| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Positive Politeness Strategies of Requests as Produced by Jordanian and Omani Students: A Conceptual Comparative Study

Rasha Ibrahim Maqableh, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts and Applied Sciences, Dhofar University, Oman
Aya Akkawi, Department of English and Translation, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman
Iman Mohammad Falah Zuraigat, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jordan
Natheer Mohammad Alomari, Ministry of Education, Jordan
Mouad Mohammed Al- Natour, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jordan
Haitham M.K AlYousef, Department of Translation, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jordan
Corresponding Author: Mouad Mohammed Al- Natour, **E-mail**: msgmouad@gmail.com

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| ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of positive politeness strategies in requests made by Jordanian and Omani students within an academic context. By examining the positive politeness strategies employed in their interactions, the research aims to identify the preferred strategies utilized by these students when communicating with their classmates. Data will be collected through memos and semi-structured interviews with a sample of Jordanian and Omani students. The study anticipates uncovering both differences and similarities in the positive politeness strategies employed by the two groups while also investigating the influence of culture on their request patterns. Further research could explore the role of gender in motivating the use of specific positive politeness strategies between male and female students.

| KEYWORDS

Positive Politeness, Requests, Jordanian, Omani, memos

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The successful execution of a polite request necessitates a nuanced understanding of the speech context and the relationship between the individuals involved. Requests, by their very nature, are intrinsically face-threatening acts that can potentially disrupt the interpersonal harmony between interlocutors. To mitigate potential threats to the hearer's face, individuals employ careful linguistic strategies to signal their awareness of the social dynamics at play. Despite cultural differences between Jordanians and Omanis, they share a common language, Arabic. This research explores how Jordanians and Omanis construct and respond to requests politely within an academic setting. Speakers and hearers utilize specific terms and phrases that are contextually and culturally relevant. Examining request speech acts is crucial for maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, as it minimizes potential face threats and fosters cooperation. The specific characteristics of request strategies can be identified through the analysis of utterances and phrases, shedding light on the use of positive politeness strategies in this context.

Interlocutors' speech acts are manifested through words, with utterances conveying the potential to initiate actions. Participants manage their interactions to ensure smooth communication. This study focuses on the role of speech acts, recognizing the importance of polite language with implicit semantic meaning understood within a shared context. Utterances reflect both implicit and explicit meanings, interpreted based on the context, traditions, and culture of the interactants. Disagreements can arise, and listeners may decline requests if they are incompatible with their own intentions. While numerous studies have

examined the impact of contextual variables on the realization of request speech acts, there is limited research comparing the perceptions and production of request speech acts between Jordanians and Omanis. Therefore, this study concentrates on comparing the positive politeness strategies employed by Jordanian and Omani students, aiming to identify both similarities and differences in their request forms in academic interactions.

This research examines two hypotheses: First, the positive politeness strategies used by Jordanian and Omani students in their requests are similar in their implicit and explicit connotations. Second, the positive politeness strategies employed in their interactions have different formulations that lead to variations in their usage. Elaboration of these hypotheses will be clarified in the analysis, which will reveal results that either support or contradict these hypotheses based on the analytical framework adopted for data analysis. This study contributes to the broader field of cross-cultural pragmatics by providing insights into the specific linguistic strategies used by Jordanian and Omani students to negotiate social interactions in an academic setting.

2. Literature Review
A. Theoretical framework

The first study on politeness which proposed the universality theory of politeness, was by Brown and Levinson's (1987). They claimed that the linguistic strategies utilized by interactants of different cultural backgrounds are the same. They stated that humans have public self-images known as "face" that they endeavor to preserve throughout social interactions. The idea of "face" in their theory was influenced by the work of Goffman (1967). Consequently, they said that individuals have two similar "face" wants, namely negative face and positive face. The positive face want refers to the wish to "be desirable to at least some others", while the negative face want refers to the desire to have one's "actions which are unimpeded by others" (p.62). People from various cultural backgrounds have similar facial needs. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) states that the majority of human relationships preserve one another's face, through the observance of universal principles. They identified three social variables to politeness speech. These comprise relative power (P) of the participants, social distance (D) between interlocutors, and absolute ranking (R) of the impositions embedded in the act within a particular culture. The FTA action is also specified by the interactants. By employing this strategy, the interactants choose an appropriate strategy to suit their needs.

There are five politeness strategies that are universally used by speakers according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The strategies that could be used based on their theoretical framework are as follows:
1. *Positive politeness* which involves addressing the positive face of the listener.
2. *Negative politeness* which involves addressing the negative face of the listener.
3. *Bald-one record* which is used to express a message directly to the listener.
4. *Off-record* which allows speakers to execute a *face-threatening act* (FTA) indirectly.
5. Don't do the FTA. To avoid threatening the hearer's face.

