

“I thought it was excellent!”

Giving a compliment

A speaking lesson by Lindsay Clandfield

Level: Pre-Intermediate

Time: 40 minutes

Aims: reviewing and extending positive adjectives, giving and receiving compliments; students discuss when it is appropriate to give compliments in their culture.

Stage one: Write on the board the following two phrases. If you think your students won't know the meaning of the word “compliment”, give a quick explanation:

give/ receive a compliment

Ask students to try and remember, individually, a time they received a compliment. Give them additional questions to help them remember. Some questions you can ask are:

Who gave you the compliment? When was it?

Why? Was it for something you did? For your clothes? Your appearance?

Something you have?

What did they say?

How did you feel?

What did you say?

After giving them a minute to think about, ask students to work in pairs and tell each other about their compliments.

Stage two: Feedback as a whole class on this stage. You could start this feedback by telling them about a time when someone complimented you.

Stage three: Explain the following situation.

Mr Brown and Ms Green are colleagues at work. Ms Green has just given a very good presentation at a conference. Mr. Brown wants to give her a compliment on it. What does he say?

Ask students to work in pairs and to prepare a short dialogue (minimum 4 lines) between Mr. Brown and Ms. Green. Circulate and help different pairs as needed.

Stage four: Ask different pairs to read their dialogues out loud. Correct any serious errors, but don't spend too much time on this now.

Stage five: Explain that you are going to give them another example of the dialogue. Read out the following sentence:

I saw your presentation at the conference.

Ask the students to repeat it, then read out the next line and ask students to repeat.

You did?

Ask students to repeat this “pair” of sentences together, first as a class, then in open pairs (two students across the class) then in closed pairs (two students working together). Once they are familiar with it then move on to the next line.

I thought it was an excellent.

Ask students to repeat the sentence once or twice. Then repeat the whole thing from the beginning, and end with:

Oh, thank you very much.

Ask students to write the dialogue down from memory. Give them a couple of minutes, then write it up on the board for them to check against.

Stage six: Underline the word excellent and elicit other positive adjectives that could go in its place.

Possible answers:

really/ very good
superb

really/ very interesting /informative
fantastic

Point out and drill the pronunciation of each adjective, and that in the dialogue above, the word *thought* and the adjective (plus modifier if any) should be stressed.
(I thought it was excellent; I thought it was really interesting)

Stage seven: Distribute the handout and direct students’ attention to the exercise 1. Go through the language in the table. Make sure to point out the following:

- the adjectives *excellent*, *beautiful* etc are non-gradable (you cannot use *very*, *really* with them)
- only *wonderful*, *delicious*, *nice* and *good* can be used with the food words.

Ask the students to prepare a new dialogue which includes one of the compliments for from the box (exercise 2)

Stage eight: Ask different students to present their dialogues.

Stage nine: Ask students to read the cultural information about compliments in North America and to discuss the questions at the bottom. You could run this as a whole class discussion.

Note: the cultural information is designed to provoke conversation and intercultural awareness and should not be read as “absolute” truth regarding compliments. The whole area of giving and receiving compliments is very variable. You may wish to complement this information with that of your own experience.

Giving a compliment

I saw your presentation at the conference.

You did?

I thought it was excellent.

Thank you very much.

1. Use the words in the tables to make different compliments.

Compliments

What That's That was It was	a an -	beautiful excellent delicious amazing superb wonderful	nice good	dress. shirt. meal. cake. job. party. presentation. ...
		really very		
You	dance speak English cook drive ...	(very) well.		

Responses

Thank you (very much).		
I'm	glad happy	you like it. you liked it.

2. Work in pairs. Create a short dialogue. Include a compliment and response from 1. Present your dialogues to another pair.

3. Read the "rules" from an American consultant on giving compliments and answer the questions.

How to give a compliment: the rules

1. A compliment is a two-way gift: it's good for the giver and the receiver.
2. Be sincere in compliments. A false compliment is easy to detect and sounds very bad.
3. Be specific in compliments.
4. Don't compare. A compliment doesn't sound very good if it's comparing it to something else.
5. When someone compliments you, smile and say 'Thank you'. Don't disagree with the person who is giving you a compliment.
6. If there are other people who deserve credit, don't forget to mention them if you receive a compliment.

1. When do people give compliments in your country?
2. Are these 'rules' similar to your country? What would you tell an American about giving compliments in your country?