

# Compliments styles across gender in artists’ Instagram comments: A study of language and emoji usage

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## ABSTRACT

Language serves a pivotal role in social interaction, including the performance of compliments as a key speech act for building rapport. This study conducts a sociolinguistic analysis of gendered differences in language style and emoji use within compliment exchanges on Instagram. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the research utilizes a documentation approach to collect a corpus of 160 comments, evenly sampled from male and female users. These comments were extracted from ten Hollywood celebrity Instagram accounts (specifically, actors known for superhero film roles, each with over 10 million followers). Guided by Tannen’s (1990) Genderlect Style Theory, the analysis reveals significant gendered patterns. In same-gender interactions, men predominantly employ a “report talk” style, characterized by informative and referential language, whereas women favor “rapport talk,” which is more affiliative and collaborative. However, in cross-gender interactions, both genders demonstrate stylistic flexibility, utilizing a more balanced mix of report and rapport talk. Regarding paralinguistic features, male users show a greater tendency toward evaluative emojis, while female users more frequently employ expressive emojis. In terms of compliment topics, aligned with Holmes’s (1986) taxonomy, both men and women directed compliments across all major categories: appearance, ability/performance, possessions,

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and personality/friendship, indicating a shared thematic repertoire despite stylistic divergence.

**Keywords:** *Compliment style; Gender differences; Instagram comments; Genderlect style; Emoji usage*

## **1. Introduction**

Social media has encouraged unlimited cross-gender interactions, where men and women can comment without being bound by prevailing language standards. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook have become key platforms shaping communication styles, especially among the younger generation (Putri & Putra, 2024). This is in line with the findings of Küchler et al. (2023), which showed that comments written by female authors were more polite than those written by male authors. Furthermore, comments made by female users tended to be more conversational and referred to other users as friends, while male comments often contained slang, symbols and acronyms, short and incomplete sentences, jokes, personal perspectives, and humor (Cantina & Alvarico, 2022). This phenomenon is evident in the form of compliments given in social media posts—for example, women's posts are often filled with compliments from men, while men's posts often receive compliments from women, often using different styles. This suggests that while social media allows for freedom of expression, gender-based communication patterns are still reflected in how people give compliments in the digital world.

Regarding the delivery of compliments between genders on social media, differences in language styles can be a topic for specific research. Compliments are a form of positive expression that demonstrates our opinion of something we deem valuable (Chairani & Subiyantoro, 2022). In the real world, compliments can be delivered using other pragmatic language, such as gestures, facial expressions, and so on. However, this is different when compliments are delivered online. In this case, language is a key factor in how well compliments are delivered. For example, women are generally more expressive in their compliments, while men are more neutral and concise. However, in this context, there are various possibilities where women deliver compliments using concise and neutral language while men use expressive and lengthy language.

In addition to the different styles of language used for compliments, different emojis also have a unique appeal in constructing meaningful communication on social media. Comments delivered solely through written language often fail to convey an emotional impression to the recipient of the compliment. In this context, emojis emerge as a new medium that can strengthen expressions and make compliments feel more meaningful. Emojis have been considered a tool for conveying thoughts and feelings in online communication and are a non-verbal cue in speaking (Wirza et al., 2020). Initially, emojis were created to express emotions or depict expressions clearly; however, their use can vary from one individual to another, especially between genders (Alburaidi, 2023).

Pavalanathan and Eisenstein in Alburaidi (2023) also stated that emojis have the same function as human language; in other words, emojis can represent facial expressions used in non-verbal language.

Among various social media platforms, Instagram holds a prominent position in shaping digital interaction patterns. As of 2025, Instagram is the third-largest social network in the world, with 2 billion monthly active users accessing the app globally, according to data from Instagram Monthly Active Users (IMAU). In this context, social media has opened up opportunities for influencers—users with large followings and established credibility—to reach a wider audience and increase their popularity (Parkins & Parkins, 2021). Therefore, one interesting aspect worthy of further study in this context is the comments section on the Instagram accounts of famous artists. These comments not only reflect users' language practices but also reflect differences in communication styles between men and women, particularly when it comes to giving compliments.

Several previous studies have shown that gender plays a significant role in influencing communication patterns on social media (Karatsoli & Nathanail, 2020; Nadim & Fladmoe, 2021; Parkins & Parkins, 2021; Pignolet et al., 2024). In this context, men and women tend to use different language styles when interacting on social media (Cantina & Alvarico, 2022; K uchler et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2020). In addition to social media, gender-based differences also appear in communication in other online media, such as email and online news (Al-Moqbali & Al-Amrani, 2021; Baek et al., 2021). Regarding the use of emojis, several previous studies have shown that there are no significant differences between men and women in the use of emojis because emojis function to create a comfortable atmosphere in online communication tools for both genders (Alburaidi, 2023; Wirza et al., 2020). However, different studies show that there are significant differences in the way men and women use emojis to express emotions (Cantina & Alvarico, 2022; Chen et al., 2018). Meanwhile, research on compliments has been conducted by Chairani and Subiyantoro (2022), who found that women receive more compliments than men. This study used the theory of compliment patterns by Manes and Wolfson (1981).

