

# Pragmatic Competence in Learner English: The Case of Jordanian EFL Learners

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**Abstract**—The study investigates the Jordanian EFL learners' pragmatic competence through their production of the speech acts of responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats and expressing farewells. The sample of the study consists of 130 Jordanian EFL learners and native speakers. 2600 responses were collected through a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The findings of the study revealed that the tested students showed similarities and differences in performing the strategies of four speech acts. Differences in the students' performances led to pragmatic failure instances. The pragmatic failure committed by students refers to lack of linguistic competence (i.e., pragmalinguistic failure), sociocultural differences and pragmatic transfer (i.e., sociopragmatic failure). EFL learners employed many mechanisms to maintain their communicative competence; the analysis of the test on speech acts showed learners' tendency towards using particular strategies, resorting to one strategy related to their grammatical competence, prefabrication, performing long forms, buffering and transfer. The results were also suggestive of the learners' lack of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. The implications of this study are for language teachers to teach interlanguage pragmatics explicitly in EFL contexts to draw learners' attention to both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features, pay more attention to these areas and allocate more time and practice to solve learners' problems in these areas. The implication of this study is also for pedagogical material designers to provide sufficient and well-organized pragmatic input.

**Index Terms**—pragmatic competence, pragmatic failure, Jordanian EFL learner, sociopragmatic competence, pragmalinguistic competence

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is understood that one of the main aims of learning a language is to empower the learners in their communications. In actuality, learning the grammatical forms and rules may not be enough to equip the learners with the desired level of communication, specifically when communicating with native speakers. Hymes (1994) reports that it is customary that members of different speech communities participate in communication, but then again, they tend to be confronted by misunderstandings. Therefore, being unaware of the pragmatic systems of the foreign language as Muir (2011) asserts, may result in breakdowns or discomfort in cross-cultural communication.

Many scholars took forward definitions of pragmatics. Pragmatics is understood to be language in use. Hence, language may be used in various ways in different contexts yet it may convey dissimilar meanings. It is concerned with one's ability to use language meaningfully. Crystal (1997) asserts that "pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication". The obvious issue in learning a second language is learning its pragmatics. Schmidt (1995) assures that learning the pragmatics is linked to text organization; implicature, presupposition, and the handling of conversations.

This study is basically concerned with pragmatic competence. Hymes (1971) who proposed the term competence, referred to communicative competence as an aspect of one's competence which enables the speaker to convey and interpret messages within specific contexts. Social and cultural knowledge are as essential to communicative competence as syntactic knowledge, morphology and phonology are. Thomas (1983) proposes that both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence feed into pragmatic competence. The pragmalinguistic competence refers to the multiplicity of choices that are available to perform a speech act. Hinkel (1996) asserts that sociopragmatic competence refers to the knowledge of accuracy of time and manner of selecting, namely, the occasions. Leech (1983) mentions the term 'general pragmatics' which he defines as a fairly abstract study. He addresses the need for more specific and detailed studies such as the fields of sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics. He illustrates that general pragmatics branches into sociopragmatics, which is related to sociology and pragmalinguistics, which is more related to grammar. Brown and Levinson (1987) refer to sociopragmatic competence as native cultural competence, whereas pragmalinguistics is language specific.

Insufficient pragmatic competence impels second language (L2) learners to transfer their language competences from their first language (L1) to L2 and when this transfer happens, whether linguistically or pragmatically, failure or

miscommunication ensues. Thomas (1983) defines pragmatic failure as the inability to understand what is meant by what is said. Blum-Kulka and Olshain (1986) highlight that pragmatic failure might carry serious social implications. For example, O'Keeffe et al. (2011) note that the impact of differing pragmatic norms leads to cultural misconceptions and misunderstanding. Pragmatic failure happens when language is in actual use, specifically, when non-native speakers perform various arrays of speech acts. Thomas (1983) clarifies that pragmatic failure branches into two major categories namely, pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. Thomas (1983) clarifies sociopragmatic failure is much more difficult to deal with than pragmalinguistics, since sociopragmatic involves the learner's system of beliefs. Thus far, Pragmalinguistic failure may be considered at the explicit level and the transfer at this level is inappropriate due to the problems of transfer of referential expressions. The current paper is primarily aimed at investigating the pragmatic competence of the Jordanian EFL learners through their production of the speech acts of responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats and expressing farewells. For example, what strategy would the EFL learner employ to respond to his/her aunt who is asking for help? What strategy would the Jordanian EFL learner employ to threaten a stranger who is following him/ her? Are the strategies employed by the Jordanian EFL learner, in making farewells to the uninvited attendee, similar to the strategies employed by the native speakers? (see Appendix A)

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since researchers believed that misunderstanding may arise in cross-cultural communication, they conducted many researches which were confined to study pragmatic competence teaching. Hassan (2018) explored the challenges of raising the awareness of pragmatic competence in EFL classes. The study concluded that students are being deprived of some conditions which cannot be completely provided in the classrooms.

