
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Saudi and Jordanian University Student Complaining Strategies

Dr. Bandar Fahad Alhamdan¹ ✉ and Rae'd Abdulgader Al-Shorman²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Translation, College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia

²Language Instructor, English Language Skills Department, Alkhaleej for Training and Education, Common First Year Deanship, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Dr. Bandar Alhamdan, **E-mail:** balhamdan@ksu.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

This study examined male Saudi and Jordanian student complaint strategies when complaining about their academic advisors, instructors, classroom environments, and exams to a friend, a person in charge, or the complaine (complaint addressee). To achieve the study goals, a discourse completion test (DCT) with 10 scenarios was developed and distributed to 100 (50 Jordanian and 50 Saudis) male university students. It was found that the students used a wide range of strategies that were both threatening and less threatening strategies, and had control in some situations, but were offensive in others. The Saudi students used a greater number of speech acts to complain than the Jordanian students. Further research suggestions are also given.

KEYWORDS

Complaint Strategies, Complaint Strategies in Arabic, Complaints, Saudi and Jordanian University Students, Speech Acts, Discourse

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1. Introduction

Searle (1990) stressed that speaking a language entailed the performance of certain speech acts for successful communication. Therefore, to avoid communication failure, it is vital that speakers know how to appropriately employ speech acts. In Searle (1976) and Cohen's (1996) classification, complaint speech acts are categorized as "expressive" because they reveal the psychological state of the speaker. However, Austin (1962) saw complaints as part of the performative class and the behabitives subclass, both of which are related to attitudes toward social behaviors.

A number of complaint speech act functions have been identified: (a) to express displeasure, disapproval, annoyance, censure, threats, or reprimands as a reaction to a perceived offense/ violation of social rules (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993); (b) to hold a hearer accountable for an offensive action and possibly suggest/request a repair (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993); (c) to confront a problem with an intention to improve the situation (Brown & Levinson, 1978); (d) to share a specific negative evaluation, obtain agreement, and establish a common bond between the speaker and addressee (Boxer, 1993); (e) to vent/let off steam (Boxer, 1993); and (f) to open and sustain conversations (Boxer, 1993). Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) also claimed that there were also several necessary preconditions for the complaint speech act to take place: (a) the hearer (H) performs a socially unacceptable act (SUA) that is contrary to a social code of behavioral norms shared by the speaker (S) and H; (b) S perceives the SUA as having unfavorable consequences for themselves and/or for the general public; and (c) the verbal expression of S relates post facto directly or indirectly to the SUA, thus having the illocutionary force of censure.

Tanck (2002) concluded that the complaints speech act occurred when a speaker reacted with displeasure or annoyance to an action that had affected them in an unfavorable manner. Moon (2001) saw complaints as face-threatening acts to the hearer, and

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therefore should be made cautiously by the speaker so as not to hurt the hearer's feelings and impair the relationship. Wannurk (2005) believed that people should use indirect strategies when making complaints to avoid offending the other party and being seen as impolite, rude or disrespectful. Therefore, it appears that there are two main types of complaints: direct complaints, which are direct confrontations (Newell and Stutman 1989/1990) by speakers toward hearers for socially unacceptable behaviors that hold the hearer responsible for this behavior (Olshtain and Weinbach 1993); and indirect complaints, which do not hold the hearers responsible for the substance of the complaint (Boxer 1993).

While pragmatic competence is as important as grammatical competence for language learners and teachers, pragmatic competence may unconsciously be neglected (da Silva, 2014). Because of a lack of sufficient socio-pragmatic knowledge of a second language, complaining can be difficult for non-native speakers. Yamagashira (2001) found that nonnative speakers do not know how to make complaints in the other language. They tend to use their own language strategies and, which results in misunderstandings. Complaining has been an under-represented speech act in the-same-cultural pragmatics and has less research interest than other speech acts such as apologizing, thanking, and refusing. Nevertheless, there have been a few studies on the complaint speech act (e.g. Murphy & Neu, 1996; Boxer, 1993; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Boxer, 1996). The focus of this study was the socio-pragmatic competence necessary for the mastery of complaints for successful language communication. In Arabic, the results of which will add to knowledge on complaint performance by Saudi and Jordanian Arabic speaking groups.

