On Differentiating the Speech Acts of Praise and Compliment

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Abstract: Contemporary linguistic research pays much attention to the study of speech acts (SA). Although researchers have come with a range of interpretations regarding their origin and typology, there are a number of challenges that still require clarification. The article explores two speech acts – praise and compliment, which belong to the category of evaluative SA with the semantics of approval, i.e. which possess a laudatory connotation. The goal of the article is to analyse their similarities and differences in terms of ways of their classification, principles and criteria used by scientists when considering them and to provide examples in the Russian language. The distinction between the semantics of the SA of praise and compliment is identified, some of their differential characteristics are established, and their classifications are considered from different perspectives.
Keywords: *speech acts, classification, laudatory connotation, praise, compliment.*

Introduction

It is an incontestable fact that in the course of communication, speakers use a diverse range of speech acts (SA), with a variety of connotations, which, in turn, involves a number of shades considered as more or less relevant, depending on the situation and/or context, which is viewed from a certain point of view. The SA can be regarded from the perspective of the speaker, the listener, or even other people present (physically or implicitly) in a certain communicative situation; it can also depend on some particular factors: circumstantial, (inter)personal, social, political, cultural, etc., which are subordinate to the given context and to the communicative projections of the speaker/ interlocutor, etc. Green Mitchell assumes that SAs can be described

> "as the central units of communication, with phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic properties of an utterance serving as ways of identifying whether the speaker is making a promise, a prediction, a statement, or a threat." [Green, 2017]

SAs are "actions performed via utterances" [Yule, 2003: 47] used by speakers to exchange information, i.e. they "are staples of communicative life" [Green, 2017]. As Alan Gardiner affirms the act of speech is viewed as a vastly "complex, purposeful mode of human action" which aims at the speaker's purpose to have an impact on others "in reference to some particular thing" [Gardiner, 1932: 62]. It is worth mentioning that the Speech Act Theory (SAT) describes a rather peculiar model of a communicative situation.

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Together with such components as speaker, listener, state, discourse, circumstances, etc., which are obligatory in communication models, the SAT model of SAs also includes its intention, i.e. the purpose and the result. According to the SAT model, the main feature of a communication model is, firstly, the approach to the SA as a means of achieving the goal set by the speakers and, secondly, the interpretation of the language means used in this aspect.

In our research we intend to examine two speech acts – the SA of praise and the SA of compliment. They are defined as expressive, evaluative SA that have an emotional-expressive distinction with a meliorative (laudatory) connotation, that is, words or phrases which express a positive assessment. In this article we have provided only examples of praise in Russian, as we are focusing exclusively on this particular act in a broader research.

Theoretical background

Linguists and philosophers have long been interested in the notion of 'good' in general and how it is expressed in SAs. For instance, Searle [as cited in Dascal, 2002: 326-327], emphasises the idea that the meaning of such words as 'good' is in some way related to the performance of definite SAs, coming up with the example that such a connection is not 'just a contingent fact', but rather 'a matter of conceptual truth', or a 'quazi-necessary truth''. Dascal claims that in Searle's view

> '"good' is a 'grading label', one of a range of terms used for the purpose of performing acts of assessing, grading, evaluating, judging, etc. Furthermore, the assessment it serves to perform is positive, i.e., it is such that it might be expressed by illocutionary verbs such as 'commend', 'praise', etc. So, 'good' is 'embedded in the institutions' of assessing, grading, evaluating, etc. in a particular way. This is why, calling something good is commending." [Searle, apud Dascal, 2003: 511]

The study of expressive, evaluative speech acts has lately become very popular as they reveal people's emotional states in various contents. Searle wrote about commendation SAs, (i.e. those of praise)

> "If the condition 'performance of the speech act of commendation' is part of the meaning of 'good' then every (literal) occurrence of 'good' should involve the performance of that act or at least be related to performances of that act in a way which is purely a function…[Searle, apud Dascal, 2002: 326]

