Pakistani ESL/EFL Teachers' Compliment Behaviour in English

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Abstract

This study investigates the Compliment Response behaviours (CR) by ES/EFL teachers in Pakistan. Data were collected from eight interlocutors; four males and four females to create homogeneity in the results. A questionnaire was used for instrumentation, based on four diverse scenarios such as appearance, character, ability, and possession. A Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was considered the prioritized tool based on its strengths for data collection. The findings revealed that all interlocutors adapted CR behaviours in various settings with certain differences across males and females, as well as in individual categories. The interlocutors employed CR behaviour with an overall 77%. The category of appearance and ability predominantly occupied the attention of the interlocutors with the highest percentage of CR behaviour such as 83.33% and 83.33%. Character demonstrated the second-highest category with 79.16%, and possession showed the least employed CR behaviour with 62.05%. Moreover, the findings revealed sharper variations between the CR behaviour of male and female interlocutors. The females adapted CR with an overall 85.41% while the males employed 68.75% which showed a significant variation between the two groups.

Keywords: compliments, compliment responses, L2 teachers, public sector universities

Introduction

A compliment is generally defined as an expression of praise, admiration, commendation, encouragement, or congratulation. A compliment may also be considered formal, respectful, or an expression of civility, courtesy, and regard. Courteous greetings and good wishes are also referred to as compliments. People commonly interchange compliments to keep their relationship intact. The understanding and knowledge of CR behaviour by the interlocutors indicate linguistic competence and cultural affiliations in a given scenario.

Hobbs's (2003) terms compliment a polite speech act used by the interlocutors that confer credit on the addressee in various scenarios as a result of positive evaluations. He states that all non-native speakers require to understand polite speech acts beyond grammar and syntax: that is pragmatic competence in that language in order to give or respond to a compliment. In Pakistan, many languages are used to communicate. English is the official language of Pakistan and Pakistanis are supposed to be competent enough to communicate

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in English. The people of Pakistan consider English to be the gateway to success and key to national progress. Compliments are expressions of civility, courtesy, respect, or regard. The people of Pakistan are courteous and pay compliments in many situations. English is taught in Pakistani educational institutions as a compulsory subject and Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers of English are considered to be skilled in paying CR behaviour in various scenarios.

The issues lie with the practical manifestation of English by ESL/EFL speakers during conversations with native or non-native people. ESL/EFL teachers might have degrees in English or have visited foreign countries but still, it is a challenge to adapt the CR behaviour in the same way as native speakers in various settings. Compliment and compliment responses are ubiquitous behaviours in communication between the interlocutors and may be different from culture to culture. The use of compliments varies according to the norms of societies, showing respect, humbleness, and cooperation, based on the relation of addressee and addresser. The current study aims to address the following research questions.

> 1. Do ESL/EFL teachers in Pakistan employ CR behaviour in speaking English?
> 2. To what extent do they adopt CR behaviour in English?
> 3. Is there any variation in the frequency of CR behaviour between male and female ESL/EFL teachers in Pakistan?

The present study attempts to investigate the Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers' compliment behaviour in English in public sector universities in Pakistan. To investigate this, the researcher collected data from different L2 teachers of English teaching English linguistics and Literature in Islamabad, Pakistan. The current research attempts to bridge the gap because the compliments and compliment response behaviours of ESL/EFL teachers who are considered proficient speakers of English, remained unaddressed in the field of applied linguistics. The study focuses on exploring the important aspect of CR behaviour by Pakistani ESL/EFL speakers because these teachers have earned their MA, MPhil, and PhD degrees in English language and Literature, as well as working as ESL/EFL teachers in various institutions. The study reveals significant findings regarding their CR strategic behaviours as well as demonstrates variation across male and female interlocutors.

