The Appropriateness in Advice-Giving From a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract

This cross-cultural study investigates the differences in the perceptions of the appropriateness in advice giving in English between American English native speakers (AEL1) and Jordanian learners of English as a foreign language (JEFL). Data were collected using an adopted version of a Multiple Choice Questionnaire (MCQ) by Hinkel (1997). The questionnaire consists of eight situations that required advice giving or opting out to a peer acquaintance (equal status) and an instructor (higher status). Each situation was accompanied by three MC selections in random order: direct advice, hedge advice, and indirect comments. The fourth selection was an explicit choice for opting out that remained constant for all selections. Results revealed that both groups have the same perception of the social distance in the situations involving peer acquaintance and instructor. They, however, differed in the types of advice they showed as the appropriate choice. JEFL participants considered direct advice or hedge advice as appropriate option to be used with peer acquaintance and with instructors where in American culture the AEL1 participants found these strategies as least likely appropriate. The paper suggests EFL programs that promote awareness for JEFL on various appropriate conversational strategies in English. The results are expected to be useful information in cross-cultural comparison studies and other related areas.

Keywords: Speech act, Giving-Advice, Individualism and Collectivism.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, researches of cross-cultural speech acts have shown that L2 learners' communicative competence greatly relies on their cultural competence. For example, Bentahila and Davies (1989) differentiated between linguistics knowledge and knowledge of behaviour associated with the target language culture. Thus, L2 learners who have considerable grammatical competence or lexical knowledge of the target language but have a lack of sociocultural awareness may encounter problems of communication with native speakers (NS) due to their lack of the pragmatic knowledge of the target language culture, that is, when to use appropriate linguistics forms (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Thomas, 1983; Hinkel, 1997; Matsumura, 2001). According to Kasper (1992), the concept of pragmatic is dealt with the ability to interact and communicate with speakers of other languages and cultures through language forms appropriate to specific contexts. Otherwise, the possibility of communication breakdowns is most likely to occur. Such communication breakdowns come into play when NNSs rely on their pragmatic knowledge of appropriate L1 speech acts and negatively transfer it to their L2 and then pragmatic failure occurs (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Hinkel, 1997; Matsumura, 2001; Bordería-García, 2006). Thomas (1983) considers these failures to be more serious than grammatical or lexical deficiency because it may be understood to be rudeness or unfriendliness that may affect the speakers' relationships.

Studies examining pragmatic awareness have focused on various speech acts such as refusal (Beebe et al., 1990; Al Issa, 2003), apology (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006), and request (Blum-Kulka& House, 1989; Al-Momani, 2009). Those studies have contributed to revealing the differences between NSs and NNSs and to better understanding of the use of appropriate linguistic forms in different languages and cultures and further to avoiding communication breakdowns. However, not many studies were done on the speech act of advice (Hinkel, 1994, 1997; Matsumura, 2001; Bordería-García, 2006; Chun, 2009), and in Jordanian context, to the researchers' best knowledge, there has been no investigation of giving advice conducted on Jordanian EFL learners. Therefore, it would be useful to examine how the speech act of giving advice is perceived in English by Jordanian EFL learners at University Kebangsaan Malaysia (henceforth, UKM) that would contribute in cross-cultural comparison studies. In other words, this study aims to investigate cross-cultural differences in the perceptions of the appropriateness of giving advice in English between American English native speakers and Jordanian EFL learners at UKM and to provide interpretations of the differences mainly in terms of the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism. The reason for selecting English in the present study refers to the fact that English is the medium of instruction for Jordanian EFL learners in Malaysia and is also a language that is frequently needed in their everyday interaction. Thus, it would be important to pay attention to pragmatic competence of the Jordanian EFL learners rather than their grammatical competence.

The Speech Act of Advice

The speech act of giving advice has not been studied extensively with the exception of a few scholars (Bordería-García, 2006; Chun, 2009). As a result very few definitions of what giving advice entails are available. The following two seem to be appropriate for this research; first by Searle (1969) who stated that giving advice is a kind of speech act which the speaker believes