Many studies investigated cross-cultural pragmatic competence in the context of EFL learners. Therefore, a number of studies focused on examining the pragmatic ability in various speech acts aiming to reveal the intercultural language. Yu (2011) who investigates the interlanguage behavior of Chinese learners of American English, focused on how they offer compliments in L2. The native Chinese speakers and native English speakers used very different linguistic strategies and options, suggesting that socio-cultural strategies from the L1 were translated into L2 behavior. Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011) investigated how Iranian EFL learners employ suggestion speech acts. In their study, 150 Iranian English learners took part in a DCT which consisted of 6 situations. The results of the study were conferred in the context of language learning and teaching. They related this finding to the pedagogical materials employed in Iran and justified it that English teaching books teach these strategies directly.

In the Jordanian context, Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) investigated the Jordanian learners' request-making in English. Their study aimed at comparing the devices with those used by the native speakers of American English in order to find out the potential pragmatic failure instances between the two languages. They found that Jordanians commit pragmatic errors when making requests because of three factors: (1) nonnative speakers' choices, which is the language ability, (2) L1 pragmatic knowledge and (3) L1 cultural norms transfer. Huwari and Al-Shboul (2015) investigated the perception of Jordanian EFL learners' pragmatic competence through assessing their refusal strategies in terms of contextual and cultural factors. They collected data by two methods; a DCT and a scaled response questionnaire which aimed to elicit perception data from the participants. The results revealed that Jordanian's production of making refusals is politer than American refusals. They attributed it to the deeply rooted cultural values that Americans possess of their own culture.

Al-Khaza'leh (2018) explored the influence of social power on the perception of the speech act of apology by Jordanian EFL learners. The study concluded with some pedagogical implications that could benefit EFL course designers and teachers to develop EFL curricula in Jordan. They believed that it might remedy the lack of pragmatic knowledge of the target language and reduce pragmatic failure across cultures. Al Kayed and Al-Ghoweri (2019) conducted a sociopragmatic study of speech acts of criticism in Jordanian Arabic. The data were collected from 120 undergraduate Jordanian students living in Jordan by means of DCT. It contained 10 scenarios. The results of the study showed that Jordanians adopted more indirect strategies than direct strategies to perform criticism. Almahameed and Ajalein (2019) investigated instances of pragmatic failure committed by Jordanian learners of English when producing some language functions. They focused on four functions; accepting compliments, asking for permission, expressing congratulations and expressing condolences. The results revealed that pragmatic failure committed by students refer to lack of both linguistic competence and socio-cultural differences. Shboul (2010) conducted a cross-cultural investigation of linguistic realizations of the speech act of threatening which was performed by native speakers of Jordanian Arabic and American English. The data of the study were elicited by using DCT in which situations were drawn from real life situations. The study revealed five strategies of making threats namely, telling authority, committing harm, introducing options, warning and promise of vague consequence.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitative in nature. To answer the research questions, the researchers rely on percentages and frequencies to inform the pragmatic competence of the Jordanian EFL learner. Following that, the researchers comment briefly on these percentages and frequencies to come up with the reasons that probably stand behind the pragmatic

competence-level. This was done through a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) and an Oral Discourse Completion Test (ODCT) (see Appendix A).

#### A. Instrument

The data for the present study were collected through a DCT which includes four speech acts (responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats and expressing farewells), with five situations for each. The twenty scenarios were prepared by the researchers to lead the participants to respond appropriately using the four speech acts. The main reason for using the DCT in this study is so that the participants have sufficient time to think about their responses and make use of different strategies compared to other tasks (see Appendix A).

With regard to the ODCT, the researchers met each Jordanian EFL learner in an individual session and the responses given on the twenty situations by the participants were recorded. The researchers excluded the students who reported that they lived in an English-speaking country. With regard to the WDCT, each native speaker was requested to read twenty situations and then write down his/ her response in a natural way as s/he talks to a real person. The participants were selected randomly regardless of gender and the sample was taken upon convenience and availability.

#### B. Sample of the Study

The sample of the study is composed of 130 aged 15 to 17 of male and female who gave 2600 responses. They were Jordanian students who are learning English in a private school in Jordan and native speaker students of English language who are in a school in England.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study answers and discusses the results in terms of the two research questions of this study.

Q1-What strategies do Jordanian EFL learners and English native speakers use most often in responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats and expressing farewells?

Q2- How different or similar are the speech acts of responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats and expressing farewells between Jordanian EFL speakers and English native speakers?

As mentioned above, the researchers used a DCT to investigate the competence of Jordanian EFL learners in the production of four speech acts responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats and expressing farewells.

#### A. Responding to Requests

The overall number of native speaker's responses to requests was 100, henceforth (N=100), and Jordanian EFL learners (N=550). The responding to requests data fell into three main categories; both group students accepted, refused and mitigated in responding to requests while no one refused to answer. Table 1 presents the Frequency distribution of request response types and strategies of native speakers and Jordanian EFL learners in percentage.

