. The analysis focuses on the socio-cultural factors of situation and value (Tolcsvai Nagy 1996, 2005), because these are the most relevant for the subject. The domain of situation is essential in interpersonal relationships, and the domain of value is significant in the description of the style of compliments.

The Hungarian language corpus is the result of my own work of collection, in order to have language data I made a discourse-completion test (details: Pap 2011: 80) according to a method applied in empirical research, extended to more languages and cultures (Blum—Kulka 1982). The test was carried out with 20 to 30 year-old college students and graduates (83 questionnaires). In this paper the responses of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> situations of the discourse-completion test will be analysed, where the responses to compliments are emphasised. The compliments in the given situations are related to external appearance, external properties (in the 4<sup>th</sup> situation) and to the results of intellectual work (in the 5<sup>th</sup> situation). The Italian language corpus is based on the language materials collected by Alfonzetti (2009), in which some everyday Italian conversations are presented. Also in the Italian corpus there are only responses related to external appearance (external properties) and the results of (intellectual or other kind of) work. Comparing the two types of language corpus it can be observed that Hungarian data gained from the discourse-completion tests reflect a greater awareness of the speakers (what can be said in a given situation according to the language user), whereas the Italian language corpus contains more spontaneous conversations. This fact can make the comparability of data more indirect, because the written method can narrow the possibilities of style to express the verbal modes, even so the different language materials can be an adequate basis to note some similarities and differences.<sup>1</sup> In both corpora metapragmatic or metacommunicative reflections can be found that are part of the contextual meaning and are characteristics of the orality and spontaneity of discourses (on metapragmatic reflections, see Tátrai 2011: 119—125).

### 1.2. The interpretation of politeness

The phenomenon of **politeness** can be interpreted in many ways (for details, see Szili 2004b, 2007). In everyday meaning, it refers to the norms of tactful social behaviour with others (Szili 2004b: 32), the rules of appropriate behaviour. In polite linguistic behaviour respect towards people, the reciprocal appreciation of each other according to the traditions of social interaction manifest, by always following the norms (Éder 1980: 1128—1130). Everyone exercises the courtesy with actions, words, with symbolic gestures, somehow according to their own up-

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed study the analysis already completed in the Hungarian language should be extended also into the Italian language with the same method (with discourse-completion tests).

bringing, quality of social interaction and emotional readiness (Kertész 1933: 1). In a broader interpretation politeness is a phenomenon when we set our conversations in service of social goals, by considering the influence on others (Tannen 2001: 32). Politeness represents a value which has an important role in social relations, expresses respect and appreciation for the communication partner regarding the social position represented by the interlocutor (Bańcerowski 2000: 312). The concept of politeness is often identified with respect. The two phenomena are not the same: politeness is a kind gesture towards the others in a more general way, and the forms of respect are part of the means of expression of politeness (Szili 2007: 3).

From a pragmatic perspective politeness is an ensemble of strategies which are used by the speaker in specific situations, according to the communication demands, in order to achieve purposes and to establish and maintain relationships (Szili 2000: 272). Polite linguistic behaviour helps to create, modify and maintain interpersonal relationships, which explains according to Leech (1983: 80) why people are often indirect to change their thoughts (of Leech's theory: Bańcerowski 2000, Nemesi 2000, Szili 2004b, Pap 2011).

Thus politeness generally can be defined as linguistic behaviour that the speakers apply to satisfy the communication demands, being mostly suitable for their own and the partners' needs to create and maintain interpersonal relationships. Politeness is a specific accompanying phenomenon of social interactions and interpersonal relationships which shows the social relationship between interlocutors, the speaker's attitude related to the situation and the conversation partner. In the opinion of Bianchi (2005: 91) politeness essentially is a social dimension of communication that forms a complex interaction network between the different social identities and different systems of rules.

According to Leech's theory an "objective" and "subjective" aspect of politeness can be distinguished. "Objective" politeness reflects that some linguistic devices seem more polite to us than others. A relevant explanation for this fact can be that in some typical situations (which also appear in the analysis: for example, boss-employee, teacher-student) conducting the interpersonal relationships requires greater attention and elaboration compared to other typical (for example, friend-friend) situations (Tátrai 2011: 47). It correlates with the "objective" politeness theory that in the boss-employee and teacher-student interactions, for example, the situation seems more formal compared to the informal interaction between friends. Also the etymological explanation of politeness can be connected to this interpretation. Its root is the royal court (Szili 2004b: 32): English *court*, German *höflich*, French *courtois*, Spanish *cortes*, Italian *corte*, Hungarian *udvar*. The Hungarian adjective *udvarias* meaning 'polite' and the Hungarian noun *udvariasság* meaning 'politeness' emerged from a Slavic loanword (*udvar* 'court') are semantic loans created by a German model. In the 17th century the derivations of the word *udvar* ('court') appeared still in the knowledge of language users connecting to the royal court, but according to the testimony of writings of the age, besides the polite behaviour towards the king, in the content of these words the falsity, the occult thought, the lack of sincerity are included also in accordance with the morals of the court and the whole social life at that time (Kertész 1933: 155). Politeness and polite behaviour (as a higher social phenomenon) have included the rules related to the behaviour of the high social classes, the formality of social interaction (Kertész 1933: 1—2, 154—155). The norms of etiquette that determine the modes of expression of politeness, gained recognition during the civil development, have developed and become conventionalised in different cultures, in different ways and times (Deme—Grétsy—Wacha 1987: 92).

”Subjective” politeness, however, refers to the fact that polite linguistic behaviour depends on situations, which is emphasised also in the analysis (section 4). This characteristic is connected to the issue of the functioning of style attributions and style patterns. Regarding ”subjective” politeness it is possible, even within a typical situation, to speak about a formal, neutral and informal style in relation with a style pattern connected to a given situation. In this sense politeness can be defined as a relative concept, according to which the politeness or impoliteness of a given language solution can be interpreted in the given context, according to the relationship between the interlocutors (Tátrai 2011: 47).

In the polite utterances between the intersubjective (cognitive) and interpersonal (relationship-oriented) functions of language (in other words: cognitive — interactive: Habermas 1997: 248, transactive — interactive: Brown és Yule 1983: 1) the interpersonal role is emphasised (Tátrai 2011: 36—41, Szili 2007: 1). The primarily interpersonal language use is realised in situations when attention is directed to the participants’ interpersonal relationship in the discourse (Tátrai 2011: 39; the joint attentional scene as a part of discourse world: vs. Tátrai’s paper in this volume and Tolcsvai Nagy’s paper also in this volume). Forming properly the interpersonal relationships contributes greatly to the success of communication, must correspond to the socio-cultural expectations related to the polite linguistic behaviour of a given speech community.