will benefit the hearer. He further demonstrates that by giving advice, the speaker is doing the hearer a favour because it is not clear to both of them that the hearer will do the act without the advice being given. Searle distinguished between advice and request as advising is more like telling on what is the best for his/her rather than what s/he should do. Second, Brown and Levinson (1987) described giving advice as an "intrinsically face threatening act" (p. 65), where the speaker indicates that s/he does not mean to avoid obstructing the hearer's freedom of action. However, Brown and Levinson observe that the degree to which advice is a face-threatening act differs among cultures based on the measure of power which the hearer has over the speaker, the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, and the politeness strategies considered appropriate in a particular culture. Matsumoto (1994) on the other hand, points out that in collectivist cultures like Japanese; a face-threatening is not intended by an imposition on the hearer's freedom of action but by inequality in the rank relation of the speaker and the hearer. With this respect, the speech act of giving advice may not be understood as a face-threat. Although the giving of advice can be perceived as rude by Americans native speakers, the giving of advice in Arabic is not only an expression of friendliness but also largely conveys benevolence and support (El-Sayed, 1990). Once again, this study focuses to investigate Jordanian EFL learners' perceptions of the appropriateness of giving advice in English in terms of the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism.

Related Studies on Advice-Giving

Many researchers have agreed that NNSs' perceptions of different kinds of speech act varied from those of NSs of English, and although there are great number established studies on speech acts (Watts, 2003), the number is seemingly very small for the speech act of giving advice (Nydell, 1987; El-Sayed, 1990; Hinkel, 1994, 1997; Matsumura, 2001; Bordería-García, 2006; Chun, 2009). Moreover, after an exhausting and long journey of investigation in Jordanian, Malaysian and US libraries and academic institutions, the researchers found no study that examined the differences in the perceptions of the appropriateness of giving advice in English between American English native speakers and Jordanian EFL learners. Thus, such investigation would be useful to understand the cross-cultural features of both Jordan and American speech communities with regards to the speech act of giving advice.

In her comparative study, Hinkel (1994) investigated cross-cultural differences between native English speakers (NS) and nonnative English speakers' (NNS) perceptions of appropriateness of giving advice. The participants of this study were 172 NNSs included Chinese (84), Japanese (33), Korean (16), Indonesian (16), Arabic (13), and Spanish (10) participants. On the other hand, the NSs included of (31) of American English participants. Results revealed that NNSs group provided advice to the superior and the peer acquaintance noticeably more frequently than the NSs. In addition, responses provided by speakers of Spanish and Arabic were most nearly like NSs and differed from those of other NNSs groups. In descending order, they were followed by the speakers of Indonesian, Chinese, and Japanese; speakers of Korean deviated the most from the responses of NSs (Hinkel, 1994). In addition, she elaborated that the notion of giving advice may be viewed in collectivist cultures as "an expression of friendliness and interest, i.e. a conversational routine and/or a rapport-building activity, which is, nonetheless, considered inappropriate in some English-speaking cultures" (pp. 84-85), which are typically placed as individualist cultures. Finally, Hinkel notes that NNSs rely on their L1 perceptions of

conversational appropriateness and politeness in performing their L2 speech act of giving advice. She concluded that NNSs need to be taught pragmatically appropriate topics and formulae in the L2. Hinkel's study is important as it provides a significant contribution with regard to the scenarios that she designed in order to elicit giving advice responses. Over the last decade, these scenarios have been widely adapted by other researchers examining the speech act of advice and the current research is a new addition to the corpus. The findings would contribute significantly toward further cross-linguistics and cross-cultural discourses.

In another study dealing with the appropriateness of advice, Hinkel (1997) investigated cross-cultural differences of advice giving in terms of production collected by discourse completion test (DCT) and perception collected by Multiple Choice Questionnaire (MCQ). The participants of this study were equally divided by gender into two groups of forty Taiwanese Chinese and forty American native speakers of English. Findings revealed that when responding to the MCQ, NNSs chose substantially more options with either direct or hedged advice than did NSs, which is in line with theoretical assumptions. In response to DCTs, however, NSs preferred direct and hedged advice significantly more than did NNSs. According to her, DCTs may not always be the best elicitation instrument for L1 and L2 data. Another important finding, which is related to the present study, Hinkel found that one of the essential differences between the Chinese concept of collective self and Anglo-American individualism lies in the Confucian and Taoist precept of interdependence with others which is in contrast with cultural values emphasizing personal autonomy. Thus, this study is important because it is the first of its kind that compared two data collection instruments, DCT and MCQ, to elicit participants' perception in the framework of advice-giving studies.