Literature Review
Status of English in Pakistan

Pakistan is a multilingual country and the linguistic atlas of Pakistan is pretty intricate because of multiple cultures and languages; as each of the four provinces uses one dominant language along with some minority languages and several dialects. English is considered, the language of power compared to other local languages such as Urdu which is a national language, besides other many regional languages (Rassool and Mansoor, 2007, 2009). Across the country, all public and private sector institutions try hard to promote English in order to compete with the available competitors in the market and get recognition. English is by far considered a modern language that is thought to be the only source of knowledge, access to international markets, and a way of communication. Every individual attempt to excel in English because it functions as a standard gauge for measuring human knowledge and intellect as was the case with Ancient Greek and Latin languages. McArthur (2002) reports that English is used as a second language "by a national minority of c.3 million in a population of c.133 million". It is generally believed by people in Pakistan that English is a key to success for providing abundant better job opportunities and privileged life. Every parent in the country desires to educate their children in English medium institutions and equip them with English as much as possible for a promising career. This inclination bifurcates society into various educational systems and penetrates class distinctions.

Compliment Response Behavior

Mascunana, Patron, Caturay and Duran (2019) examined Compliment Response behaviours of Filipino L2 learners. The data were collected through Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs). The study employed four situational topics such as possession, ability, character, and appearance. The findings revealed that Filipino EFL learners used a peculiar way of accepting compliment behaviours that reflected avoiding self-praise. The findings demonstrated that Filipino L2 learners were proficient enough to competently employ CR behaviour in the communicative and pragmatic aspects of a foreign language. Despite being proficient in L2, the study revealed the influences of L2 culture on the use of Compliment behaviours on the interlocutors.

Singh (2017) proposes Active Constructive Complimenting (ACC) and Active Constructive Accepting (ACA) build a positive relationship and extend the value of the horizon through conversation that involves appreciation between interlocutors. Appreciation in daily interaction is a positive aspect of human sublimity that produces a society based on respect and joy. Adopting positive speech acts in communication enhances the opportunities for a happy productive

society. Responding to a compliment is highly significant for the receiver to maintain a balance in communicative speech acts, neither reject the addresser nor praise oneself (Shahsavari, Alimohammadi, & Rasekh, 2014).

Hawbaker (2017) examined the incident that happened to a woman in an organization in Chicago and revealed that the emphasis on equity in workplaces gains importance due to nuances in conversation that often drastically impact the context under compliments. Hawbaker makes a distinction between the two CR behaviours in a given scenario; first, 'I like your pants'; and second, 'I like the way your legs look in those pants'. The compliment responses associated with sexual harassment are considered the linguistic expression that objectifies someone's body or a part of the body.

Compliment response behaviour is dependent on the respective culture of the interlocutors and in cross-cultural communication, both the native and non-native speakers adjust their speech to develop inter-cultural behaviours in interaction (Placencia, & Lower, 2017; & Moalla, 2013). One of the significant aspects of learning L2 is to improve the pragmatic competence of the target language to cope with intercultural communication effectively (Drbseh, 2015). In the last decade, intercultural communication through social media opened up a new horizon which gave way to a unique language, representing a common culture (Dortkulak, 2018).

Holmes (1986) defines a compliment as a positive speech act used by the addresser to glorify the addressee. Generally, the CR behaviours demonstrate the value given to a character, ability, and possessions. Wolfson (1983) states that compliments "grease the social wheels and thus serve as social lubricants". Nonetheless, CR behaviour is a significant aspect of communication that gears the interlocutors to use appropriate linguistic expressions and avoid any forthcoming discrepancy that may cause socio-pragmatic failure (Khan, & Sohail, 2021).

The current research fills a void because the Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers' CR behaviour did not get the attention of the researchers in applied perspectives. Previous scholars focused only on the compliment response behaviours of students but the current study focuses on teachers who are considered proficient speakers of L2 and working as English teachers in various higher educational institutions in Pakistan. This study investigates a significant aspect of linguistic competence and would shed light on the possible drives behind these responses, variations, and possible repercussions responsible for this CR behaviour.

Methodology

This study explores Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers' CR behaviour in higher institutions. The mixed-method research design was chosen as an appropriate design for the current study (Robson, (1993; Denzin, 2008; & Creswell 2017). The data was collected through a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as a suitable technique given its strengths for the elicitation of behaviour based on providing a natural setting to the interlocutors.

