| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Comparative Pragmatic Analysis of Negative Politeness Strategies in Request Employed by Jordanian and Omani Students: A Conceptual Paper

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| ABSTRACT

This study explores the pragmatic application of negative politeness strategies in requests produced by Jordanian and Omani students. By comparing the negative politeness strategies utilized by each group, the research aims to highlight both similarities and differences in their approaches. A qualitative methodology, incorporating observation and semi-structured interviews, will be employed to gather data from a sample of 10 Jordanian students at Jerash University in Jordan and 10 Omani students at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The study will test the following hypotheses: Jordanian and Omani students tend to favor similar negative politeness strategies when making requests, and the enactment of these strategies may vary in terms of request formulation and specific linguistic choices. Future research directions include examining positive politeness strategies in requests among these populations, potentially enriching the current findings through a deeper investigation of politeness behaviors in their daily communicative interactions.

1. Introduction

This study examines the similarities and differences in the use of negative politeness strategies by Jordanian and Omani students in their interactions, focusing on a pragmatic analysis of their requests. Despite sharing the Arabic language, these cultures exhibit notable distinctions making a comparative analysis of their request strategies particularly insightful. This research investigates how Jordanian and Omani students formulate and respond to requests within an academic setting. Previous studies have explored cross-cultural variations in request realization patterns between native and non-native speakers (Sifianou, 1992; Jalilifar, 2009; Najafabadi, & Paramasivam, 2012), as well as the influence of social factors like power and distance on request speech acts (Rue, Zhang, and Shin, 2007; Mohammadi & Hatam, 2014). While the impact of contextual variables on request realization has been extensively studied, there is limited research specifically examining the perceptions and production of requests between Jordanian and Omani speakers. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap by investigating Jordanian and Omani EFL learners' perceptions and use of negative politeness strategies in their requests. Understanding these nuances is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication.

Requests are directive speech acts (Ellis 2022, p.167), intended to elicit or prevent an action from the hearer. Politeness theory (Brown and Levinson's,1978 and 1987), particularly the concept of face-threatening acts, posits that requests inherently threaten the hearer's freedom. While the speech act of requesting is a cultural universal, its realization varies across cultures (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, p.201). However, Jordanian and Omani societies have received limited attention in comparative cross-cultural pragmatics (Umar 2004; Al-Kahtani 2005). Although politeness is culturally relative, indirect requests are often perceived as more polite (Leech 1983, and Searle 1975). Despite the extensive research on requests across various languages and cultures, the culture-specificity of Jordanian and Omani Arabic requests remains underexplored. Therefore, this study seeks to provide insights into the negative politeness strategies employed in requests by Jordanian and Omani native Arabic speakers, contributing to a deeper understanding of pragmatic variation in the Arab world.

2. Literature Review
A. Theoretical framework

This study adopts Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness model. They stated that face comprises a number of wants "to be unimpeded" and avoiding imposition by saving the face of others "the want to be approved in a certain respect". (ibid.63). Interactants perform different acts in their interactions, for instance, a request which is considered as a face threatening act. As Brown and Levinson (1987) stated in their model, any violation of the hearer's face is called Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Thus, Requests are one of the examples of the Face Threatening Acts that are produced by interactants. The reason for considering it as FTAs is related to the role of the requester (speaker) who is impeding on the hearer by requesting the hearer not to do what he/she wants. The speaker, in this case wants the hearer to do what he/she wants (Fasold 1990:161). Therefore, people do facework in order to offset FTAs (Brown and Levinson 1978: 68). There are five politeness strategies proposed Brown and Levinson model which are: Positive politeness, Negative politeness, Act baldly, Off-record-indirect, Don't do the FTA. Three social factors have to be investigated to evaluate the imposition of request acts in order to differentiate between the politeness strategies that are utilized by the interactants. These factors are:

1- Social distance of speaker and hearer.
2- Relative power between them.
3- Absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture.

To recognize the concepts of politeness in every culture, it is intended to examine various utterances that are produced by every society. Significantly, the researchers concentrate on the explicit and implicit meanings of the word 'polite' in Jordanian Arabic as compared to Omani Arabic. To minimize threatening the requestee's face politely, the requester has to be indirect. Thus, the form of requester strategies is analyzed from being the most direct to the most indirect in accordance with the three social factors. However, as Brown and Levinson (1978 and 1987) pointed out people of different languages may access the same range of speech acts and realization strategies, but they are varied in the strategies they choose (Wolfson 1989: 183).