In the Japanese context, Matsumura (2001) investigated the perceptions of social status in giving advice by two groups of Japanese ESL and EFL students. The EFL group was studying at a university in Kyoto, Japan, and the ESL group was studying at a university in Vancouver, Canada, for 8 months in an exchange program. Data were collected using a 12-item MCQ to elicit the participants' perception of the appropriateness of giving advice. The primary focus of this study was to investigate how both groups of Japanese students developed pragmatic competence in their giving advice in English, and therefore to compare their approximation of preferences for advice type to native speakers preferences. Results revealed that at the study's initial stage the ESL group appeared lower in pragmatic performance than the former but then surpassed them at the end of the study period. Such finding suggests that the students who lived and studied abroad had a better perception of social status in giving advice. This study is significant because it provides an important longitudinal analysis of how the pragmatic competence on giving advice developed over time. However, the researcher did not specify what caused such significant development of pragmatic competence in terms of cultural differences between Canada and Japan. There is also an issue of inadequacy of using just one instrument to make a strong conclusive claim of the Japanese perceptions on the appropriateness of giving advice (Rose & Ono, 1995).

In her dissertation, Bordería-García (2006) investigated cross-cultural differences in the productions and perceptions of advice giving. The data were obtained via role-plays (productions) and a written questionnaire in the form of metapragmatic judgment task (perceptions). The participants of this study included students of Spanish as a foreign language at

three proficiency levels, and their data were compared with native speakers of Spanish from Spain and North American English Speakers. The primary aim of this study was to examine if the students of Spanish as a foreign language at three proficiency levels develop the appropriate pragmatic knowledge needed to interpret and give advice. The findings showed no significant difference in the perceptions of appropriateness of non-conventionally indirect, conventionally indirect, and direct forms of advice by the native speakers of Spanish and the native English. However, they differed in the oral productions with the Spanish speakers showing a significant preference on giving direct advices. The main differences between the learners and the NS of Spanish were in the perception and usage of the non-conventionally direct strategies, which seems to be due to transfer from learners' native language, i.e., English. It was also found that in a collectivist culture like Spanish, family, physical appearance and well-being, and job-related topics are not seen as private matters. Thus, when speakers of Spanish offer advice on what they perceive to be non- private topics, in L2 they may threaten the hearer's face without being aware of the impact to the hearers (Condon, 1987).

This study is important because it is one of a very small number of speech act studies that examined the concept of pragmatic transfer in the framework of advice. This study, however, has some limitations. For example, similar to Matsumura's (2001) study, this study used only one method for the study of perception as well as only six strategies for giving advice were investigated. Hence, perception can be examined using interviews or naturally occurring data. Regarding the participants, those who served as native speakers of Spanish came from only one region of Spain (the east) and they may not be representative of how everyone in Spain talk.

More recently, Chun (2009) investigated cross-cultural differences in the speech act of giving advice by Korean speakers and Canadian English speakers. This study aims to provide interpretations of the differences primarily in terms of the four cultural value-orientations of horizontal individualism (H-IND), vertical individualism (V-IND), horizontal collectivism (H-COL), and vertical collectivism (V-COL). The participants of this study included 35 Korean students and 35 Canadian students with both males and females. Data were collected using a 2-part questionnaire. Part one aims to elicit politeness strategies in giving advice, whereas part two consists of twelve items to assess other cultural value-orientations. Results revealed that there was a significant difference between Canadian and Korean students in terms of the social distance. Canadian students were less dependent on social distance than Korean students. Canadian students tended to give advice significantly less frequently to peers and superiors than did Korean students. This particular difference can be attributable to the respective cultural value-orientations. Another important finding is that Koreans, as vertical collectivistic society, likely show vertical integration emphasizing the sense of propriety and respect for social hierarchy rather than horizontal integration emphasizing interdependence and collective duty. In contrast, Canadians as vertical individualistic society lack both horizontal and vertical integration. Vertical individualists tend to predispose themselves toward individual rights and autonomy. Thus, this study is important as it extended the conventional framework of the existing two cultural types of individualism (IND) and collectivism (COL).

In Arabic context, El-Sayed (1990) and Nydell (1987) elaborated that the speech act of giving advice is perceived as a rapport-building speech act that is common in the Arabic culture and serves as a means of establishing group belonging, which is a primary aspect of collectivist

cultures. According to El-Sayed (1990), this particular speech act is perceived as an expression of friendliness and also greatly conveys benevolence and support in Arabic culture. Nydell(1987) notes that topics that are considered private are subject to cultural interpretation and issues such as children, health, physical comfort and well-being, financial matters, professional qualifications, and personal contentment are openly discussed. Hence, refusing advice on what Americans would consider private matters can be met with a sense of bewilderment and rejection in Arab culture. These studies are important because they are the only two studies that paid attention to the speech act of advice in Arabic context. However, no explanations were presented with regard to the data collection or how the data were transcribed.

