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Bridging Pragmatic Gaps in Jordanian EFL: A Path to Effective Communication

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on potential pragmatic failure instances by investigating Jordanian EFL pragmatic competence through the production of speech acts such as responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats, and expressing farewells. A total of 160 responses were gathered from Jordanian EFL learners using an oral discourse completion task as the data collection instrument. The results revealed that there were instances in the learners' responses that may lead to cross-cultural pragmatic failure. Moreover, the results of the data from the tests on speech acts showed the learners' tendency towards performing distrustful, socially unacceptable, offensive, awkward, inconvenient, and uncommon responses. The results also suggested the learners' lack of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge. The implication of this study is for pedagogical material designers to provide sufficient and well-organized pragmatic input. Further implications of this study are also for language teachers to fortify this material by teaching interlanguage pragmatics in English as a foreign language context to draw learners' attention to socio-pragmatic features, to pay more attention to these areas and allocate more time and practice to solve learners' problems in these speech acts. Such efforts are vital for equipping learners with the skills necessary for successful intercultural communication to bridge these gaps.

Keywords: Jordanian EFL Learner; Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Knowledge; Pragmalinguistic Failure; Sociopragmatic Failure

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1. Introduction

Communication, the lifeblood of human interaction, often transcends the mere exchange of words. It is laden with nuances, unspoken rules, and cultural subtleties that can significantly impact understanding. At the heart of effective communication lies pragmatics, the study of how language is used in context. Hymes[1] points out that misunderstandings are common, although people from different language backgrounds often communicate. Scholars define pragmatics as the study of language in use. This means that language conveys different meanings depending on context. It concerns one's ability to use language meaningfully. Schmidt[2] contends that understanding pragmatics or having pragmatic competence is linked to text organization, implicature, presupposition, and managing conversations. Crystal[3] Pragmatism is the examination of language from users' perspectives, particularly focusing on their choices, the limitations they encounter when using language in social interactions, and the impacts their language use has on other participants in communication. A key challenge in learning a second language lies in achieving competence in pragmatics.

Pragmatic competence, a pivotal aspect of communicative competence conceptualized by Schmid[2], encompasses the ability to effectively convey and interpret messages within specific social and cultural contexts. This competence depends on syntactic, morphological, and phonological knowledge and is heavily influenced by sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence, as proposed by Thomas[4]. Pragmalinguistic competence involves understanding and using various linguistic choices to perform speech acts, as Hinkel[5] highlighted. Sociopragmatic competence entails knowledge of appropriateness concerning the timing and manner of speech act selection within specific contexts. Brown & Levinson[6] further emphasize this distinction, referring to sociopragmatic competence as native cultural competence, highlighting its ties to broader cultural norms. Meanwhile, pragmalinguistics is considered language-specific in its study of linguistic forms and their pragmatic functions.

Lack of sufficient pragmatic competence often leads second language (L2) learners to transfer competencies from their first language (L1). When this transfer occurs, whether linguistically or pragmatically, it often results in failure or miscommunication. This may be because L2 learners do not belong to the foreign language community. Pragmatic failure presents a notable obstacle within the intricate interplay of semantic nuances and communicative intentions, especially in cross-cultural interactions. Many agree that the main goal of learning a language is to give people the tools they need to communicate effectively. Muir and Xu Z[7] adds that not understanding how the social rules of a foreign language work can cause problems or unease when communicating across cultures. Merely learning grammar rules might not be enough to help learners truly connect with native speakers. Consequently, their speech acts, behaviors, conversational expressions, and norms may influence their performance in the L2. Miller[8] clarifies that a far more important source of difficulty in communication is that we often fail to understand a speaker's intention.

This research diverges from traditional L2 studies by adopting a targeted approach to examining specific speech acts, responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats, and expressing farewells within the Jordanian EFL context. This perspective highlights culturally relevant pragmatic challenges and proposes actionable insights for improving pragmatic competence in underrepresented linguistic communities.