From the mentioned above we can conclude that when we claim something is good we evaluate it, thus expressing our own point of view, be it subjective or objective. Numerous linguists have investigated evaluative SAs, including praise and compliment. Our research is based on the works by K. Allan (1994), K. Bach and M. Harnish (1979), D. Burton (1980), T. Thomas (1981), M. Clyne (1994), S. Levinson (1983), M. L. Pratt (1977), M. Dascal (2002, 2003). In the last few decades, a number of valuable works have appeared in modern Russian linguistics, among which are the studies by E.M. Wolf (Вольф) (1985), N.I. Formanovskaya (Формановская) (1988), N.D. Arutynova (Арутюнова) (1992), V.P. Sheynov (Шейнов) (1997), E.V. Kliuyev (Клюев) (1998), A.S. Borisov (Борисов) (1998), Z.K. Temirgazina (Темиргазина) (1999), O.S. Issers (Исерс) (1999), A.N. Pankratov (Панкратов) (2001), N.A. Bigunova (Бигунова) (2013), and others.

Given these points, it should be highlighted that E. M. Wolf (Вольф) has made a significant contribution to the study and understanding of evaluative SAs, examining their

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structure and semantics, as well as determining in what conditions and in what context they function. She asserts:

> «В мире оценок действует не истинность относительно объективного мира, а истинность относительно концептуального мира участников акта коммуникации.» [Вольф, 1985: 203].

To put it differently, this proposition comprises everything that is known about the world and existing stereotypes, as well as about people's preferences, the pragmatics of communication, the goals of SAs, etc. The researcher sticks to the opinion that evaluative statements are a separate type of illocutionary acts, which have the purpose "to cause the listener show/elicit a perlocutionary effect – an emotional reaction to the statement" [Вольф, 1985: 166].

Though it seems much has been written about evaluative SAs, still, in modern linguistics there is no clear, all-accepted classification of such SAs, as the researchers confront the problem of identifying the basic criteria and features of the evaluative SAs that provide the possibility of their systematic description. So far, there is no reliable methodology of the holistic comparison of their illocutionary tasks, perlocutionary effect of the structure, as well as the ways of their linguistic description. The analysis of available literature has proved that hitherto there is no clear distinction between the notions *compliment* and *praise*, there is no comprehensive classification of these SAs, nor is there a typology of responding moves to compliments and praise. We consider that all of the above determines the relevance of our research.

The speech act of compliment

It has been considered that the SA of compliment has been thoroughly researched, as there are numerous academic works on it. A compliment is an expression of admiration, praise, approval, commendation, etc. In Holmes's terms "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 (possessions, characteristics, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" [Holmes, apud Taavitsainen& Jucker, 2008:198]. In other words, compliments are SAs that directly or indirectly approve of another person, not of the speaker, typically the addressee, for something good that is appreciated positively by the addresser. At first sight it is clear and easy to understand, nevertheless we do not agree with the opinion that the above-mentioned description of the term 'compliment' exactly renders its meaning, because to compliment, in fact, means to flatter someone for something, and it is expected that the 'complimentee' should come with a reaction – accepting, rejecting, or avoiding the compliment in conformity with his/her cultural customs, beliefs or values. It is evident, the etiquette would require a certain reaction to the compliment, thus, we can draw attention to the idea that in many cultures the requirement that the addressee should return it, or at least thank the compliment-payer/addresser is a necessary attribute of this SA. On the other hand, it is essential to accentuate the idea that depending on the cultural norms accepted in the society, when it comes to paying compliments, there will definitely be discrepancies in terms of norms and models of language use, specific for that very community and language; i.e. a compliment that is appropriate, for example, in one country might turn to be completely improper in other cultures. The study of the speech act of compliment has shown that speakers of English use more or less formulaic, stable forms

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and meanings to express commendation; for instance, the locution of a compliment usually contains an adjective or a verb. According to the data provided by Manes and Wolfson, compliments used in the USA can be literally divided into *adjectival* and *verbal*. They affirm that more than two-thirds of the adjectival compliments are realized by using five adjectives (nice, good, beautiful, pretty, and great) and two verbs (like and love) [Manes&Wolfson, 1981:120-121]. Varfolomeeva and Kulemina consider the nature of the compliment as its social goal grouping them into: (1) etiquette and (2) instrumental compliments. [Варфоломеева&Кулемина, 2013: 31].