To sum up, it can be seen that the appropriateness of giving advice may vary from culture to culture. In collectivist cultures such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Arabs giving direct advice such as "you should stop smoking, you are heavy smoker" often reflect the speaker's sincere concern for the welfare of the hearer. In contrast, in individualist cultures such as in the USA, people tend to perceive the same form of advice as an invasion of their privacy. It also can be seen from the literature that this speech act has not been studied adequately in Arabic culture. Specifically, to the researchers' best knowledge, there has been no investigation of giving advice conducted on Jordanian EFL learners. Therefore, it would be useful to examine how the speech act of giving advice is perceived in English by Jordanian EFL learners at UKM that would contribute in cross-cultural comparisons. This will be the gap where the contribution will be made by this study.

The Study

This study aims to investigate cross-cultural differences in the perceptions of the appropriateness of giving advice in English between American English native speakers and Jordanian EFL learners. It also aims to provide interpretations of these salient differences between the two groups. It is mainly based on the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism. This cultural dimension is the most broadly adopted one in investigating the differences and the similarities in cross-cultural communication studies. In this paper, collectivism is characterized by individual subordination of personal goals to the goals of the collective group while individualism is characterized by the subordination of a group's goals to an individual's own goals. A fundamental conviction of people in collectivist cultures is that the smallest unit of survival is the collective power. On the other hand, in individualist cultures the smallest unit of survival is the individuals themselves (Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988), because the self is autonomous and separated from the group, while in collectivistic cultures the self is never defined by an autonomous self but by a group of others (Lyuh, 1992). In addition, Triandis et al. (1988) explain that people in individualistic cultures show positive attitudes toward horizontal relationships and are uneasy about people in authority. In contrast, people in collectivistic cultures show positive attitudes toward vertical relationships and accept differences in power.

Jordan typically is classified as a collectivistic culture, while the USA is typically classified as an individualistic culture. Thus these emerging two research questions that initiated this study:

1. What are the differences in the contextual and cultural dimensions between Jordanian EFL learners and American English native speakers in the perceptions of the speech act of giving advice?

2. Why are there differences in the speakers' perceptions of the speech act of giving advice between Jordanian EFL learners and American native speakers of English in terms of contextual and cultural dimensions?

Methodology

Participants

The participants to the present study were twenty Jordanian EFL learners (JEFL) and twenty American English native speakers (AEL1). The participants of the latter group were chosen among visitors visiting Malaysia. This group was first composed of 32 speakers who were ethnically diverse. Of the 32 participants, 12 speakers were not AEL1 (5 were speakers of Germany, 3 Italy, 2 British, and 2 Australian) and were therefore excluded. The remaining AEL1 consist of 20 male speakers whose ages ranged from 25-45 years old. On the other hand, the Jordanian participants were all graduate students, both Masters and PhD, pursuing studies in both pure sciences and applied sciences at UKM's main campus located in Bandar Baru Bangi, a town in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. They also are relatively homogeneous in terms of their cultural background (Jordanian Arabs of northern region of Jordan) and academic/linguistic experiences (25- to 35-year old graduates, both master and PhD, pursuing studies in both pure science and applied science fields at UKM). All 38 JEFL of northern region of Jordan who are pursuing studies in both pure science and applied science fields at UKM all participated in the study. However, responses of only 20 male students whose ages ranged from 25-35 were randomly chosen in order to match the number and sex ratio of the American participants. In addition, all of them had never travelled to any English speaking countries other than to and within Malaysia. In another research project, the researchers observed the participants of the present study for around five months. Thus, based on the researchers' personal contact with them, the researchers judge the participants to represent intermediate to high-intermediate English proficiency.

Instrument and Procedure

The issue of how data are collected is one of the main concerns in cross-cultural researches. Trosborg (1995) stressed that data collection in an ethnographic procedure (i.e. naturally occurring data) is the ultimate goal in most cross-cultural researches. This data collection method is considered to be the most reliable data source in speech act research because it reflects what speakers actually say rather than what they think they will say in a given speech situation (Wolfson, 1986; Bardovi-Harlig& Hartford, 1993). However, the contextual variables (e.g., gender, age, status) are difficult to be controlled and very time consuming. Another limitation is that the occurrence of some speech acts cannot be predicted and therefore this method might not

yield enough instances of a particular speech act. Accordingly, collecting ethnographic data seem to be an unlikely option for cross-cultural speech act researches.