The notion of pragmatic failure is the central premise of this research. Pragmatic failure manifests when individuals encounter difficulties navigating cultural and contextual aspects of communication. It transcends mere linguistic proficiency, highlighting the necessity for cultural insight and social awareness. As noted by Tannen[9], the interplay between language and culture underscores the complexity of effective communication, suggesting that the ability to speak a language is distinct from the capacity to communicate across cultures effectively. Thomas[4] clarifies that pragmatic failure can be categorized into two major types: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. According to (ibid: 90), sociopragmatic failure is more complex than pragmalinguistic failure, as it involves the learner's system of beliefs. He defines pragmatic failure as the inability to understand what is meant by what is said (ibid: 91). Blum-Kulka & Olshtain[10] highlight that pragmatic failure might carry serious social implications. By focusing on pragmatic failure in Jordanian EFL learners, this study aims to expand on Thomas's[4] farmwork, emphasizing the sociocultural dimensions and their practical implications for second language

pedagogy. This research proposes a nuanced understanding of pragmatic competence that integrates cross-cultural insights into speech act execution.

It involves using inappropriate utterances for the context, such as greeting people in high status with 'hey' instead of 'good afternoon'. At this level, these mismatches arise from differences in social contexts. O'Keeffe, Clancy, Adolphs[11] note that varying pragmatic norms can lead to cultural misconceptions and misunderstandings. As Muir[8] asserts, pragmatic failure may result in breakdowns or discomfort in cross-cultural communication. According to Austin[12], speech act theory is marked by recognizing that words often do things beyond merely informing or conveying information. The speech act is used in daily communication, aiming to perform actions. Speech act theory considers who performed the utterance in an appropriate context to interpret it properly; hence, it achieves the communicative goal. Levinson[13] considers speech act theory one of the central phenomena that any general pragmatic theory must account for. He asserts that it works along with presupposition and implicature. Fillmore[14] views speech acts as social actions and explains that the formats are grammatical constructions with a pragmatic profile in that they are idiomatic ways of performing an action. The pragmatic continuum occurs when the perlocution does not meet the illocution. This failure is attributed to the lack of context on the locution and the perlocution. Another factor arises when an irrelevant speaker produces the illocution[6]. Moreover, later Searle[15] identified five basic categories of action that one can perform in speaking: representatives, directives' commissives, expressives, and declarations.

Making a request is when the speaker asks the listener to perform an action. Searle[15] classifies requests as directive speech acts. He explains that their illocutionary purpose is to get the hearer to do something. Brown & Levinson[6] suggest that the speaker infringes on the listener's freedom from imposition by making a request. Responding to a request verbally acknowledges that the recipient will react to the request from the recipient's perspective. The reaction to a request could be an acceptance, a refusal, or a neutral response, which Echols, Al-Batal, Nelson[16] title as mitigation. Suggestions are another category in speech act theory used in daily communication to influence others. Searle[15] reflects that those suggestions belong to direc-

tives; they are acts in which the speaker intends to get the hearer to commit to some future course of action. Threats are categorized as commissive speech acts. Threats serve to warn or react, often implying revenge or punishment. Their wide linguistic range includes modifications such as swear words or weapon mentions. Grant[17] categorizes threats as a form of promise, labelling them as "unwelcome promises". Searle[15] views verbal threats as speech acts that coerce and manipulate the listener into (not) taking action with undesirable consequences. According to Kreidler[18], threats are forward-looking and indicate the speaker's intention to take future action. Farewells, or leave-taking, are seen as straightforward speech acts that mark the end of interactions[19]. They often close conversations and vary in formality, from 'All the best' to 'Cheers'. They reflect the situational and relational context. Key elements include well-wishes and references to the addressee[20]. Outline a predictable sequence for closing conversations, which is crucial for proper closure. Farewells are important for maintaining social bonds, and a lack of understanding may lead to pragmatic failures in a second language. Jucker[19] emphasizes the need to analyze these expressions within their contexts for deeper understanding.Top of Form

Pragmatic awareness is linked to pragmatic competence in second language (L2) learning, focusing on skills like speech acts and implicatures. Abu Ghazalah[21] highlights that it is crucial to strengthen resources and develop social education. Therefore, exposure to varied examples, such as speech acts, is necessary for developing pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence involves receptive and productive communication channels in second language (L2) learning. The productive channel, focusing on speaking, requires L2 learners to communicate with politeness, directness, and appropriateness, as highlighted by Ishihara and Cohen[22]. The primary focus of this paper is to investigate the potential pragmatic failure instances of Jordanian EFL learners through their execution of speech acts of responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats, and expressing farewells.