### **1.3. Relation between politeness and style — the socio-cultural factors as components of style**

The politeness (or impoliteness) of an utterance can always be interpreted in a given context. Interpreting the utterances requires a background knowledge which is an essential condition for successful interaction. A polite utterance (even in indirect form) may be relevant in a given situation if it meets the communication requirements. The attitudes entrenched during polite linguistic behaviour become conventionalised in a certain community, dynamic schemas, stylistic patterns (stylistic schemas) are created, and all participants of the discourse are provided with this knowledge (Tátrai 2004: 482). The interactions are directed by the socio-cultural norms of a given community (Tolcsvai Nagy 2001: 318), the knowledge of schemas related to language behaviour is defined socio-culturally.

Polite behaviour is the realisation of attention towards the other person, a kind of language use that can be realised in a variety of styles. In a cognitive approach — based on Tolcsvai Nagy’s theory (1996, 2005) — style can be defined as a complex phenomenon that is a socio-culturally defined component of the discourse: “the stylistic meaning of a symbolic structure is determined partly by factors which can be derived from social and cultural values” (Tolcsvai Nagy 2001: 300, 2005: 85). Style reflects the socio-cultural conditions of an interaction, socio-cultural factors have a role in the formation of style. In Halliday’s interpretation (1978: 32) the meaning of a text is related to the situation, becomes part of the situation (register theory). So style (register) is a mode of language use which depends on the given situation (vs. Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 86). Langacker says that sociolinguistic and other values also belong to the semantic and phonological matrix of a linguistic unit (Langacker 1987: 63, Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 87). According to Tolcsvai Nagy (2005: 85) the stylistic meaning is determined also by social and cultural factors, the universal and culture-specific factors of cognition and communication. The socio-cultural characteristics prevail in the interaction of the speaker’s

and the receiver’s knowledge of language and the text specifies the stylistic functions related to the speaker and the receiver within the interaction. Thus the social-cultural factors belong to the matrix of the meaning of a given expression, because they influence the interpretation of the complex text, the stylistic value of the text. The style of a text is determined not only by internal factors, but also by such external factors as the quality of verbal action and the context (Tolcsvai Nagy 2001: 229, Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 85—87).

In Tolcsvai Nagy’s (2005: 88—92) model of verbal interaction (an idealised cognitive model) the speaker’s and the recipient’s relation to each other, to the text and the situation is visualised, the socio-cultural factors are represented in cognitive domains in figure — ground relations. In this model five major cognitive domains (attitude, situation, value, time, language varieties) are distinguished, and in the continuum of the domains certain subdomains may be separated. By studying the responses to the appreciative utterances, to the compliments, the stylistic aspects will be analysed concentrating on the situation and the value factors, emphasising their relations, therefore the characterisation of these two factors will be dealt with in more detail (in Section 4). Various proto-styles, prototypical co-occurrences are created by the co-occurrences (parallel distribution) of certain socio-cultural factors: informal, neutral and formal proto-styles (Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 92, 95; see also Tátrai’s paper in this volume). This phenomenon can be observed also in polite linguistic utterances.

## 2. A typical manifestation of polite linguistic behaviour, the compliment

The **compliment** (as an act of appreciation toward the communication partner) is a characteristic manifestation of polite linguistic behaviour. Before analyzing the act related to the compliment, viz. responses to the compliment, it is important to interpret the phenomenon of compliment itself. In the international literature, this type of manifestation is commonly called *compliment* (Italian *complimento*). In the Hungarian language the meanings of the words for ‘compliment’ (that mainly men say to women) and ‘praise’ (more general, to express appreciation) are well separated (Szili 2004b: 156). Following the literature, I will interpret compliment and all the appreciative utterances in the same meaning.

### 2.1. The interpretation of the definition of compliment

In the Hungarian language, *bók* (‘compliment’) has the following meaning: a nice praise expressed to court and to flatter (ÉKsz.<sup>2</sup> 2003: 140). In English to define *compliment* a similar interpretation is given in several dictionaries: praise, respect, congratulations expressed politely (*Oxford Dictionaries* 2011); a formal act of courtesy or respect (*Dictionary of the English Language* 2009); an expression of praise, commendation or admiration, a formal act or expression of civility, respect or regard, and in archaic meaning a gift, a present (*Dictionary.com Unabridged. Based on the Random House Dictionary* 2011). In the Italian monolingual dictionaries the term *compliment* is interpreted in a similar manner: the act of courtesy, respect and congratulations (*Dizionario Garzanti della lingua italiana* 1963: 195); an expression of admiration, respect, congratulations, courtesy and similar things, polite expressions or behaviour (*Zingarelli*: 2007: 422); the act of respect, courtesy, greeting; to make a compliment for a woman; an expression of respect, homage to high-status persons (*Grande dizionario della lingua italiana III*. 1964: 416).

The compliments used in everyday conversation are an integral part of politeness, they are its typical manifestations. In Leech's (1983) model of politeness, compliments can be connected to the Approbation Maxim, according to one of the principles of this maxim the praises of the other person (communication partner) and the utterances which express the approval of others should be maximised. Leech claims that compliments — together with greetings, congratulations, thanks and other expressions — are jovial, confidentially polite acts (Leech 1983: 106). Starting from Leech's concept, the utterances related to compliments reflect primarily an informal situation, are connected to the informal style. A compliment is a „behabitive-verdictive” act (this double feature was highlighted by Pomerantz 1978) by which the speaker expresses appreciation, admiration towards the communication partner. Pomerantz (1978: 82) observes that compliments have the function of „supportive actions”, similarly to offers, invitations, gifts, praises. In his view compliment is a behaviour that reflects attention, respect directed to others. According to Wolfson (1983: 86) compliments play an important role in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, they are social lubricants, but all acts of politeness can be characterised by this feature. According to Holmes a compliment is defined as a positively affective speech act directed to the receiver (1986: 500), which is used to create and re-establish relationship between the interlocutors (Holmes 1986: 486, Szili 2004b: 167). In the bibliography on this subject compliment is interpreted as a positive act of politeness. Thus compliment like an utterance containing a positive evaluation can be defined as a „linguistic gift” that gives joy to the communication partner (Alfonzetti 2009: 46). The interpretation of a compliment depends on the cultural values of a given community (2.2.), for its success the socio-cultural expectations (characteristics of the society) of polite linguistic behaviour must be met. In this paper, following the general definition of the literature on this subject, compliment will be considered as a positive manifestation towards the other person (this interpretation is supported by the linguistic behaviour of two speech communities and the analyzed corpus).