As a result, due to the limitations of those of ethnographic procedures, the present study adopted a Multiple Choice Questionnaire (MCQ) established by Hinkel (1997) as the data collection procedure (see Appendix). In their distinction between DCT and MCQ, Kasper and Dahl (1991) pointed out that the difference between DCT and MCQ data lies in the type of elicited responses, i.e. MCQ elicits 'perceptions of alternative speech act realization', while DCT is classified to constrained production instrument. According to Hinkel (1994), MCQ has been proven to be a more effective measure of subjects' judgments of appropriateness as compared to DCT and open-ended instruments. For these reasons, an adopted version of Hinkel's (1997) MCQ was chosen to investigate the cross-cultural differences in the perceptions of the appropriateness of giving advice in English between American English native speakers and Jordanian EFL learners. The characters were briefly described in the questionnaire situations: a social superior i.e. a college instructor with whom the participants were familiar in a professional capacity only, and a peer acquaintance. The questionnaire consists of eight situations that required giving advice or opting out: four involved statements addressed to the social superior and four to the peer acquaintance. Each situation was accompanied by three MC selections in random order:(1) direct advice involving the model "should," (2) hedged advice using "need to" or other softeners or hedging advices, lexical hedging ("may be, I think"), or questions, and (3) indirect comment including no advice or suggestions. The fourth selection was an explicit choice for opting out that remained constant for all selection. Examples of direct advice, hedge advice, and indirect comments are illustrated in (1) to (3), respectively:

1. You shouldn't order the hamburger. I had it here before, and it was really greasy.

2. May be it's not a good idea to order a hamburger. I had it here before, and it was really greasy.
3. I had a hamburger here before, and it was really greasy.

Regarding the JEFL group, the researchers met the participants and administer the questionnaires at five computer laboratories from 3 faculties/institutes, namely the Faculty of Information Science and Technology, the Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology Studies, and the Institute of Mathematical Science Studies. The details of the administration are as the following:

1. The researchers explain the tasks in detail to the participants.

2. Participants were then asked to read each situation and react to it by trying to place themselves in the situations presented. They were asked to choose the statement (or question) that they think would be the most appropriate to say in the situation.

For the AEL1 group, the researchers met them at different locations in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia, such as in hotels, guest houses, and public parks. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire was 10 minutes. Over the period of five weeks, the researchers completed their data collection. Data were analysed based on Hinkel's (1997) classification of giving advice strategies. Once again, three major levels of directness for giving advice can be

identified cross-culturally on theoretical grounds: (1) direct advice involving the model "should," (2) hedge advice using "need to" or other softeners or hedging advices, lexical hedging ("may be, I think"), or questions, and (3) indirect comment including no advice or suggestions. Finally, the data were analyzed based on the frequency and percentage of each MC selection in each situation. In other words, the participants' choices of the MC responses were tallied and converted to percentages (see Table 1 below).

Results and Discussion

Research question one was to see if there are differences in the perceptions on giving advice between Jordanian EFL learners and American English native speakers. As illustrated in Table 1 below, Jordanian EFL learners selected the options of direct advice more frequently than AEL1 did in two out of four situations with peer acquaintance. Specifically, Jordanian EFL learners were more direct in the situations of *Unreliable car* and *Repair shop* situations. However, AEL1 chose direct advice option more frequently than JEFL did in the *Library* situation. In the *Academic course* setting, both groups JEFL and AEL1 selected the option of direct advice in the same frequency (n=3). Although there were differences in the options of selecting direct advice between JEFL and AEL1, these differences seemed to be insignificant. For example, 3 out of 20 of JEFL selected the option of direct advice in the *Library* situation, while 4 out of 20 of AEL1 chose the direct advice option in the same situation.

On the other hand, the differences between JEFL and AEL1 were significant in the choice of hedging advice options, with the JEFL choosing such options more frequently than AEL1 did. This is in consistent with findings from Hinkel (1997) where Chinese selecting such options markedly more frequently than NSs of American English. For example, 25 out of 40 of Chinese participants selected the option of hedge advice in the *Library* situation, while 6 out of 40 of NSs of American English chose the hedge advice option in the same situation.