Participants

Eight non-native volunteer ESL/EFL teachers from different universities in Islamabad, Pakistan, participated in the current study. The study has its limitations because the teachers in many universities were not willing to participate due to the fear of exposing their language proficiency in public, though, they were informed that their information would not be shared with anyone except the researcher and the data would be destroyed after the completion of the project. The participants' ages ranged from 30 to 60 and most of them had not visited any foreign country. They were formerly trained in the English language as a compulsory course since primary school. All of the participants almost studied the English language in various institutions in Pakistan for sixteen to eighteen years and beyond. Certain measures were taken before the collection of data. All teachers had to have a degree in English and at least 3 years of teaching experience at the university level. The participants included in the study consisted of four male and four female teachers to create homogeneity in the results. A non-probabilistic sampling procedure was adopted for the current study due to the exploratory nature of the research.

Data Collection Tool

A Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was considered an appropriate technique for the collection of data from participants. The study employed the theoretical framework suggested by (Holmes, 1986, 1988). Holmes presented her taxonomy regarding CR behaviour that constitutes four major scenarios that require interlocutors to use compliments. The four categories used in Holmes' taxonomy include ability, appearance, character, and possession. Appearance was considered as the category in which the speaker praised the outer appearance and the look of the addressee. Character was considered as the category in which the addresser praised the personal qualities of the addressee like kindness, etc. Ability was considered as the category in which the interlocutor praised the quality of something produced through the addressee's skill or effort. Possession was considered as

the category in which the speaker praised a substantial object owned by the addressee. The DCT used for investigating the use of CR behaviour consisted of a total of twelve items (questions based on different situations). There were three items and one question related to each situation. The responses from the respondents were considered based on the native norms indicating the compliment response behaviours.

The Discourse Completion Test (DCT) included questions with four situational settings: appearance, character, ability, and possession. The total number of items for each situation was three so the total number of items in the DCT was 12 (4 x3 =12), the total number of teachers was eight, and each teacher responded to three questions for each situation. So, the total number of questions for each situation was 24 (8 x 3 = 24). The total number of compliment questions for the four situations (4 x 3=12) for the eight (8) teachers was 96 (12 x 8=96).

Findings

The findings revealed that Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers including both male and female interlocutors used compliments in their interaction as L2 speakers. Moreover, the findings demonstrated variation in compliment behaviours between groups (male and female) as well as between individuals, but with a lesser variation. The accumulative compliment behaviours including both males and females based on diverse scenarios are demonstrated in table 1. The statistical analysis in table 1 demonstrates the overall score of CR behaviour by all interlocutors as well as shows the individual pattern. Table 1 provides answers to research questions 1 and 2.

> 1. Do ESL/EFL teachers in Pakistan employ CR behaviour in speaking English?
> 2. To what extent do they adopt CR behaviour in English?

Table 1
Distribution of local and overall pattern of CR behaviour by all interlocutors

Participants	Appearance (24)	Character (24)	Ability (24)	Possession (24)
Total Questions (12x8=96)				

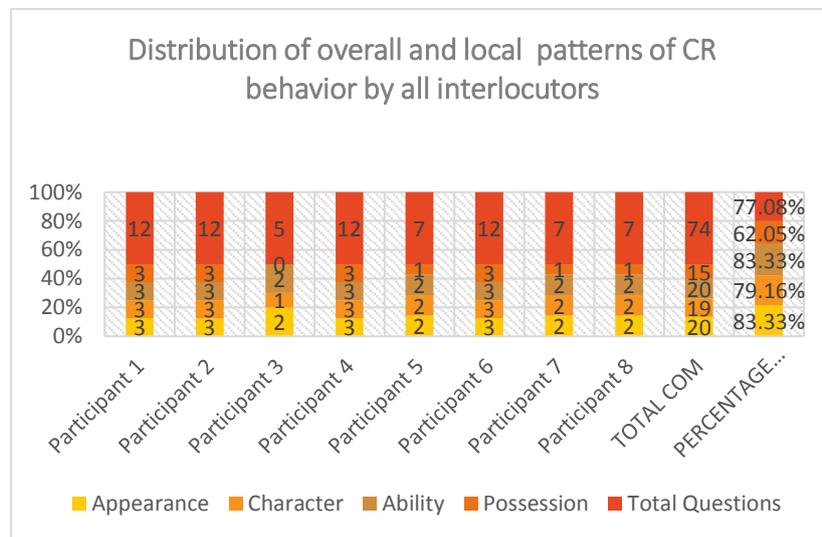|					
Participant 1	3	3	3	3	12
Participant 2	3	3	3	3	12
Participant 3	2	1	2	0	5
Participant 4	3	3	3	3	12
Participant 5	2	2	2	1	7
Participant 6	3	3	3	3	12
Participant 7	2	2	2	1	7
Participant 8	2	2	2	1	7
Total comp	20	19	20	15	74
Percentage	83.33%	79.16%	83.33%	62.05%	77.08%