Complaint speech act research has explored, analyzed, and compared complaint strategies within and across languages to assess appropriateness (Henry & Ho, 2010; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Mulamba, 2009; Tatsuki, 2000). de Silva (2014) found that there were both differences and similarities in the complaints made by native and nonnative English language speakers, most of which were related to cultural differences. Therefore, this study attempted to describe the complaint strategies used by Saudi and Jordanian undergraduate students to identify their specific characteristics. The results of this study will: (a) add to the small body of research on Arabic speech acts; (b) assist Arabic language teachers to identify pragmlinguistic or sociolinguistic difficulties and give guidance on avoiding complaint strategy miscommunications in real-life encounters; (c) describe speech act strategies in Arabic, and elucidate the communication conflicts in Arabic culture, (d) add to the communicative competence research in first and second language learning; (e) provide insights into complaining speech act strategies and the effect on communicative competence; (f) illuminate students on the importance of complaint speech act strategies to improve their language competence and performance; and (g) encourage textbook designers to include speech acts, and particularly complaint speech acts in curricula to expose students to authentic situations and the semantic formulae that accompany each speech act (Cohen and Olshtain, 1993).

As Saudi and Jordanian university student complaint speech acts have not been studied in any depth, this study examined the complaint strategies of Saudi and Jordanian university students to determine which strategies the students employed when complaining about their academic advisors, instructor friends, and people in charge and when directly complaining to the complaine.

1.1 Research Questions

Two main research questions guided this study.

1. What complaint strategies do male Saudi and Jordanian university students use when complaining about their academic advisor and instructors to friends, a person in charge, and directly to the complaine?
2. What complaint strategies do male Saudi and Jordanian university students use when complaining about their classroom environment and their exams to their friends and the person in charge ?

2. Literature Review

Generally, speakers use a variety of speech acts to achieve their communicative goals. As a speech act, complaints can be used for a number of communicative purposes: to confront a problem with an intention to improve the situation (Brown & Levinson, 1978); to open and sustain conversations; to let off steam; to share a specific negative evaluation, obtain agreement, and establish a common bond between the speaker and addressee (Boxer, 1993); to express displeasure, disapproval, annoyance, censure, threats, or reprimand as a reaction to a perceived violation of social rules; and to hold the hearer accountable for the offensive action and possibly suggest/request a repair (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993). To fulfill these communicative purposes, speakers often employ a variety of strategies. Different methodologies have been used to investigate complaint strategies, with some studies comparing native speaker complaint strategies, others comparing English language native speaker and nonnative strategies, others specifically focusing on ESL/ESL speaker strategies, and others examining sex-based differences.

Studies that have compared native speaker complaint strategies found that native speakers use a wide range of strategies, such as opting out, explicit complaints, accusations, expressions of annoyance or disapproval, humorous complaints, indirect complaints, joking, demanding justification, blaming, interrogations, requests for repair, threats, modified blame, an explicit condemnation of the accused's actions, apologies, denials and warnings (Bonikowska, 1988; Hartley, 1998; Chang, 2001; Geluyken and Kraft, 2002; Kozlova, 2004; Al Omari, 2008; Prykarpatska, 2008; Salmani- Nodoushan, 2008; Laforest, 2009; Ma'ayah, 2009; Chen et al., 2011; Zhoumin, 2011; Lee, 2012; Al-Shorman, 2016; Sinuraya, 2017; and Megawati, 2016).