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the politeness strategies are universal. The strategies that could be used based on their theoretical framework are five. First, *negative politeness* which involves addressing the negative face of the listener. Second, *positive politeness* which involves addressing the positive face of the listener. Third, one is *off-record* which allows speakers to execute a *face-threatening act* (FTA) indirectly where their utterances can consist of several ways of interpreting the utterances. Fourth, *bald-one record* which is used to express a message directly to the listener. Fifth, do not do the FTA.

It is remarkable to mention here that Brown and Levinson (1987) framework has been utilized in numerous studies that seek to discover the occurrence of politeness strategies in various phenomenon. Their framework helps to determine the politeness strategies in the students' requests; because of that, this study will analyze the data based on their framework.

This study concentrates on the utterances that are produced by the Jordanian and Omani students of English at their universities. It is a qualitative study that seeks to find fruitful results that find a vital contribution to future studies. The data is going to be recorded to facilitate analyzing it by the researchers. Each participant is coded in order to maintain the privacy of their responses. Examples of these codes were JS-1, JS-2 (for Jordanian students), and OS-1, OS-2 (for Omani students).

Each interview lasted for 10- 20 minutes. Observation is written while interviewing the students to identify the request strategies that were performed by the students. The negative politeness strategies were listed while listening to the interviews. Finally, they were classified and then analyzed based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theoretical framework.

3. Past Studies
3.1 Omani sociolinguistic studies

Al Wahaibi and Ibtisam (2012) investigated the extent to which gendered behaviors in interaction are influenced by situational and contextual factors within the Omani workplace. Their findings indicated that participants do not consistently enact gender roles but rather interact based on their group membership, specifically as "the librarians group." This suggests that professional context can override gendered communication patterns.

Shifting our focus to broader communication strategies, Al Zidjaly, N. (2017) explored the communicative strategies employed by Omanis in digital spaces, concluding that they utilize a range of techniques, including repetition, code-switching, hashtags, and diverse genres. The study also noted the juxtaposition of emojis with text and the manipulation of production and participation frameworks. These strategies, functioning through intertextuality, enable the indirect and playful expression of concerns. This highlights the adaptive nature of communication in online environments.

These strategies facilitate indirect expression, which is a skill potentially homed in language learning contexts. Indeed, Al-Humaidi S. H. (2002) found that EFL teachers who participated in Language Processing Groups were significantly more likely to use code-switching, approximations (both syntactic and semantic), and code-based confirmation checks. This suggests that collaborative professional development can influence language use in the classroom.

Looking beyond the classroom, Yenigun et al. (2021) examined Oman's public diplomacy efforts, emphasizing the need for modern tools and strong strategies to successfully implement and achieve its goals both regionally and internationally. This underscores the importance of adapting diplomatic approaches to contemporary challenges.

All of these studies taken together indicate that sociolinguistic competence is multifaceted and develops through a combination of social context, pedagogical methods, and strategic communication. Vaishnav, P. (2025) supports this claim, concluding that sociolinguistic competence varies depending on institutional setting, exposure to English, and interactional norms, with Arabic exerting both positive and negative transfer effects. This points to the complex interplay between first and second language influences on communication skills.

This phenomenon of linguistic transfer can lead to pragmatic errors, as highlighted by Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2022), who discovered that many students transferred linguistic and pragmatic considerations of complimenting from their native language when communicating in English, which resulted in infelicitous or defective performance of the speech act. This highlights the challenges of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication, particularly in the realization of specific speech acts.

3.2 Jordanian sociolinguistic studies

Al-Ajalein et al. (2025) found that Jordanians have adapted their complaining strategies, now employing thirteen new approaches. This shift is likely influenced by the cybercrime laws enacted in 2023, leading to more indirect complaints devoid of offensive language. Shifting the focus to speech acts, Abu-Elrob & Tawalbeh (2025) identified the occurrence of most of Searle's speech acts, alongside additional acts such as swearing, sarcasm, and accusation. Their work adds nuance to our understanding of speech act performance in Jordanian Arabic. This demonstrates how the landscape of speech acts is evolving in response to various social and legal pressures.