Figure1. Distribution of local and overall patterns of CR Behaviour by all interlocutors

The data in Table 1 is further distributed into tables 2 and 3 to answer research question 3:

3. Is there any variation in the frequency of CR behaviour between male and female interlocutors in Pakistan?

Table 1 reveals the overall and local CR behaviour adopted by female interlocutors and provides the basis for comparison between the groups and individuals.

Table 2
Distribution of local and overall patterns of CR behaviour by female interlocutors

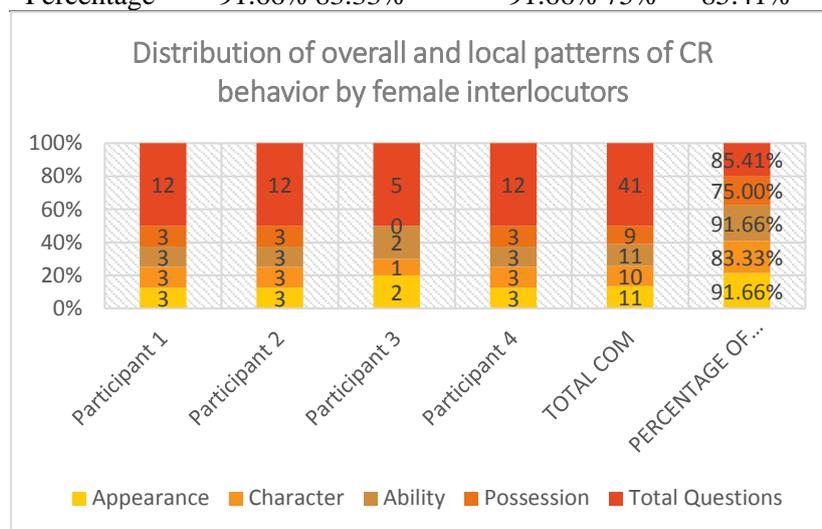| Participants	Appearance (12)	Character (12)	Ability (12)	Possession (12)	Total Questions (12x4=48)
Participant 1	3	3	3	3	12
Participant 2	3	3	3	3	12
Participant 3	2	1	2	0	5
Participant 4	3	3	3	3	12
Total comp	11	10	11	9	41
Percentage	91.66%	83.33%	91.66%	75%	85.41%

Figure 2. Distribution of local and overall patterns of CR behaviour by female interlocutors

Table 3 presents the overall and local CR behaviour employed by male interlocutors and provides the basis for comparison between the groups and individuals.

Table 3

Distribution of local and overall patterns of CR behaviour by male interlocutors

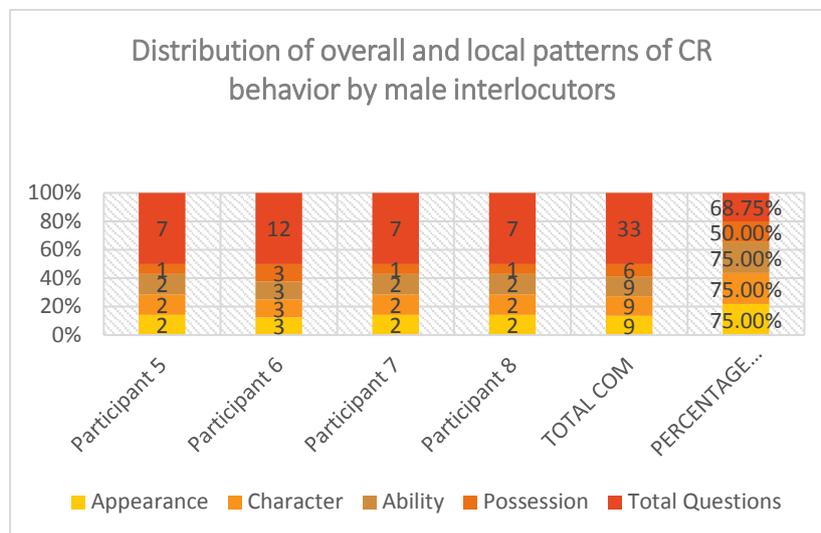| Participants	Appearance (12)	Character (12)	Ability (12)	Possession (12)	Total Questions (12x4=48)
Participant 5	2	2	2	1	7
Participant 6	3	3	3	3	12
Participant 7	2	2	2	1	7
Participant 8	2	2	2	1	7
Total com	9	9	9	6	33
Percentage	75%	75%	75%	50%	68.75%