2. Previous Research in the Field

Many studies investigated cross-cultural pragmatic competence in the context of Jordanian EFL learners. For

example, Al-Ali and Alawneh [23] researched how Jordanian EFL use language to soften requests. They found that pragmatic errors in requests were due to the language proficiency of non-native speakers, the pragmatic norms of their native language, and the transfer of cultural norms from their first language. Similarly, Arif and Mugableh [24] studied the speech act of promising among Jordanians to identify and address potential pragmatic failures in social, pedagogical and translation domains. These findings may also support speakers of different languages and cultures navigating interethnic communication challenges [25]. It was found that Jordanian EFL learners often misuse modal verbs (e.g., have to, should, must), which they attributed to native language transfer and resulted in instances of pragmatic failure [26]. Discussed how Jordanian refusals tend to be more polite than American refusals, linking this to deeply ingrained cultural values that shape communications norms. This difference in politeness strategies can lead to pragmatic failures in cross-cultural interactions. Building on this, Al-Khaza'leh [27] investigated how social power affects Jordanian EFL learners' perceptions of apologies, revealing that students frequently made errors when expressing apologies. Additionally, Almahameed and Ajalein [28] examined pragmatic failures by Jordanian English learners in specific language functions, such as accepting compliments, asking for permission, expressing congratulations, and expressing condolences, while considering variables like gender and power. Their findings highlighted how linguistic gaps and socio-cultural differences contribute to this failure.

Several studies have also explored cross-cultural pragmatic competence among EFL learners outside of Jordan. Jaworski [29] investigated pragmatic failures in English by Polish students, focusing on their responses to greetings. He found that EFL Polish students struggled to grasp the formulaic nature of greetings, which led to misunderstandings. In the Saudi Arabian context, Althobaiti [30] examined whether using Arabic aids Saudi Arabian students in learning English. However, the study did not focus on the loss of English pragmatic skills or instances of pragmatic failure when using Arabic. In comparative study, Stukan [31] explored socio-pragmatic failures in Ukrainian, comparing them to Mexican Spanish by applying principles such as the cooperative principle and politeness principles, as well as the concept of "face." Drawing from personal experiences in intercultural interactions, the study highlighted instances where sociopragmatic failures can disrupt communication. For example, Ukrainians might say "How ugly" or "How bad" when seeing a newborn, intending it as a protective gesture against evil; however, such expressions could be offensive in other contexts, illustrating how nuances and cultural differences can cause communication breakdowns.

Research Question

Despite existing studies on pragmatic competence, there remains a critical gap in research specifically focusing on Jordanian EFL students' pragmatic abilities in the context of specific speech acts. While some investigations have touched upon aspects of pragmatic failure, few have systematically examined under-researched speech acts, such as responding to requests, making suggestions, issuing threats, and expressing farewells. This study is significant as it offers an in-depth analysis of these speech acts among Jordanian EFL learners, shedding light on their communication challenges. The importance of this research is underscored by its unique methodological approach. Unlike previous studies that often compare strategies across different languages, this investigation focuses solely on the production of speech acts within the Jordanian context. By analyzing a sample of spoken English from Jordanian EFL students, the study will reveal the strategies employed in these speech acts and the instances of pragmatic failure that may arise due to sociocultural differences and linguistic limitations. Furthermore, the findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how Jordanian EFL learners navigate complex social interactions in English, which is crucial for their overall communicative competence. The implications extend beyond academic contributions; they will inform language teaching practices and curriculum development in EFL contexts by highlighting the necessity of explicit instruction in interlanguage pragmatics. This focus on pragmatic competence is essential for addressing communication breakdowns and enhancing learners' ability to engage effectively in diverse social settings. This study fills a vital research void by systematically exploring pragmatic competence among Jordanian EFL students. Its findings are expected to have significant implications for pedagogical strategies and materials, ultimately fostering improved communicative skills among learners in Jordan and potentially influencing similar contexts across the Middle

East.

1. To what extent do the pragmatic failure instances affect the communication process of Jordanian EFL learners in responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats, and expressing farewells?

3. Methodology

3.1. The Participants

The study involved 40 participants who provided 160 responses. They were secondary-level Jordanian students attending a private school in Jordan, where they studied English as a second language. The students were enrolled in the Jordanian national program and were all native speakers of Jordanian Arabic. The male and female participants were aged between 15 and 17. The participants were randomly selected, regardless of gender; their total score varies from 85 and up in English, and the sample was taken based on convenience and availability. The selection of the participants was based on the researchers' belief that, at this age and education level, people would contribute to the study's objectives, as it had been observed that Jordanian school students lack some pragmatic knowledge in their L2. The participants provided data through an oral Discourse Completion Task (DCT).