Another focus has been to compare English-native and nonnative complaint strategies by examining the number of complaint strategies employed, the length of the utterances employed to express complaints, social and contextual factors, the directness of the complaints, politeness, the use of softeners to mitigate the complaints, and the linguistic or socio-pragmatic skills, most of which have found several differences (DeCapua, 1989; Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993; Trosborg, 1995; Murphy and Neu, 1996; Takano, 1997; Moon, 2001; Rinnert and Iwai, 2002; Tanck, 2002, Shea, 2003; Eslami-Rasekh, 2004; Umar, 2006; Yue, 2007; AL Hammuri, 2011; and Eslamirasekh et.al., 2012) .

ESL/ESL complaint strategy studies have found that ESL/ESL speakers employ a wide variety of complaining strategies, such as direct complaint, justification, demands, explanation of purpose, indirect complaints, and candidate solution, such as request (Morrow, 1995; Nakabach, 1996; Park, 2001; Deveci, 2003; Rhurakvit, 2011; Abdolrezapour et. al., 2012; Mofidi & Shoushtar, 2012; Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan, 2015; Li and Suleiman, 2017; and Wijayanto et.al., 2017).

Sex-based differences in complaints and responses have also been studied, which found that male and female strategy choices varied depending on the referential goal, the nature of the interlocutor relationship, participation in troubles-talk and indirect complaints, the severity of the complaint, politeness, presence or absence of the person being complained about, the formality degree of the person being interacted, and the relative social status of the interlocutors (Du, 1995; Boxer, 1996; Akıncı, 1999; Lin, 2007; Ayu and Sukyadi, 2011; and Jui-chun, 2013)..

This study differed from previous complaint studies as first, it compared two groups of undergraduate students complaining in their native Arabic. Second, it only investigated complaint strategies, unlike other studies that investigated complaints and other speech acts, such as refusals, apologies, and requests, and third it used a specially discourse completion test (DCT) comprising ten educational situations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The sample participants were two randomly selected groups comprising hundred 18-24-year-old male Saudi and Jordanian undergraduate students from the humanities faculties at King Saud University (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and Yarmouk University (Jordan) in the second semester of the academic year 2016/2017. The 50 Saudi participants were from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) and the 50 Jordanian participants were from Irbid, Jordan. All participants were made aware that involvement in this study was completely voluntary and all were assured that their responses would remain confidential.

3.2 Study Instruments

To collect the required data for the study, a DCT, written in Arabic was developed that had three main parts: (1) a short introduction to the study and instructions for answering the questions; (2) a short demographic information collection section; and (3) ten open-ended scenarios focused on the complaint strategies used to complain to a friend, a person in charge, and a complaine about academic advisor, an instructor, the classroom environment, and exams.

The initial DCT was reviewed by eight professors (four at Yarmouk University and four at King Saud University) to assess its validity in terms of accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness. Then, it was reviewed and modified based on their recommendations, after which it was piloted on 40 participants (20 Saudis and 20 Jordanians) to establish the reliability, with the Cronbach's alpha found to be 0.87.

3.3 Data collection and statistical analysis

The questionnaire was distributed to participants in class, at which time explanations were given and participant questions answered. The participants then completed the questionnaires one-two-hour class session, after which the completed questionnaires were collected. Participants were asked to independently complete the DCT based on their usual and frequent use of face-to-face complaint expressions without any influence from other participants. The data were processed, statistically computed, and analyzed using the statistical package SPSS, and the outcomes were compared.

4. Results and Discussion

This study investigated male Saudi and Jordanian university student complaints to others to assess whether there were any differences.

4.1 Research Question 1

The first question was focused on the actual complaint strategies used when complaining about their academic advisor or instructor to friends, the person in charge and the complaine. The strategy frequencies for each person the complaint was directed at were calculated, with the results divided into (a) strategies when complaining about their academic advisor and (b) strategies when they were complaining about their instructors.

(a) Complaining about an academic advisor to a friend, person in charge, or the complaine.

