

Watch out and beware: differences in the use of *warning* between American and Jordanian undergraduate students

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This study investigates potential differences in the use of the speech act of warning in English between Jordanian EFL and American undergraduate students. Findings have revealed that the respondents used 21 simple strategies to express warning, as well as 21 combinations of simple strategies. The differences in the use of warning have been attributed to the cultural and ideological diversity of the two groups, while the similarities confirmed that the strategies are universal and that Jordanians may be influenced by American media to the extent that many of their responses were essentially native-like.

Keywords: American, intercultural differences, Jordanian EFL students, language transfer, speech act, warning

1. Introduction

Language is a means of communication through which human beings can achieve certain goals by sending and receiving messages. Chomsky (1986: 15) defines language as “a set of very specific universal principles which are intrinsic properties of the human mind and part of our species’ genetic endowment”. Many of the communicative acts people attempt to produce and comprehend are speech acts such as *requesting*, *apologizing*, *warning*, *thanking*, *greeting*, *advising* and *criticizing*.

Levinson (1983: 5) defines pragmatics as “the study of language usage”. Kasper and Rose (2002: 2) define it as “the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context”. Pragmatic studies are concerned with speech acts within a social context. The ability to comprehend and produce these acts is referred to as pragmatic competence which is concerned with both cultural and linguistic knowledge and the social distance of the interlocutors. In performing any action such as *warning*, *promising*, *threatening* or *complaining*, some universal aspects are drawn from the social context in which each action is performed.

To communicate effectively with people from different cultures, one needs to be aware of their cultural background (e.g., thoughts, customs, beliefs) in addition to their language ability. Language and culture are interdependent so much so that knowing the culture of the target language helps second/foreign language learners to communicate effectively. The relationship between language and culture is embedded in the rules of speaking in any speech community. Hymes (1972: 278) maintains that “there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless.”

Following Austin’s seminal work (1962) on speech acts, Searle (1969: 16) states that “language is a form of rule-governed behavior” and defines speech acts as “the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication”. He suggests that by speaking a language, one performs speech acts, such as giving commands or asking questions, which are performed in accordance with certain linguistic rules.

Austin (1962: 118), who classifies *warning* under exercitives in which one exercises the power, right and influence over another, suggests that *warnings* can sometimes be performed nonverbally as ‘swinging [one’s] stick’, for example, can be understood as a

warning. Along the same lines, Searle (1969: 67) suggests that most warnings are essentially hypothetical ‘if–then’ statements: “If you do not do X, then Y will happen.”

Warning may also serve as an indirect speech act. For example, in *it is raining heavily outside*, one may warn the hearer by uttering an explicit *warning* (producing the illocutionary effect of *warning*). Alternatively, the perlocutionary effect of *warning* can be expressed by making the addressee aware that *this rain is dangerous* (causing him/ her to be warned). A *warning* can serve two functions, directive or assertive (warning the hearer to do or not to do something), depending on the presupposed interests of both hearer and speaker. Searle (1979: 28-29) maintains that *warning* is a speech act which belongs to either directive or assertive syntax. The difference between assertive and directive functions is that the former tells one something that may or may not be in one’s best interest while the latter tells one what to do in a certain case.

Along the same lines, Allwood (1977: 55) reports that the act of *warning* should be identified through the intention to warn (i.e., the intention to make somebody aware of danger), some specific type of explicit behavior that the agent conducts to warn others, some specific contexts, and some person actually being warned (i.e. taking the *warning* in his/her course of action). Moreover, Leech (1983: 208) claims that there are cases like *warn*, which belong to both the assertive and the directive categories, as shown in the following examples:

- (1) a. *They warned us that the food was expensive* (assertive).
- b. *They warned us to take enough money* (directive).

Wierzbicka (1987: 177-178) claims that “the verb *warn* stands for a speech act which is extremely common and versatile. This versatility can be reflected, among other things, in a wide range of syntactic patterns which can be used to make a warning”. She also proposes the following formula for the illocutionary force of *warning*: “*I say this because I want to cause you to be able to cause that bad thing not to happen to you*”. Maintaining her claim, she reports that “[i]n indirect speech, one can warn that, warn about, warn of, warn off, warn not to (do something) or warn to (do something).”

In this study, *warning* refers to the different strategies used for getting the attention of the addressee and making him/her alert to a specific danger or bad consequences. It also refers to the way in which speakers use these strategies either directly or indirectly, politely or impolitely, as influenced by their cultures and ideological perceptions.

1.1 *Problem, Purpose and Questions of the Study*

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, TEFL) has become important because of the spread of English as a universal lingua franca. One may think that there are similarities and differences between native speakers of English and EFL learners in terms of expressing *warning* in English. This research attempts to fill a gap in the literature through examining the speech act of *warning* by native speakers of American English and Jordanian EFL learners. These two groups of respondents come from diverse cultures and, thus, have potentially diverse customs, traditions, perceptions, creeds and principles. By examining their responses to different situations, the researchers can determine whether or not this diversity affects their responses. It is hoped that this research will bring about pedagogical implications that may help EFL learners use *warning* properly.

The researchers examine the strategies used to express the speech act of *warning* in English by the two groups. They investigate the intercultural differences between the two groups in responding to a 20-item discourse completion task (DCT). More specifically, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the strategies used to express the speech act of *warning* by American and Jordanian EFL undergraduate students?
2. What are the differences in the two subsamples' use of warning strategies?

Most studies on interlanguage pragmatics have focused on the differences in speech acts and their realization patterns in the two languages. Few studies examine those differences among native speakers and foreign/second language learners of that language (Bataneh & Bataneh 2006; Umar 2004). This study adds to this research by examining the use of *warning* by American speakers and Jordanian learners of English.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study derives its significance from its attempt to bridge a gap in the literature on the speech act of *warning*. By examining the major cultural and linguistic differences between the two groups, the researchers attempt to identify the potential difficulties in Jordanian EFL learners' use of *warning*.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

The current study has few limitations. As most studies examine *warning* from a non-linguistic perspective, linguistic examinations of *warning* across cultures are scarce and far-in-between. This dearth of literature on cross-cultural *warning* makes the potential benchmarking of the results of the current study a bit difficult, which is further asserted by Smith-Jackson (2006) and Song (1995).