It is worth analyzing the compliments in a given context, together with the responses to compliments. Those responses in which the partner says thank you for appreciation expressing joy indicate the „supportive action” character of compliment. In this case the “linguistic gifting” is mutual. The positive emotion associated to the compliment can be expressed through met-apragmatic reflection: e.g. compliment: *Csinos a ruhád, nagyon jól áll.* (‘Your dress is pretty, very good on you.’) — response: *Igazán udvarias vagy ma.* (‘You are really polite today.’).

A compliment involves the potential value of two kinds of acts: on the one hand an evaluation statement (followed by another evaluation statement, agreeing or not agreeing), on the other hand a supportive action (which may be accepted or rejected) (Alfonzetti 2009: 57—58). Compliment and response as speech acts related to each other, forming a chain of utterances called an adjacency pair (Schegloff—Sacks 1973: 296, Szili 2004b: 156). The responses to praise, to compliment belong to the group of expressive speech acts, because they express the speaker's feelings and attitudes about a state of affairs (Searle 1975: 357, Szili 2004b: 156).

## 2.2. The cultural dimensions of compliment

The main theories of politeness (Leech 1983, Brown—Levison 1987) tried to describe the general principles of linguistic behaviour. According to Brown and Levinson (1978: 56) polite utter-

ances contain many universal elements. Leech (1983) also sought to summarise the universal principles of politeness, however, he notes that the measure of following the principles vary from culture to culture. Referring to the universal nature of polite linguistic behavior that certain situations expect politeness from the speaker. It may be for example a conversation with a person of a higher social status, an elderly person, an unknown person, and the interaction between men and women. Polite behaviour can prevail in different ways in different societies. According to the opinion of some researchers the linguistic norms of politeness are not universal (Wierzbicka 1991, Bańczerowski 2000: 313, Nemesi 2000: 419, 428, Szili 2004b: 104). Tolesvai Nagy notes (in his paper of this volume) that the social relationship between the interlocutors (as a part of the linguistic interaction) has a culture-specific character; the behavioural patterns (learned through socialisation) can be traced back to the general principles, but their evolution is culture-specific.

Our verbal behaviour and speech activity are determined by the components of a given society, the socio-cultural expectations. The rules of polite linguistic behaviour are controlled by the given behavioural norms which partly are part of the cultural convention. In the cultural learning process — intersubjectively, in interaction with others — we learn to use the linguistic symbols, the communication conventions and a new kind of cognitive representations will be created. A common cultural background knowledge gives opportunity to understand the communication partner’s intention. From the study of the linguistic forms it will be evident that depending on the situational factors the same phenomenon can be interpreted in different ways according to the different communication goals. Therefore, the members of different cultures behave differently (Tomasello 1999).

Expressing appreciative utterances between the interlocutors is the most natural way to satisfy their mutual needs for praises during the interaction. The intensity of using praise, compliment in the everyday communication is variable in different societies. This linguistic behaviour is less frequent in Eastern cultures, such as in Japan (where social attention is realised differently, the harmony between individual and community is more pronounced), as well as in the North European countries (for example the English people perceive it as entering someone’s personal space). Conversely, using praises is very common among the Americans and the reason for this may be the emphasis on individuals or social equality. Within some cultures the excessive compliment or an appreciative comment involving a social taboo is interpreted negatively by the interlocutor and it may cause the opposite effect to the speaker’s intention. In the Egyptian society, for example, asking questions about a child’s health, development is interpreted as a sign of envy, a violent linguistic action contrary to the socio-cultural norms (Alfonzetti 2009: 32). Differences in intimacy can be observed, how much and how you can talk about a conversation topic (for example money, political opinions, religious or ideological issues, sexuality). Respecting the taboos and the subject of conventional polite conversations of social contact is a necessary condition for successful communication.

The Mediterranean cultures such as the Italians and the Spanish pay close attention to the act of compliment, use it as a kind of social practice (Alfonzetti 2009: 30—32). A characteristic feature of the Italian speech community is to use the expressions with emotions (also women with each other, mothers to their children: *bella* ‘beautiful’, *cara* ‘dear’, *amore* ‘love, sweet’, *tesoro* ‘treasure’). The Hungarian linguistic behaviour is between the two types of attitude (using compliments less, or more intensively; and accepting or rejecting compliments: Szili 2004b: 172). In Italian, the emotional attitude is also morphologically

inherent, as the language contains many diminutive suffixes: e.g. *bellino* 'pretty', *carino* 'cute', *fratellino* 'little brother', *figliola* 'little daughter'.

As for the style of responses to compliments, differences can be observed in the Hungarian and Italian speech communities (details: in Chapter 3). The Hungarian linguistic behaviour is determined by modesty. Its characteristics are the informal, value depriving utterances which usually express the speaker's opinion in relation to the compliment or oneself (e.g. *Na ne mondd* 'Don't tell me'; *azt azért nem hinném* 'I don't think so'; *szörnyen nézek ki* 'I look terrible'). The Italian speech community represents a linguistic attitude between agreement and modesty. The responses which change the theme imply informal style. For example: 'A' says to a colleague looking at her continually: *È sempre un piacere per me è sempre in splendida forma.* ('It's always nice to see you look so good.') — 'B' (*laughing*): *Come va?* ('How are you?'; the conversation continues with another theme related to 'A'). But their responses to compliments are realised in formal, value saturating style. For example: 'A': *Hai degli anelli bellissimi! Li ho notati in questi giorni, sono molto particolari.* ('You have beautiful rings! I've noticed these days, they are exceptional.') — 'B': *Sì, mi piacciono molto.* ('Yes, I like them very much').

### 3. The style of responses to compliments in Hungarian and Italian discourses/ conversations

A compliment — as the speaker's opinion — can refer to external features, internal characteristics, intellectual abilities, personality, financial and other goods. Appreciative utterances can be realised in different ways and intensity. In order to recognise and interpret them, the receiver needs explicit or implicit linguistic signs which clarify the content and the receiver of statements, and meet the *communication needs* of the *participants* in interaction. Both the implicit and the explicit compliment can be relevant, and their interpretation depends on the given context. Some explicit compliments: *Nagyon tetszik* ('I love it'); *remekül néz ki* ('it looks great'); *jól áll a ruha* ('the dress looks good on you'); *jól néz ki a szerelésed* ('your outfit looks good'); some implicit compliments: *sokat foglalkozhattál vele* ('you must have spent a lot of time with it'; about a thesis at the University); *Ah! Qua c'è la professoressa 'B'. Dicevo questo forse se l'è rapita qualche bel giovane.* ('Ah! Here is professor 'B'. I told you that some handsome men had kidnapped her.' — *laughing*). An appreciative utterance can be formed in different styles, the stylistic value, however, is not determined only by the linguistic form and cannot be separated from the context: the implicit meaning, the speaker's intention can be interpreted in a particular context.