Figure 3. Distribution of local and overall patterns of CR behaviour by male interlocutors

Discussion

Research questions 1, and 2 asked about the CR behaviour, and frequency adapted by ESL/EFL teachers in Pakistan. Tables 1 and 2 presented the frequency score of individual participants supplemented with the overall cumulative percentage. The participants employed overall CR behaviour with 77.08% including all four major categories used in the current study. The total cumulative percentage in the bottom row demonstrated that the participants used the CR behaviour with 83.33% in the category of 'appearance' as well as revealed similar findings in 'ability' with 83.33%. The findings indicated that these two categories: 'appearance' and 'ability' employed most frequently by overall interlocutors in their interaction. The second highest demonstrated CR behaviour was 'character' adopted with 79.16%, and the least employed CR behaviour used with 62.05% was 'possession' presented in table 1.

The frequent compliments regarding appearance used by the interlocutors were 'you are looking great', 'you are looking beautiful', 'you have a wonderful dress', and 'you are so beautiful'. For ability the most common compliments used by the speakers pertain to 'you are a hard worker', 'your speaking is amazing' and 'you are a good teacher'. For possessions, they used frequent expressions such as 'I love your clothes', 'your car is expensive', and girls also complimented on

hairstyles for example 'I like your hairstyle'. The most frequent compliments used by the interlocutors concerning the character included 'I like your sincerity', and a typical expression such as 'thank you'.

The overall patterns of CR behaviour were used with the highest frequency by individual interlocutors associated with participants 1, 2, 4, and 6. The medium used frequency goes to participants 5, 7, and 8 while the least frequent CR behaviour goes to participant 3. The findings demonstrated pronounced variations in individuals as well as in groups between male and female interlocutors in their CR behaviour.

Female interlocutors employed CR behaviour with an overall 85.41% in all four categories. The overall percentile score presented in table 2 about female CR behaviours echoes with the overall percentile score revealed in table 1 adapted by both male and female interlocutors. Female interlocutors revealed consistent CR behaviour except for participant 3, her overall score revealed considerably lower compared to the rest of the three females in the same group. The significant point revealed regarding the CR behaviour by the female interlocutors, they employed the highest frequency in the category of 'appearance' with 91.66%, as well as demonstrated a similar pattern in the category of 'ability' at 91.66%. The percentage in the category of 'character' slightly dropped down to 83.33%. The category of 'possession' revealed the least used frequency by female interlocutors across this group with 75% which indicated the lowest score across all four categories.

The male interlocutors demonstrated a different pattern of CR behaviour in their overall percentile score as well as in individual responses. Table 3 presented the overall CR behaviour employed by male interlocutors. Males adapted CR behaviour with an overall 68.75% score which revealed considerably lower compared to the percentile score obtained by female interlocutors in table 2. Moreover, participant 6 used the CR behaviour with a 12-frequency score while the rest of all three interlocutors in the same group employed CR behaviour with a 7-frequency score which indicated sharper inter and intra-behavioural variation among interlocutors. The findings revealed that male interlocutors adapted CR behaviour in the categories of 'appearance' with 75%, 'character' with 75%, and 'ability' with 75%. They adopted a very consistent pattern in the three categories opposite to the CR behaviour demonstrated by their female counterparts. Surprisingly, the male interlocutors employed the least CR behaviour in the category of 'possession' with 50% indicating the lowest percentile score across the data.