Surova identifies ten principles for the classification of compliments, stress being made on the person the compliment is directed to:

> "(1) the direct orientation of the statement to the addressee present in the communicative space, and acting as the recipient of the compliment;
> (2) the indirect orientation of the utterance to the addressee present in the communicative space, acting as a recipient of a compliment, but not being a participant in the interaction;
> (3) the orientation of the utterance to the recipient of the compliment, who is absent in the communicative space (however, the recipient participates in interaction with another subject – the addressee of the utterance of a non-complimentary character);
> (4) the orientation of the compliment to the addressee (when the addresser and the addressee coincide) in an interaction with another subject (the addressee of an uncomplimentary speech);
> (5) the orientation of a compliment to a single or multiple (collective) addressee;
> (6) the orientation of the compliment to the internal or external characteristics of the addressee;
> (7) the entirety /(non) entirety of the compliment;
> (8) stylization or non-stylization of the compliment;
> (9) consistency / inconsistency of the deep and surface semantics of compliment;
> (10) compliment or pseudo-compliment." [Сурова, online]

The author also comes with a broader, fragmented classification of the SA of compliment. Compliments bring positive emotions, furthermore, according to Brown & Levinson's concept, they represent a chiefly positive politeness strategy, as they indicate "the complimenter's noticing of and attending to the complimentee's interest and needs" [Brown & Levinson, 1987: 78-80]. It might be of interest to bring N. Bigunova's view that in linguistics some researchers do not clearly distinguish the concepts of compliment and praise; that is why, according to her, any statement of praise is interpreted as a compliment [Бигунова, 2013: 7]. However, we have to acknowledge that in the last few years more works in which this distinction is outlined have appeared.

The speech act of praise

It is interesting to state that the linguists who studied praise categorised it differently. For instance Austin considered praise to be a *behabitive* SA, Searle came with the idea that its place is in the *expressive* class, whereas Leech labelled it a *convivial* SA. What all three views have in common is that praise is used to convey the speaker's frame of mind and assertiveness, in such a way that praising the speaker shows his/her support and approval of something. Moreover, for a praise to be 'valid' it ought to specify at least one word that has a positive semantic judgement. Researchers have come with various typologies of the SA of praise, regarded from different perspectives. We have analysed it

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earlier [see Varzari, 2018], still we would like to come with some examples in Russian for each type of praise classification. The examples are taken either from modern Russian literature or from everyday dialogues.

Kamins and Dweck [1999: 842] differentiate three categories of praise, describing (1) the expression of personal attitude to the addressee, i.e. 'person praise'; e.g. – Знаешь, что мне в тебе нравится, Андрей? А то, что ты никогда ничего не приукрашиваешь и не преувеличиваешь. А ещё мне нравится твоё отношение к работе, вот всем бы так. Уважаю! (2) praise for the result, i.e. 'outcome praise'; e.g. – Я ведь крепко пил. – Вы уж рассказывали. Счастливый человек – бросили. Взяли себя в руки. [Шукшин, 1992: 271]. 3) praise as the expression of appreciation for the procedure/manner an activity has been performed, i.e. process praise; e.g. Я впечатлён. За такой короткий срок- и такой прогресс. Ты, наверное, очень много и усердно работал. Браво! [conv.]

Bell's classification [Bell, 2004: 1-4] is based on the role of praise in shaping one's self-esteem, identifying three classes: (1) praise as a social compliment, which ensures the recipient's contentment, expressing the addresser's positive attitude to the addressee; e.g. Вы – необыкновенная танцовщица, Вы просто не знаете об этом. На вас приятно смотреть и вы мне нравитесь... очень. [conv] (2) Praise increasing the listener's self-esteem and motivation facilitating the formation of the personality; e.g. – Молодец, пацан, всё-таки выиграл. Тренировался много и победил такого сильного соперника! [conv.] (3) Praise that establishes certain relationships and promotes cooperation; e.g. Мы добились очень хороших результатов, значит можем продолжить сотрудничество в данной области. [conv.]

Mueller and Dweck come with examples of praise differentiating (1) praise for ability, (2) praise for intelligence, (3) praise for achievement, and (4) praise for hard work, and the consequences they have on children [Mueller, Dweck, 1998: 33]. For example: (1) Да у тебя дар, руки золотые. Просто слов нет... (conv.); (2) Как ты быстро решил задачу. Да ты у нас просто умничка, гений! (conv.); (3) Очень хорошая работа, Ванечка. Ты так красиво нарисовал этот пейзаж. (conv.); (4) Каков результат! Вы так долго для этого трудились и всё-таки добились своего. Просто молодцы. [conv.]