Those previous studies have shown significant results regarding language variation and emoji use in social media contexts. However, most of these studies generally focus solely on language variation between men and women in online communication without specifically highlighting the language style used in compliments. Furthermore, many previous studies have only focused on one aspect, either language or emoji use, without combining both of them. Therefore, this study seeks to combine these two aspects by focusing on complimentary comments.

This study aims to analyze the differences in language styles between men and women in giving compliments to Hollywood artists through the Instagram comment column. The main analysis was conducted using Deborah Tannen's (1990) Genderlect Style to identify differences in gender-based communication styles, supported by Holmes' (1988) findings that classify compliment topics. In addition to understanding the

linguistic aspects, this study also aims to explore the differences in emoji use between men and women and their social functions. In this case, the emoji analysis is based on Li and Yang (2018) classification of emoji functions and the genderlect style of Tannen (1990).

Academically, this research expands the study of the relationship between gender and language in the context of digital communication by combining linguistic and semiotic (emoji) analysis, which are rarely studied together. The findings are expected to deepen understanding of the social function of compliments, particularly how men and women use language and emojis to build social closeness (*rapport*) or assert admiration and status (*report*). Practically, this research provides insights for social media users to be able to use compliments more appropriately, politely, and effectively according to context and helps digital communication practitioners understand the dynamics of cross-gender interactions in online spaces.

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1. Language and gender differences*

According to WHO, gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men—such as norms, roles, and relationships between groups of women and men (Sun et al., 2020). Tannen (1990), in her book "You just don't understand: Woman and Man in Conversation", proposed a theory called Genderlect Style, which consists of report talk and rapport talk. According to her, most women's conversational language is primarily rapport talk: a way of building connections and negotiating relationships. Their language is typically more personal, affective, expressive, and relational. For most men, their primary language is report talk, where speaking is the primary means of maintaining independence, negotiating, and maintaining status within a hierarchical social order. This is achieved by demonstrating knowledge and skills, and by commanding attention through verbal performance. The characteristics of this language are objective, evaluative, reflective, and factual.

Tannen viewed compliments in the context of gender differences, emphasizing that differences in complimenting behavior between men and women are closely related to differences in communication goals. According to her interpretation, women tend to use compliments as a means to build connections and create a sense of equality in conversation. In contrast, men have a more competitive communication orientation, so they tend to give compliments less frequently. In this context, compliments can be perceived as actions that risk threatening the male speaker's self-image or dominant position (Miller, 2011).

Furthermore, these differences in language use between genders can also be found in Lakoff's (1973) theory, which explains that women and men have different access to language. Men's language is more assertive, mature, and they tend to speak openly with appropriate vocabulary. In contrast, women's language is hesitant, less open (using figurative language), and cautious in conveying something, and often uses soft and polite

words and gestures. Holmes (1992) also states that there are several characteristics of masculine language, namely ungrammatical forms, many negations, spoken forms, deleting words at the end of words in pronunciation, and impolite forms. Furthermore, Lakoff (1973) explain that the characteristics of women's language consist of lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, very precise grammar, rising intonation, emphatic adjectives, precise terms, intensive, super-polite forms, avoidance of swear words, and emphatic emphasis.

## 2.2. *The functions of emoji*

Emojis are small digital images or icons used in electronic messages to express ideas, emotions, etc (Wirza et al., 2020). Emojis are a slightly more recent invention (from Japanese e, “picture”, and [e] moji, “character”) (Cantina & Alvarico, 2022). Emojis were created by Shigetaka Kurita in 1999 for Japanese internet platforms with an initial number of only 176 emojis (Wirza et al., 2020). In the research of Cantina and Alvarico (2022), positive emojis can be seen in images showing smiling and joking expressions, while negative emojis are images showing feelings of sadness, boredom, irritation, confusion, embarrassment, and shock/surprise. In addition, as a form of visual communication, emojis can convey more meaning than regular text characters and can be used to increase the appeal of dialogue and reduce sentence ambiguity (Jiang et al., 2020). Emojis not only have semantic functions, but are also influenced by the context that shapes their interpretation, so it is important to consider their pragmatic function in communication (Herring, 2020). In their research, Li and Yang (2018) classified emoji functions as “(a) attitude/emotion signal; (b) turn taking/giving; (c) backchannel device; (d) attitude/emotion intensity enhancer; (e) illocutionary force modifier; (f) humor; (g) irony.