Expanding on the exploration of speech acts, Al-Natour et al. (2025) anticipate that linguistic and cultural factors significantly influence the refusal strategies employed by students. Further elaborating on verbal interactions, Alabdali,T. (2024) found a preference for on-record indirect strategies over direct strategies and hints, with a tendency to prioritize constraints such as Approbation. Approbation, in particular, is a facet of politeness, and Al-Natour et al. (2025) also explored compliment responses, documenting that Jordanian students used strategies such as acceptance, mitigation/deflection, rejection, non-response, and request interpretations. The range of options available highlights the complex and nuanced nature of interpreting compliments. Taken together, these studies highlight the central role of pragmatic competence in effective communication.

Beyond compliments, Al-Natour et al. (2025) further revealed the various congratulatory strategies employed by students, including congratulatory statements, happiness clauses, compliments, good wishes, and gift-giving. These strategies reveal the multifaceted ways in which Jordanians express positive sentiment. Turning to the role of culture in communication, AlYousef et

al.'s (2025) study contributes to a deeper understanding of how cultural context shapes persuasive communication within academic settings, while also offering insights into the dynamics of rhetoric and translation in multilingual environments. Persuasion can also take the form of subtle conversational cues.

Hamdan et al. (2025) revealed that the word 'away' fulfills a wide range of pragmatic functions in Jordanian Arabic, including expressing confirmation, indicating interest, showing understanding, conveying irritation, and signaling reserved approval. The significance of 'away' in everyday conversation further illuminates the nuances of Jordanian communication. When it comes to workplace dynamics, Mahzari & Al Tameemy (2025) found that instructors employed both direct and indirect strategies of request. This strategic variation is further substantiated by Al-Natour et al.'s (2025) study, which indicated that both heads of departments and department members utilized direct and indirect refusal strategies. Finally, Abu Manie et al. (2025) demonstrated that the most frequently employed politeness strategies were intensifying interest in the hearer (often in combination with other strategies), followed by giving gifts. These studies highlight the importance of understanding the intricate interplay between linguistic strategies and politeness norms in Jordanian communication.

4. Methodology

This methodology has been designed to tackle the linguistic and cultural complexities of politeness in the request strategies texts used by Jordanian students and Omani students in their interactions at their universities. This part of the study defines the data collection procedure, participants and the instruments used.

4.1 Data collection

The data of this study is going to be collected from two nationalities in different countries which are Jordan and Oman. The procedures that are followed to collect the data are as follows:

1- Send a letter to the English departments in both universities to get permission to collect the data from them.
2- After getting the permission, the students will be requested to sign a consent letter to participate in this study.
3- Find a suitable place to meet the students for the interviews.
4- Interview the students and record their responses simultaneously based on the questions that are prepared by the researchers.
5- Observe the students' reactions to the interview questions.

4.2 Participants

The participants of this study are students who study English language at Jerash University in Jordan and Omani students who study at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. 10 students from each university will be chosen randomly to participate in the interviews. Their responses will be recorded and classified to collect the negative politeness strategies in their requests.

4.3 Instruments

To get an in-depth analysis of the problem that is investigated in this research, two instruments are going to be used to collect the data. The first one is semi-structured interview. It is obtained through information provided by purposefully selected informants. Creswell's (2014) stated that it helps to add questions other than the main questions that were prepared previously. This kind of interview helps the researchers to get an in-depth understanding of the exact meaning of the negative politeness strategies that the students use once they want to request things from each other's. The questions are organized and then reviewed by a panel to amend them if there is any need for that.

The second one is observation. While the students answer the interview questions, the researchers will observe their reactions to the questions and write what they observe to strengthen their analysis. The observers look for what is happening and reasons for the appearance such utterances in their requests. They sort out the regular from the irregular activities and look for variation to view the event in its entirety from a variety of viewpoints Musante, K., & DeWalt, B. R. (2010). These two instruments assist in understanding the reasons for using negative politeness strategies in their requests based on the student's perceptions.

5. Conclusion

This conceptual research expects a result for the hypotheses that are proposed. As mentioned in the previous sections, there are two hypotheses that this study proposes to investigate which are:

1- Both Jordanian and Omani prefer to use similar negative politeness strategies in their requests.

2- The performance of the negative politeness strategies in the request may be different in the form of the formulation of the request sentences and the terms that are used in their requests.

The expected results based on the analysis that is going to be made could explain the reasons for some similarities and differences between the student's negative politeness forms in their requests. It is expected that the forms can be different, but the strategies may be the same or have a little difference. All of these expected results can be guaranteed after the study is conducted based on the data that will be analyzed to reach the vital reasons for using the negative politeness strategies. The similarities and differences between the student request strategies can be explored once the request utterances are compared and analyzed.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
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