The overall frequency of CR behaviour indicated that Pakistani EFL/EFL teachers, teaching English in higher institutions were linguistically more competent in the categories of 'appearance' and 'ability' compared to 'character' and 'possessions' such as 83%, 83%, 79%, and 62.05% respectively. They adopted fewer compliments in situations related to 'character', while they revealed a significant decrease in CR behaviour in scenarios related to 'possession'.

The overall frequency across the interlocutors aligned with CR behaviour was adapted by female participants. The findings reflected that the female interlocutors' focus of attention during CR behaviour stayed on 'appearance' and 'ability'. The results indicated that their focus of attention gradually shifted to 'character' and lastly to 'possession' which received the least attention from female interlocutors in terms of CR behaviour such as 91.66%, 91.66%, 83.33%, and 75% respectively.

The findings revealed that the male interlocutors behaved consistently in the categories of 'appearance', 'character', and 'ability' but in the category of 'possession' they demonstrated inattentive behaviour such as 75%, 75%, 75%, and 68.75% respectively. The male interlocutors showed similar behaviour to their female counterparts as both of them adapted the least CR behaviour in the category of 'possession'.

Despite certain similarities in the behaviour of CR patterns between male and female interlocutors, the findings demonstrated pronounced differences that can be accounted for based on these grounds. Pakistani societies are largely based on conventions and cultural norms that penetrate complexity into the CR behaviour as indicated by the behaviour of different interlocutors. Moreover, Pakistan is largely a patriarchal form of society, male folks are considered dominant and females are deemed less authoritative. The females are supposed to use more polite language in front of their males and be submissive as a norm. This can be the factor that led to different CR behaviour by both groups. Ming-Chung (2005) argues that people with lower or higher status may refrain to use compliments because they consider it to be flattery.

Moreover, Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers' compliments in English may deviate from the naturalistic pattern of compliment and compliment responses used by native speakers in their daily conversation. The findings revealed that the frequently used pattern by Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers' compliment and compliment responses pertain to 'thank you' but English native speakers may supplement their responses with more information. This can be due to the reason that Pakistani ESL/EFL learners learn English most of the time in pedagogical settings from textbooks, and non-native teachers, and

have the least exposure to a naturalistic environment. This aspect of compliment and compliment responses requires more research to answer these questions such as 1) Do Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers use CR behaviour with similar frequency and patterns adopted by the native interlocutors? 2) Are there any influences of L1 on the use of CR behaviour in L2? The pragmatic impacts of L1 on the CR behaviour of L2 teachers largely remained unexplored due to little attention paid by the researchers in the field. These questions will be left to future researchers to find definite answers to them, due to the limitations of the current study these questions are out of the current scope of this research.

Limitation of the Study

      The current study has certain limitations on the research context, different settings may yield different results. The sample selected for the current study was limited due to the availability of the ESL/EFL teachers, teaching in higher institutions, data from more participants may reveal different findings. Second, the data was collected from participants who all had different L1 backgrounds and cultures, collecting data from participants with the homogeneous L1 background may change the findings. Third, DCT was the tool used for the collection of data which may not be a reliable source, data collection in natural settings may give different findings.

      Despite certain limitations, the study contributes to the existing body of language and provides significant insight into the CR behaviours of the ESL/EFL teachers in Pakistan. The study demonstrates the interlocutors' CR behaviour as non-native L2 speakers and reveals the pattern adapted by them regarding various frequencies.

Conclusion

      The study focused to investigate Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers' CR behaviour at the university level. The research design aligned with the data collection tool and nature of the study by providing a naturalistic setting to the interlocutors for the elicitation of responses. The pattern of the naturalistic setting and the collection of data from male and female interlocutors strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings. The findings revealed that Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers at the university level employ CR behaviour with various degrees. A sharper variation was revealed between male and female interlocutors, the socio-cultural and conventional pattern of Pakistani society may have a role in causing the variation. Moreover, the data was collected from participants, who belonged to different sects and societies of the country. Nonetheless, the L1 of the participants may have impacted

the patterns of CR behaviour in the current study because all the interlocutors had a different L1 background. More research is required to investigate the pattern of Pakistani ESL/EFL teachers' CR behaviour to be compared to that of native speakers' CR behaviour which will indicate the frequency and patterns used by native speakers in natural conversation.

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