As shown in Table 1, the 85 Saudi and Jordanian student complaint acts were classified into 13 strategies: direct complaint, obscenity, accusation, inquiry, request, suggestion, warning, justification, appeal to religion, blaming, sarcasm, irony, and dissatisfaction. The Jordanian students used nine of these strategies; direct complaint, obscenity, accusation, inquiry, request, suggestion, warning, justification, and appeal to religion and the Saudi students used 12; obscenity, accusation, inquiry, request, suggestion, warning, justification, appeal to religion, blaming, sarcasm, irony, and dissatisfaction.

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Direct Complaint	1	0	1
Obscenity	4	7	11
Accusation	6	18	24
Inquiry	1	10	11
Request	2	1	3
Suggestion	6	2	8
Warning	2	1	3
Justification	3	4	7
Appeal to religion	2	8	10
Blaming	0	1	1
Sarcasm	0	4	4
Irony	0	1	1
Dissatisfaction	0	1	1
Total	27	58	85

Table 1. Complaint strategies directed to a friend

The Jordanian students used accusation and suggestion the most, at 6 times each, while the Saudi students used accusation and inquiry the most, at 18 and 10 times respectively. Both Saudi and Jordanian respondents shared eight strategies; obscenity, accusation, inquiry, request, suggestion, warning, justification, and appeal to religion, with Jordanian respondents producing 27 speech acts and the Saudi respondents producing 58 speech acts.

Table 2 shows the frequencies for the complaint strategies directed by the complainer to a "person in charge". The 86 complaint acts used to complain about their academic advisor to a person in charge were classified into 11 strategies: accusation, justification, obscenity, appeal to religion, direct complaint, blaming, suggestion, inquiry, sarcasm, request, and warning. The Jordanian students used six of these strategies; accusation, justification, appeal to religion, direct complaint, suggestion, and inquiry; and the Saudi students used all 11 strategies.

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Accusation	4	10	14
Justification	5	11	16
Obscenity	0	1	1
Appeal to religion	1	2	3
Direct Complaint	9	4	13
Blaming	0	4	4
Suggestion	3	4	7
Inquiry	1	14	15
Sarcasm	0	3	3
Request	0	9	9
Warning	0	1	1
Total	23	63	86

Table 2. Complaint strategies directed to a person in charge

The Jordanian students used direct complaint and justification the most, at 9 and 5 times respectively, while the Saudi students used inquiry and justification the most, at 14 and 11 times respectively. Both Saudi and Jordanian respondents shared five strategies; accusation, justification, appeal to religion, direct complaint, suggestion, and inquiry, with the Jordanian respondents produced 23 speech acts and the Saudi respondents produced 63 speech acts.

Table 3 shows the complaining strategy frequencies directed by the complainer to the "academic advisor (complainee)". When the Saudi and Jordanian students complained about their academic advisor to the academic advisor (complainee), they used 74 complaint acts, which were classified into 13 strategies; direct complaint, obscenity, threat, accusation, request, justification, suggestion, inquiry, dissatisfaction, blaming, sarcasm, warning, and appeal to religion. The Jordanian students used nine of these strategies; direct complaint, obscenity, threat, accusation, request, justification, suggestion, inquiry, and dissatisfaction; and the Saudi students used 11; direct complaint, obscenity, accusation, request, justification, suggestion, inquiry, blaming, sarcasm, warning, and appeal to religion.

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Direct Complaint	1	1	2
Obscenity	2	2	4
Threat	1	0	1
Accusation	2	7	9
Request	2	8	10
Justification	8	11	19
Suggestion	1	4	5
Inquiry	4	10	14
Dissatisfaction	1	0	1
Blaming	0	4	4
Sarcasm	0	3	3
Warning	0	1	1
Appeal to religion	0	1	1
Total	22	52	74

Table 3. Complaint strategies directed to the academic advisor (complainee)

The Saudi and Jordanian students used justification and inquiry the most, but at different frequencies. Both of them shared seven strategies; direct complaint, obscenity, accusation, request, justification, suggestion, and inquiry, with the Jordanian respondents producing 22 speech acts and the Saudi respondents producing 52 speech acts.