## 2.3. *The concepts and topics of compliment*

Compliments are a speech act that has received enthusiastic attention from sociolinguists over the last decade (Miles, 1994). The definition of compliment according to Chairani and Subiyantoro (2022) is a positive expression to show an opinion about something that we consider to be of good value. On the other hand, Ye et al. (1993) stated that compliment is an action that is considered a good word that directly or indirectly gives appreciation to someone for something that is appreciated by the speaker to the recipient of the praise and even the entire speech community. Moreover, Holmes (1986) defined, "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' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer". The definitions above are also reinforced by Yusof and Hoon (2014) who said that a compliment is a positive expression, appreciation, or admiration that can improve someone's morale.

The most basic function of compliment is as a positive affective speech act directed at the recipient, which functions to increase or strengthen solidarity between the

speaker and the recipient (Holmes, 1988). This is in line with the statement from Manes and Wolfson (1981) that the main function of a compliment is to create and strengthen solidarity between the speaker and the recipient, while in discourse, compliments have functions in several ways, such as greeting, saying thank you, opening a conversation, etc.

According to Holmes (1986), the main topics of compliment are appearance, ability or performance, possessions, personality or friendship, and others. On the other hand, Wolfson classified compliment topics into two types. First, general topics, which encompass all compliments, refer to something the recipient did with effort or skill, and also refer to the recipient's talents, tastes, and personal qualities. Second, specific topics that refer to compliments, which are act-specific (Yusof & Hoon, 2014). Almost the same as Holmes's view, Herbert in Wu (2008) said that the topics of compliment consist of appearance, possession, performance or skill or ability, personality, and other. From Herbert's point of view, Wu (2008) explained further regarding the topic of praise, namely:

1. Appearance –someone's external packaging (dress, looks, make-up, etc).
  2. Possession – cars, albums, films, etc.
  3. Performance/ability/skills –job or competencies such as skills of acting, etc.
- Personality –internal traits, emotions, etc.

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1. Research design*

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods as its design to determine the differences in compliments and emojis used by men and women in the comments section on Instagram. Qualitative methods are research approaches used to understand phenomena in depth through the process of interpreting and analyzing descriptive data (Salsabila et al., 2024). Qualitative research is interpretive research, with investigators typically engaging in ongoing and intensive experiences with participants (Creswell, 2009). According to Kuncoro in Salsabila et al. (2024), qualitative methods focus more on the meaning, context, and understanding contained within a phenomenon, rather than numerical measurements or statistical generalizations. The qualitative descriptive method is used by researchers because the data are in the form of words, phrases, or sentences regarding related linguistic phenomena (Sari et al., 2020).

#### *3.2. Data source and participants*

The data sources for this study were the Instagram accounts of Hollywood celebrities who have starred in superhero films. These Instagram accounts were selected for several reasons. First, they have high global popularity and a wide and diverse reach of followers. Second, they are generally active on social media and have millions of followers across countries, resulting in thousands of comments on their posts. Third, they often serve as pop culture icons, frequently receiving praise from social media users.

Besides, the criteria for the artist accounts selected are Instagram accounts with more than 10 million followers. From the existing accounts, researchers selected 10 artists' accounts, which were divided proportionally by gender, namely 5 male artists and 5 female artists. The age range of the artists sampled varied, namely from 20s to 50s. Each artist was selected for four uploads (posts), consisting of: (1) selfies or close-up photos, (2) professional photos, (3) casual or personal posts, and (4) career achievements. From each upload, researchers took two comments from male users and two comments from female users, so that the total number of comments analyzed from one artist account was 16 comments. Thus, the total number of comments collected in this study was 160.

Meanwhile, the participants in this study were Instagram users who commented on public posts by selected Hollywood celebrities. The comments were purposively selected, focusing on comments containing linguistic expressions of compliment and accompanied by the use of emojis. Additionally, researchers only included complimentary comments written in English. Comment authors were selected based on publicly accessible profile information—such as username, profile photo, and bio—which allowed researchers to identify gender (male or female). Only comments from public accounts were included to maintain transparency and research ethics. A purposive sampling method was used to ensure that the data obtained directly represented communication patterns relevant to the research objective, which was to explore gender differences in praise language styles and emoji use on social media. A total of 160 comments were collected as research data. These comments were selected based on the presence of compliment elements in the form of words, phrases, or sentences accompanied by emojis. For each celebrity post, researchers took two comments from male users and two comments from female users for a balanced sample.