It seems possible to generalize and synthesize the multidimensional descriptions of various typologies of the speech act of praise. It can be classified according to numerous perspectives; for instance, by means of eight basic criteria, which are segmented into even smaller ones: the first is *the contents of the praise* which can imply the following aspects:

(a) appearance, e.g. Какая ты стройная, и талия есть, и грудь, ну просто заглядение! Красава! [conv.];

(b) good results – Ура! Я сдала экзамен, бабуля. – Умница ты моя! [conv.];

(c) a correct answer, e.g. Хороший ответ; можешь, если хочешь, Петров. [conv.];

(d) a person's moral qualities, e.g. – Как ты себя чувствуешь, мой дорогой? – Очень хорошо, спасибо большое. – Какой хороший, воспитанный мальчик. [conv.];

(e) certain deeds, e.g. – Ну, как успехи, моя милая? – Замечательно, Роман Петрович! Вы просто волшебник! [Славникова, 2018:243]

(f) intentions, - Я обязательно всё выучу, Марья Сергеевна. – Вот и славно! [conv.];

(g) actions/deeds in progress – Что ты там делаешь, Маруся? Дай посмотреть. Какая красота! Шикарное платье. Поздравляю! [conv.];

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(h) something made by one's own hands; Однако... классный домик ты построил в лесу... а главное своими руками в свободное от работы время. Супер! [conv.];

(i) competence and aptitudes e.g. – И кому, как не тебе, этим заниматься! У тебя же чёртов дар писать! Ты же слагаешь словечки, как кружева плетёшь. Ты - поэт! [Яхина, 2019:195];

(j) intellectual abilities of the person, e.g. – Как это, однако, метко сказано... Да ты философ, Бах! Немой философ с того берега. [Яхина, 2019:192];

(k) someone's way of thinking, and / or a particular point of view, e.g. – Ах, как ты прав, как бесконечно прав! Не зря молоко колхозное пил... И недаром в облике твоём проглядывает что-то от Аристотеля. [Яхина, 2019:192]; and

(l) a toast given, e.g. – Я хочу выпить за самую прекрасную даму в нашем дружественном кругу. За наш свет в окошке. За удивительную женщину. – Прекрасный тост, Женя. [Славникова, 2018:382].

The second aspect is the *targeting*, in which praise can be (a) personal, i.e. addressed directly to the interlocutor, e.g. – Хорошо, – похвалил прокурор постарше. – Иметь дело с понимающим человеком – тоже удовольствие. До свидания, Сергей Витальевич. [Рубанов, 2017: 112] and (b) non-personal which can be subdivided into praise (1) addressed to someone close to the speaker; e.g. – Вера в молодости была хороша собой, – уже рассказывает мне он (муж о жене). – И сейчас хороша. – Ах, как она была хороша... [Маканин, 2010: 7] and (2) concerning the objects included in the personal sphere of the listener. e.g. – Хорошая квартира, – говорит он. – Стильная. [Маканин, 2010: 5].

The third aspect is (1) the *degree of directness* and (2) *indirectness*. It is important to note that the direct praise is always expressed explicitly, while the indirect one is conveyed implicitly. E.g.(1) – Ты выбежал, словно из страшной книги.[…] Это было... красиво, Сергей. [Рубанов, 2017: 151] (2) – Он крутой парень, – сказал Занаев. [Рубанов, 2017: 150]

The fourth one is the *degree of emotionality* that can be (a) rational (logical), e.g. – Я докторскую в прошлом году защитил. – Что ж, в твои годы успех немалый. [Арбузов, 1971: 91], and (b) emotional. E.g. – Вчера, – объяснил Занаев, – я видел Тома Форда. Он сверкал, как золотой слиток. Молодец мужик. Пятдесят лет, а выглядит на тридцать. Я даже позавидовал. [Рубанов, 2017: 330].