TABLE 1  
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF REQUEST RESPONSE TYPES AND STRATEGIES OF NATIVE SPEAKERS AND JORDANIAN EFL LEARNERS IN PERCENTAGE

	<b>Native speakers</b>	<b>Jordanian EFL learners</b>
<b>Response types</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Accept</b>	55%	63%
Acceptance + formula	87%	51%
Conditional acceptance	9%	28%
Request returning	4%	4%
Acceptance + explanation	0%	16%
<b>Total =</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Refuse</b>	40%	35%
Refusal + formula	18	5%
Refusal + showing obstacles	55	47%
Refusal with question	13	9%
Refusal + suggestion/ promise	15	38%
<b>Total =</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Mitigate</b>	5%	2%
Deflecting informative comments	80%	82
Reassurance or repetition request	20%	18
<b>Total=</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
No response	0%	0%
<b>Total=</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Overall total=</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 illustrates that, in both groups, the acceptance category was the most frequent response type, the second frequent response type was refusal and the least was mitigating. First, with regard to the acceptance category, it is

obvious in Table 1 that accepting requests in the native speaker's data opted for three of the four subcategories (strategies), namely, (A) acceptance + formula, (B) conditional acceptance and (C) request returning. The fourth strategy 'acceptance with explanation' was not found in the native speakers' data, hence, it was only found in the Jordanian EFL learner's data. Below is a presentation of each acceptance strategy followed by illustrative examples. In order to save space, each example (response) is presented alongside its situation title (see Appendix A).

**First: Native speakers' response types.**

*(a). Acceptance + Formula*

- (1) [Response] Okay. (Aunt asking for help)
- (2) [Response] I'll show you how to do it as well. (Someone asking for engine-repairing)
- (3) [Response] Yes, sure. (Professor asking for assistance)

Apparently, acceptance + formula was the most commonly used strategy in accepting requests (see Table 1). This strategy, which was employed in (P=87%) of the acceptance responses, was also frequent in the Jordanian EFL learner's data (P=51%). It was observed that native speakers tended to accept requests in simple sentence forms i.e., their sentences consisted of one part. The native speakers fulfilled the one-part response by performing either of the two patterns. First, they accepted by applying a device as in example (1) Okay. Second (the formula), when it did not contain a device that showed acceptance, they accepted the request mostly by confirming as in example (2) I'll show you how to do it as well. It was also noticed that very few responses consisted of a mixture of devices as in example (3) Yes, sure.

*(b). Conditional Acceptance*

- (4) I will only help you; I won't do it for you. (Classmate asking for homework)

This strategy was performed by (P=9%) of the native speakers when accepting requests. Although it is conditional, it was observed that native speakers were capable of performing this strategy in default of using a conditional device such as, *if, unless, provided*, etc. Subsequently, native speakers were able to signify their conditioned acceptance by confirming the pattern as in example (4). It was noticed that native speakers did not use acceptance devices in this strategy.

*(c). Request Returning*

- (5) What do you need my friend? (Classmate asking for homework)

This strategy was performed by (P=4%) of the native speakers when accepting requests. It was observed in this strategy that native speakers did not use acceptance devices. Instead, they performed this strategy by signifying the acceptance as in example (5).

**Second: Jordanian EFL Learners response types:**

*(a). Acceptance + Formula*

- (6) [Response] Of course, I will since you need helping. (Aunt asking for help)
- (7) [Response] I'll help you. (Professor asking for assistance)
- (8) [Response] Yes, sure. (Someone asking for engine-repairing)

This strategy acceptance + formula which was the most commonly used strategy in accepting requests in both groups, was not identical in the forms. While native speakers performed their acceptance in one part-sentences, it was observed in most of the Jordanian EFL learner's data that this strategy was performed in two parts. The first part contained a device that showed acceptance and the second part (the formula) showed emphasis. This prominent way in accepting request responses can be witnessed in (6) Of course [the acceptance device] then (the formula) I will since you need helping [the emphasis]. It is worth to highlight that an insignificant number of responses consisted of only one part (the formula) and which can be witnessed (7) I'll help you. Dissimilar to the native speakers' responses, it was common for the Jordanian EFL learners to mix devices as in example (8). Remarkably, the most frequent device in both groups was *yes*.

*(b). Conditional Acceptance*

- (9) [Response] Of course I will help you with the homework, but I will need you to help me too facing the same difficulties in the same homework. (Classmate asking for homework)
- (10) [Response] Yes, I would be. Yes, I would be very happy to help you if you can give me extra marks for that. (Professor asking for assistance)
- (11) [Response] Okay, but you will pay more. (Someone asking for engine-repairing)

This strategy was performed by (P=28%) of the Jordanian EFL learners when accepting requests. Although they applied acceptance devices, they proceeded by adding a condition that the requester had to fulfill. In (9), the classmate accepted to help but only if s/he received help back. In (10), the student accepted to help the professor, but only if he granted him extra marks. In (11), the mechanic agreed to fix the car but only if the requester paid him more.