### *3.3. Data collection*

The data for this study were complimentary comments in the comments section of artists' Instagram posts. The collected complimentary comments are words, phrases, or sentences used in conjunction with emojis. In Holmes' (1986) study, the main topics of compliments included appearance, ability or performance, possessions, personality or friendship, and others. Therefore, to align with the research, the following post criteria were used: selfies/close-up photos, professional shots, casual/personal posts, and career achievements. The posts selected were those with the most comments and uploaded within the past year. Data collection was conducted manually, by directly copying and selecting comments containing compliments. Researchers not only examined the sentence structure of the compliments but also the emojis used. Although the number of sample data taken in this study was more than 100, this number is still far from the total population. Therefore, the researcher realizes that the limited amount and scope of data do not allow the results of this study to be generalized widely.

### *3.4. Data analysis*

The collected data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. In the initial stage, all comments that met the criteria as compliments were manually coded based on two main theories. First, Tannen's (1990) Genderlect Style theory was used, which consists of rapport talk and report talk, to analyze differences in communication styles based on gender. Comments that are personal, expressive, build closeness, and use emotional language are categorized as rapport talk, while comments that are informative or performance-oriented are categorized as report talk. This theory is not entirely related to communication on social media and the language of compliments because it focuses on the conversational styles of men and women in face-to-face communication. However, in this study, the researcher used this theory because differences in communication styles between genders can be analyzed functionally, namely in the context of building relationships (rapport) and conveying information (report). To support this analysis, the researchers also used Holmes' (1986) framework, which divides compliments' topics into several categories to help clarify the focus of compliments given by social media users based on gender. Furthermore, this study also discusses differences in emoji use between genders. Therefore, to make the research results more in-depth, the researcher used Li and Yang's (2018) findings, which discussed the function of emojis along with Tannen's Genderlect Style theory.

The analysis process was carried out by carefully reading each comment, identifying the gender of the commentator and the artist being commented on, and then classifying the comments into appropriate categories. After that, the categorized comments were analyzed thematically to identify gender-based tendencies and patterns, both in communication style and in the type and function of compliments. At this stage, the analysis was carried out by considering aspects such as the purpose of communication (building relationships vs. providing judgment), the focus of the comment (on the individual or the work), and the tone and structure of the language. The results of this analysis were then explained in the form of a descriptive narrative to reveal differences in gender representation in praise comments on Instagram.

## **4. Findings**

### *4.1. Differences in language styles between gender in giving compliments*

The main objective of this study is to understand the differences in language styles between men and women in giving compliments to Hollywood artists in the Instagram comments column. Thus, the researcher used Tannen's (1990) Genderlect Style theory, which differentiates male communication styles as report talk and female communication styles as rapport talk. Furthermore, the researcher also used Holmes' (1986) theoretical framework on the topic of praise for a more in-depth explanation of the data. Further explanation can be seen through the following data, which is taken as a representative example of the findings.

(Data 1) I'm just so proud and happy for you about your marriage you are more than ready for this next step and I cry with how happy I am for you girllll yes 🙌😭👉👉👉👉👉👉❤️ favorite childhood star I loved shake it up.

The comment above was written by a female with the account name *miaa614* and directed at female artist Zendaya. The comment was written on a personal photo posted showing a side of the artist's personal life. This compliment exhibits several characteristics, including long sentences indicating high emotional involvement, the use of direct greetings such as "you" and "girllll," which strengthen interpersonal relationships. This comment can be categorized as personality/friendship topics because the comments do not highlight aspects of physical appearance, professional abilities, or possessions, but rather focus on personal relationships and emotional expressions regarding the artist's personal life.

(Data 2) I'm not ready for season 5 yet, but I think it's going to be awesome too. 🙌👀👀

This comment was written by a male with the account name *Oscar schnapp* and directed at female artist Millie Bobby Brown. The comment was made on a post showcasing the artist's career achievements, including several photos from the set of her latest film. This comment is a compliment for professional achievement. The main characteristic of this comment is its focus on professional achievements rather than building emotional closeness or interpersonal relationships. As such, it can be categorized as a compliment for ability or performance because it highlights the artist's involvement in the work project.

(Data 3) You wear a man hat dude, 🔥

This comment was written by a male user with the account name *qnsrpn1031* and directed at the male artist, Dwayne Johnson. The comment was taken from a post showing the artist's activities while attending an event with other public figures. This comment is short, direct, does not show excessive emotion, and uses casual and evaluative language such as the phrase "man hat". This compliment falls into the category of possessions, because it contains praise for an item worn by the artist, in this case, a "man hat". The focus is on the artist's visual attributes or accessories rather than on personal qualities or achievements.