(b) Complaint strategies when complaining about their instructor to friends (Table 4), a person in charge (Table 5), and the complainee (Table 6).

Table 4 shows the complaint strategy frequencies when complaining about their instructor to their friends.

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Accusation	2	12	14
Request	2	5	7
Direct Complaint	1	0	1
Appeal to religion	2	7	9
Justification	8	10	18
Inquiry	0	11	11
Sarcasm	1	5	6
Suggestion	4	5	9
Obscenity	6	4	10
Warning	1	0	1
Dissatisfaction	1	0	1
Total	28	59	87

Table 4. Complaint strategies directed to a friend

When Saudi and Jordanian students complained about their instructor to their friends, they used 87 complaint acts, which were classified into 11 strategies: accusation, request, direct complaint, appeal to religion, justification, inquiry, sarcasm, suggestion, obscenity, warning, and dissatisfaction. The Jordanian students used 10 of these strategies; accusation, request, direct complaint, appeal to religion, justification, sarcasm, suggestion, obscenity, warning, dissatisfaction; and the Saudi students used eight strategies; accusation, request, appeal to religion, justification, inquiry, sarcasm, suggestion, and obscenity.

The Jordanian students used justification and obscenity the most, at 8 and 6 times respectively, and the Saudi students used accusation and inquiry the most, at 12 and 11 times respectively. Both Saudi and Jordanian respondents shared seven strategies; accusation, request, appeal to religion, justification, sarcasm, suggestion, and obscenity, with the Jordanian respondents producing 28 speech acts and the Saudi respondents producing 59 speech acts.

Table 5 shows the complaint strategy frequencies when complaining about their instructor to the person in charge.

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Accusation	2	3	5
Appeal to religion	0	3	3
Criticism	0	1	1
Request	3	18	21
Direct Complaint	2	0	2
Obscenity	2	2	4
Suggestion	1	6	7
Inquiry	0	5	5
Sarcasm	1	0	1
Justification	7	18	25
Dissatisfaction	1	0	1
Total	19	56	75

Table 5. Complaint strategies directed to a person in charge

When Saudi and Jordanian students complained about their instructor to the person in charge, they used 75 complaint acts, which were classified into 11 strategies: accusation, appeal to religion, criticism, request, direct complaint, obscenity, suggestion, inquiry, sarcasm, justification, and dissatisfaction; with both the Saudi and Jordanian students using eight of these strategies; however, the Jordanian students used accusation, request, direct complaint, obscenity, suggestion, sarcasm, justification, and dissatisfaction and the Saudi students used accusation, appeal to religion, criticism, request, obscenity, suggestion, inquiry, and justification.

Both the Jordanian and Saudi students used justification and request the most, at different frequencies. Both Saudi and Jordanian respondents shared five strategies; accusation, request, obscenity, suggestion, and justification, with the Jordanian respondents produced 19 speech acts, while the Saudi respondents produced 56 speech acts.

Table 6 shows the complaint strategy frequencies when students complained about their instructor directly to the instructor (complainee).

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Accusation	2	0	2
Obscenity	4	2	6
Request	4	25	29
Direct Complaint	0	3	3
Challenge	1	0	1
Dissatisfaction	1	0	1
Suggestion	5	5	10
Appeal to religion	1	3	4
Inquiry	1	0	1
Warning	0	1	1
Justification	6	20	26
Opting out	8	12	20
No complaint	9	8	17
Total	42	79	121

Table 6. Complaint strategies directed at the instructor (complainee)

When Saudi and Jordanian students complained about their instructor to the instructor "complainee", they used 121 complaint acts, which were classified into 13 strategies: accusation, obscenity, request, direct complaint, challenge, dissatisfaction, suggestion, appeal to religion, inquiry, warning, justification, opting out, and no complaint. The Jordanian students used 11 of these strategies; accusation, obscenity, request, challenge, dissatisfaction, suggestion, appeal to religion, inquiry, justification, opting out, and no complaint and the Saudi students used 9 strategies; obscenity, request, direct complaint, suggestion, appeal to religion, warning, justification, opting out, and no complaint.