3.2. Instrument

The literature has established that the DCT is the most commonly used tool for assessing interlanguage pragmatic competence. The DCT was chosen for this for several reasons. First, since this research aimed to explore learners' interlanguage pragmatic competence, the most resourceful way to obtain the required data is through DCT. Secondly, the participants have sufficient time to think about their responses and can utilize various strategies compared to other tasks. More importantly, because the research aimed to assess both learners' pragmalinguistic knowledge (in selecting appropriate pragmatic forms and strategies) and sociopragmatic knowledge, the DCT was considered the most suitable test. In this regard, Kasper[32] argues:

> "A DCT is an effective method of data collection when the study intends to inform about speakers' pragma-linguistic knowledge of the strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their socio-pragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategic and linguistic choices are appropriate".

The participants took part in a DCT, which was used to guide proper data collection. The DCT consisted of two parts. The first part was collecting the biodata, namely, age and whether participants lived in or travelled to an English-speaking country, to ensure they remained free from cultural influence. The second part focuses on four speech acts: responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats, and expressing farewells. Each speech act contained 3 situations to guide the selection of forms and strategies. Students were asked to read 12 situations and respond orally The researchers designated the scenarios to prompt participants to respond appropriately using the four speech acts. The task was written in English to encourage students to respond in English. Consider one of the scenarios below:

You have warned your friend many times not to reveal your secrets, but he/she will not stop. You threaten him/her and say _____.

Initially, the DCT designed for the study underwent a validation process to ensure face and content validity, as assessed by a panel of jurors from the University of Jordan and Al Hussein Technical University. The jurors, three professors from the Departments of English Language and Literature and the Department of Languages, were asked to provide feedback. McBurney[33] defines face and content validity as follows:

> "Face validity is the idea that a test should appear superficially to test what it is supposed to test, and content validity is the notion that a test should sample the range of behavior represented by the theoretical concept being tested."

The jurors' feedback was considered, and the DCT was refined to address any obstacles.

3.3. Procedure

First, the researchers met with the participants in individual sessions. The session was not continued if a student

had lived in or visited an English-speaking country. Each student's task generally took about 25 minutes to complete. The researchers provided instructions in English or Arabic and gave one example to ensure clarity if needed; participants had to respond in English. The participants' responses were recorded. Second, the 160 voice-recorded responses from the DCT were transcribed into written form to facilitate analysis. This study adopts a qualitative approach. Third, 160 responses were then presented and discussed with a panel of native English speaker judges. The committee was asked to clarify their understanding, assess whether the instances were socially acceptable, and suggest possible alternatives.

4. Data Analysis

Anaylysis aAnalysis of the DCT data shows that Jordanian EFL students produced 64 instances of pragmatic failure. These instances are presented as produced by the participants and classified according to the speech act. To save space, the instances will be provided opposite to the titles of their corresponding situations **Table 1** presents 20 instances that illustrate pragmatic failures in communication, specifically in responding to requests. Each entry contains a response that may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations due to cultural or contextual differences. Overall, the responses highlight the complexities of language use in social interactions, emphasizing the importance of context and cultural sensitivity in effective communication.

Table 1. Instances of pragmatic failure in responding to requests.

	Responding to Requests		
1	Would I love to do that? Yes, I have some things and I have many things to buy for my home.	11	By it's difficult this time
2	I'm not going to listen.	12	May God help me
3	I will open my shop and help your fix your car because you look like a poor man to me.	13	God willing
4	Must go outside if you don't love the smell.	14	My soul is at your service
5	Send it for me.	15	Finish
6	I have no problem to help you	16	Your request is on my head and my eyes
7	You honor me	17	May God not make need anyone
8	From my eyes	18	I don't care, I will help
9	My eyes to you	19	you can bring me a cup of coffee and then we'll talk and everything is good
10	Present		

Table 2 illustrates 10 suggestions that may lead to pragmatic failures in communication. Each phrase highlights misunderstandings or culturally specific interpretations arising from how suggestions are articulated. Overall, these examples reveal the nuances of making suggestions, where the choice of words and delivery can significantly impact the effectiveness and reception of the intended message.

Table 3 presents 19 threatening utterances produced by Jordanian EFL learners. These expressions, ranging from veiled threats to explicit warnings, demonstrate the learners' ability to employ assertive and aggressive language.

Table 4 presents 20 farewell expressions used by Jordanian EFL learners. The data reveals various farewell strategies, from polite, formal, informal, and threatening. These

expressions reflect the cultural and linguistic nuances of Jordanian farewell practices.