The responses to compliments represent the receiver's opinion in relation to the content of the utterance, the recipient's linguistic behaviour, and can be created in different strategies, in a great variety of styles and in a complex form adapting to the conditions of the interaction. The cognitive environment of participants in the interaction and the common cultural background knowledge help the interpretation. The linguistic modesty appeared in the responses to compliments is a decisive element of the Hungarian linguistic behaviour (vs. Szili 2000: 104, Pap 2008, 2011: 83). (Leech talks about Modesty maxim according to which the speaker has to minimise the expression of praise of self and maximise the expression of dispraise of self; Leech 1983: 137.) Linguistic modesty (vs. Holmes 1988, Szili 2004a, b, Pap 2011) forms a continuum from rejection to acceptance of the content of utterance. In the responses to compliments the Italians express an opinion between modesty and agreement trying to reduce the value of praise (Alfonzetti 2009: 178).



Our linguistic behaviour is governed by social factors, the style of expressing our thoughts and the way of being polite are influenced by the social status of the persons involved in the conversation (social status, power, social distance, familiarity) and the individual characteristics (sex, age, social status, race). Politeness as the realisation of attention towards the others is related to the interpersonal function of the language (Tátrai 2011: 41—45, Szili 2007: 1), so it can be interpreted starting from this perspective. The interpersonal relationships created and maintained between the participants of interaction have influence on the quality of utterance and the style of communication. The interpersonal relations as the components of situational context (vs. Tátrai 2004: 480) can develop in different ways in various interactions. In a given situation the members of a community establish typical ways of expressing stylistic patterns (system of socio-cultural norms; Tátrai 2004: 482).

In this analysis of responses to compliments, starting from the relationships emerging in the interaction and the linguistic forms, the stylistic features, the relations of the socio-cultural factors of style will be studied (Tolcsvai Nagy 1996, 2005). Of these factors the variables of value and situation will be emphasised, because from the point of view of the subject of analysis they are significant. The interpersonal relationships (peer relationships, or subordinate and superordinate relations, social distance or proximity) can be mostly represented through the factor of situation (vs. Tátrai’s paper in this volume). The domain of **situation** conceptualises the speaker’s representation of the communicative situation in relation to the formation of linguistic symbolic structures (Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 142—145, 2001: 306, 2005: 90). The characteristic of the appreciative expressions towards others, the compliments and responses is the diversity in the formation of evaluation attitude, therefore, in the description of their style the value factor is highlighted. The domain of **value** conceptualises the speaker’s evaluation of the circumstances (the scene and the participants, entities, actions) involved, through the formation of linguistic symbolic structures, texts (Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 145—148, 2001: 311, 2005: 90). During the processing of conceptualisation, one subdomain is foregrounded (figured) and the other subdomains remain in the background. In the case of neutrality, the neutral subdomain is the central subdomain, a linguistic unit “needs no other symbolic structures in order to make a comparison” (Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 89).

The discourse completion test used to collect the language corpus indicates the formation of interpersonal relationships through the man-woman, teacher-student, boss—friend relations. In the typical interpersonal relationships, the responses to compliments appear in different ways and various styles. In addition, the subject of an appreciative utterance can also influence the style (in the questionnaire the compliments refer to both the external appearance and the result of intellectual work: 1. 1.). In this analysis of responses to compliments, the socio-cultural factors, especially those of situation and value, and their relation with the interpersonal relationships will be studied.

### 3.1. The socio-cultural factor of situation in the responses to compliments

Regarding the situation factor — according to Tolcsvai Nagy’s model (2005) —, the utterances can be realised in **informal**, **neutral** and **formal** styles (by forming a continuum), and the features of style are determined by the given context. The responses to compliments show various styles according to the formation of interpersonal relationships (power rela-

tions, level of acquaintance, gender communication). An interaction with a person who has a higher social status (for example with the boss or teacher) is a typical everyday interpersonal relationship. In the interactions representing social (power) distance between the interlocutors, the responses usually present a **formal** style (in the case of external appearance and the result of intellectual work as well).

- (1) Boss: *Nagyon csinos a ruhája, ma igazán jól néz ki.* ('Your dress is very pretty, you look really nice today.')

Response: *Nagyon kedves, örülök, ha így is **megfelel** az öltözetem.* ('That's very kind of you, I'm glad you like it.')

- (2) Teacher: *Igazán alapos, jól átgondolt, logikus felépítésű munka. Sokat foglalkozhatott vele.* ('It's a really thorough, well thought-out, logically structured work. You must have worked really hard on it.')

Response: *Nagyon köszönöm az **elismerő** szavakat, **sokat jelent** nekem a tanár úr véleménye. **Hálás** vagyok minden segítségért.* ('Thank you very much for your words of appreciation, the professor's opinion matters much to me. I am grateful for any help.')

It is possible, however, that a conversation in which the degree of social distance is greater reflects informal style. This presupposes a good personal relationship between the interlocutors, for example the employee is on first-name terms with the boss. Although this situation (to be on first-name terms with somebody) does not exclude the formal style, it does reduce its probability.

- (3) Response (to a boss, to a compliment related to external properties): *Köszönöm, habár nem sok időm akadt **helyrerakni magamat.*** ('Thank you, even though I didn't have much time to get myself ready.')

Long responses with explanations are often used speaking with a person who has social power or authority (the compliment can refer to both the external appearance and to the result of intellectual work), but this kind of response is also possible in close relationships. This linguistic attitude is present in the Hungarian and Italian speech communities too, but in different styles. This type of utterances are formal or neutral in the domain of situation, and value saturating in the domain of value as regards the Hungarians. However, the long answers with explanations are expressed in informal style by Italian people. In these responses the domain of **attitude** (subdomains within this scalar continuum: vulgar, familiar, neutral, elegant, sophisticated) is also worth observing: the Hungarian answers are more sophisticated, in the Italian ones the familiar style is dominant.

- (4) Responses to a professor/ university teacher, to a compliment related to a thesis: *A lehetőségekhez képest igyekeztem; megtettem, amit tudtam; minden szabadidőm ráment; rengeteg energiám van benne* ('I tried as far as possible; I did everything I could; I used all my free time for it; I put a lot of energy into it'); to a boss, to a compliment related to external properties: *Fárasztó napom volt, de megpróbáltam magamból a legjobbat kihozni.* ('I have had a tiring day today, but I tried to do my best.')