The Jordanian students used opting out and no complaint the most, at 8 and 9 times respectively, while the Saudi students used request and justification most, at 25 and 20 times respectively. Both Saudi and Jordanian respondents shared seven strategies; obscenity, request, suggestion, appeal to religion, justification, opting out, and no complaint, with the Jordanian respondents producing 42 speech acts, while the Saudi respondents producing 79 speech acts.

4.2 Research Question 2

The second question investigated the complaint strategies the male Saudi and Jordanian university students used when they complained about the classroom environment and their exams to friends and person in charge. The strategy frequencies were calculated and the findings of this question divided (a) complaints about the classroom environment and (b) complaints about their exams.

(a) *Complaints about the classroom environment to a friend and person in charge.*

Table 7 shows the of complaint strategy frequencies directed by the complainer to a friend.

When Saudi and Jordanian students complained about their classroom environment to a friend, they used 96 complaint acts, which were classified into 14 strategies: accusation, irony, opting out, request, direct complaint, suggestion, warning, inquiry, sarcasm, appeal to religion, obscenity, justification, no complaint, and dissatisfaction. The Jordanian students used ten of these strategies; accusation, irony, opting out, request, direct complaint, warning, sarcasm, appeal to religion, justification, and no complaint and the Saudi students used 13 strategies; accusation, irony, opting out, request, direct complaint, suggestion, warning, inquiry, sarcasm, appeal to religion, obscenity, justification, and dissatisfaction.

The Jordanian students used direct complaint, request, and no complaint the most, at 7,6 and 6 times respectively, and the Saudi students used direct complaint and obscenity the most, at 10 and 11 times respectively. Both groups shared nine strategies; accusation, irony, opting out, request, direct complaint, warning, sarcasm, appeal to religion, justification, and no complaint, with the Jordanian respondents producing 35 speech acts and the Saudi respondents producing 61 speech acts.

Table 8 shows the complaint strategy frequencies directed by the complainer to the person in charge.

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Accusation	1	8	9
Irony	1	3	4
Opting out	1	2	3
Request	6	2	8
Direct Complaint	7	10	17
Suggestion	0	1	1
Warning	2	1	3
Inquiry	0	5	5
Sarcasm	5	7	12
Appeal to religion	3	3	6
Obscenity	0	11	11
Justification	3	7	10
No complaint	6	0	6
Dissatisfaction	0	1	1
Total	35	61	96

Table 7. Complaint strategies directed to a friend

When Saudi and Jordanian students complained about their classroom environment to the person in charge, they used 85 complaint acts, which were classified into 14 strategies: accusation, expressing frustration, opting out, request, direct complaint, blame, giving advice, justification, inquiry, sarcasm, expressing anger, regret, suggestion, and no complaint. Both the Saudi and Jordanian students used 11 of these strategies, with the Jordanian students using accusation, expressing frustration, opting out, request, blame, giving advice, justification, sarcasm, expressing anger, regret, and no complaint, and the Saudi students using accusation, expressing frustration, opting out, request, direct complaint, blame, giving advice, justification, inquiry, sarcasm, expressing anger, regret, suggestion, and no complaint).