The majority of JEFL chose hedge advice option in all situations with peer acquaintance. For example, 12 out of 20 of JEFL selected hedge advice in the *Repair shop* situation (i.e. It's better to take your car to the shop on the corner. It's closer), while 6 out of 20 of AEL1 chose hedge advice in the same situation. In contrast, the AEL1 selected indirect comment options more frequently than JEFL did. For example, 12 out of 20 of AEL1 selected indirect comment in the *Repair shop* situation (i.e. I usually take my car to the shop on the corner. It's closer), while 6 out of 20 of JEFL chose indirect comment in the same situation.

With regard to Instructor's Situations, AEL1 participants' frequency choices were similar to those with Peer Acquaintance i.e., the majority of them tended to choose indirect comments or to opt out altogether. JEFL participants however, preferred to give direct advice such as in *Illness* situation, and in the case of the situations for the *Library*, the *Bookstore*, and the *Restaurant*, they did it through hedged advice more frequently (35%, 25%, 35%, respectively) Interestingly, these findings are consistent with Hinkel (1994, 1997) and Matsumura (2001) where Hinkel (1997) for example, found that most of the Chinese participants selected direct advice in the *Illness* situation, followed by those who chose hedge advice.

Table 1: MCQ Data

Situation	Direct	Hedge	Indirect	Nothing
Peer acquaintance				
1. Unreliable car	JEFL (25) 5 AEL1 (15) 3	JEFL (45) 9 AEL1 (20) 4	JEFL (20) 4 AEL1 (50) 10	JEFL (10) 2 AEL1 (15) 3
2. Academic course	JEFL (15) 3 AEL1 (15) 3	JEFL (50) 10 AEL1 (10) 2	JEFL (30) 6 AEL1 (70) 14	JEFL (5) 1 AEL1 (5) 1
3. Repair shop	JEFL (10) 2 AEL1 (5) 1	JEFL (60) 12 AEL1 (30) 6	JEFL (30) 6 AEL1 (60) 12	JEFL (0) 0 AEL1 (5) 1
4. Library	JEFL (15) 3 AEL1 (20) 4	JEFL (55) 11 AEL1 (20) 4	JEFL (20) 4 AEL1 (35) 7	JEFL (10) 2 AEL1 (25) 5
Instructor				
1. Library	JEFL (20) 4 AEL1 (15) 3	JEFL (35) 7 AEL1 (10) 2	JEFL (25) 5 AEL1 (35) 7	JEFL (20) 4 AEL1 (40) 8
2. Illness	JEFL (40) 8 AEL1 (10) 2	JEFL (20) 4 AEL1 (15) 3	JEFL (25) 5 AEL1 (50) 10	JEFL (15) 3 AEL1 (25) 5
3. Bookstore	JEFL (20) 4 AEL1 (10) 2	JEFL (25) 5 AEL1 (10) 2	JEFL (40) 8 AEL1 (65) 13	JEFL (15) 3 AEL1 (15) 3
4. Restaurant	JEFL (15) 3 AEL1 (5) 1	JEFL (35) 7 AEL1 (15) 3	JEFL (40) 8 AEL1 (60) 12	JEFL (10) 2 AEL1 (20) 4

Note: frequency count is listed in each cell, with percentages provided in brackets

Generally speaking, both JEFL and AEL1 participants perceived the social distance in the situations with peer acquaintance (equal status) and instructor (higher status) very similarly. They, however, differed in the types of advice they showed as the appropriate choice. This is in accordance with findings from Hinkel (1994) where NSs and NNSs very similarly perceived the social distance in situations with the superior and a peer. However, both NSs and NNSs substantial differences in the patterns of advice they viewed as the best choice: NNSs selected advice to the superior and the peer with a frequency and on topics which would not be considered appropriate in the Anglo-American culture. In other words, JEFL considered the direct advice or hedge advice to be an appropriate option significantly more frequent than AEL1 did with a peer acquaintance or an instructor, which would not be considered to be appropriate in the American culture. Hence, JEFL viewed giving advice as a matter of friendliness, rapport-building, concern, sincere interest, and solidarity, while AEL1 perceived advice as an FTA.