Collecting the data from Jordanian EFL students was a little difficult. In spite of their willingness to respond to the DCT, the respondents found it a bit long and time-consuming. Some did not think they are proficient enough to respond while others expressed preference for a multiple-choice DCT to the open-ended format of the one used in this study. Taking after American native speakers, some Jordanian respondents used slang expressions to show their mastery of English. The use of such expressions, which they acquired mainly from American movies, was often irrelevant or even erroneous in the context of the scenarios of the DCT.

2. Review of Related Literature

A number of studies have investigated cross-cultural differences in the forms and patterns of the realizations of speech acts among native speakers of different languages (Abu Hantash 1995; Al-Omari 2007; Al-Omari 2008; Bataneh & Bataneh 2008; Karasneh 2006). In investigating speech acts across cultures, Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that the strategies of speech act realizations are essentially similar across cultures in spite of the specifications and restrictions imposed by each. On the other hand, Wierzbicka (1991: 26)

states that “the cultural norms reflected in speech acts differ not only from one language to another, but also from one regional and social variety to another” such as the difference between Australian and American English. She also states that “English speech act verbs codify a folk taxonomy of speech acts, not some culture-independent, scientific, or philosophical taxonomy of modes of human interaction.”

Some researchers (Beebe & Takahashi 1989; Olshtain & Weinbach 1993; Sadock 1974; Song 1995) only touch upon *warning* when examining other topics. Song (1995) explores the speech acts of *threatening* and *warning* in English conversational discourse in Washington D.C. metropolitan area. He has found that differences between *threatening* and *warning* are not always very clear, but both speech acts require certain conditions to be performed successfully. He has also found that the severity of the illocutionary force of *threatening* and *warning* is related to the syntactic forms in which acts are performed. He has categorized *warning* and *threatening* into two types according to their semantic content and consequences of the speech act: physical punishment and loss of privilege.

Sadock (1974) claims that the act of *warning* can be an illocutionary and perlocutionary act at the same time because the concept of *warning* is not necessary to create a sense of awareness in the hearer. For example, in the sentence “*The bull is about to charge*”, the speech act of *warning* is an illocutionary act of *warning* because the speaker can say “*I warn you that the bull is about to charge*”, and a perlocutionary act because it creates a sense of awareness by-product of asserting that the bull is about to charge depending on the context in which it happens.

Investigating complaint strategies used by the speakers of Hebrew, Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) have found that the students used *warning* as a central strategy to express complaint and that the use of *warning* increases when the interlocutors are equal or the speaker has a higher social status. Smith-Jackson (2006: 364) asserts the lack of literature on cultural differences in *warning* and states that “[b]ecause of the relevant absence of literature on cultural differences relevant to warnings and risk communications, [...] it is necessary to conduct research to isolate relevant differences and test prototype warnings that can be redesigned based on new information.”

To the best of these researchers’ knowledge, the speech act of *warning* has not been adequately researched across cultures, and it has been given less importance than other speech acts. Most studies are concerned with other speech acts such as *apologies*, *requests* and *greeting*. Locally, Al-Omari’s (2007) is the only study which has investigated the speech act of *warning* by native speakers of Arabic and English. Song (1995) has investigated the speech acts of *threatening* and *warning* and claimed that these speech acts have been given less attention than other speech acts.

Al-Omari (2007) compared the patterns and realizations of the speech act of *warning* by English and Arabic native speakers in responding to a 20-item questionnaire. He has collected the data from 93 American and 200 Jordanian graduate and undergraduate students. He reported that the Jordanian and American subjects used 20 different strategies to express *warning*, more so for the former than the latter. Nine of these strategies (i.e. *requesting*, *showing surprise*, *alerting*, *threatening*, *suggesting*, *flouting*, *begging*, *advising* and *offering alternatives*) were shared between the two groups. On the other hand, nine strategies (i.e. *swearing*, *frightening*, *blaming*, *amplifying*, *apologizing*, *anticipating*, *reminding* and *wishing*) were only used by the Jordanian subjects and two (i.e. *disallowance* and *encouraging*) by their American counterparts. This means that the former use more strategies to express *warning* than their American counterparts.

The similarities Al-Omari reported in his respondents' use of *warning* may lend further evidence for the universality of the functional patterns of speech acts and the culture-specific realization of *warning* strategies. The current study investigates the potential differences between native and non-native speakers of English in their use of the speech act of *warning*. Two groups of undergraduate students were chosen as sample for this study: American students and Jordanian learners of English.

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample of the Study

The population of this study consisted of two groups: American undergraduate students at Humboldt State University (HSU), California, USA, and Jordanian EFL undergraduate students at Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), Irbid, Jordan. The American subsample consisted of 50 (21 male and 29 female) respondents ranging between 18 and 25 years of age. Their programs of study were English, international studies, history, French, political science, applied math and film production. On the other hand, the Jordanian subsample consisted of 50 (31 male and 19 female) EFL students from the Department of English for Applied Studies between 18 and 23 years of age.

One of the researchers visited the classes personally, introduced the study, and asked the students to fill in the DCT. The two sample groups are similar in terms of age, but the number of those who are above 22 in the American sample is more than those in the Jordanian sample.

3.2 Instrumentation, Data Collection and Data Analysis

The construction of the DCT has gone through a number of stages. The researchers asked 200 students for situations that warrant *warning*: 100 from Jordanian Universities (viz., JUST and Yarmouk University), and 100 from HSU. The American students produced 54 situations while the Jordanian students produced 63 situations. The most frequent situations were identified, typed and shown to a jury of experts for validation. The jury made several suggestions most important amongst which is to delete all culture-specific situations (e.g., warning a son not to get drunk, and a sister not to talk to males). The DCT was then piloted on 50 American and 50 Jordanian undergraduate students at HSU and JUST to identify the situations they believe to warrant *warning*. The 20 most recurrent situations were chosen to form the final version of the DCT which consisted of three parts: a cover letter and instructions for respondents, a demographics section and 20 scenarios warranting *warning* (For a copy of the DCT, e-mail the researchers). The two groups who participated in the initial survey as well as the pilot test were not asked to fill out the final DCT.