As this study focuses on the request forms that are exhibited by the Jordanian and Omani students of English with each other in their interactions. It pursues to find vital findings that contribute to future studies. Recording the interviews and writing memos were accurately collected to explore the positive politeness strategies that are exploited by Jordanian and Omani students in their request forms. To indicate the examples that are related to each nationality of the students, codes are going to be used to point out them. Such examples for the codes are JS-1, JS-2, OS-1, OS-2, which are mentioned prior to each example.
Memos are written throughout the time of the interviews to recognize the positive politeness strategies that are performed by the students. The positive politeness strategies are listed while listening to the interviews. Finally, they are segregated and then scrutinized based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theoretical framework.

3. Past Studies
1. Omani Sociolinguistic Studies

Several studies have explored various pragmatic and sociolinguistic phenomena within Omani society. The following studies are particularly relevant to this research. Latrech, A. and Alazzawie, A. (2023) investigated politeness strategies in Omani EFL teacher-student interactions in the classroom. Their findings suggest that young learners prioritize their positive face, while adult learners emphasize their negative face. Teachers tend to employ more face-saving acts compared to face-threatening acts, while younger students use more FTAs than adult students. Female teachers were observed to use more FSAs than their male counterparts. Notably, all teachers indicated a willingness to prioritize saving their own face, even if it meant potentially threatening the student's face. Umale, J. (2011) found that Omanis tend to use more direct strategies than the British when refusing requests and offers. Both groups also employed indirect strategies, particularly when interacting with individuals of higher status. Lenchuk, I. and Ahmed, A. (2019) demonstrated that, contrary to some claims in the interlanguage pragmatics literature, EFL learners do

utilize indirect strategies when making requests. This research builds upon these previous studies by examining the specific positive politeness strategies employed by Jordanian and Omani students in an academic setting. By comparing the strategies used by these two groups, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural communication and pragmatic competence in the Arab world. It is evident from these studies that pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic awareness among Omani EFL learners have been the subject of ongoing investigation. A key area of focus has been the comparison of Omani speakers with native English speakers, particularly in the use of request strategies and politeness markers.

Previous research has highlighted differences in request strategies between Omani students and native English speakers. Al Rahbi et al. (2023) found that Omani students (non-native speakers) use fewer indirect request strategies in English compared to their American counterparts (native speakers), attributing these linguistic differences to potential limitations in linguistic abilities among Omani students. Rahman et al. (2015) similarly revealed that Omani learners of English differ significantly from native speakers, particularly in their use of mitigators. While native speakers employ a wide range of syntactic, lexical, and discoursal mitigators, Omani learners tend to restrict their use to syntactic mitigators, especially modals. Al Rahbi, A. (2022) also found that Omani students use fewer indirect request strategies than their American counterparts, leading to poorer overall performance in producing appropriate requests across different situations. Building upon these findings, this research aims to further investigate the request strategies employed by Omani students, focusing on their use of positive politeness strategies in comparison to Jordanian students within an academic context. By examining the similarities and differences in their approaches, this study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of cross-cultural pragmatics and the factors influencing pragmatic competence in the Arab world. *Despite these observed differences in request strategies, broader patterns of linguistic behavior in Oman reveal a complex interplay of stability and adaptation.* This suggests that while certain aspects of pragmatic competence may be influenced by linguistic proficiency and cultural norms in specific contexts like requesting, other aspects of Omani communication reflect a more stable linguistic heritage.

Research indicates a complex interplay between linguistic stability, cognitive awareness, and pragmatic transfer in Omani communication patterns. Despite external pressures for linguistic change, Emery, P. G. (2000) observed that Omani Arabic usage remains relatively stable in certain areas, with exchange-structures largely maintained across different lectal groups. In the realm of digital awareness, Shirawia et al. (2025) found no significant variances in cognitive awareness of digital drugs among undergraduate students at Sultan Qaboos University based on the variables investigated. However, other studies highlight pragmatic variations and transfer phenomena. Hessenauer, P. R. (2014) identified the "query preparatory" as the politest request strategy employed by Omani students and L1 students, suggesting its role in mitigating imposition. Furthermore, Al-Rubai'ey, F. (2023) found that Omani EFL learners often do not perceive instances of pragmatic transfer as errors, but rather as appropriate for their communication goals in the EFL context. Similarly, Rubai'ey (2016) demonstrated that participants' pragmatic choices when refusing in English are influenced by their perceptions of various sociopragmatic and contextual variables. These findings underscore the importance of considering both linguistic stability and pragmatic adaptability when examining communication patterns in Oman. While certain aspects of Omani Arabic remain consistent, pragmatic choices in EFL contexts are subject to various influences, including perceptions of appropriateness and sociopragmatic variables. *This focus on linguistic stability and pragmatic adaptation provides a foundation for understanding how Omani speakers navigate social interactions and maintain social harmony.* These factors influence the selection of communication strategies, leading to both shared and culture-specific approaches in various communicative contexts.