5. Results/Key Findings

Analysis of the 68 selected pragmatic instances (responses) in the data of Jordanian EFL learners revealed pragmatic failure instances. The validation of 68 selected pragmatic instances (responses) from the date of Jordanian EFL learners revealed that native-speaker judges identified 59 instances as likely to result in cross-cultural pragmatic failure. In comparison, 9 instances were deemed somewhat tolerable. Native speaker judges confirmed that 19 instances were distrustful and unclear, and their meanings were not

Table 2. Instances of pragmatic failure in making suggestions.

	Making Suggestions		
1	Why don't we go to a museum?	6	Close your mouth
2	That novel is more interested in you	7	Think before you swallow
3	I learned that if you quit smoking for 21 days, you can quit smoking for the rest of your life.	8	You don't know where you want to spend your money
4	I know that you are expensive, you should take care of your baby and leave.	9	What's this nonsense (spending money)
5	Get out and shut up your baby.	10	You putting your money in a broken waterskin

Table 3. Instances of pragmatic failure in making threats.

	Making Threats		
1	It's 3:00 o'clock, but I will take care of you.	11	I will wipe the floor with you
2	Have you lost a coin in my face? I see that you have a watch.	12	I will call my cousin, he's the manager of the police
3	I'll take a picture for you and post it on the Instagram and say that you are a stealer.	13	Don't test me
4	I'll keep my eyes on you.	14	If you don't stop with these moves, you'll see something from me you won't like!
5	I will show you the stars of the afternoon	15	Are you playing with fire
6	The last time someone did this, his mother is still looking for him until now	16	Can you come with me to the police, please?
7	I will sell you in the Friday market if you do this again	17	Please if you want to be a thief don't come to here
8	You're stealing from someone who knows everyone	18	If you do that another time, I could kick you off the place and not coming back.
9	I make a mess with you	19	I guess that you should drive carefully
10	I will show you something that you haven't seen		

intended. Based on each speech act, the 19 instances were, respectively: In responding to requests, 'Would I love to do that? Yes, I have some things, and I have many things to buy for my home' *(Title: Aunt asking for help).* 'Send it for me' *(Title:* Professor *asking for assistance),* judges suggested, 'Send it to me,' assuming that may be a grammatical mistake. 'You honor me' *(Title:* Professor *asking for assistance),* 'Present' *(Title: Aunt asking for help),* 'By it's difficult this time' *(Title: Aunt asking for help),* 'God willing.' *(Title: Professor asking for assistance),* 'Finish' *(Title: Someone asking to stop smoking),* 'I don't care, I will help' *(Title: Aunt asking for help).* In making threats, 'I will show you the stars of the afternoon' *(Title: The shoplifter),* *'The last time someone did this, his mother is still looking for him until now'* *(Title: The shoplifter),* 'I will sell you in the Friday market if you do this again.' *(Title: The shoplifter).* In expressing farewells, 'I guess that you came alone' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event)* was perceived as the guest attending without company. 'We can meet more next

time' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event).* However, the native speaker judges suggested an alternative: ' We can spend more time together next time we meet'. 'Repeat it.' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event),* 'This place is your place at any time.' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event),* 'Leave it good.' *(Title: Coworker resigning).* In the group of instances analyzed, native-speaker judges did not offer alternative suggestions because the utterances were unclear. They explained that the statements made no sense. Only 3 instances were somewhat accepted, but this was because EFL learners misused certain terms rather than completely lost the meaning.

Native speaker judges correspondingly confirmed that 8 instances tended to be socially unacceptable. Despite that, judges provided the nearest possible alternatives based on their understanding. Based on the speech act, the 8 instances were, respectively: In making threats, 'It's 3:00 o'clock, but I will take care of you' (Title: *Person tracking you*); as an alternative, the judges suggested, 'It's 3 o'clock, but don't

Table 4. Instances of pragmatic failure in expressing farewells.