An Italian example:

- (5) A: *Ma che bellissima collana!* ('What a beautiful necklace!')  
 B: *Questa è mia figlia che si compra le cose e poi le lascia.* ('This is my daughter who buys things for herself and then leaves them.')

There is another typical interpersonal relationship which is characterised by formal style in the domain of situation. Women to women, even to a person in a position of authority, and men to women often answer to the praises with explicit compliments or positive emotional expressions. This attitude is a courteous gesture of polite linguistic behaviour. The style of these utterances is value saturating in the domain of value, and as a result of co-occurrences of the subdomains they have formal style. This phenomenon can be observed both in the Hungarian and Italian speech communities, and its characteristics is an emotional, sophisticated way of expressing an opinion (highlighted in the examples).

- (6) Responses (to a compliment related to external appearance and the result of intellectual work): in social distance: *Köszönöm, a magáé még csinosabb; igazán kedves; az ön ruhája is elegáns; az a nyaklánc lélegzetelállító önön; jólesik, ha így gondolja* ('Thank you, yours is even prettier; you are very kind; your dress is elegant, too; your necklace is breathtaking; it makes me feel good, if you think so'); in close relation: *te is fantasztikusan nézel ki, remek a fülbevalód; köszönöm, aranyos vagy; örülök, hogy neked tetszik* ('You look fantastic, too; your earrings are great; thank you, you're kind; I'm glad you like them').

Italian examples:

- (7) Boy (to his friend's mother): *No, prima permettimi di salutare tua madre! Buonasera bellissima signora!* ('No, first let me greet your mother! Good evening beautiful lady!')  
 His friend's mother: *Bellissima! Grazie! Lei è sempre affettuosa.* ('Beautiful! Thank you! You're always affectionate.')
- (8) A: *Ah! Io sono in buona compagnia allora ottima!* ('Ah! I am in good company so it's great!') — B: *Sono proprio contento.* ('I'm really happy.')
- (9) A: *Hai i capelli diversi oggi!* ('Your hair is different today!')  
 B: *Me li ha fatti il parrucchiere.* ('I have been to the hairdresser.')
- A: *Li gradisco.* ('I love it.')
- B: *Mi fa piacere che hanno il tuo consenso.* ('I'm glad that they have your consent.')

Another typical style which forms the continuum of the domain of situation is the **informal** style which prevails primarily in close interpersonal relationships, between equal communication partners, for example, friends or acquaintances. Informal responses are rarely used with people of a higher social status.

In responses to compliments there is a variety of explicit expressions, opinions related to praises. The explicit answers can be realised in different styles depending on the subject of compliments, as well as on the attitude to them. If the compliments are related to external or internal

features, or to the result of the communication partner's work, informal style is dominated in the responses, in case of disagreeing with the compliments (usually in negative form). These utterances have a function of value deprivation, and have informal style following the co-occurrence of the social-cultural factors. This manner of expression is mainly characteristic of Hungarians.

- (10) Responses (to a friends or an other students): *Egyáltalán nem; szerintem nem lett jó, nem értek vele egyet; te sem gondolod komolyan; na ne mondd; ugyan, dehogy; ne csináld; nem gondolnám; kötve hiszem* ('Absolutely not; I don't think it is good, I don't agree; even you don't really think so; don't tell it to me; tush; nope; don't do this; I don't think so; I doubt it').

An Italian example:

- (11) Conversation of friends (B is cooking):  
 A: *Sei un grande!* ('You're great!')  
 B: *No! Ma che ci vuole? Veramente non ci vuole niente.* ('No! What does it take? Really doesn't take much.')

Responses to compliments accepted in relation to external or internal features, or to the result of the communication partner's work, are formal in the domain of situation, and value saturating in the domain of value, and may occur even in close relation or in an interaction with a person who has a higher social status. This is a rare phenomenon in the Hungarian speech community, and the Italian linguistic behaviour is not determined by this type of utterances either.

- (12) Responses: *Igen, köszönöm, magam is így látom; így igaz; szerintem is.* ('Yes, thank you, I do think so myself; it's true; I think so, too.')
- (13) A: *Lei è una cuoca bravissima!* ('You're a very good cook!')
- B: *Grazie!* ('Thanks!').

The direct (considered also impolite) utterances expressed in informal style are rare in social distance.

- (14) Responses (to a professor, to a boss): *Ugyan már, ne túlozzon; ne is említse* ('Tush, don't exaggerate; don't mention it').

The implicit answers which linguistically express agreement, but reflect disagreement in a given context are characterised by informal style.

- (15) Responses (to a compliment related to external appearance): *Biztosan; valószínűleg; természetesen* ('Surely, probably, of course').

The linguistic behaviour of the receiver of the compliment continuing the conversation with a different subject can be considered informal in the domain of situation. The change of the subject of the conversation, which appears in Italian answers, expresses an attitude

of value deprivation in the domain of value. This type of responses features informal style according to the co-occurrences of the subdomains.

- (16) Two old (female) friends seeing photos:  
 A: *Che bella che sei qua!* ('How beautiful you're here!')  
 B (shows 'A' a card on which a poem is written): *Questa poesia gliel'ha dedicata X a mio marito.* ('This poem was dedicated to my husband by X.')
- (17) A: *Stai troppo bene con la gonna! Te la dovresti mettere più spesso.* ('You look very good in skirt! You should put it on more often.')
- B: *E ora vediamo che possiamo fare.* ('And now let's see what we can do.')

In the responses to appreciative utterances, there are metapragmatic reflections, also as a specific form of expressing opinion (both in the Hungarian and Italian conversations). These answers show informal style in the domain of situation, and are clearly value depriving in the domain of value. This attitude is present primarily in close interpersonal relationships, but can also occur in social distance if the interlocutors have a closer relation.

- (18) Responses (to compliments related to external appearance and to the result of intellectual work): *Nem kell hazudni, tudom, hogy borzalmasan nézek ki; legalább igazat mondanál; egy kis őszinteséget vártam volna tőled; nem kell gúnyolódni; köszönöm a bókot, mégha nem is igaz; most hazudsz; nagyon vicces; ne viccelj már; ne ugrass* ('You don't need to lie, I know I look terrible; at least you could say the truth; I would have expected a bit of honesty from you; there's no need for irony; thanks for the compliment, even if it's not true; now you're lying; very funny; don't be joking with me; don't pull my leg').
- (19) Employer and employee (in social distance):  
 A: *Bene stai B con questi capelli.* ('B, this hair serves you right.')
- B: *Me lo deve dire veramente però.* ('But you must say this to me sincerely.')