Research on Omani communication patterns reveals both shared and culture-specific strategies for maintaining social harmony. Bait Jamil, A. (2016) found that while some compliment responses are universal across cultures, others are culture-bound, highlighting the influence of cultural norms on social interaction. Al-Siyabi's (2012) study contributed to a deeper understanding of Omani students' attitudes, expectations of both students and teachers, and student-teacher relationships within the Omani EFL context. Further emphasizing the importance of face-saving, Alaoui's S. M. (2011) study indicated that speakers in both Arabic and English prioritize minimizing threats to their own face and the face of their interlocutor. These studies contribute to a nuanced understanding of the sociolinguistic landscape in Oman, emphasizing the interplay between universal pragmatic principles and culture-specific strategies. Further research is needed to explore the specific factors that contribute to culture-bound compliment responses and the potential impact of differing expectations on student-teacher dynamics in the Omani EFL context.

Research into Omani communication reveals a fascinating interplay between linguistic stability, cognitive factors, and pragmatic adaptation. While Omani Arabic maintains its integrity in certain contexts (Emery, P. G., 2000), pragmatic strategies in EFL settings are shaped by perceptions of appropriateness and socio-cultural variables (Al-Rubai'ey, F. 2023; Rubai'ey, 2016). Furthermore, studies such as Bait Jamil, A. (2016) and Alaoui, S. M. (2011) demonstrate the emphasis on maintaining social harmony through both universal and culture-specific strategies, underscoring the importance of face-saving and nuanced social

interactions. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics, particularly focusing on the interplay between linguistic stability and pragmatic adaptation in various communicative contexts, as well as the factors influencing culture-bound communication strategies within the Omani sociolinguistic landscape.

2. Jordanian Sociolinguistic Studies

Anticipated findings from Al-Natour et al. (2025) suggest that linguistic and cultural factors exert a significant influence on the specific refusal strategies utilized by students. Building on this, Migdadi and Hammouri (2025) identified twelve distinct politeness strategies employed by preachers, categorizing them according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness, which encompasses positive face, negative face, off-record strategies, and bald-on record communication. These strategies highlight the nuanced ways in which speakers negotiate social interactions and mitigate potential face-threatening acts. Similarly, Al Salem et al. (2025) observed that religious markers are frequently omitted or transformed in subtitles, manifesting as various linguistic elements such as speech acts, intensifiers, emphatic expressions, filler words, and even sarcastic utterances. In instances where the Arabic term "*wallah*" was used, it was either paraphrased to convey its meaning or literally translated, indicating a challenge in directly transferring the cultural and religious connotations of the original expression. Adding to this body of research, AlYousef et al. (2025) explore the intercultural dynamics of persuasion within Jordanian academic discourse, further illuminating the complexities involved in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication, particularly when dealing with culturally embedded terms and expressions. This study underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of cultural context in translation and intercultural communication to effectively convey intended meanings and avoid misinterpretations.

The aforementioned studies highlight the multifaceted ways in which linguistic and cultural factors shape communication strategies and intercultural interactions. These observations provide a foundation for examining broader trends in translation and linguistic studies, particularly in relation to the negotiation of politeness, persuasion, and identity within diverse communicative contexts. Rabee et al. (2025) accurately observe that linguistic frameworks within translation studies have exerted a more pronounced influence compared to their impact on literary studies. Expanding on this, Al-Natour et al. (2024) investigated the preferred positive politeness strategies employed by professors with their students, revealing a tendency to utilize eight distinct strategies to avoid potentially damaging the students' face. In a related vein, Al-Natour et al. (2025) analyzed the persuasion strategies employed by US President Joe Biden in his speech at COP27, providing insights into the application of persuasive techniques in international discourse. Furthermore, Al Yousef et al. (2025) demonstrated that code-switching serves specific motivational purposes, notably the expression of identity and self-confidence through the simultaneous use of both languages. These findings collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between language, culture, and communication in diverse contexts.