To perform this strategy, it was observed that the majority of the Jordanian EFL learners used conditional devices such as, *if, unless, but, if, just, let me first/first let me, it depends, only*, etc. as is (9) but, (10) if and (11) but. This observation is unlike the native speakers who signified their conditioned acceptance without using conditional devices.

*(c). Request Returning*

- (12) How can I help you? (Someone asking for engine-repairing)
- (13) What happened to the engine? Don't worry. (Someone asking for engine-repairing)

This strategy was performed by (P=4%) of the Jordanian EFL learners when accepting requests. Although Jordanian EFL learners and native speakers were similar in not employing acceptance devices, EFL learners followed two patterns instead of one. They either implied acceptance by formulating another request as in (12) How can I help you? Or they supported their returned request by a phrase that implied acceptance as in (13) don't worry. On the contrary native speakers performed this strategy by following the former pattern and not the latter.

(d). *Acceptance with Explanation*

(14) For sure I can, I will open the shop and will help you in the tool and mechanic. (Someone asking for engine-repairing)

(15) Of course, my auntie I will go with you to the market and help you. You don't have anyone to help you, so I will. I'm going, so let's go. (Aunt asking for help)

This strategy which was performed by the Jordanian EFL learners (P=16%), was not found in the native speakers' data. Thus far, after Jordanian EFL learners accepted, they explained why and how they intended to execute. In (14), the explanation aimed to express the manner of the execution *I will open the shop and will help you in the tool and mechanic*. In (15), the explanation aims to show the purpose of the acceptance *You don't have anyone to help you*.

Second, it is quite obvious in Table 1 that refusing requests in the native speakers' data and the Jordanian EFL learners' data opted for four sub categories (strategies), namely, (A) refusal + formula, (B) refusal + showing obstacles, (C) refusal with question and (D) refusal + suggestion/ promise. Below is a presentation of each strategy which is followed by illustrative examples. In order to save space, each example (response) is presented alongside its situation title (see Appendix A).

**First: Native speakers' response types.**

(a). *Refusal + Formula*

(16) I'm sorry, I can't. (Classmate asking for homework)

(17) I'm afraid not, I can't. (Professor asking for assistance)

Ostensibly, refusal + formula accounted for (P=18%) in refusing requests. By means of this strategy, it was observed that the native speaker's refusals consisted of two parts. One part contained a refusal device and the other part showed emphasis (the formula). This can be seen in example (16) I'm sorry [the refusal device] then I can't [the emphasis]. By means of this strategy, it was also noticed that native speakers selected only 3 devices, namely, *I'm sorry*, *no* and auxiliary *not* as in example (16) I'm sorry and example (17) not.

(b). *Showing obstacles*

(18) We are in the designated smoking area, sorry. (Someone asking to stop-smoking)

(19) I have to do my homework. (Classmate asking for homework)

It seems that showing obstacles was the most frequently used strategy in refusing requests (P=55%). In this strategy native speakers refused requests by applying a refusal device and then showing the obstacles to attest the infeasibility to the requester. In (18), the smoker refused to stop smoking by showing the obstacle that it was a convenient place. By means of this strategy, it was observed that the native speaker's refusals consisted of either one part or two parts. The first part contained a refusal device and the second part showed the obstacle, or contrariwise, as in example (18) We are in the designated smoking area [the obstacle] then sorry [the refusal device]. It may be predicted that when their refusal consisted of one part, only the obstacle part was used as in example (19) I have to do my homework.

(c). *Refusal with question*

(20) Why should I? (Someone asking to stop-smoking)

(21) How much help do you need? It sounds impossible. (Classmate asking for homework)

This strategy was employed by (P=13%) of refusals. The results revealed that native speakers signified their refusal by responding in a request form as in (20) Why should I? Nevertheless, in some responses a certain expression preceded or followed the response to fortify the refusal as in example (21) it sounds impossible.

(d). *Making a suggestion or promise*

(22) I recommend that you come back tomorrow. (Someone asking for engine-repairing)

This strategy was performed by (P=15%) of the native speakers when refusing requests. Native speakers preferred to signify their refusals instead of employing devices by making suggestions as in (27) I recommend that you come back tomorrow. No promises were found in the native speaker's data.