After getting the permission from the department chairs at both JUST and HSU, the researchers visited the classes to distribute the DCT to the students. With the American students, the researcher introduced himself, told them the aim of the study and described what the DCT was about. He gave the instructions for filling out the DCT orally and helped the students by explaining or answering queries. Participation was voluntary, and most students showed willingness to fill out the DCT. It took an average of ten minutes for most students to complete it. The same procedure was followed with the Jordanian subsample who took an

average of fifteen minutes to complete the task at hand. From their willingness or reluctance to answer the DCT, their personal contact with the researchers, and the language they used to answer the given questions, the researchers estimated their language ability to fall within the intermediate to the high-intermediate range.

The data analysis included the following stages: (1) tallying the frequency of *warning* in the responses of the two sample groups, and (2) counting numbers and percentages of the *warning* strategies used by the American undergraduate students and those used by their Jordanian counterparts.

This analysis required close scrutiny of each response which was examined in terms of the strategy used and the linguistic form used to express it. The researchers presented the frequencies of the resulting strategies in two Tables, the first of which shows the strategies used by the American subsample (Table 1) and the second shows those used by the Jordanian subsample (Table 2).

4. Findings and Discussion

In this section, the researchers compare and contrast the various *warning* strategies used by American and Jordanian EFL learners with illustrative examples from their responses. They also analyze the linguistic forms used for *warning* by the two groups. It is worth noting that the examples used in this section are taken verbatim from the sample's responses to the DCT, which explains the awkward grammatical structure, wrong use of punctuation marks and the inaccurate word choice in some of them.

4.1 Warning Strategies by the American Subgroup

The data examined demonstrate that the American subsample used various simple and compound strategies to express *warning*, as shown in Table 1, discussed and illustrated below.

Simple Strategies	#	%	Compound Strategies	#	%
<i>Alerting</i>	284	28.4	<i>Requesting and Advising</i>	10	1
<i>Requesting</i>	271	27.1	<i>Requesting and Alerting</i>	10	1
<i>Advising</i>	110	11	<i>Advising and Encouraging Reconsideration</i>	4	0.4
<i>Threatening</i>	62	6.2	<i>Advising and Threatening</i>	4	0.4
<i>Chastizing</i>	32	3.2	<i>Requesting and Chastizing</i>	3	0.3
<i>Showing No Concern</i>	22	2.2	<i>Requesting and Threatening</i>	3	0.3
<i>Taking Action</i>	21	2.1	<i>Requesting and Offering Help</i>	2	0.2
<i>Encouraging Reconsideration</i>	18	1.8	<i>Advising and Alerting</i>	2	0.2
<i>Criticizing</i>	17	1.7	<i>Criticizing and Advising</i>	2	0.2
<i>Seeking Promise</i>	16	1.6	<i>Showing Surprise and Requesting</i>	2	0.2
<i>Offering Help</i>	14	1.4	<i>Advising and Offering Help</i>	1	0.1
<i>Discussing Consequences</i>	12	1.2	<i>Advising and Chastizing</i>	1	0.1
<i>Irony</i>	6	0.6	<i>Discussing Consequences and Advising</i>	1	0.1

Simple Strategies	#	%	Compound Strategies	#	%
<i>Suggesting Alternatives</i>	6	0.6	<i>Chastizing and Threatening</i>	1	0.1
No warning				63	6.3

Table 1 *The Warning Strategies Used by the American Subsample*

Alerting

To alert someone is to warn him/her of danger (cf., for example, Carstens 2002). *Alerting* is considered a *warning* from imminent action and, as such, one cannot warn the addressee of an action happening in the far future. In their attempts to warn, the American subsample used *alerts* in 28.4% (n=284) of their responses. In their responses to 13 of the items of the DCT (viz, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, and 16), the American subsample produced examples such as the following in response to Item 4 in which a heavy object is about to fall on a person:

- (2) Hey! Watch out above your head!

Requesting

Austin (1962: 152) classifies *requests* under *exercitive* speech acts in which one exercises power, right, or influence on others. Wierzbicka (1987: 49) claims that requests are formal, impersonal, markedly polite and yet self-assumed speech acts. Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gerson (1985) suggest four intentions for *Requesting* something: action, goods, information and permission.

The American subsample used this strategy in 27.1% (n=271) of their responses to all items, yielding examples such as the following in response to Item 2 in which you're a child is playing around a well, and he/she could fall into it:

- (3) Don't do that, it is dangerous.

Advising

Like *requests*, *advice* falls under *exercitive* speech acts (Austin 1962: 151) and entails the speaker's conviction that the listener should take a proposed course of action (Wierzbicka 1987). In their attempt to warn, the American subsample used *advice* in 11% (n=110) of their responses to all items except 4, 6 and 8, yielding examples such as the following in response to Item 11 in which a relative smokes too much:

- (4) I am concerned for your health, you should not smoke so much.

Threatening

Threatening is telling someone that he/she will be punished if he/she does or does not do something (Wierzbicka 1987: 178). The American subsample used *threatening* in 6.2% (n=62) of their responses to all items except 8, 4, 5 and 14, as shown in the following response to Item 3 warning against driving recklessly:

- (5) You will get hurt if you do not slow down.

Chastizing

Chastizing, or *reprimanding*, is defined as showing disapproval of or dissatisfaction with somebody's actions. Wierzbicka (1987: 139) claims that, like *reproving*, *rebuking* and *reproaching*, *chastizing* is more severe than *criticizing* since the speaker uses harsher words to express him-/herself. The American subsample used *chastizing* in 3.2% (n=32) of their responses to 7 of the items of the DCT (viz, 3, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20), as shown in the following response to Item 19 warning a brother against driving without a license:

- (6) What the hell? That is stupid, you could get arrested.