(Data 4) One of the most handsome men in the world, beautiful face, beautiful body, beautiful heart. ❤️❤️

This comment was written by a female user with the account name *thefirstvictoriarose* and directed at male artist, Hendry Cavil. The comment appeared on a post showing the artist casually cooking a steak. From the comment, several characteristics that can be found are expressive and full of emotion, as seen in the phrase "beautiful heart." This comment contains two categories of compliments. The most dominant topic is appearance, as reflected in the phrases "most handsome men in the world," "beautiful face," and "beautiful body," which directly admire the artist's physical appearance. In addition to that, the comment also includes elements of the personality/friendship category, indicated by the phrase "beautiful heart," suggesting admiration for the artist's inner qualities or emotional character.

#### 4.1.1. Gender differences in giving compliments

In this section, the researchers present the results of a data analysis to identify the language style used by Instagram users in complimenting artists. The primary focus of this analysis is the gender of the commenters, namely, the Instagram users. Therefore, the researchers do not only focus on the gender of the artists as the recipients of the comments, but also the communication patterns emerging from male and female commenters in the context of social media. The data was analyzed and grouped into two categories: rapport talk and report talk. Based on the analysis of 160 compliments, consisting of 80 compliments from male accounts and 80 compliments from female accounts. The researchers obtained the results as shown in the following table.

**Table 1**

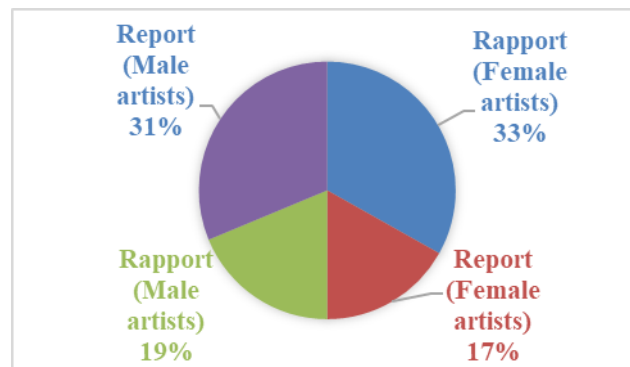
Distribution of types of compliments based on gender.

Sex	Number of Compliments	
	Rapport Talk	Report Talk
Male	29	51
Female	54	26
Total	83	77

Based on the data shown in Table 1, from the 80 comments written by male accounts, 51 comments were categorized as report talk, while 29 comments were rapport talk. This indicates that men tend to use report talk more often when complimenting artists. On the other hand, from the 80 comments written by 80 female accounts, 54 were categorized as rapport talk, while 26 were report talk. This data indicates that women predominantly use rapport talk when delivering compliments. However, the data also shows that not all men use report talk, and not all women use rapport talk. There are a number of men who use rapport talk, and vice versa. These findings illustrate the variation in communication styles between genders in the context of compliments on social media.

#### 4.1.2. Gender differences in receiving compliments

In addition to analyzing the gender of the commenters, this study also considered the gender of the recipients of the compliments, namely the Hollywood celebrities who were the objects of the comments. This analysis aimed to determine whether the gender of the celebrity receiving the compliments influenced the language style and type of compliment used by the commenters. From the 160 comments analyzed, the results showed that female celebrities received more comments that included rapport talk and male celebrities received more comments that included report talk. This finding can be seen more clearly in the following pie chart.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of rapport and report talk in compliments based on artist gender

The pie chart above shows the percentage of rapport talk and report talk received by artists out of a total of 160 comments. Overall, female artists received 33% of the compliments containing rapport talk, equivalent to 53 comments, and 17% of the compliments including report talk, equivalent to 27 comments. These findings show that female artists receive more compliments that build social relationships and intimacy. On the other hand, male artists received 31% of the compliments that included report talk, equivalent to 50 comments, and 19% of the compliments that were categorized as rapport talk, amounting to 30 comments. This data shows that male artists received more compliments about performance, delivery of information, status, or evaluation.

#### 4.1.3. *Distribution of compliment forms across gender relation*

In previous findings, researchers presented general data on the number of rapport talks and report talks based on the gender of the giver and recipient of the compliment. However, in this section, a more in-depth analysis is conducted to explore how gender differences influence the form of complimenting language used, both when complimenting the same sex and the opposite sex. This study used a total of 160 complimenting comments collected from the Instagram accounts of 10 Hollywood celebrities. A total of 80 comments came from 5 female celebrity accounts, consisting of 40 comments written by female users and 40 comments written by male users. On the

134 | **Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities** | Vol.13, No.1, November 2025

other hand, an additional 80 comments were collected from 5 male celebrity accounts, also with the same composition: 40 comments from women and 40 comments from men. From all these comments, the researchers divided the findings into four combinations of gender relations between the giver and recipient of compliments, as shown in the following table:

**Table 2**

Sex-based distribution of the complement forms.