Al-Natour et al. (2015). investigated the core request strategies employed by Jordanians, revealing a spectrum of approaches ranging from direct to indirect, including inquiry, mind, permission, appreciation, and preparatory strategies. Expanding on this, Al-Natour & Ateeq (2025) anticipate that their conceptual paper will address two key areas: first, the specific politeness strategies utilized by President Joe Biden; and second, the challenges faced by undergraduate translation students in interpreting politeness strategies. Furthermore, AlSharifin et al. (2025) examined the effectiveness of a health education-based training program in enhancing health empowerment among refugees in Jordan. Their findings demonstrated a significant increase in health empowerment scores for the experimental group that received the training program compared to the control group, which underscores the potential of targeted interventions to promote health empowerment within vulnerable populations. In a related field, Al-Natour et al. (2025) conducted a pragmatic analysis of refusal strategies in management communication, further contributing to the understanding of communication dynamics in specific contexts.

These studies collectively demonstrate the importance of understanding communication strategies in various social and professional contexts. Building upon this foundation, subsequent research has delved into specific aspects of interpersonal communication and literary analysis within the Arab world. Al-Natour et al. (2024) investigated the role of terms of address in facilitating polite interactions, revealing a preference for their use among Jordanian students. Similarly, Al-Natour et al. (2024). found that both professors and students employed silence as a strategic communication tool for various purposes; professors, for instance, utilized silence to manage interruptions. Akkawi & Maqableh (2025), in their investigation of Arabic literary works, aimed to contribute a new conceptual framework to the subgenres of romance, specifically the Scheherazade Romance. In a related study, Al-Natour (2023) explored the politeness strategies employed by undergraduate students when communicating with their professors via WhatsApp, observing varying levels of directness in their messages. This collective body of work highlights the nuanced communication strategies employed in diverse contexts, ranging from classroom interactions to digital communication.

4. Methodology

This section consists of three parts. Firstly, data collection. In this section, the procedures that are going to be followed sum up to elaborate on the consistency of conducting this research. Secondly, sample of the study. In this section the researchers show the number of the informants and setting of the interactions. Thirdly, instruments. This section highlights the research methods that were adopted to collect the data from the informants. Two tools are going to be utilized which are memos and semi-structured interviews. Each section clarifies the researchers' assiduousness in applying the research with high validity and reliability.

4.1 Data collection

This research is qualitative research that seeks to dive into the explicit and implicit meanings of the requests' utterances that are produced by the interactants. Two nationalities participate in this research from different countries which are Jordan and Oman. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the following steps for collecting data are followed:

The procedure that the researchers are going to follow consists of five processes. Firstly, receiving a permission letter from the head of the English departments in both universities to collect the data from students. Secondly, signing a consent letter by each student to enable them to participate in this study. Thirdly, performing the interviews with the interviewees in a suitable site. Fourthly, recording the interviewees' responses to classify the positive politeness strategies and then analyzing them based on the adopted framework. Fifthly, writing memos while interviewing the students.

4.2 Participants

English language students are going to be selected to participate in this study. They study in the English departments at Jerash University in Jordan and in the English and translation department at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Ten students from each university will be randomly selected. The interviewees' answers are documented and categorized to find out the best positive politeness strategies they prefer to use in their requests.

4.3 Instruments

Two instruments are going to be used to collect the data to analyze the problem of this research. The first one is semi-structured interview. It helps to add questions other than the main questions that were prepared previously Creswell's (2014). The collected data provides purposefully selected informants a deeper understanding of the usages of the positive politeness strategies in their requests. It clarifies the precise denotation of the positive politeness strategies they used once they wanted to make a request. Three experts in the field of this study reviewed the interview questions. Their amendments are taken into account to ensure that the interview questions are valid to examine the hypotheses of this research.

Writing memos is the second instrument utilized to collect the data. It helps the researcher to identify the positive politeness strategies employed by the students. As suggested by Sankaran, S. (2017), the memos tool can be utilized by researchers in qualitative research to improve reflection during an action research project. So, while the students respond to the interviewer's questions, the researchers write memos to keep on recording their reactions to the interview questions.

5. Conclusion

Two hypotheses are proposed in this conceptual research to accomplish the expected results. The hypotheses are:

1- The positive politeness strategies of requests that are utilized by Jordanian and Omani students are the same in their implicit and explicit connotations.
2- The positive politeness strategies of requests they involve in their interactions have different formulations that make their usages dissimilar.

It is anticipated that the types of positive politeness strategies used by both Jordanians and Omanis are the same. The importance of clarifying the reasons for using the same strategies is going to shed light on the deep intentions they have while they employ the strategies with their classmates. The formulation of the positive politeness strategies is important to be scrutinized to indicate the disparity and resemblance between their strategies forms. The various forms and utterances are important to be elaborated to avoid misunderstanding between the Jordanian and Omani students once they interact with each other. The expected results can help to narrow down the gap of misunderstanding between the two nationalities in general and among the students in an academic setting in particular.

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