**Second: Jordanian EFL Learners response types.**

(a). *Refusal + Formula*

(23) I'm sorry, I can't. (Aunt asking for help)

(24) No, sorry I don't want. (Someone asking to stop-smoking)

Apparently, the strategy refusal + formula accounted for (P=5%) of the Jordanian EFL data. It is worth mentioning that the systematic means of refusing in the native speakers' data was also found in the Jordanian EFL data. Jordanian EFL learner refusals also consisted of two parts. One part contained a refusal device and the other part showed emphasis (the formula). This can be acknowledged in example (23) *I'm sorry* [the refusal device] then *I can't* [the emphasis]. Unlike the native speakers, it was also noticed that Jordanian EFL learners selected more than 3 devices in refusing requests, namely, *I'm sorry*, *no* and the auxiliary '*not*', *but* and even a mixture of devices as in example (24); the response contained 'no' and 'sorry' together.

*(b). Showing obstacles*

(25) Oh, sorry Professor, I have a class that I have to get to. (Professor asking for assistance)

(26) This, uh, this area is, especially for people who smoke. (Someone asking to stop-smoking)

Comparable to native speakers, it appears that this strategy was the most frequently used in refusing requests (P=47%). Jordanian EFL learners employed the systematic means of refusing which was employed by the native speakers. This system can be evident in (25) *sorry Professor* [the refusal device] then *I have a class that I have to get to* [the obstacle] and (26) This, uh, this area is, especially for people who smoke. However, unlike the native speakers, it was also noticed that Jordanian EFL learners selected more than 3 devices when performing the two parts, namely, *I'm sorry, no* and the auxiliary 'not', *but* and even a mixture of devices such as *no, sorry, I don't want*.

*(c). Refusal with question*

(27) Why it's a smoking area? (Someone asking to stop-smoking)

(28) Don't you know that we close now? Fix it yourself. (Someone asking for engine-repairing)

(29) Can you come back later please if you allow to? Sorry, we closed now (Someone asking for engine-repairing)

(30) I'm sorry I don't, uh I don't have time. Can you go? (Classmate asking for homework)

This strategy was employed by (P=9%) of the refusals. Jordanian EFL's employed similar forms to the native speakers which can be witnessed in (29) *Why it's a smoking area?* (30) *Fix it yourself*. Despite the fact that both native speakers and Jordanian EFL learners adopted similar structure, it was noticed that Jordanian EFL learners overreacted. In this strategy, almost half of the responses were either overpolite or offensive. First, overpolite responses may be acknowledged in (29) *Can you come back later please if you allow to? Sorry, we closed now*. Second, offensive responses may be acknowledged in (30) *I'm sorry I don't, uh I don't have time. Can you go?*

*(d). Making a suggestion or promise*

(31) Sorry, but this is the smoke area you should go to another place. (Someone asking to stop-smoking)

(32) No, you have to wait for tomorrow, so I can open the shop for you. (Someone asking for engine-repairing)

This strategy was performed by (P=38%) of the Jordanian EFL learners when refusing requests. Despite the insignificant usage of devices in the native speakers' responses, Jordanian EFL learners did use devices. In this strategy, Jordanian EFL learners refused requests using a device then they proceeded in either two ways. The first way, they made a suggestion to advise as in (31). The second way, they made a promise to make the requestee come back later as in (32). Remarkably, instances of promises in this strategy were only found in the Jordanian EFL data.

Third, it is quite obvious in Table 1 that mitigating requests in the native speakers' and the Jordanian EFL learners' data opted for two strategies, namely, (a) deflecting informative comments and (b) reassurance or repetition request. Below is a presentation of each strategy which is followed by illustrative examples. In order to save space, each example (response) is presented alongside its situation title (see Appendix A).

**First: Native speakers' response types.***(a). Deflecting informative comments*

(33) Nice to meet you. (Aunt asking for help)

Table 1 illustrates that this strategy appeared in (P=80%) of the mitigating responses; neither showing acceptance nor refusing but rather placing a comment. The results revealed that the native speakers ignored the request by deflecting an informative comment as in example (33) *nice to meet you*.

*(b). Reassurance or repetition request*

(34) You really think I'm skilled? (Professor asking for assistance)

Table 1 also illustrates that this strategy appeared in (P=20%) of the mitigating responses. The results revealed that the native speakers ignored the request by reassuring it, however, no data was found on repeating the request. In example (34), the native speaker ignored the request by reassuring it *You really think I'm skilled?*

**Second: Jordanian EFL Learners response types.***(a). Deflecting informative comments*

(35) It looks that you are afraid of going alone because there are crowds of people. (Aunt asking for help)

Table 1 illustrates that this strategy appeared in (P=82%) of the mitigating responses. The results revealed that the native speakers ignored the request by deflecting an informative comment as in (34). It may be noticed that the response did not show acceptance nor showed refusal.

*(b). Reassurance or repetition request*

(36) Do you really prefer my way? (Classmate asking for homework)

(37) Do you want me to help you? (Professor asking for assistance)

Table 1 illustrates that this strategy appeared in (P=18%) of the mitigating responses. In (36) the request was ignored by reassuring it *Do you really prefer my way?* And in (37) the request was ignored by repeating it *Do you want me to help you?* The analysis revealed that Jordanian EFL learners used reassurance and repetition to avoid answering requests, however, native speakers only used reassurance.