The fifth criterion is the *tone/level of seriousness*, according to which praise can (a) be distinctly positive (serious), e.g. – Молодец, – ответил он. Действительно большой день. [Рубанов, 2017: 258], and (b) contain irony; e.g. Ну ты даёшь? Как ты мог? Вот молодец! [conv.]

The sixth aspect is the *time orientation*, referring to the present, past or future. E.g. – А я ведь тебя сначала не понял, Петька. Душу твою не увидел. А ты молодец. Хорошую речь сказал. [Пелевин, 2010: 46].

The seventh one is the *language form*, i.e. praise which contains (a) praise-comparison, e.g. – Серафима, – сказал он, – вы явно талантливей Тома Форда. [А. Рубанов, 2017: 331]; (b) praise by means of a negative comparison, e.g. – Нет, – сказал он наконец, у тебя не глаза, а жемчужены! [Пелевин, 2010:76]; (c) praise-contrast, e.g. – И как хорошо, что я первый прочёл стихи! – После вас ни за что не решился бы! [Пелевин, 2010: 253]; (d) praise with interjections, e.g. – О, – воскликнул Кавабата, – великолепно! Великолепно! Как вы правы! Всего тридцать два слога, но стоят целой

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книги! [Пелевин, 2010: 253]; and (e) the use of generalizing words; e.g. – И все ты всегда знаешь! И везде ты всегда успеваешь. [Солженицын, 1991: 222]

The eighth principle is its *means of expression*, i. e. by (a) verbal, e.g. – Поздравляю, – сказал он, – искренне вас поздравляю! Ответ самый благоприятный. [Пелевин, 2010: 267]; (b) non-verbal means of communication; e.g. – И как ты объяснишь всё это, Василии? – А очень просто, скажу правду. –Отец улыбается и одобрительно кивает. [conv.] or (c) both- verbal and non-verbal; e.g. – Хорошо выглядишь, деточка! – улыбнулся дед и показал большой палец. It seems to us that this classification can be supplemented by including, for example, self-praise, which can be expressed both explicitly and implicitly; e.g. (a) – В школе, – сурово ответил Занаев, – я был крутым парнем. Первым гитаристом. [Рубанов, 2017: 13]. (b) Вроде получилось. Впервые получилось. [conv.]

As it can be seen from the examples above, the SA of praise expresses a positive assessment, and it definitely contains words with a positive semantic load, correspondingly the speakers use different evaluative adjectives, interjections, exclamatory words, etc.

The speech act of compliment vs the speech act of praise

Though both compliment and praise have much in common, as they express approval and/or admiration, researchers have identified similarities and differences between them. Shabeeb and Jibreen (2008) have come with Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk's and Searle and Vanderveken's (1989) characterization of compliment:

> "to compliment somebody means that you are giving, him, her personal positive evaluation either about his, her appearance, attire, physical shape or any thing related to that person". [Shabeeb and Jibreen, 2008: 10-11]

The key idea here is that a person approves of another one, i.e. any compliment will be always directed to another person. As for praising, in their view, it may be directed not only to a specific person, but also to "his/her own home (country, army, ancestors, etc.)". The main difference between praise and compliment is that for praise the positive assessment is its main goal, while for a compliment it is a way to report to the addressee one's good attitude, feelings, propitiousness, etc. Differences between the SAs of compliment and the SAs of praise are also to be found in their propositional content. For instance, praise involves a positive assessment of the qualities, knowledge, and skills of the addressee, i.e. a person's deeds, actions, qualities manifested under some circumstances. To get praise, one needs to do something deserving praise, which means that praise, is an assessment of achievements. As for the compliment it is not limited in this regard, i.e. one can be complimented on having green eyes, fair/dark complexion, etc., but one cannot be praised for the above-mentioned assets [Иссерс, 2006, 178-180]. The similarity between the SAs under discussion might be that they can both be sincere and false. Shabeeb and Jibreen agree with Searle and Vanderveken's idea concerning some expressive acts denoting approval: "compliments, praising, lauding and extolling". Conversely, a *compliment* displays the "approval of the hearer, divergent to *praising, lauding* and *extolling* that do not convey the idea that "the hearer is necessarily related to the thing being praised, lauded or extolled" [Searle and Vanderveken, apud Shabeeb & Jibreen, 2008: 11]. In addition to the above-mentioned SAs, the term *commendation* is added, which is similar to all of them since it also expresses approbation. However, it differs from the term complimenting in the same way as the terms lauding, praising and extolling. Let us consider the following table in which five expressive SAs are defined and translated into Romanian and Russian.