Typical accompaniments of the situations requiring politeness are the non-verbal expressions, however, the analysis of the style of these expressions is rather limited with discourse completion tests (so in the Hungarian corpus). Typical non-verbal accompaniments of responses to compliments (or reactions without words as well) are laughing, nodding, hand gestures which can express the addressee's embarrassment, an unpleasant feeling or even the accepting of a compliment, but can also imply irony (of the irony: 3.2.). Their interpretation depends largely on the context and cultural factors (Szili 2004b: 160, 161). In general they express emotional surplus, their style is determined by the communicative situation, contextual factors, they can have both informal and formal style. In the Italian speech community, communication with gestures and non-verbal signs has a more important role.

Italian examples (from conversations):

- (20) A: *Quindi bene! Mi complimento di questa tesi.* ('So, all right! I congratulate you on this thesis.')

- B: (smiling with satisfaction)
- (21) Shop assistant and customer:  
 A: *Ha un fisico da attrice, da top model.* ('You have the physique of an actress, top model.')
- B: *Sì.* (smiles and becomes red) ('Yes.')
- (22) A: *Sei sempre splendida!* ('You are always splendid!')
- B: (laughs and makes a disavowing gesture)
- A: *Lo dico veramente.* ('I mean it.')
- (23) A conversation in a family:  
 A: *Che bella B! È bellissima!* ('What a beauty is B! She's beautiful!')
- B: ( a facial expression of rejection)

Silence in communication — when the receiver doesn't respond to the compliment — is a particular mode of expressing opinion, its interpretation is determined by the communicative situation. Silence can imply both politeness and impoliteness, it is interpreted in different ways from culture to culture (when, with whom, where may speak). Leech (1983: 141) mentions the phenomenon of silence related to the Phatic Maxim (an additional maxim of politeness): 'Avoid silence!'. In our society, the attitude to speak with the others has an essential function, embarrassing silence looks like a failure in the interaction (Szili 2004b: 35), silence between two people is usually considered uncomfortable. According to Sperber and Wilson (2006a: 302—303), in an interaction there can be some relevant information which the communication partners do not want to pass to each other. On the basis of their theory the use of silence can also be an ostensive stimulus in these cases (the use of ostensive stimulus adds an extra layer of intention). Silence can be interpreted as a sign of the speaker being unable or unwilling to respond to the communication partner's utterance. In the context of compliments, silence may be the sign of embarrassment, but it can be interpreted as avoiding the response or rejecting the compliment (Holmes 1988: 494). In the case of compliments related to external appearance, silence can express embarrassment, or it is also possible that the speaker does not want to communicate their opinion about the compliment. Silence as a response to compliments by the receiver is a typical phenomenon in interactions when the appreciative statement is from a man to a woman, or from a person of a higher social status, from a boss (24), from a professor/university teacher (25), but it may occur in close relationships, too (26). As regards the social-cultural factors, in the domain of situation responses with the silence of the recipient can be considered informal, neutral or formal as well, and can imply both value deprivation and value saturation styles in the domain of value.

- (24) Boss (woman): *Ma igazán remekül néz ki, nagyon csinos a ruhája!* ('Today you look really great, your dress is very pretty!')
- Response: (silence)
- (25) Professor/University teacher: *Igazán jól átgondolt, logikus felépítésű munka, nagyon tetszik. Sokat foglalkozhatott vele.* ('It's a really thorough, well thought-out, logically structured work. You must have worked really hard on it.')
- Response: (silence)
- (26) Dinner with friends:

C: *Guardate che bel piatto di frutta che ha portato B!* ('Look what a beautiful fruit plate B brought!')

A: *E che sei una giapponese?* ('And you're a Japanese?')

B: (silence)

It may occur that different styles are mixed within an utterance (in close and social distance relationships, too): it may have different stylistic features, both informal (e.g. *kösz* 'thanks', *szörnyen* 'awful', *butaságokat* 'nonsense', *pukkanva* 'feeling under the weather') and formal (e.g. *illemből* 'out of politeness/for courtesy', *kedvesnek* 'kind', *hálás* 'grateful', *nyilvánvaló* 'obvious') styles in the domain of situation, and both value deprivation and value saturation styles in the domain of value (about the socio-cultural factor of value: 4.2.). Atypical co-occurrences (Tolcsvai Nagy 2005) result in heterogeneous style (about the homogenisation limits: Tátrai's paper in this volume).

(27) Responses (to a friend, to a compliment related to external appearance): *Kösz, tudom, hogy csak jót akarsz, de én is tudom, mennyire szörnyen nézek ki. Nem muszáj csak illemből kedvesnek lenned. Sőt, hálás lennék, ha nem beszélnél ilyen butaságokat, amikor nyilvánvaló, mennyire le vagyok pukkanva.* ('Thanks, I know that you just want to do good, but I know how awful I look. You don't need to be kind just for courtesy. Indeed, I'd be grateful, if you wouldn't talk such nonsense, when it is obvious how much I am feeling under the weather.')

In the responses to compliments the act of saying thank you appears as a conventional answer (in the Hungarian and Italian language, too). In the Hungarian language the long form (*köszönöm* 'thank you') generally reflects formal situation (but it may express interpersonal relationships of close relation and social distance as well). The short form (*kösz*, *kösz* 'thanks') has informal style, and is typically characterised by close relationships. *Grazie*, saying thank you in Italian, can imply both formal and informal style. Contextual factors and accent (as a metalinguistic tool of communication) play a decisive role when interpreting the style of answers expressing *thank you*.

To sum up the stylistic characteristics of responses to compliments in the domain of situation, it can be concluded that formal style usually dominates in the interactions of social distance, and informal style in close relationships. Reciprocative answers to compliments expressing positive emotions are usually created in formal situations. This type of utterances is present both in the Hungarian and Italian speech communities. Responses with explanations are expressed rather in formal style by Hungarians, and in informal style by Italians. In the domain of situation responses which express disagreement with compliment through explicit or implicit opinions, metapragmatic reflections are informal. Compliments related to the appearance are often followed by answers in informal style, and this linguistic attitude is mostly a Hungarian characteristic. As for the domain of situation, the change of theme in the conversation implies an informal style, and this phenomenon occurs frequently in the Italian answers.

### 3.2. The socio-cultural factor of value in the responses to compliments

In the domain of value, the following subdomains form a scalar continuum (Tolcsvai Nagy's model 2005): **value depriving**, **neutral** and **value saturating** style. In the domain of value,

responses to compliments show a variety of styles according to the formation of interpersonal relationships and the subject of compliment. The style of answers can be determined in a given context.

In the interpersonal relationships, some typical phenomena can be observed also in the domain of value. The style of responses to compliments is generally **value depriving** in close relationships, and is **value saturating** in a conversation with a person of higher social status.

