A Pragmatic Analysis of Complaining Strategies in Jordanian Arabic and American English

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Abstract


This contrastive socio-pragmatic study addresses the linguistic realization and the pragmatic strategies of the face-threatening act of 'complaint' in JA and AE using a discourse completion test (DCT) aiming at investigating what strategies are employed by both Jordanian and American speakers. The study also investigates the differences and similarities between the two groups mentioned above in terms of length, complexity, and level of directness of the head act. Gender differences are also discussed. The DCT consists of nine situations each of which requires a complaint. The data were analyzed using a Chi-Square test (\(\alpha\)-value < 0.05), which was conducted to determine whether differences between the two groups were statistically significant. The Jordanian participants include (40) males and (36) females while American participants include (30) males and (30) females at the university level. The responses were classified into fifteen strategies. The findings of the study may be summarized as follows:

- Jordanian and American speakers employed somewhat similar strategies.
- Joking and demanding justification were used by American respondents only.
- Regret was used by Jordanian respondents only.
- American respondents used a higher number of utterances compared to Jordanians.
- More complaining strategies were employed by Jordanians.
- American speakers tend to be more direct in their complaints than their Jordanian counterparts.
- Jordanian males and females employed all strategies. However, the difference in gender was statistically significant in half of the strategies used by Americans.
- Differences in complaining strategies may be culture-specific, while similarities may reflect the universality of complaining as a speech act.

Keywords: Complaining, Pragmatics, Politeness, Speech acts, Discourse Completion Test, Face Threatening ACT. Gender, Indirectness.