Showing No Concern

This is evident when the speaker shows disinterest in participating in the action. The American subsample used this strategy in 2.2% (n=22) of their responses to 6 of the items of the DCT (viz, 3, 11, 17, 18, 19 and 20), as shown in the example below:

- (7) Your choice! (in response to Item 17 warning a younger sister against dropping out of school)

Taking Action

In this strategy, the speaker does not produce any verbal action to warn the addressee but rather shows an immediate reaction. This strategy was used in 2.1% (n=21) of the American subsample's responses to 8 of the items of the DCT (viz, 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 16), as in the following example in response to Item 9 warning a child against talking to adult strangers asking for directions:

- (8) I will call the police immediately.

Encouraging Reconsideration

To reconsider is to think again about a specific course of action. In this strategy, the speaker encourages the addressee to consider a decision before doing something that may not be in his/her best interest. In 1.8% (n=18) of their responses, the American subsample *encouraged reconsideration* in items 11, 12, 15, 17 and 18, as shown in the following response to Item 17 warning your younger sister against dropping out of school:

- (9) I know you do not like school, but have you thought of other options?

Criticizing

To criticize is to show your dissatisfaction with or disapproval of something/somebody through words or actions. This strategy was used in 1.7% (n=17) of the students' responses to 6 of the items of the DCT (viz, 3, 11, 12, 18, 19 and 20), as in the following example:

- (10) Dude, that is not cool. (in response to Item 18 warning against speaking about people behind their backs)

Seeking Promise

In this strategy, the speaker asks the addressee to promise him/her to do or not to do something. Austin (1962) classifies *promising* under *commissives* in which the speaker

commits him-/herself to doing something. Wierzbicka (1987) classifies verbs, such as *promise, pledge, vow, swear, vouch for* and *guarantee*, under *promise*. In their responses to Item 10, in which one tells someone a secret and warns him/her against divulging it to others, the American subsample opted for seeking a promise in 1.6% (n=16) of their responses, as shown in the following example:

(11) Promise not to tell anyone, no matter who they are.

Offering Help

In this strategy, the speaker offers immediate help to the addressee to let him/her avoid danger. In 1.4% (n=14) of the situations, the American subsample *offered help* in items 1, 3, 6 and 9 to express *warning*, yielding examples such as:

(12) I would ask: “do you need any help”? (in response to Item 1 warning children against looking in both directions of the street before crossing it)

Discussing Consequences

In this strategy, the speaker reminds the addressee of the undesirable consequences of the action. The American subsample used *discussing consequences* in 1.2% (n=12) of their responses to items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 17 and 19, as shown in the response to Item 19 warning a brother against driving without a license below:

(13) You could get arrested or a ticket.

Irony

The American subsample used *irony* in 0.6% (n=6) of their responses to items 12, 14, 15 and 16, yielding examples such as the following in response to Item 15 warning a friend against climbing a tree in the woods:

(14) Right on, I am coming up after you.

Suggesting Alternatives

In this strategy, the speaker offers the addressee safer or better options than what he/she is doing. In 0.6% (n=6) of their responses, the American subsample used this strategy to warn the addressee in items 1, 2 and 7, as in the following:

(15) Let’s watch a movie or play over here with some toys. (in response to Item 7 warning children against playing around an electric outlet)

Requesting and Advising

This combination was used in 1% (n=10) of the responses to items 1, 2, 3, 7, 16, 18 and 20, as shown in the following response to Item 2 in which a speaker warns a nephew against playing around a well:

(16) Get away from there. I don’t want you to fall in!

Requesting and Alerting

This combination was used in 1% (n=10) of the responses to items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 14 and 15 as in following example:

- (17) Don't do that, be careful of electricity. (in response to Item 7 warning children against playing around an electric outlet)

Advising and Encouraging Reconsideration

The American subsample used this combination in 0.4% (n=4) of their responses to items 11 and 17, yielding examples like the following in response to Item 11 warning a family member against excessive smoking:

- (18) You are free to do whatever with your life, but do not throw it down the drain.

Advising and Threatening

This compound strategy was used in 0.4% (n=4) of the students' responses to items 12, 15, 17 and 20, as in the following response to Item 20 in which a speaker warns young people against using inappropriate language with older people:

- (19) Uncultured ignorant. You need to speak appropriately with your elders.

Requesting and Chastizing

The American subsample used this combination in 0.3% (n=3) of their responses to items 16 and 18, as shown in the following example in response to Item 16 warning a teenage brother against leaves home without telling his parents where he is going and with whom:

- (20) You are a brat! Tell them where you are going.

Requesting and Threatening

The American subsample used this combination in 0.3% (n=3) of their responses to items 3 and 7, as shown in the following response to Item 3 warning against driving recklessly:

- (21) Slow down! You are trying to get yourself killed?

Requesting and Offering Help

The American subsample used this combination in 0.2% (n=2) of their responses to Item 9 in which the speaker tries to warn the child who is asked for directions by a suspicious adult, as follows:

- (22) Go home, I will give them directions.

Advising and Alerting

This combination was used in 0.2% (n=2) of the students' responses to Item 2, in which one's nephew is dangerously playing around a well.

- (23) Watch out kid! I think you shouldn't play here.

Criticizing and Advising

This combination was used in 0.2% (n=2) of the students' responses to Item 19, in which the speaker is trying to warn his/her brother against driving without a license, as shown in the following example:

(24) This is very wrong. You shouldn't drive without a license.

Showing Surprise and Requesting

This combination was used in 0.2% (n=2) of the students' responses to Item 3 warning against driving recklessly, as in:

(25) Hey! Slow down.

Advising and Offering Help

The American subsample used this combination only once in Item 15, in which the speaker is trying to warn a friend attempting to climb a tree in the woods, as shown below:

(26) Hold it; do you need me to back you up?