**B. Making Suggestions**

Table 2 displays the formulas of making suggestions which appeared in the Jordanian EFL collected data (N=650). All suggestions were analyzed upon a categorization by Jiang (2006), the making suggestions data fell into ten formulas, namely, Let's, Certain modals and semi-modals, Wh-questions, conditionals, performatives, pseudo cleft structures,

extraposed to-clauses, yes/ no questions, imperatives and assertives. Table 2 illustrates the overall use of suggestion formulas of the native speakers and the Jordanian EFL learner in percentage.

TABLE 2  
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF MAKING SUGGESTION STRATEGIES OF NATIVE SPEAKERS AND JORDANIAN EFL LEARNERS IN PERCENTAGE

	Native speakers (%)	Jordanian EFL learners (%)
Let's	5%	1%
Certain modals and semi-modals	10%	32%
Wh-questions	10%	5%
Conditionals	23%	4%
Performatives	14%	18%
Pseudo cleft structures	6%	1%
Extraposed to-clauses	1%	1%
Yes/ no questions	4%	11%
Imperatives	27%	20%
Assertives	0%	7%
<b>Total=</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

(a). *Making suggestions types native speaker data*

- (38) Try finding tastier healthy food. (Friend wants to lose weight)  
 (39) If you like shopping, list your needs. (Friend who wastes money)  
 (40) To cut down slowly is effective. (Boss wants to quit smoking)

In the native speaker's data 9 formulas out of 10 were used in making suggestions. Table 2 illustrates that the most frequent suggestion formula in the native speaker's data was imperatives (P=27%) as in (38). The second frequent formula was conditionals (P=23%) as in (39). The least frequent was using the extraposed to-clause (P=1%) as in (40). It was found that native speakers did not use assertives in making suggestions.

(b). *Making suggestions types Jordanian EFL data*

- (41) You should not starve yourself or forbid yourself from eating things you like, but you have to consider the amounts of food you consume. (Friend wants to lose weight)  
 (42) Focus on what you need and spend your money properly on things you need. (Friend who wastes money)  
 (43) Let him drink milk maybe he will feel better and be quiet and calm down. (The baby who is crying)

In the Jordanian EFL learners' data 10 formulas were used while native speakers only used 9. The most frequently used formulae in the Jordanian EFL data were certain modal verbs and semi-modal verbs (P=32%) as in (41). The second frequently used formula was the usage of imperatives (P=20%) as in (34). The least frequent was let's (P=3%) as in (43). Although the frequencies varied, both groups applied similar formulas. The results indicated that Jordanian EFL learners employed one additional formula, namely, assertives, which did not appear in the native speakers' data.

### C. Making Threats

Table 3 displays the types of threatening strategies which appeared in the native speakers' data and in the Jordanian EFL learner's data (N=650). All threats were analyzed upon a categorization by Shboul (2010). It can be understood that in addition to the five categories adopted by Shboul's (2010) study, the analysis revealed a sixth category, namely, issuing a direct request to make a threat. Below is a presentation of native speakers' data and the Jordanian EFL data which are followed by illustrative examples from this study. Each example (response) is presented alongside its corresponding situation title. Table 3 below illustrates the overall use of threat strategies of the native speakers and the Jordanian EFL learner in percentage.

TABLE 3  
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF MAKING THREAT STRATEGIES OF NATIVE SPEAKERS AND JORDANIAN EFL LEARNERS IN PERCENTAGE

		Native speakers (%)	Jordanian EFL learners (%)
		%	%
1	Telling authority	12%	46%
2	Committing harm	11%	1%
3	Introducing options	9%	1%
4	Warning	34%	33%
5	Promise of vague consequence	20%	4%
6	Issuing a direct request	14%	15%
<b>Total=</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

(a). *Making threat types in native speaker data.*

- (44) Do that again and I'll fire you. (Employee sharing information to competitors)  
 (45) I fear the conversation might become a little unpleasant. (Friend who tells secrets)  
 (46) Either you admit or get fired. (Employee sharing information to competitors)

It is obvious in Table 3 that the native speaker's data showed variation in the frequency of the six strategies. The most frequent strategy was warning (P=34%) as in (44). The second frequent strategy was promise of vague consequence (P=20%) as in (45). The least frequently used strategy was and introducing options (P=9%) as in (46).

*(b). Making threat types in Jordanian EFL data.*

- (47) If you don't leave the shop now, I'm gonna call the police. (The shoplifter)  
 (48) Listen, if you don't stop telling my secrets to other, I'll stop talking to you. (Friend who tells secrets)  
 (49) Following me everywhere, I can hit you because I play Karate. (Person tracking you)  
 (50) You choose to leave or else I will lock you in the shop. (The shoplifter)  
 (51) Can you go away from me? (Person tracking you)

Jordanian EFL learners employed similar threatening strategies to those employed by native speakers. In contrast, the results indicated that the strategies employed differed in frequency. The most frequently used strategy in the Jordanian EFL learners' sample was telling the authorities (P=46%) as in (47). The second frequent strategy was warning (P=33%) as in (48). However, the least frequent strategies were committing harm (P=1%) as in (49) and (50). Remarkably, the sixth introduced strategy was present in the data of both groups and with almost similar frequencies, see example (51) Can you go away from me?