The second research question asked for the reasons of such differences in the speakers' perceptions on giving advice between Jordanian EFL learners and American English native speakers in terms of contextual and cultural factors. As the JEFL were all Muslims, they perceived giving advice as an Islamic obligation. Regardless of what people may think of someone, every Muslim ought to be concerned about giving advice in their daily life and should not think about people's reaction, whether they will condemn or praise them later. Thus, JEFL viewed giving advice as a matter of friendliness, rapport-building, concern, sincere interest, and solidarity which all represent the nature of the collectivist cultures. In contrast, AEL1 perceived

it as an invasion of their privacy and therefore as a FTA which represents the nature of the individualism's culture. This is in consistent with other studies conducted by El-Sayed (1990) and others who have found that giving advice is perceived as an expression of friendliness and also greatly conveys benevolence and support in the Arabic culture. In addition, Nydell (1987) notes that topics that are considered private are subject to cultural interpretation and issues such as children, health, financial matters, professional qualifications, and personal contentment are openly discussed. Thus, refusing advice on what Americans would consider private matters can be met with a sense of bewilderment and rejection by JEFL.

Another reason is that in L2 situations, NNSs, as is the case with JEFL offer advice with diverse goal-orientations, i.e. for diverse means-end relationships than NSs (Goody, 1978, as cited in Hinkel, 1994). Finally, such differences would refer to the fact that JEFL rely on their pragmatic knowledge of appropriate L1 (Arabic) speech acts and negatively transfer it to their L2 (English). This would also refer to the fact that JEFL are facing lack of access to appropriate L2 communicative and solidarity strategies. According to Rabab'ah (2005), the only way to learn English in Jordan is through formal instruction where most of the language instructors are native speakers of Arabic. Consequently, there is little opportunity to learn English through natural interaction in the target language, where it is only possible when students encounter native speakers of English who come to the country as tourists. This is also in consistent with the claim made by Blum-Kulka (1982, 1983) that NNSs make use of L1 and L2 knowledge of rules of politeness inappropriately due to their lack of accessibility on interactional models for various linguistic politeness strategies in L2.

While advice giving is often considered as appropriate in Jordanian culture because of its manifestation of filial piety, rapport-building, concern, and collective duty; it is perceived to be inappropriate or rude in the American culture when not explicitly requested. With this in mind, it can be argued that the concept of politeness in Jordan culture could easily be interpreted as different from that in the American culture. Therefore, the universality of politeness claimed by Brown and Levinson (1987) is arguable with this respect. AEL1's beliefs of individual rights and autonomy frequently perceive advice giving as invasion of privacy, whereas JEFL's beliefs of collective duty tend to perceive it as a means to demonstrate warm interest in the in-group members' well-being. Hence, the present study attributed such cross-cultural differences in advice giving to their respective cultural dimension: American individualism versus Jordan collectivism. This empirically grounded claim is a statement on the existence of variations in the concept of politeness across culture, despite some shared universal features from other speech acts.

Based on the findings of the present study, the researchers would like to reemphasize that school curricula in EFL contexts should focus not only on structures and vocabulary but also on the sociopragmatics aspects of the language. In other words, English teaching and learning in Jordan have to emphasize not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic competence. That is, if JEFL learners perceive giving advice as a means of friendliness, rapport-building, concern, sincere interest, and solidarity, therefore, within the context of target culture, it is most likely that this pragmatic communicative function can fail. Accordingly, EFL learners need to be taught the appropriate speech act routines and topics, associated with appropriateness and solidarity, so that their goal-oriented strategies can be effective (Hinkel, 1994). Specifically, Jordanian students who aspire to study in an English speaking country should be made aware of the language

transfer phenomena and to be cautious of the appropriateness of offering advices to the speakers of the target language, English, to avoid misinterpretation of intent and cultural understanding among the two groups of speakers.

Conclusion and Further Research

The findings of the present study showed how the speech act of giving advice is perceived in English in two culturally and linguistically diverse groups (Jordanians and Americans). The present study shows the fact that speech acts reflect the cultural norms and values that are possessed by the speakers of different cultural backgrounds, as different cultures are very likely to realize the speech acts quite differently. Such differences might cause misunderstanding or communication breakdowns when people from different cultural backgrounds come in contact with each other. Even though the researchers believe that this study has generally answered the research questions, further researches on giving advice by Jordanian EFL learners and Americans need to be investigated, i.e. investigating the production of giving advice and gender differences in giving advice. The generalizability of findings may be constrained by the following considerations:

a. Due to the small sample size and the fact that JEFL were all male graduate students, more research is required to support the current finding including researches involving female participants, larger/bigger participants, and different social groups. Because of the size of the current research, the generalizability of this study should not be assumed.