	Expressing Farewells		
1	Can you go with me in my home?	11	We'll see you in good health
2	See you in the next company.	12	May God make things easier for you
3	I wish you to find another room that you like this where you will be more happy than this.	13	You won't make short
4	I guess that you came alone	14	You're on my head and, goodbye
5	We can meet more next time.	15	Repeat it
6	Yeah, I never guessed that you will shine our meeting for today, however, it was really good cause we've added some new information	16	Make a mistake and repeat it
7	Say hi to your relatives	17	You've increased our honor
8	May God be with you	18	This place is your place at anytime
9	Good luck (Jordanian farewells can be extended with wishes)	19	Leave it good
10	In God's protection	20	My time is too valuable to waste here

worry, I haven't forgotten about you'. 'I'll take a picture for you and post it on the Instagram and say that you are a stealer' *(Title: The shoplifter);* alternatively, the judges suggested, 'I'll take a picture of you, post it on Instagram, and call you a thief. 'I'll keep my eyes on you' *(Title: The shoplifter)*; alternatively, judges suggested, 'I'll be watching you'. I make a mess with you' (Title: *Person tracking you*), *the proposed alternative was* 'I'll mess with you' or 'I'll mess things up for you'. 'I will show you something that you haven't seen' (Title: *Person tracking you*); alternatively, judges suggested, 'I'll show you something you'll wish you never saw' 'Don't test me' (Title: *Person tracking you*)'; *the response is culturally specific which means (don't test my patience)* alternatively, judges suggested, '*Don't push your luck'*. In expressing farewells, the instances were, 'Can you go with me in my home? (Title: Ending the conversation with a friend)', judges suggested *a* politer way, such as 'Would you like to come over*?'*. 'Say hi to your relatives' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event)*. Alternatively, the judges suggested '*deliver my regards to your family'*. These instances were clearer than the previous group instances but were extremely unacceptable; their connotation *regarding ethics, morals, and principles was unpleasant*. Therefore, judges could suggest alternatives to an extent. Even though the instances were clearer and despite the ability to be refined, judges confirmed that they are *inappropriate and* uncommon and not used as responses to similar situations.

Native judges also established that 10 instances sounded rude. Based on each speech act, the 10 instances, respectively, in responding to requests, 'I'm not going to lis-ten' *(Title: Classmate asking for help in homework),* instead, judges suggested, 'I'm not willing to do what you've asked me for you'. 'I will open my shop and help you fix your car because you look like a poor man to me' *(Title:* Someone *asking for engine-repairing)*. Native speaker judges misunderstood the instance and perceived that the mechanic would help the indigent man. In their understanding, they suggested, 'Don't worry, I can help you'. 'May God help me' *(Title:* Someone *asking for engine-repairing)*. 'You can bring me a cup of coffee and then we'll talk and everything is good' *(Title:* Someone *asking for engine-repairing)*; alternatively, judges suggested, 'How about bringing me a cup of coffee, and then we can talk? Then everything will be fine. In making suggestions, 'Get out and shut up your baby' *(Title: The baby who is crying)*; alternatively, judges suggested, 'May I help you'. 'Close your mouth.' (*Title: Boss wants to quit smoking*). 'What's this nonsense spending money' (Title: *Friend who wastes mone*y). In making threats, 'I will wipe the floor with you' (Title*: Friend who tells secrets)*. In expressing farewells, 'My time is too valuable to waste here' *(Title: Ending the conversation with a friend).* 'See you in the next company' *(Title: Coworker resigning)*. Despite that, some instances could have native alternatives, but many sounded rude due to the understanding that this may convey implications about social status. Also, in instances like 'May God help me' more in religious or culturally specific settings, although it may be perceived as a whimper. Native responses are the only alternative to show a more native-like tone, yet some are irrelevant. In some instances, it didn't sound very pleasant. From the native speakers' judgment perspective,

this instance was unclear; therefore, they did not suggest an alternative.

Native speaker judges confirmed that 22 instances sounded awkward and inconvenient. Based on each speech act, the 22 instances, respectively, in responding to requests, 'I have no problem to help you' *(Title: Aunt asking for help),* the judges suggested, 'I have no problem helping you'. 'From my eyes' (Title: *Professor* asking for assistance). 'My eyes to you' (Title: *Professor* asking for assistance). 'My soul is at your service' (Title: *Professor* asking for assistance). 'Your request is on my head and my eyes' (Title: *Someone* asking to stop smoking). 'May God not make need anyone' *(Title: Aunt asking for help).* In making suggestions, 'Why don't we go to a museum?' *(Title: Friend who wastes money)*; the response should align with the issue. Suggesting a museum visit does not help the friend manage spending or find cost-free activities. 'That novel is more interested in you' (*Title:* The librarian suggesting novels). 'I know that you are expensive; you should take care of your baby and leave' (*Title*: The baby who is crying). You can go out if you don't love the smell' (Title: *Someone* asking to stop smoking); they suggested 'If you don't like the smell, you should go outside'. 'Think before you swallow' (*Title: Boss wants to quit smoking*). In making threats, 'Have you lost a coin in my face? I see that you have a watch' (*Title: Person tracking you*). 'You're stealing from someone who knows everyone' *(Title: The shoplifter).* 'Can you come with me to the police, please?' *(Title: The shoplifter).* 'Please if you want to be a thief don't come to here' *(Title: The shoplifter).* 'If you do that another time, I could kick you off the place and not coming back' *(Title: The shoplifter).* 'I guess that you should drive carefully' *(Title: Father leaving to work.).* In expressing farewells, 'Yeah, I never guessed that you will shine our meeting for today, however, it was really good cause we've added some new information' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event).* 'You're on my head and, good bye' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event).* 'You won't make short' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event).* 'Make a mistake and repeat it' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event).* 'You've increased our honor' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event).*