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Accusation	1	2	3
Expressing frustration	1	4	5
Opting out	3	1	4
Request	7	16	23
Direct Complaint	0	5	5
Blaming	2	0	2
Giving advice	3	0	3
Justification	2	11	13
Inquiry	0	2	2
Sarcasm	1	3	4
Expressing anger	1	3	4
Regret	1	2	3
Suggestion	0	10	10
No complaint	4	0	4
Total	26	59	85

Table 8. Complaint strategies directed to a person in charge

The Jordanian students used request and no complaint the most, at 7 and 4 times respectively, and the Saudi students used request and justification the most, at 16 and 11 times respectively. Both Saudi and Jordanian respondents shared eight strategies; accusation, expressing frustration, opting out, request, justification, sarcasm, expressing anger, regret, with the Jordanian respondents producing 26 speech acts and the Saudi respondents producing 59 speech acts.

(b) complaining about exams to a friend and person in charge.

Table 9 shows the complaint strategy frequencies directed by the complainer to a friend.

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Accusation	0	2	2
Dissatisfaction	0	6	6
Obscenity	0	12	12
Request	0	3	3
Direct Complaint	0	1	1
Warning	1	1	2
Inquiry	0	5	5
Sarcasm	3	4	7
Regret	2	0	2
Appeal to religion	4	2	6
Justification	4	5	9
Suggestion	3	2	5
Total	17	43	60

Table 9. Complaint strategies directed to a friend

When Saudi and Jordanian students complained about their exams to a friend, they used 60 complaint acts, which were classified into 12 strategies: dissatisfaction, obscenity, request, direct complaint, warning, inquiry, sarcasm, regret, appeal to religion, justification, and suggestion. The Jordanian students used six of these strategies; warning, sarcasm, regret, appeal to religion, justification, and suggestion and the Saudi students used 11 strategies; dissatisfaction, obscenity, request, direct complaint, warning, inquiry, sarcasm, appeal to religion, justification, and suggestion.

The Jordanian students used appeal to religion and justification the most, at 4 times each and the Saudi students used obscenity and dissatisfaction the most, at 12 and 6 times respectively. Both Saudi and Jordanian respondents shared five strategies; warning, sarcasm, appeal to religion, justification, and suggestion, with the Jordanian respondents producing 17 speech acts and the Saudi respondents producing 43 speech acts.

Strategy	Jordanian	Saudi	Total
Accusation	0	3	3
Expressing frustration	4	8	12
Obscenity	0	1	1
Request	4	10	14
Direct Complaint	1	1	2
Blaming	0	2	2
Giving advice	5	0	5
Suggestion	0	5	5
Inquiry	0	8	8
Appeal to religion	1	4	5
Justification	0	12	12
Regret	1	0	1
Irony	0	2	2
No complaint	6	0	6
Total	22	56	78

Table 10. Complaint strategies directed at the person in charge

Table 10 shows the complaint strategy frequencies directed to the person in charge.

When Saudi and Jordanian students complained about their exams to the person in charge, they used 78 complaint acts, which were classified into 14 strategies: accusation, expressing frustration, obscenity, request, direct complaint, blaming, giving advice, suggestion, inquiry, appeal to religion, justification, regret, irony, no complaint. The Jordanian students used seven of these strategies; expressing frustration, request, direct complaint, giving advice, appeal to religion, regret, and no complaint and the Saudi students used 11 strategies; accusation, expressing frustration, obscenity, request, direct complaint, blaming, suggestion, inquiry, appeal to religion, justification, and irony.

The Jordanian students used no complaint and giving advice the most, at 6 and 5 times respectively, while the Saudi students used justification and request the most, at 12 and 10 times respectively. Both Saudi and Jordanian respondents shared four strategies; expressing frustration, request, direct complaint, and appeal to religion, with the Jordanian respondents producing 22 speech acts and the Saudi respondents producing 56 speech acts.