- (28) Response (to a boss, to a compliment related to external appearance): *Ha az ember ilyen bókot kap, megéri az a sok készülődés.* ('If someone receives a compliment like this, it's worth all the preparation.')
- (29) Response (to a professor, to a compliment related to the result of intellectual work): *Még egyszer köszönöm, hogy volt szíves átnézni.* ('Thank you again for being so kind to check it.')

One of the characteristics of responses to compliments in the domain of value is the phenomenon of **irony**. The ironic utterances have typically value depriving style, and by the co-occurrence they are realised in informal proto-style (situation: informal, value: value deprivation). To recognise and interpret irony, besides understanding the linguistic form, the context, the situation and the background knowledge have a decisive role. In this case, the receiver should make a greater effort to interpret the utterance. Understanding depends on the common cognitive environment of the speaker and the receiver (Wilson—Sperber 2006b: 367). Leech (1983: 82, 142) speaks about comic utterances connected with Irony and Banter Principles. The Irony Principle is the following: "If you must cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn't overtly conflict with the PP, but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature." (Leech 1983: 82). From the point of view of pragmatics, irony is an implicit evaluation to which a critical attitude is related. The implicit meaning gives a possibility to interpret ironically the content in the current context (Tátrai 2008). In a functional, cognitive-pragmatic framework, irony can be interpreted as a reflexive attitude to the linguistic activity (about irony: Tátrai 2011: 190—204).

Ironic responses are present both in the Hungarian and Italian speech communities, and they characterise especially the style of young people. This type of answers usually appears in close relations, and mostly in the compliments related to external appearance. Ironic utterances often come from slang, and sometimes they are formed in vulgar style.

- (30) Responses (to compliments related to external appearance): *Ma már ne igyál többet; mondták már, hogy pocskék izlésed van?; mindenki belém fog szeretni, még a nők is; miről beszélsz ember; na ebben biztosan nem, de ha levinném, esetleg lenne, aki rámharapna; nem hinném, hogy én leszek ma a bálkirály; képzeld el, mi lett volna, ha több időm van; inkább ijesztgetni fogom a nőket; egyébként is mindig hódítok, ma pedig különösen, amikor még a szokásosnál is lestrapáltabb vagyok; csak ha az igénytelenség szexepil; azt leszámítva, hogy hullá vagyok, és egy zsiráfcsalád elférne a szemem alatti táskákban.* ('Don't drink more today; have anybody already said to you that you have a bad taste?; everyone will be falling in love with me, even the women; guy, what are you talking about; well, in this certainly not, but if I take it



off, there may be someone who would snap at me; I do not think that I'll be the party's king today; guess what could have happened if I had more time; I'm going to scare the women, instead; anyway I always conquer, especially today, when I'm more tired than usual; only if simplicity is sex appeal; apart from the fact that I'm dead, and there would be enough space for a giraffe family in the bags under my eyes.')

Irony is not always recognised, it becomes understandable in the given context (context allows the ironic interpretation). This phenomenon can be observed in implicit responses (already mentioned by analysing the domain of situation in chapter 4.1.), which imply value saturation or neutral attitudes in their linguistic form, however their function is value deprivation. In this type of answers there are also slang expressions (e.g. *yep*). Both the Hungarian and Italian speech communities are characterised by this linguistic behaviour.

- (31) Responses (to compliments related to external appearance): *Természetesen; persze; biztosan; valószínűleg*. ('Naturally; of course; surely; likely.')
- (32) A (to her friend): *Stavo ammirando questa fotografia. Guarda come sei bellissima!* ('I have just been admiring this photo. Look, how beautiful you are!')
- B: *Sì, bellissima!* ('Yes, beautiful!')
- (33) A: *Bene stai così*. ('You look so good (with this hair style).')
- B: *Con i capelli davanti? Bella sembro!* ('With hair in the front? I look nice!')

**Slang** is a particular phenomenon of responding to compliments, it has an importance from the point of view of the domain of value, especially in the case of compliments related to appearance. According to Péter (1991: 43), slang is an essential source of expressivity, it makes more efficient the linguistic expression. This manner of speaking is typically used in close relations, but it may also occur in an interaction of social (power) distance or in a conversation with an unknown person. By examining correlations between slang and social-cultural factors, typical co-occurrences can be noted in the domain of situation and value as well. They have an informal style in the domain of situation, and a value deprivation style in the domain of value: therefore according to the co-occurrences they show an informal proto-style.

- (34) Responses (to compliments related to external appearance): *Hulla vagyok* ('I am dead tired'); *ne szórakozz velem* ('Don't push me'); *el vagyok havazva* ('I'm a bit snowed under right now/I'm just in a little funk right now.')

In the domain of value, there is a typical way of replying to compliments (mainly related to external characteristics, to appearance) which expresses a value depriving attitude: when the speaker expresses a negative opinion concerning oneself (often with autoirony). This linguistic behaviour is mainly represented by the Eastern cultures, but Hungarians also often answer with these types of responses (Szili 2004b: 161), and they are used by the Italian speech community as well. The negative ironic (or self-ironic) utterances are a characteristic phenomenon, in particular, of women's linguistic attitude. These kinds of utterances have an informal style in the domain of situation, usually they are present in close interpersonal relationships and often are slang expressions.

- (35) Responses: *Ramatyul nézek ki* ('I look shoddy'); *olyan vagyok, mint egy mosogatórongy* ('I am like a dishcloth'); *tök slampos vagyok* ('I am very dowdy'); *teljesen kivagyok* ('I am totally frazzled').
- (36) A (to the sister): *B, tu qua sei bellissima!* ('B, here you're beautiful B!')  
B: *Io un mostro sono in questa fotografia.* ('I'm a monster in this photo.')
- (37) A (to colleague at university): *Sei sempre bellissima.* ('You always look beautiful.')
- B: *Veramente sono stanca e sciupata.* ('Actually, I'm tired and skinned.')
- (38) A: *Quello B sempre elegante, guarda quant'è elegante!* ('That B is always elegant, look how elegant he/she is!')
- B: *Non mi dire che sono elegante perché sono uno straccio di casa.* ('Don't tell me that I'm elegant because I am a rag of home.')

Occasionally, this speech style can occur also in a situation when responding to a compliment related to the results of work (the following example is a response to a compliment related to a thesis):

- (39) Responses: *Úgy összecsaptam, mint még soha* ('I threw it together than never before.').

In the case of power distance between the communication partners, in similar contexts the expressions of value saturation may appear in value depriving function as well. In these answers, the speakers express a negative opinion (which is typically related to the result of work) about themselves.