Sex	Rapport Talk	Report Talk
Male to Male	9	31
Male to Female	20	20
Female to Female	33	7
Female to Male	21	19
Total	83	77

Table 2 shows that from the 40 complimentary comments collected from five male celebrity accounts, only 9 were considered as rapport talk, while the remaining 31 were categorized as report talk. This indicates that the type of language used by men to other men when complimenting mostly falls into the category of report talk. In contrast, a balanced distribution was found in the 40 comments written by male users on posts by female artists, with 20 comments categorized as rapport talk and 20 as report talk. These findings suggest that when interacting with the opposite sex, male users do not show a dominant preference for either communication style. Furthermore, from the 40 comments written by women on posts by female artists, 33 were found to be rapport talk, while only 7 comments were report talk. Whereas, in comments written by women on male artists' posts, out of 40 comments analyzed, 21 were rapport talk and 19 were report talk. These results indicate a balanced distribution of compliment styles in cross-gender communication, while same-gender female communication tends to favor rapport talk.

#### 4.2. Differences in emoji use and function between gender in giving compliments

In addition to analyzing the language style in giving compliments, this study also aims to analyze the differences in the use of emojis by male and female commenters in complimenting Hollywood artists, as well as the social functions of these emojis. To analyze the social functions of emojis, the researchers referred to the findings of Li and Yang (2018). Although the theory does not explicitly discuss differences in emoji use based on gender, the researchers combined it with Tannen's (1990) Genderlect Style theory to examine the relationship between gender, emoji function, and communication style. Of all the emojis used by the artists, the researchers only took the three emojis that were most used by each gender. In this regard, the researchers divided the findings into four combinations of gender relations between the giver and receiver of compliments. The results of these findings can be seen in the following table.

**Table 3**

Gender-based distribution of the three most common emojis and their genderlect style.

Sex	Emoji	Number of comments	Emoji function (Yang, 2018)	Genderlect style
Male to Male	🔥	20	illocutionary force modifier	Report
	❤️	8	attitude/emotion signal, emotion intensity enhancer	Rapport
	👏	7	illocutionary force modifier	Report
Male to Female	🔥	12	illocutionary force modifier	Report
	❤️	11	attitude/emotion signal, emotion intensity enhancer	Rapport
	👏	8	illocutionary force modifier	Report
Female to Female	❤️	20	attitude/emotion signal, emotion intensity enhancer	Rapport
	😘	9	attitude/emotion signal, emotion intensity enhancer, irony	Rapport
	🔥	6	illocutionary force modifier	Report
Female to Male	❤️	16	attitude/emotion signal, emotion intensity enhancer	Rapport
	😘	9	attitude/emotion signal, emotion intensity enhancer, irony	Rapport
	👏	5	illocutionary force modifier	Report

As the data presented in table 3, in the pattern of male-to-male interactions, the emoji most often used for compliments is the emoji 🔥, which appeared 20 times in the comments. In second place, the emoji ❤️ was used 8 times, followed by the emoji 👏 with a total of 7 comments. Among those three emojis, two of them — 🔥 and 👏 — are

included in the report talk category, while emoji ❤️ is categorized as rapport talk. This finding shows that men tend to use emojis with the report talk function when complimenting other men. Similarly, in male-to-female interaction patterns, emoji 🔥 is still the most used, with 12 comments. However, this number is almost equal to the emoji ❤️, which was used in 11 comments. In third place, the emoji most frequently used by men when complimenting women was the emoji 🙌, namely 8 comments. Although both rapport and report emojis appear in male-to-female compliments, 🔥 and 🙌 — both reports talk emojis — appear slightly more frequently.

In the female-to-female interaction pattern, emoji ❤️ became the most frequently used for compliments, appearing 20 times in the comments. Followed by the emoji 😍, appearing 9 times, and then the emoji 🔥 with 6 occurrences. Based on this classification, it can be seen that women tend to use emojis with rapport conversation functions when complimenting other women because two of the three most frequently used emojis \_❤️ and 😍\_ include rapport conversation styles. In a different context, in the female-to-male interaction pattern, emoji ❤️ is the most frequently used emoji, with 16 comments. Second place is taken by the emoji 😍, which appears 9 times in the comments, followed by the emoji 🙌 as many as 5 times. Based on the emoji function classification, ❤️ and 😍 are categorized under rapport talk, while 🔥 and 🙌 are categorized as report talk.

## **5. Discussion**

This research aims to find out the differences in compliment styles based on gender in online communication, especially comments on Instagram posts of Hollywood artists. The main focus lies on analyzing the language style and function of compliments based on gender. From the analysis, the findings show that Tannen's (1990) Genderlect Style theory is quite relevant and applicable in analyzing complimentary language styles on social media. In general, this study found that men tend to praise using report talk style because for them, communication serves as the main means to maintain independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order. In contrast, women tend to praise using rapport talk, where communication serves as a means to build connections and create a sense of equality in the conversation.

