

**Abstract:** This study focuses on the pragmatics of compliments and compliment responses in Russian and German. The data sources used in the study were polls, direct communication, Internet forums and chats, literary and journalistic text corpora, and dictionaries. Subjects, functions and realization of compliments and compliment responses as well as situational context of compliments are compared between the cultures. The most relevant cultural differences were concentrated in the gender roles in a compliment situation as well as in the explicitness and reasonability of compliments. It was found that the most culturally typical compliments and compliment responses are not necessarily the most efficient, i.e. the addressee would not recognize them as such first and foremost. The difference between the most frequent and the most efficient speech acts was used as a criterion for distinguishing between the pragmatic norms of speech behaviour and the speech politeness.

**Keywords:** compliment, compliment response, speech politeness, speech act, Russian, German, gender roles