Advising and Chastizing

The American subsample used this combination in one response (0.1%) to Item 20, in which the speaker warns those who use inappropriate language with their elders, as in

(27) Mind the counsel of years.

Discussing Consequences and Advising

The American subsample used this combination once (0.1%) in Item 8 in which the speaker is warning people of a slippery wet floor, yielding

(28) If you don't want to fall, be careful of the wet floor.

Chastizing and Threatening

This combination was used only once (0.1%) in Item 19 in which the speaker is warning his brother against driving without a license, yielding the following response:

(29) You are an idiot, you could get arrested.

4.2 Warning Strategies by the Jordanian Subsample

The data collected for this study reveal that the Jordanian respondents used several strategies to express *warning*, as shown in Table 2 below.

Simple Strategies	#	%	Compound Strategies	#	%
<i>Requesting</i>	389	38.9	<i>Alerting and Ordering</i>	15	1.5
<i>Alerting</i>	271	27.1	<i>Advising and Requesting/ Ordering</i>	11	1.1
<i>Advising</i>	64	6.4	<i>Requesting and Criticizing</i>	10	1
<i>Threatening</i>	47	4.7	<i>Chastizing and Requesting</i>	7	0.7
<i>Discussing Consequences</i>	35	3.5	<i>Advising and Discussing Consequences</i>	7	0.7
<i>Chastizing</i>	20	2	<i>Alerting and Discussing Consequences</i>	6	0.6
<i>Taking Action</i>	17	1.7	<i>Chastizing and Threatening</i>	3	0.3
<i>Criticizing</i>	16	1.6	<i>Advising and Criticizing</i>	3	0.3
<i>Drawing Analogy</i>	14	1.4	<i>Alerting and Taking action</i>	2	0.2
<i>Showing No Concern</i>	7	0.7	<i>Chastizing and Discussing Consequences</i>	2	0.2
<i>Seeking Promise</i>	6	0.6	<i>Discussing Consequences and Criticizing</i>	2	0.2
<i>Encouraging Reconsideration</i>	5	0.5	<i>Threatening and Discussing Consequences</i>	2	0.2
<i>Suggesting</i>	3	0.3	<i>Showing Surprise and Requesting</i>	1	0.1
<i>Punishing</i>	3	0.3	<i>Alerting and Chastizing</i>	1	0.1
<i>Ordering</i>	3	0.3	<i>Advising and Encouraging Reconsideration</i>	1	0.1
<i>Religious Sermon</i>	3	0.3			
<i>Appealing to Allah</i>	2	0.2			
<i>Offering Help</i>	2	0.2			
<i>Flouting a Maxim</i>	1	0.1			
<i>No Warning</i>				19	1.9

Table 2 *The Warning Strategies Used by the Jordanian Subsample*

Requesting

This strategy was used, politely and impolitely, implicitly and explicitly, and justifiably and unjustifiably, in 38.9 % (n=389) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to all items, yielding examples such as the following in response to Item 2 warning a nephew against playing around a well:

(30) Don't do it again, it is dangerous.

Alerting

In 27.1% (n=271) of their responses, the Jordanian respondents alerted the addressee in all items except 12, 17, 18, 19 and 20, producing examples like the following:

(31) Look out! There are a lot of cars. (in response to Item 1 warning children against crossing the street without looking in both directions)

Advising

The Jordanian respondents used *advising* to express *warning* in 6.4% (n=64) of their

responses to 15 of the items of the DCT (viz, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20), as shown in the following example:

- (32) The certificate is a weapon for a girl. (in response to Item 17 warning a young sister against dropping out of school)

Threatening

In 4.7% (n=47) of their responses to all items except 1, 2, 6 and 8, the Jordanian subsample used *threatening* to express *warning*, as shown in the following response to Item 10 warning a friend against divulging your secret:

- (33) If you tell anybody, you will lose our friendship.

Discussing Consequences

The Jordanian subsample used this strategy in 3.5% (n=35) of their responses to all items except 1, 4, 10, 13 and 14, as in the following example:

- (34) You will fall and hurt yourself. (in response to Item 15 warning a friend against climbing a tree in the woods)

Chastizing

In 2% (n=20) of their responses to 8 of the items of the DCT (viz, 3, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20), the Jordanian subsample used *chastizing*, yielding examples such as the following in response to Item 20 warning young people against using inappropriate language while addressing someone older than they:

- (35) He is in your father's place.

Taking Action

In 1.7% (n=17) of their responses, the Jordanian subsample used this strategy to express *warning* in all items except 3, 10, 11, 12 and 14, as in the following response to Item 9 warning a child against adult strangers asking for directions:

- (36) I stop the drive and take the child out.

Criticizing

This strategy was used in 1.6% (n=16) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to 10 of the items of the DCT (viz, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 20), as in the following example:

- (37) That is not a good thing? He will hate you. (in response to Item 18 warning a young person against talking about people behind their backs)

Drawing Analogy

The speaker mentions a similar case or situation to convince the addressee that what he/she is doing is not in his/her best interest and that he/she should behave in a certain way to avoid imminent danger. This strategy was used in 1.4% (n=14) of their responses to items 18 and 20, yielding the following example in response to Item 18 warning a young person against talking about people behind their backs:

(38) Do you want people to talk about you the way you are talking about him?

Showing No Concern

In 0.7% (n=7) of their responses to items 15, 17 and 18, the Jordanian subsample used this strategy, as shown in the example below:

(39) It isn't my business. (in response to Item 15 warning a friend against climbing a tree in the woods)

Seeking Promise

In 0.6% (n=6) of their responses to Item 10 warning a friend against divulging a secret, the Jordanian subsample sought a promise to do or not do something.

(40) I trust you so never tell anybody, promise me.