Furthermore, this study found that in a same-gender context, report talk compliments are predominantly used by men, and rapport talk is predominantly used by women. It can be seen from table 2. This finding suggests that women tend to predominantly use the rapport talk communication style when complimenting fellow women. This can be explained by women's tendency to demonstrate deep emotional support, high social solidarity, and the use of personal, warm, and empathetic language. According to Tannen, women tend to use compliments as a means to build connections and create a sense of equality in conversation (Rees-Miller, 2011). Their language is typically more personal, affective, expressive, and relational approach (Tannen, 1990). In

addition, this finding shows that men are oriented toward informative, objective, and status-conveying communication. Furthermore, in this context, men are complimenting each other, so that emotional expressions tend to be discouraged to avoid the impression of tenderness or intimacy, which would be considered inappropriate within traditional masculine norms. The compliment given is often focused on performance, strength, or success—rather than on personal relationships or affection. Tannen also stated that men have a more competitive communication orientation (Rees-Miller, 2011).

This finding is in line with the research conducted by Chairani and Subiyantoro (2022), who found that compliments for celebrities are generally shown to the same sex, not across genders. Holmes (1986) also states that both men and women praise the same sex more often than the opposite sex. In contrast to research from Loor (2019), the gender of the celebrity does not really determine how Facebook users give compliments. This finding also contrasts with research by Dalimunthe and Pulungan (2019), which showed that male teachers tended to use rapport talk in their teaching, while female teachers tended to use report talk. Despite their different contexts and focuses, this study remains relevant because they both use Tannen's theory as a basis for analysis.







On the other hand, in inter-gender communication, both men and women show flexibility in the use of language styles. Both can balance between emotional expression and evaluation, depending on the context and purpose of communication. In table 2, the number of complimentary comments received from different genders is not too far apart. It shows that when complimenting artists of the opposite gender, men not only focus on an informative communication style (report) but also express emotional and personal admiration (rapport). In other words, men are more flexible in their communication styles when interacting with women, including delivering compliments effectively. This suggests that gender differences between the giver and receiver of compliments influence the communication strategies chosen, with men more likely to use rapport talk when complimenting the opposite sex. Meanwhile, women still show emotional expression in the form of praise for physical appearance or emotional closeness (rapport), but also provide evaluations of performance or professionalism (report) when praising the opposite sex. In other words, in cross-gender communication, women also show a tendency to combine both communication styles. This shows that communication patterns are not rigid but can be adjusted according to the situation. This finding is also in line with the study of Chairani and Subiyantoro (2022) who found that the males and females did not present a significant difference in directing compliments. This shows that the compliment behaviour on social media might happen in reference to the influence of technology use in this sophisticated era (Chairani & Subiyantoro, 2022).

Although the amount of data for each gender in the current study is equal, it can be seen that the application of Tannen's theory in analysing compliments seems more consistent in same-sex communication, where males tend to use report talk and females tend to use rapport talk. This shows that gender differences in word use, sentence construction, grammar, and pronoun use reflect how language plays an important role in

reflecting, shaping, and reproducing gender differences in society (Salsabila et al., 2024). Comments written by female users tend to be more conversational and refer to other users as friends, or they use non-standard language to communicate, while male comments often contain slang, symbols, acronyms, short and incomplete sentences, jokes, and personal points of view (Cantina & Alvarico, 2022). This difference in language between genders is also proven by research from Park et al. (2016) which showed that the language used by self-identified female Facebook users was interpersonally warmer, more affectionate, and polite, while the language used by self-identified males was colder, more hostile, and impersonal.

The next finding is related to the topic of gender-based compliments. The researchers found that the four compliment topics proposed by Holmes (1986)—appearance, ability or performance, possessions, and personality or friendship—also appeared in the compliments in the Instagram comments of artists. Both men and women expressed compliments on a variety of topics. However, because the analysis focused on Tannen's (1990) primary theory of Genderlect Style, the data taken is also related to that theory. So, the results showed that women gave more compliments on personality or friendship topics, indicating their tendency to build emotional connections and interpersonal closeness through compliments. Meanwhile, in comments written by men, there was no single dominant topic, but their compliments generally revolved around ability or performance and appearance, indicating an orientation toward the evaluative and performative aspects of the artist.

This finding differs from previous research, including a study by Yusof and Hoon (2014), which analyzed compliments given to artists on Twitter. Their findings showed that women tended to give more compliments related to appearance, while men were more likely to compliment things related to possessions. Rees-Miller (2011) reported that both men and women gave more compliments related to performance than other topics. Meanwhile, research by Ulfa et al. (2023), which related to compliment comments on YouTube without focusing on gender differences, found three dominant topics of compliments: appearance, skills/abilities, and personality. None of these three studies showed results that fully align with the findings of this study, which combines a linguistic approach with gender and social analysis in digital media.