- (40) Responses (to a professor/university teacher, to a compliment related to the result of intellectual work): *Lenne mit javítani rajta* ('there would be some things to improve on it'); *néhány helyen alaposabban ki kellett volna dolgoznom a témát* ('I should have had to work more thoroughly on the subject at some point'); *fontos dolgokat is kihagytam belőle* ('important things have been left out'); *sokkal jobb is lehetett volna, ha egy kicsit alaposabb vagyok* ('it could have been much better if I am a little more thorough'); *nem vagyok teljesen megelégedve vele* ('I'm not entirely satisfied with it'); *még milyen sok lehetőséget nem vizsgáltam meg* ('how many options haven't I examined yet'); *még foglalkozhattam volna vele* ('I could have dealt with it some more').

Responses in question forms (a special way of responses to compliments) can be approached from the point of view of value as a socio-cultural factor. Such utterances can also express attitudes of value deprivation (in the domain of situation: informal) and value saturation (in the domain of situation: formal). The questions (responses) of value deprivation style may also have ironic intentions; the metalanguage tools (like tone, mimicry, gestures) can help to recognise them. Responding with questions to compliments as a linguistic behaviour is present in the Hungarian and Italian speech communities as well. Responses related to the attitude of value saturation are more typical in the Hungarian answers.

Value saturation:

- (41) Responses (to a professor/university teacher, to a compliment related to the result of intellectual work): *Tényleg úgy tűnik?* ('Does it really seem so?'); *valóban?* ('really?'); *nem kellene még javítanom valamit rajta?* ('shouldn't I have to change anything on it?'); *esetleg van még javaslata, amit érdemes lenne hozzátenni?* ('Do you have any more proposals to add (to it), maybe?').
- (42) Responses (to a friend, to a compliment related to external appearance): *Igazán?* ('Really?'); *igen?* ('yes?'); *komolyan így látod?* ('do you see it seriously so?').

Italian examples:

- (43) A: *Buona è venuta!* ('It's fine!')  
 B: *Buona? Ah! Mi fa piacere!* ('Fine? Ah! I'm so glad!')
- (44) A: *È troppo bellino questo giubbotto!* ('This jacket is very beautiful!'; -ino — is a common diminutive suffix in Italian)  
 B: *Ti piace? Anche a me piace molto.* ('Do you like it? I like it very much as well.')

Value deprivation:

- (45) Responses (to a friend, to a compliment related to external appearance and the result of intellectual work): *Micsoda?* ('What?'), *te rám néztél egyáltalán?* ('Did you look at me at all?'); *te tényleg elolvastad?* ('Did you really read it?').
- (46) Responses (to a professor/university teacher, to a compliment related to the result of intellectual work): *Nem mondja?* ('You're not telling me that?').

Vulgar expressions (without politeness) are present in responses to compliments, especially in young people's linguistic behaviour, particularly in close, peer relationships. Such utterances are considered to be value depriving in the domain of value, as well as informal in the domain of situation, and both the Hungarian and Italian speech communities are characterised by this quality. In the case of vulgar expressions, it is worth mentioning the attitude domain in which they have vulgar style, and based on the co-occurrences they have informal proto-style.

- (47) Responses (to a compliment related to external appearance and the result of intellectual work): *Menj a francba, el se hinnéd, milyen szar napom volt; olyan vagyok, mint a mosott szar; anyád; hülye* ('Go to hell, you wouldn't believe how crappy my day was, I look like a hot ass mess; your mother; stupid').
- (48) Young people between each other:  
 A: *Ti stanno bene questi capelli.* ('You look good with this hair.')

By studying the style characteristics of various interactions a typical co-occurrence of socio-cultural factors can be observed. Utterances which are formal in the domain of situation and have value saturating attitude in the domain of value, result in a formal proto-style. Re-

sponses which are informal in the domain of situation and have value depriving attitude in the domain of value, are realised in informal proto-style. Slang expressions and ironic utterances typically express an attitude of value deprivation. A special characteristic of responses to compliments — mainly in the Hungarian speech community — is to offer an opinion of oneself (by the speaker) in value deprivation style. In this kind of situations — in the case of power distance between the communication partners — some expressions of value saturation have a function of value deprivation. Questions (as responses) can have both value saturating and value depriving styles (the latter one describes more the Hungarian speech community).

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to summarise the theories, experiences and results related to the phenomenon examined, and to observe them in Hungarian and Italian corpora. In the focus of analysis was the phenomenon of polite linguistic behaviour, responses to compliments and their link with socio-cultural factors by highlighting the domains of situation and value. By taking notice of different cultural models, style characteristics and socio-cultural dimensions of responses to compliments have been presented.

It can be observed that both the Hungarian and the Italian speech communities use compliments fairly often. Hungarian linguistic behaviour is determined by modesty, and the Italian language use represents an attitude between agreement and modesty. Slang and ironic (or autoironic) expressions are typically present in negative, dismissive responses (against the compliments); these utterances are informal in the domain of situation and have value depriving style in the domain of value. These expressions can have vulgar style as well, and they are dominant in young people's language. Some similarities and differences of the Hungarian and Italian linguistic behaviour can be observed in the different types of utterances. Hungarian people often respond to compliments in an informal, value depriving style, by expressing an opinion about themselves and responding with a question. Italian responses with explications are informal. Answers with explicit and implicit opinions related to compliments usually imply informal style (both in the Hungarian and the Italian speech communities). Responses (in both corpora) that express positive emotions or return the compliments are realised in formal, value saturating style, and this is a significant characteristic of women's linguistic attitude. Formal style is also dominant in the Hungarian responses with explications. The topic of compliment can influence the style. Compliments related to external appearance are often followed by responses in informal style, especially in the Hungarian corpus.

Some typical phenomena can be observed by the formation of interpersonal relationships. According to the co-occurrences of socio-cultural factors, direct relations (friends, acquaintances) are characterised by informal proto-style (situation: informal, value: value deprivation). And formal proto-style (situation: formal, value: value saturation) is dominant in the power distance relationships (e.g. in a conversation with boss, professor/a university teacher).

Therefore context has a decisive role in interpreting the responses to compliments. Socio-cultural factors belong to the meaning and the structure of style of a given utterance. By highlighting the situation and value factors, it can be observed and analysed that typical co-occurrences are realised in the style of responses to compliments, and they establish the proto-style of every single utterance. Formal proto-style is created on the basis of co-occurrences of formal and value

saturating style (demonstrated by the examples). And the co-occurrences of informal and value depriving style result in informal proto-style. The combination of various styles is possible within an utterance, giving rise to heterogeneous style. Naturally, the issues, ideas, and problems discussed in this paper can be specified further by a more detailed analysis and another corpus.

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