Encouraging Reconsideration

In their responses to items 16 and 17, the Jordanian respondents encouraged the addressee to reconsider before doing anything that may lead to undesirable consequences. They used this strategy in 0.5% (n=5) of their responses, yielding examples such as the following:

(41) You must think again, you cannot do that. (in response to Item 17 warning a younger sister against dropping out of school)

Suggesting

Suggesting is giving an alternative to solve or avoid a problem without any authority over the addressee. This strategy was used in 0.3% (n=3) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to items 2 and 11 as in the following response to Item 2 warning a nephew against playing around a well:

(42) Why you don't play in another place, you may fall in the well.

Punishing

Austin (1962: 151) classifies *punish* under *exercitive* speech acts and claims that *punishing* has the power of making one afraid enough not to do something. *Punishing* was used in 0.3% (n=3) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to Item 16 in which the speaker's teenage brother usually leaves home without telling his parents where he is going and with whom, as shown in the following example:

(43) Go back to your friends, when you appreciate your parents, come back.

Ordering

In 0.3% (n=3) of their responses to Item 20 in which some the speaker warns young people using inappropriate language while addressing someone older than they, the Jordanian subsample ordered the addressee, as in the example below. The subsample used *ordering*, instead of *requesting*, here because of the age difference between the addressee and the speaker.

(44) Look, you must watch your language when you talk to old people.

Religious Sermon

In this strategy, the speaker reminds one of the teachings of one's religion to get him/her to do something. This was used in 0.3% (n=3) of this subsample's responses to Item 20 in which the speaker is warning the addressee against using inappropriate language with older people:

(45) Respect old people as the prophet told us.

Appealing to Allah

Wierzbicka (1987: 56) states that "when we appeal to someone, we are trying to avert what we see as a kind of disaster". This strategy was found in 0.2% (n=2) of this subsample's responses to Item 11 in which the speaker tries to warn a family member against excessive smoking,

(46) O Allah, guide him and help him to stop smoking.

Offering Help

This strategy was used in 0.2% (n=2) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to items 1 and 6, as shown in the following example:

(47) I will help him/her crossing the road. (in response to Item 1 warning children against crossing a street without looking in both directions first)

Flouting a Maxim

This implies purposefully flouting one of Grice's (1975) Maxims in order for the speaker to get the message across. It was used once (0.1%) (n=1) in response to Item 12 in which the speaker uses irony to warn against leaving the house door unlocked, as in

(48) I know closing the door is very difficult for you.

Alerting and Ordering

A combination of alerting and ordering occurred in 1.5% (n=15) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to items 1 through 9, as in the example below in response to Item 5 warning children against leaning over the second-floor balcony:

(49) Be careful; take a step a few back. Don't lean over the balcony to avoid getting hurt.

Advising and Requesting/Ordering

This combination was used in 1.1% (n=11) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to 6 of the items of the DCT (viz, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12 and 16), as in the following response to Item 11 warning a family member against excessive smoking:

(50) It causes deadly diseases like cancer. Don't smoke.

Requesting and Criticizing

Jordanian respondents used this combination in 1% (n=10) of their responses to items 3, 17, 19 and 20, as shown in the following example used in response to Item 20 warning young people against using inappropriate language with people older than they:

(51) You should not talk with them like this. It is impolite.

Chastizing and Requesting

In 0.7% (n=7) of their responses to items 3, 12, 16 and 18, the Jordanian subsample used this combination, as shown in the following example:

(52) That is impolite; don't talk about him behind his back. (in response to Item 18 warning a person against speaking about people behind their backs)

Advising and Discussing Consequences

This combination was used in 0.7% (n=7) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to items 3, 7 and 11, as in the following:

(53) Don't touch if you wanna live. (in response to Item 7 warning children against playing around an electric outlet)

Alerting and Discussing Consequences

This combination was used in 0.6% (n=6) of the Jordanian students' responses to Item 15 in which the speaker warns a person against climbing a tree, as in

(54) Hey watch out you could fall and hurt yourself.

Chastizing and Threatening

This combination was used in response to 0.3% (n=3) of the responses to items 3 and 16, as seen in the following response to Item 3 warning against driving recklessly:

(55) This is stupid. You will get in trouble if you have an accident.

Advising and Criticizing

This compound strategy was used in 0.3% (n=3) of the Jordanian students' responses to Item 19 in which the speaker warns his/her brother against driving without a license, as in the following example:

(56) Don't be reckless. You should get a license.

Alerting and Taking Action

This combination was used in 0.2% (n=2) of the Jordanian subsample's responses to Item 4 in which the speaker warns someone against a heavy object about to fall on him/her, as in the following:

(57) Watch out! I try to draw him back quickly.

Chastizing and Discussing Consequences

This combination occurred in 0.2% (n=2) of the students' responses to Item 12 in which the speaker warns against leaving the house door unlocked:

(58) Are you crazy? We will get raped.

Discussing Consequences and Criticizing

This combination was used in 0.2% (n=2) of the responses to items 11 and 19, as shown in the following response to Item 11 in which the speaker warns a family member against excessive smoking:

(59) Smoking is a bad thing. It can completely destroy your life.

Threatening and Discussing Consequences

This strategy was used once (0.1%) in response to Item 19 in which the speaker warns his/her brother against driving without a license:

(60) Do you want to spend your life in jail? This is what will happen if you do not stop.

Showing Surprise and Requesting

The combination of requesting and showing surprise was used only once (0.1%) in response to Item 12 in which the speaker warns against leaving the house door unlocked as follows:

(61) Oh my God, close the doors next time.

Alerting and Chastizing

This combination was found in one response (0.1%) to Item 9 in which the speaker warns children against talking to strangers asking for directions:

(62) You aren't allowed to talk to strangers.

Advising and Encouraging Reconsideration

In response to Item 17, in which the speaker warns against his/her sister's dropping out of school, one respondent (0.1%) used the following:

(63) Go back to school. You want to make money, don't you?