The second objective of this study is to identify differences in the use of emojis in compliments based on their social function. Emojis not only function as emotional expressions but also have social roles such as showing politeness, building relationships, and conveying affirmation (Li & Yang, 2018). The findings reveal that four emojis are most frequently used by both men and women commenters when giving compliments are , , , and . Of these four, two of them  and  are categorized under the report talk communication style. Based on Li and Yang's (2018) classification, both emojis function as illocutionary force modifiers, which serve as assertive expressions and markers of positive politeness. These functions align with Tannen's (1990) concept of report talk, that focuses on informative delivery, status affirmation, and explicit

evaluation. On the other hand, emoji 🥰 and ❤️ are more representative of the rapport talk style, which is oriented towards emotional relationships and interpersonal closeness. According to Li and Yang's (2018) classification, emoji 🥰 has functions as an attitude/emotion signal, emotion intensity enhancer, and can also convey irony, while emoji ❤️ has similar functions, namely as an attitude/emotion signal and emotion intensity enhancer. This function aligns with Tannen's (1990) rapport talk principle, which emphasizes empathy and emotional connection in communication.

Overall, these findings demonstrate a clear difference in emoji usage patterns based on gender. Two out of the three most frequently used emojis by male users — 🔥 and 🙌 — fall into the report talk category, which emphasizes evaluative and performative communication. In contrast, two of the three most commonly used emojis by female users — ❤️ and 🥰 — are classified as rapport talk, reflecting emotional closeness and positive politeness strategies. These results suggest that men tend to select emojis that align with objective and assertive expression, while women prefer emojis that convey empathy, warmth, and interpersonal connection in their compliments.

These findings are in line with the study of Chen et al. (2018) who found the 10 most used emojis by women are 😂🥰❤️🙌🥰😊🥰🥰🥰. This finding proves that women tend to use the emotional and expressive emojis. However, the list of the ten most frequently used emojis by men in previous study\_ 😂❤️🥰🙌🥰😊🥰🥰🥰\_ does not fully align with the findings of the current study. In this research, male users were found to predominantly use more neutral or assertive emojis, such as 🔥 and 🙌, which are associated with the report talk style. In their research, Butterworth et al. (2019) stated that gender influences emoji choice and perception. Specifically, their findings showed that messages with affectionate emojis were more appropriate and preferred when sent by women. Meanwhile, messages with less affectionate but friendly emojis were judged as equally appropriate—more likable when they came from men. In addition to that, women were more knowledgeable about emojis than men and used them more frequently (Cantina & Alvarico, 2022). Similar findings were found in Prada et al.'s (2018) study, which showed that female participants reported more frequent and more positive attitudes toward emoji use than men. Nishimura (2015) also revealed that women are more likely to send emojis than men because emojis are a means of self-expression, and the cultural expectation is that women are more emotional and expressive than men. Overall, these findings support the findings of this study, which showed differences in attitudes and tendencies in emoji use based on gender. Women tend to use more expressive and diverse emojis, while men use emojis with more evaluative and objective functions.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the presented findings and analysis, this study concludes that significant gendered differences exist in compliment styles and emoji usage within comments directed toward Hollywood artists on Instagram, consistent with Tannen's Genderlect Style Theory. Men predominantly employed a "report talk" style, which is informational and referential, whereas women favored a "rapport talk" style, which is more affiliative and relationally oriented. Regarding compliment topics, both genders engaged with all categories outlined by Holmes (1986)—appearance, ability/performance, possessions, and personality/friendship—though with distinct emphases. Men focused more frequently on performance and appearance, while women prioritized personality and friendship. Paralinguistically, emoji usage diverged: men utilized more evaluative emojis (e.g., 🙌, 🔥) to convey approval or judgment, while women employed more expressive emojis (e.g., 😍, ❤️) to communicate emotional affect. The primary contribution of this research lies in its detailed documentation of stylistic variation across three dimensions: syntactic structure, semantic focus (topic), and paralinguistic emoji function in digital compliment-giving.

These findings advance linguistic gender studies by delineating how gendered communication patterns manifest in the contemporary, image-centric context of social media. This study acknowledges several limitations. The sample size, while illustrative, is not fully representative of the broader population. Furthermore, the analysis is confined to sociolinguistic patterns, excluding potentially influential variables such as commenters' cultural backgrounds or specific social contexts. Future research should employ larger, more diverse datasets and incorporate interdisciplinary approaches—such as cross-cultural or socio-pragmatic analysis—to develop a more comprehensive and generalizable understanding of gender-mediated communication in digital environments.

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