The instances were not accessible to the native judges, and thus, they could not provide a clearer alternative. Most may be interpreted differently based on cultural norms sur-rounding politeness and obligation. This instance sounded acceptable to the judges, but they were irrelevant to scenarios, such as 'Why don't we go to a museum?' *(Title: Friend who wastes money).*

Native speaker judges confirmed that 9 instances, to an extent, were tolerated, and they needed context to convey the exact message. This appeared in making threats, 'If you don't stop with these moves, you'll see something from me you won't like!' (Title: *Person tracking you*). 'I will call my cousin; he's the manager of the police' (Title: The shoplifter). 'Are you playing with fire?' (Title: *employee sharing information to competitors*). In expressing farewell, 'I wish you to find another room that you like this where you will be more happy than this' *(Title: Coworker* resigning*),* the native judges suggested, 'I hope you find a better room'. 'May God be with you' (Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event). 'Good luck *(Jordanian farewells can be extended with wishes).* 'In God's protection' (Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event). 'We'll see you in good health' (Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event). 'May God make things easier for you' (Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event). Due to the obvious social distance, those responses were supposed to show a sense of formality and serosity; however, the judges confirmed that they seemed sarcastic unless contextualized.

6. Discussion of Findings

The main findings in light of the four speech acts were as follows: First, it was observed that Jordanian EFL learners exaggerated their utterances, such as being overpolite and offensive. One evidence comes from responding to requests 'Would I love to do that? Yes, I have some things, and I have many things to buy for my home; the learner means 'yes.' A plausible explanation of the Jordanian EFL learners' behavior may be related to the ease of using devices such as 'yes' alongside more explanation. In making suggestions, the findings revealed that Jordanian EFL learners used imperative forms as the most frequent strategy instead of typical suggesting forms: 'Get out and shut up your baby' *(title: The baby who is crying).* Instead, the current study's findings show that Jordanian EFL learners resorted particularly to applying strategies. Second, it was found that the Jordanian EFL learners' data invented forms and strategies when they

were performed in English. Fabrication was found in the speech act of responding to requests where some of these instances seemed to be misused: 'present', 'finish', 'From my eyes', 'Your request is on my head and my eyes', etc. Third, it was noticed that Jordanian EFL learners employed language transfer mechanisms in the four speech acts. Jordanian EFL learners tended to adopt their sociocultural norms to find a way to respond. In this regard, pragmatic failure occurs when Jordanian learners transfer the sociocultural patterns. Responding to requests, it was noted that Jordanian EFL learners tended to adopt their sociocultural norms of interaction in situations, such as asking for something in return, such as a cup of coffee, when attempting to fix someone's car. Jordanians also frequently transferred religious formulaic expressions to L2, such as 'May God be with you' *(Title: Uninvited guest leaving the event)* and many similar ones to express farewell to a distant person. Islam and religion are central to Jordan's daily life and interpersonal communication. Religious expressions often serve as a way to invoke blessings, protection, and goodwill, reflecting shared cultural values. Fourth, it was observed that Jordanian EFL learners tended to perform relatively long forms rather than short forms. One piece of evidence comes from the speech act of responding to requests: 'I don't mind going with you, I'll help you and with everything you need' *(Title: Aunt asking for help)* instead of saying (I don't mind). The response length can be predicted when supplementing this formulaic expression with an additional explanation. Al-Ali and Alawneh[23] state that providing explanations may have cultural and contextual factors.