*D. Expressing Farewells*

Table 4 displays the 7 types of farewell strategies (N=650) which appeared in the native speaker's data and in the Jordanian EFL learner's data. All threats were analyzed upon a categorization by Knapp et al. (1973) and Albert and Kessler (1976). Expressing data fell into seven formulas, namely, legitimizing appreciation, welfare, caution, continuance, tentativeness and terminating. Below is a presentation of the native speakers' data and the Jordanian EFL learners' data which are followed by illustrative examples from this study. Each example (response) is presented alongside its corresponding situation title. Table 4 illustrates the overall use of farewell strategies of the native speakers and the Jordanian EFL learner in percentage.

TABLE 4  
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF EXPRESSING FAREWELL STRATEGIES OF NATIVE SPEAKERS AND JORDANIAN EFL LEARNERS IN PERCENTAGE

		Native speakers (%)	Jordanian EFL learners (%)
1	Legitimizing	4%	7%
2	Appreciation	18%	21%
3	Welfare	25%	15%
4	Caution	3%	15%
5	Continuance	27%	15%
6	Tentativeness	0%	8%
7	Terminating	23%	18%
<b>Total=</b>		100%	100%

*(a). Expressing farewell types in native speaker data*

- (52) See you man, it was nice talking to you. (Ending conversation with a friend)  
 (53) Have a nice day. (Father leaving to work)  
 (54) I'm going to make a move. (Best friend leaving)  
 (55) Be careful out there alright. Call me if you need anything. (Best friend leaving)

It is obvious in Table 4 that the native speaker's data showed a variation in the frequency in 6 strategies out of 7. The strategy tentativeness only appeared in the Jordanian EFL learner's data. The most frequent strategy was continuance (P=27%) as in (52). The second frequent strategy was welfare concern (P=25%) as in (53). Nonetheless, the less frequently used strategy was legitimization (P=4%) as in (54).

*(b). Expressing farewell types in Jordanian EFL data*

- (56) It was more than a pleasure to have you as a coworker. (Coworker resigning)  
 (57) I guess that you came alone. (Uninvited guest leaning the event)  
 (58) Goodbye and don't be late. (Uninvited guest leaning the event)  
 (59) I need to continue my shopping. Uhm, cause I have something to do. (Ending conversation with a friend)

Unlike the native speaker's responses, it was found that Jordanian EFL learners employed the seven strategies. The most frequently used strategy in the EFL sample was appreciation (P=21%) as in (56). The second frequent strategy terminating (P=18%) as in (58). Nevertheless, the least frequent strategy was legitimizing (P=7%) as in (59). It is worth mentioning that the strategy tentativeness was only found in the Jordanian EFL data, such as (57) I guess that you came alone. In expressing farewells, Jordanian EFL learners employed similar threatening strategies to those employed by native speakers. In contrast, the results indicate that the strategies employed differed in frequency in both groups.

V. FINDINGS

It was found that there were similarities in performing the speech acts of responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats and expressing farewells between English native speakers and Jordanian EFL learners, nevertheless, the



differences cannot be neglected. Generally, it was found that the Jordanian EFL learners used many techniques, in performing the four speech acts, to maintain the communicative competence. First, they showed tendency towards using particular strategies (e.g., they tended to accept more than to refuse requests). They resorted to modify strategies and relate them to their grammatical competence (e.g., employing devices in most of the strategies). They applied prefabrication (e.g., using the strategy of tentativeness in expressing farewells). They adhered to performing long forms (e.g., adding explanations after accepting a request). They resorted to buffering (e.g., using discourse markers such as uh, uhm, etc.). Consequently, Jordanian EFL learners resorted to transfer their knowledge L1 to L2. Jordanian EFL learners showed some weaknesses in performing the speech acts which were apparent in the feeble strategies they employed. They transferred the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence from L1 to L2 (e.g., Have you lost a coin in my face?) among many others. It appears that they experienced problems in modeling speech acts, lack of competence with performing the four speech acts and lack of using pragmatic competence. The techniques they used and the problems which they experienced may be attributed to simplified and insufficient input supplied by pedagogical materials. This study delivers a suggestion for improving the pedagogical issues in the Jordanian textbooks for EFLs. It suggests that the material developers necessitate to include authentic language materials related to daily discourse. Furthermore, this study delivers a suggestion for language teachers to teach interlanguage pragmatics explicitly in EFL contexts to draw learners' attention to both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features, pay more attention to these areas and allocate more time and practice to solve learners' problems in these areas.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The present study attempted to contribute to the existing literature on pragmatic competence research by probing into sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic ability in the performance of responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats and expressing farewells among Jordanian EFL learners. The purpose was to examine the pragmatic competence of Jordanian EFL learners in the framework of speech act of spoken English. The study was not intended to be contrastive, but it rather manipulated the responses of the English native speakers as a benchmark to inform the similarities and differences. The main reason for studying the Jordanian performance in the fact that so little has been known about the EFL learners' pragmatic difficulties and needs, and their pragmatic knowledge of the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic rules, particularly, in those four speech acts which remained underdeveloped.