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Term	Translation	Definition
(to) Compliment	*Rom.* Compliment, laudă, măgulire, amabilitate. A complimenta, a face complimente, a măguli, a flata(p. 143) *Rus.* Комплимент, похвала, любезность. (гл.) Говорить комплименты, хвалить, льстить (p. 148)	(n) a remark that expresses praise or admiration of somebody. (v) to tell sb that you like or admire something they have done, their appearance, etc. (p. 247)
(to) Praise	*Rom.* Laudă, elogiu, preamărire, slăvire. A lăuda, a (prea)slăvi, a preamări (p. 552) *Rus.* (по) хвала, восхваление. (гл.) Хвалить, восхвалять, превозносить. (p. 546)	(n) words that show approval of or admiration for sb/sth (v) to express your approval of or admiration for sb/sth (p. 990) (v) to express admiration for or approval of the achievements or characteristics of a person or thing.[1]
(to) Laud (-ing)	*Rom.* Laudă, proslăvire, elogiu . a lăuda, a proslăvi, a ridica în slăvi, a elogia (p. 420) *Rus.* Хвала. (гл.) хвалить, прославлять, превозносить (p. 402)	If people laud someone, they praise and admire them.[2] (v) to praise sb/sth. (p. 725)
To extol	*Rom.* A preamări, a proslăvi, a lăuda, a ridica în slăvi (p. 258) *Rus.* превозносить (p. 255)	(v) formal, to praise sb/sth very much (p. 444), (v) to praise enthusiastically; to praise something or someone very much[3].
Commendation **To commend**	*Rom.* Laudă, elogiu, merit, omagii, complimente, (p. 140) *Rus.* Похвала, (гл.) хвалить (p. 145). Славить, прославлять.	(n) (formal) praise, approval; an award or official statement giving public praise for sb/sth. (v) to praise sb or sth especially publicly (p. 240)

Comparing the suggested translations, we can determine that all of them contain the Romanian term *laudă* and the Russian word *(по)хвала* (except *extol*). Perhaps, the English word *praise,* the Romanian *laudă* and the Russian *(по)хвала* can be regarded as umbrella terms, as they possess a broader notion than the other ones, and they can be found in the definitions mentioned above.

Results and conclusions

To be polite, speakers use certain evaluative SA such as compliments, praise, lauding, extolling, commendation, flattery, approval, etc. The above-mentioned speech acts often raise a number of questions concerning their exact meaning and use, namely: how appropriate they are for a particular context, how sincere they sound, what their thematic boundaries are. A compliment is an affirmation that states praise and/or admiration of somebody. Praise can be described as verbal, explicit, intentional, sincere and positive

[1] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/praise?q=praising
[2] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/laud
[3] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/extol

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feedback in relation to others. Moreover, by means of praise the addresser informs the addressee about the correctness of his/her action, expresses his/her positive attitude to the addressee's individual actions and success. Obviously, the main goal of compliments and praise is the listener's positive emotional reaction. A significant attribute of the SA of praise is the fact that it is a distinct social element, conditioned by a certain situation marker of expression of the speaker's attitude to the recipient. It should be noted that praise always refers to a specific addressee, which is specified by the context. This speech act should be explicit, contain evaluation, personal reference, as well as a certain value. This chiefly depends on what language means the addressee will use in this SA and how it will be perceived by the recipient. We agree with the researchers who claim that compliments and praise are not identical SAs, although sometimes they are difficult to distinguish, because in a certain context "praise can acquire the features of a compliment", and if the recipient feels the need to respond to praise, it is perceived as a compliment. [Serebreakova, 2002]. According to Formanovskaya (1998) the discrepancy between praise and compliment lies in the characterization of the interlocutor's action. It is indisputable that both the SA of compliment and the SA of praise express a positive evaluation, but while praising - the assessment is given by the one who is higher on the hierarchy ladder, not vice versa. [Bartosh & Nechaeva, 2008: 143].

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