Overall, the participants employed 847 speech acts to express their complaints, often using more than one complaint strategy for each situation. The Saudi students used 586 speech acts while Jordanian 261, with this significant difference possibly because the Saudi participants were more Arabic language proficient than the Jordanians. These findings also showed that both Saudi and Jordanian participants complain (but in different percentages) using 22 different complaint strategies, with this wide variety of strategies possibly being because of the nature of Arabic, which allows the same expression to express more than one speech act (Al-Shorman, 2016). The Saudi participants used 19 of these strategies and the Jordanian respondents used 21 different strategies, that is, the Saudi respondents did not use threats, giving advice or challenge and the Jordanian respondents did not use criticism. Overall, therefore, the Saudi and Jordanian participants used almost the same strategies to express their complaints, which indicated the similarities in their values, beliefs, customs and traditions.

The most used strategies were justification, request, accusation, inquiry, and suggestion, and the least used were criticism, threat, challenge, expressing anger, and regret, which indicated that both nationalities were seeking to save and give face by using less threatening strategies such as justification and request. The Saudi participants' most used strategies were justification, request, accusation, and inquiry and the least used were criticism, expressing anger, regret, irony and warning, and the Jordanian participants' most used strategies were justification, request, no complaint, and suggestion, and the least used were expressing anger, irony, threat, challenge, blaming, regret, and dissatisfaction, which indicated that both Saudis and Jordanians sought calm when complaining to others. This may have been because of their mutual Islamic values, which requires that respect and admiration be shown to others. The social status of the complaineer was not found to play a crucial role in governing the complaint strategies as they decided to complain in a given situation, that is, both groups appeared to equally to their friends, the person in charge, and the complaineer using almost the same strategies. Only slight differences were found between the complaint strategies employed by the Saudi participants and those employed by their Jordanian counterparts.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to examine the Arabic complaint strategies used by Saudi and Jordanian undergraduate students. It was found that even though the participants had similar cultures, values, customs and traditions, there were significant differences in the number and the strategies they used to complain. This variation might have been because of the variations of the scenarios and variables used, the richness of the Arabic language, or the improper classification of speech acts, as there has been limited past Arabic speech act research. It is therefore recommended more studies on speech acts in general and on complaint speech acts in particular be conducted so that precise categorizations can be arrived at. Including speech acts in Arabic language textbooks, in particular and in undergraduate programs in general could also help develop a standardized taxonomy. Material designers should consider the significance of speech acts by providing books with these kinds of materials to create a more relaxed language learning environment. Further research is needed for a thorough understanding of the Arabic native speakers' complaint strategies and the differences in the language use between people of the same culture. "Research in this area should identify the needs of both language learners and instructors as well as the role that effective speech act education and integration can play to meet learners' needs" (Al-Shorman, 2016).

The findings also give rise to some pedagogical implications. Speech acts in general and complaint acts in particular are important language competencies, the learning of which is essential for both academic practice and daily life. Speech acts in general and complaint acts in particular are an important enabling strategy for EFL learners; therefore, it is important to introduce students to speech act theory and to improve their pragmatic competence. The findings of this study could therefore be beneficial to both material designers and educators, particularly in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Exposing language learners to authentic learning situations could increase their motivation for learning, and decrease their anxiety and stress, which, in turn, could make their attitude toward learning more positive. Educators need to provide textbooks with real-language situations exemplifying the socio-pragmatic rules. The study findings highlight the importance of teaching pragmatic competence in general and complaint speech acts in particular to avoid misunderstanding and to be able to recognize inappropriate or impolite complaints and make better pragmatic choices.

While the findings of this study add to studies on speech acts in general and complaint acts in particular, there were some limitations. First, the study was restricted to two groups of Saudi and Jordanian undergraduate students. The second limitation was the sample size; therefore, any generalizations are tentative. Further, as the study data were collected from only two places and there were no females in the sample, the results could be different in different parts of each country and if females had been involved. The use of the DCT with 10 scenarios could also be considered another limitation as using other scenarios could result in different strategies. Another limitation was the quantitative nature of the study; therefore incorporating qualitative research

tools such as interviews or the oral version of the DCT could have allowed for a deeper probe into the reasons for complaint choices and may have led to different findings.

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ORCID iD : Dr. Bandar Alhamdan : <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4834-9650>

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