The study notified purposes behind these differences and provided recommendations. If the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic differences remain to be neglected in second language learning and teaching, the learners may face misunderstanding and conflicts of interaction in actual life situations. The study attributed the differences in performing the four speech acts to lack of pragmatic ability in the Jordanian EFL learners' case. The study added other mechanisms used by the Jordanian EFL learners in order to compensate for the pragmatic differences other than committing pragmatic transfer such as prefabrication and tendency towards using particular strategies. In order to evade this obstruction, the study recommends that it is crucial to provide pedagogical material that has sufficient pragmatic knowledge. It is also crucial for second language teachers to help learners alongside the pedagogical material and improve their competence of appropriate use of speech acts in the target language and make them aware of L2 sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic constrictions.

## APPENDIX. DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASK

### Part one: Bio Data

- Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- If you have lived or travelled to a foreign country, please mention the name of it \_\_\_\_\_
- Are you a native speaker of English? Yes/ No

### Part two: Situations

Direction: please respond orally to these situations below and make your responses in a natural way as you talk to a real person.

#### Directions: Please respond to the following requests.

##### 1. (Title: Aunt asking for help)

Your aunt needs help; she says to you "Do you mind going with me to the market?" What is your response?

##### 2. (Title: Classmate asking for homework)

A lazy classmate says to you "Could you please help me with the homework?" What is your response?

##### 3. (Title: Someone asking for engine-repairing)

You are a mechanic and you are closing your shop. Someone suddenly comes and says "Can you repair this engine now?" What is your response? \_\_\_\_\_

##### 4. (Title: Someone asking to stop-smoking)

You are smoking in the smoking area in a restaurant. Someone comes and asks you, "Can you stop smoking please?" What is your response? \_\_\_\_\_

5. (Title: Professor asking for assistance)

Your professor asks you for assistance, he says "Can you help me in typing these documents? What is your response?"

**Directions: Please make a suggestion for the following situations.**

6. (Title: Friend wants to lose weight)

Your friend wants to lose weight but he/ she loves eating. What is your suggestion? \_\_\_\_\_

7. (Title: Friend who wastes money)

Your friend likes to go shopping and buy expensive things. You really know that he/she doesn't need them. What is your suggestion? \_\_\_\_\_

8. (Title: The librarian suggesting novels)

You are a librarian; someone would like to borrow a novel and you know there is a more interesting one. What is your suggestion? \_\_\_\_\_

9. (Title: Boss wants to quit smoking)

Your boss at work wants to quit smoking. What is your suggestion? \_\_\_\_\_

10. (Title: The baby who is crying)

You are at the bank. A customer's baby is crying loudly. What is your suggestion? \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Please make a threat in the following situations.**

11. (Title: Friend who tells secrets)

You have warned your friend many times not to give out your secrets but he/she wouldn't stop. You threaten him/her and say \_\_\_\_\_

12. (Title: Classmates copying assignments)

Your classmate keeps copying your assignments and you don't like that. You threaten him/ her and say \_\_\_\_\_

13. (Title: employee sharing information to competitors)

You are an owner of a company. You suspect that an employee shares some information verbally with competitors. You threaten him and say \_\_\_\_\_

14. (Title: Person tracking you)

You realize that a person is tracking you while you are shopping. Then he comes towards you and asks you about the time. You threaten him and say \_\_\_\_\_

15. (Title: The shoplifter)

You own a supermarket; a person enters and you know that he/ she is a shoplifter (thief). You threaten him/ her and say \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Please make a farewell in the following situations.**

16. (Title: Father leaving to work)

Your father is leaving to work in the morning? Express your farewell to him \_\_\_\_\_

17. (Title: Best friend leaving)

Your best friend is about to leave. He/ She is going to drive several hours in bad weather for an important meeting. Express your farewell to him/ her \_\_\_\_\_

18. (Title: Ending conversation with a friend)

You see an old friend at the grocery store and start talking to him/ her. After a few minutes, you end the conversation. Express your farewell to him/ her \_\_\_\_\_

19. (Title: Coworker resigning)

Your coworker is leaving the company where you both work. Express your farewell to him/ her \_\_\_\_\_

20. (Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event)

An unexpected guest joins a business event, someone who you don't know. The event ends and the guest wants to leave. Express your farewell to him/ her \_\_\_\_\_

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