The findings from this study have significant implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, particularly in diverse cultural and educational settings. While the study focuses on Jordanian EFL learners, its insights can be generalized to a wider international context, offering valuable contributions to language teaching and learning. One of the primary insights of this study is the role of cultural transfer in EFL learners' pragmatic competence. As highlighted, Jordanian learners frequently transferred socio-pragmatic norms from their native Arabic into English, resulting in instances of pragmatic failure. This issue is not unique to Jordanian learners but is a common challenge for EFL students worldwide. In culturally diverse educational environments, learners often bring their first-language cultural norms into the classroom, which can lead to misunderstandings or inappropriate language use in the target language. This finding underscores the importance of explicit instruction on pragmatics in EFL curricula, particularly in contexts where cultural differences may affect communication styles.

The study also reveals that EFL learners often rely on formulaic expressions and over-politeness, which can lead to verbosity and ambiguity. This tendency, observed in Jordanian learners, can also be seen in students from other non-native English-speaking countries. In multicultural classrooms, where learners come from various linguistic backgrounds, there is a need for teachers to recognize these patterns and guide students toward more concise, context-appropriate language use. The findings suggest that EFL teaching materials should go beyond grammar and vocabulary and incorporate practical exercises that foster awareness of socio-pragmatic aspects of language use. Moreover, the study's findings on the fabrication of expressions and the lack of pragmatic competence point to a critical gap in many EFL teaching programs. In some countries, textbooks and materials may prioritize linguistic accuracy over pragmatic appropriateness, failing to provide learners with sufficient exposure to the real-world usage of English in different social contexts. To bridge this gap, EFL programs should integrate explicit instruction on speech acts and pragmatic strategies, including how to make requests, suggestions, and threats in culturally appropriate ways. This would enable learners to communicate more effectively and avoid misunderstandings in diverse international settings. In addition, the study highlights how religious and cultural expressions, such as those observed in Jordanian farewells, play a significant role in shaping language use. For EFL learners from other religious or cultural backgrounds, integrating such culturally specific expressions into their second-language use may present challenges, particularly when they do not have direct equivalents in English. Teachers in international EFL classrooms can use these findings to encourage cross-cultural understanding and awareness, ensuring that learners understand the role of culture in shaping language use. Lastly, the broader contextual relevance of this study extends to teacher training and professional development. EFL teachers working with learners from various cultural backgrounds can benefit from insights into how cultural factors influence language use. Teachers can be trained to recognize the signs of cultural transfer and

pragmatic failure in students' language production and to design classroom activities that promote the development of pragmatic competence across cultures.

Ultimately, the findings of this study have far-reaching implications for EFL pedagogy[34]. By addressing the cultural dimensions of language learning and incorporating pragmatic instruction into EFL curricula, educators can better equip learners to navigate the complexities of communication in English, particularly in diverse global contexts. This approach can help learners develop linguistic accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and pragmatic skills necessary for successful communication in international settings.

7. Conclusions

The present paper aimed to contribute to the literature on pragmatic failure research by examining Jordanian EFL learners' socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic abilities in the context of four speech acts: responding to requests, making suggestions, making threats, and expressing farewells. The study sought to fill the gap in understanding the pragmatic competence of Jordanian EFL learners, as their difficulties and needs in this area have remained underexplored. If the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic gaps continue to be overlooked in second language learning and teaching, learners may encounter misunderstandings and communication challenges in real-world interactions. This study revealed that Jordanian EFL learners use various techniques to mitigate pragmatic differences, including fabrication and a preference for certain communicative strategies, beyond merely relying on L1 transfer. Addressing these gaps in language instructions is crucial for improving learners' overall communicative competence in English. While this study provides a broad analysis of pragmatic failures, classifying each instance as sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic was beyond its scope. Future research could focus on this to offer deeper insights into the nature of these failures and their implications.

The study's implication highlights the importance of addressing pragmatic competence in language teaching, emphasizing that pragmatics is often overlooked compared to grammar instruction. Current syllabuses prioritize grammatical competence, leaving pragmatic competence underdeveloped despite its critical role in achieving communicative

competence Ishihara & Cohen[22]. The study suggests improving Jordanian EFL textbooks by contextualizing authentic language materials in daily discourse[34]. According to Abu Tayeh[35], offering training courses to enhance teaching competencies in cross-cultural norms in Jordan could serve as an effective solution. Teachers should explicitly teach interlanguage pragmatics, focusing on both pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic features, to better address learners' challenges in these areas.

Author Contributions

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Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

Due to their extensive length, the data used in this study are not publicly available. However, they can be accessed upon reasonable request from the corresponding author. Researchers interested in accessing the data should contact the corresponding author. Requests will be evaluated under the ethical guidelines of the study and relevant institutional policies.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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