4.3 Warning Strategies: The Two Subsamples Compared

The American and Jordanian subsamples used 21 *warning* strategies, of which thirteen are shared, two are American-specific and six are Jordanian-specific. They also used 21 compound strategies, of which seven are shared, seven are American-specific and seven are Jordanian-specific. The simple strategies include *requesting*, *alerting*, *advising*, *threatening*, *chastizing*, *criticizing*, *seeking promise*, *offering help*, *taking action*, *showing no concern*, *encouraging reconsideration*, *discussing consequences* and *suggesting* whereas the compound strategies include *requesting and alerting*, *requesting and advising*, *requesting and chastizing*, *requesting and showing surprise*, *chastizing and threatening*, *advising and encouraging reconsideration*, and *advising and discussing consequences*.

The similarities in strategy use can be attributed to several factors, at the top of which is the universality of some linguistic functions despite their different modes of realization. That the world has become a 'small village' as a result of major innovations in information and communication technologies (ICTs) may also have contributed to this. The abundance of American movies, series and documentaries makes it easy for Jordanian learners to acquire culture-specific knowledge. Furthermore, most TEFL curricula are written by native speakers of English to simulate authentic language in its real contexts, not to mention that the Jordanian subsample has benefited from their study of the English language and literature in their use of *warning*, especially since courses like *semantics* and *pragmatics* are compulsory in their study plan.

On the other hand, the two groups also used different strategies. The American subsample used *irony* and *giving alternatives* whereas the Jordanian subsample used *punishing*, *ordering*, *appealing to Allah*, *flouting a maxim*, *drawing analogy* and *giving religious sermons*. These differences can readily be explained in terms of the cultural diversity of the two subsamples that have essentially different creeds, perceptions, customs and traditions. A case in point is the Jordanian subsample's exclusive use of *appealing to Allah* and *giving religious sermons*, which are both nonexistent in the responses of the American subsample.

Punishing and *ordering* are two other strategies used specifically by the Jordanian subsample. In both strategies, a speaker shows his/her authority over the addressee, which reflects not only a culture-specific subordination to older people but also a tolerance for interfering in other people's affairs notwithstanding how rude or inappropriate it is in other cultures. Affected by their culture which usually categorizes people by age, the Jordanian subsample used *drawing analogy* in Item 20, in which, one is asked about his/her reaction to some young people's use of inappropriate language with older people, to tell the addressee that being rude to his/her elders is totally unacceptable.

As for *requesting*, it was used in 27.1% of the American subsample's responses as opposed to 38.9% of the Jordanian subsample's responses. The Jordanian subsample used *requesting* to express *warning* much more than their American counterparts. In addition, the Jordanian subsample used *requesting* with other strategies like *criticizing*, *chastizing* and *showing surprise* while their American counterparts used it with *advising*, *chastizing*, *alerting*, *threatening*, *offering help* and *showing surprise*.

Alerting was used in 28.4% of the American subsample's responses and 27.1% of the Jordanian subsample's responses. Almost the same number of respondents in both groups used *alerting* in responding to the DCT. The Jordanian respondents also used *alerting* in combination with *requesting*.

Advising was used in 1.1% of the American subsample's responses and 4.7% of the Jordanian subsample's responses. The American subsample used *advising* far less than their

Jordanian counterparts. Unlike *threatening*, *ordering* and *punishing* which are considered severe strategies, *advising* is a positive strategy in which the speaker tries not to impose his/her opinion upon the addressee. One can notice that the Jordanian respondents opted for more severe warning strategies, such as *ordering* and *punishing*. *Advising* was used justifiably and unjustifiably by the two groups.

Both groups used *advising* with *requesting*, *criticizing*, *encouraging reconsideration* and *discussing consequences*. The American subsample also used *advising* with *threatening*, *alerting*, *chastizing* and *offering help*. The American subsample used *threatening*, both explicitly and implicitly, in 6.2% of their responses while it was used in 4.7% of the Jordanian subsample's responses.

Chastizing (reprimanding) is another strategy that was used by the two groups albeit more so by the American subsample (3.2% vs. 1.9%), which may be attributed to that their command of English is essentially not as developed as that of their American counterparts. While the American respondents used expressions such as *what the heck is this*, *shit* and *shut up*, their Jordanian counterparts used expressions such as *shame on you*, *it is a shame* and *don't say this again to reprimand*. Since TEFL curricula do not specifically address *reprimand*, the Jordanian subsample's expressions were similar to those used in the media.

The American subsample also used *criticizing* in 1.7% of their responses while the Jordanian subsample used it in 1.6% of their responses. The two subsamples used not only similar percentages of responses but also essentially similar expressions, such as *it is bad*, *it is wrong*, *it is unacceptable*, or *it is not good for you* to express *criticism*.

The two groups expressed their disinterest in warning the addressee in some situations. *Showing no concern*, the speaker expressly shied away from engaging in the action producing utterances like *it isn't my business* or *I don't care*. The influence of the American media on some Jordanian respondents is readily noticeable. That *showing no concern* was more used by the American than the Jordanian respondents (2.2% vs. 0.7%), which may be culture-related as the American culture focuses more on privacy and freedom than its Arab counterpart. Wierzbicka (1991: 30) claims that the former "places special emphasis on the rights and on the autonomy of every individual, which abhors interference in other people's affairs (*It is none of my business!*), which is tolerant of individual idiosyncrasies and peculiarities, [and] which respects everyone's privacy on the rights and the autonomy of every individual".

Similarly, *encouraging reconsideration* was used more by the American than the Jordanian subsample (1.7% vs. 0.5%). The American subsample used this strategy, as an indirect way of *convincing* the addressee, more than their Jordanian counterparts, which may also be attributable to culture.

In conclusion, culture seems to play a significant role in the use of *warning* strategies and their frequency by the two subsamples. Tables 1 and 3 suggest that the Jordanian subsample not only used *warning* more frequently but also used more warning strategies than their American counterparts.

The American subsample tends to use more indirect strategies than their Jordanian counterparts. This indirectness can be attributed to the American culture which considers interference in others' affairs a rude behavior as well as a violation of personal space and rights. Consider responses to Item 17 as an example of how the American respondents were less direct than their Jordanian counterparts as they warned one's sister against dropping out of school:

(64) It is up to you, but your life will be easier if you get through college.