b. Participants who responded to MCQ, the instrument of the present study, cannot provide their intention or motivation when choosing an exact politeness strategy. They also cannot make an argument for their viewpoints on cultural value-orientations (Chun, 2009). Data collected in this study were only from written questionnaire items. Using data from actual discourse as an extended sequence of talk-exchange could make considerable contributions towards understanding the discourse patterns of giving advice. However, because the occurrence of some speech acts such as the speech act of giving advice cannot be predictable, using sequence of talk-exchange data might not yield enough instances of a particular speech act. In addition, MCQ serves as an instrument to elicit 'perceptions of alternative speech act realization', which is the scope of the present study.

c. Finally, the data was collected by using only one instrument limits the generalizability of the findings. Employing multi-method techniques for data elicitation and collection is the ideal, however, the samples for the study discussed here is enough to show some patterns of giving advice among the speakers of Jordanian Arabic and the American speakers. The methods used could further be reinforced in order to create corpus that are significant enough to formulate stronger claims for these early patterns that the study has found. Rose and Ono (1995) emphasized the need for a multi-method way as, ''we should not expect a single data source to provide all the necessary insights into speech act usage" (p. 207).

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Appendix: An Adopted Version of Hinkle's (1997) Multiple Choice Questionnaires (MCQ)

Instructions

Eight situations are described in the items below. Following the description of a situation, you will find a multiple choice selection of three possible statements, A, B, and C. Choose the statement (or question) that you think would be the most appropriate to say in the situation. If you think it would be appropriate to say nothing, choose option D.

When you are responding to the questions, please keep in mind the following imaginary student: **N H** is a student in your department. You have similar interests in your majors. You have talked to **N H** several times in the department lounge.

Also, please keep in mind the following imaginary college instructor: There is an **instructor** in your department with whom you have similar professional interests. You have talked to this **instructor** several times in the department lounge.

Situations

1. You see the **instructor** working in the library very late in the evening. The instructor looks tired. What do you think would be appropriate to say in this situation?

    A. You should not work so hard. It's very late
    B. Why do you work so hard? It's very late
    C. I'm going home soon. It is very late
    D. Nothing

2. **N H's** car breaks down frequently. **N H** is planning on driving it to New York to see some relatives. What do you think would be appropriate to say in this situation?

    A. I think it may be risky for you to take such a long trip in this car
    B. Taking such a long trip in this car may be risky
    C. You should not take this car for such a long trip. It may be risky
    D. Nothing

3. **N H** is considering taking a course. You have heard that the course is really difficult. What do you think would be appropriate to say in this situation?

    A. I've heard that this course is really difficult
    B. It's better not to take this course. I've heard it's really difficult
    C. You shouldn't take this course. I've heard that it's really difficult
    D. Nothing

4. You and the **instructor** in a bookstore. The instructor is considering buying an expensive book. However, you think that another store may sell the book at a lower price. What do you think would be appropriate to say in this situation?

A. You should buy the book at the other store. This store has high prices
B. This store has high prices
C. May be, it's not a good idea to buy the book here. This store has high prices
D. Nothing

5. **N H** is thinking of taking a car to a repair shop downtown. However, you know of a shop on the corner where you have taken your car. What do you think would be appropriate to say in this situation?

A. I usually take my car to the shop on the corner. It's closer
B. You should take your car to the shop on the corner. It's closer
C. It's better to take your car to the shop on the corner. It's closer
D. Nothing

6. You and the **instructor** are in a restaurant. The **instructor** says something about ordering a hamburger. You ordered a hamburger in this restaurant before and, in your opinion, it was really greasy. What do you think would be appropriate to say in this situation?

A. You shouldn't order the hamburger. I had it here before, and it was really greasy
B. May be it's not a good idea to order a hamburger. I had it here before, and it was really greasy
C. I had a hamburger here before, and it was really greasy
D. Nothing

7. You see **N H** working in the library very late in the evening. **N H** looks tired. What do you think would be appropriate to say in this situation?

A. Why do you work so hard? It's very late
B. You should not work so hard. It's very late
C. I'm going home soon. It is very late
D. Nothing

8. You see the **instructor** working in the department office. The **instructor** looks ill and clearly doesn't feel very well. What do you think would be appropriate to say in this situation?

A. You look like you don't feel well
B. You should go home. You look like you don't feel well
C. May be, it's better to go home. You look like you don't feel well
D. Nothing