(65) You can choose to do what you want but you could be limiting yourself.

Now, consider the Jordanian subsample's responses to the same item:

(66) No one will accept marrying you.

(67) You are wrong my sister. Nothing is better than your education.

Note how the American respondents opt for indirectness and avoid interfering in the addressee's personal business. In most of their responses, they start with phrases that confirm the autonomy and freedom of the addressee such as *I know it is your life, you can do what you want* and *it is up to you*, then they give their opinions as advice. Even while stating their opinion on the matter at hand, the American students explicitly state that there is no sense of obligation to force the addressee to do their bidding, as expressed in *I don't force her to do that*. Indirectness can also be attributed to the values of their culture which focus on individualism, freedom, and self-autonomy.

On the other hand, the Jordanian respondents opted for modal verbs which express necessity and obligation such as *should* and *must* to achieve directness in their requests and advice. In their attempt to *persuade* the addressee, the Jordanian respondents mention the potentially undesirable consequences of that particular course of action. Consider Item 20, in which the speaker has to warn those who use inappropriate language when addressing older people. The American subsample provided responses such as the following:

(68) There is nothing I could say.

On the other hand, the Jordanian subsample gave responses such as the following:

(69) Beware! You have to talk in a polite way.

Furthermore, whereas only six of the fifty American respondents responded to this item with *none*, their majority used more polite, albeit less direct, responses than their Jordanian counterparts. Not only have the former used more instances of *please* and *excuse me* but they also often initiated their responses with *I do not think you should do that*. By contrast, the Jordanian respondents used less polite strategies and more direct strategies in which no attempt was made to mitigate or save the other's face. There was an abundance of direct attention-getters such as *hey, look at me, or listen to me* not to mention the negative imperative *don't* and declaratives which denote necessity and obligation such as *you should, have to* and *must*.

In addition to culture, religion may also have a role to play. Some of the Jordanian subsample's responses were infused with religious reference to Islamic norms of behavior. Item 11, in which the speaker warns the addressee of excessive smoking, is a case in point:

(70) Islam prohibits smoking.

In such examples, not only are respondents seemingly influenced by religious traditions but also keen on invoking God's name to seek help. In spite of using English to express *warning*, the Jordanian respondents are clearly influenced by their culture where, for example, subordination to and deference of older people is mandatory, as shown in the following example:

(71) You are talking about them in this way! They are like your parents.

5. Conclusions and recommendations for future research

As seen above, almost the same strategies of *warning*, whether simple or compound, were used by both the American and the Jordanian subsamples, albeit in different frequencies. The simple strategies most used by Americans were *alerting*, *requesting* and *advising* (28.4%, 27.1% and 11%, respectively), whereas Jordanians opted for *requesting* and *alerting* (38.9% and 27.1, respectively). The less used simple strategies were *threatening*, *chastizing*, *showing no concern* and *taking action* (6.2%, 3.2%, 2.2% and 2.1%, respectively) by Americans and *advising*, *threatening*, *discussing consequences* and *chastizing* (6.4%, 4.7%, 3.5% and 2%, respectively) by Jordanians. The least used strategies with percentages ranging between 0.1% and 1.8% were *encouraging reconsideration*, *criticizing*, *seeking promise*, *offering help*, *discussing consequences*, *irony* and *suggesting alternatives* by Americans and *taking action*, *criticizing*, *drawing analogy*, *showing no concern*, *seeking promise*, *encouraging reconsideration*, *suggesting*, *punishing*, *ordering*, *religious sermon*, *appealing to Allah*, *offering help* and *flouting a maxim* by Jordanians.

Compound strategies were used less frequently with percentages ranging between 0.1% and 1.5%. The American subsample combined *requesting* with *advising* and *alerting* as their most recurrent compound strategies, *advising* with *encouraging reconsideration* and *threatening* as their less recurrent compound strategies, and *requesting* with *chastizing*, *threatening*, *offering help* and *showing surprise*, *advising* with *alerting*, *criticizing*, *offering help*, *chastizing* and *discussing consequences*, and *chastizing* with *threatening* as their least recurrent compound strategies. The Jordanian subsample combined *alerting* with *ordering*, *advising* with *requesting/ ordering*, and *requesting* with *criticizing* as their most recurrent compound strategies, *chastizing* with *requesting* and *discussing consequences* with *advising* and *alerting* as their less recurrent compound strategies, and *chastizing* with *threatening*, *discussing consequences* and *alerting*, *advising* with *criticizing* and *encouraging reconsideration*, *discussing consequences* with *criticizing* and *threatening*, *alerting* with *taking action*, and *showing surprise* with *requesting* as their least recurrent compound strategies.

Both subsamples used the same linguistic forms, namely the imperative, declarative, interrogative, conditional, imperative and declarative, and imperative and interrogative, whether positively or negatively, to express *warning*. The form used by only one of the subsamples was the conditional and declarative used by Americans though in only one example (0.1%).

As Jordanian EFL learners were found to misuse modal verbs (e.g., have to, should, must), which may be attributed to native language transfer, it seems paramount that EFL instructors provide realistic, contextualized examples to help students overcome this problem. Furthermore, although the Jordanian respondents have apparently learned aspects of the American culture, they still misuse some vocatives, attention getters and some expressions of *reprimand* and *criticism*. This misuse often signifies their lack of competence in the cultural aspects of the language. EFL teachers and curriculum designers play a key role in contextualizing the target language within its working culture.

The researchers recommend that this study be replicated using other varieties of English and Arabic. Further research may address the effect of some variables (e.g., power, social distance, gender) on the use of *warning*. Furthermore, as this research has not addressed learners' grammatical and structural errors (e.g., errors in subject-verb agreement and tense), these may be further researched. Moreover, due to their importance for TEFL and intercultural pragmatics, other speech acts (e.g., *complaint*, *promise*, *threatening*, *compliments*) constitute fertile grounds for future research.

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