

Responding Strategies in Jordanian Arabic: A Socio-Pragmatic Study¹

Faten Amer “corresponding author”

Centre for International Languages (CIL), Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
fatenamer@gmail.com

Dipima Buragohain

Centre for International Languages (CIL), Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
dipima@unimap.edu.my

Ina Suryani Binti Ab Rahim

Centre for International Languages (CIL), Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
inasuryani@unimap.edu.my

Abstract

This study aims to examine the types of response strategies employed in the interactions between Jordanians and the employees of the call-centre-customer service (CCCS) of a major telecommunications company in Jordan. It focuses on their linguistic behaviours upon responding taking into account the degree to which they adhere to Leech’s (2014) maxims. Naturally-occurring interactions and designed situations were used to collect data from 28 Jordanian Arabic speakers participated in this study. The results of the study show that participants adhere to a number of the maxims in that responses are made politely whether the act is achieved or not. Furthermore, it has been revealed that participants are impacted by the social and cultural norms of the Jordanian society.

Keywords: Responding; Agreement, Politeness strategies; Jordanian Arabic; Social norms

1 Introduction

In pragmatics, speech acts have been the focus for a number of linguists, such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Grice (1975), among others. The concept of speech act was first coined by Austin (1962). He stated that words are actions in themselves because they are uttered either to do something or to get something done by others. When we speak, according to Austin, our words involve three aspects of act: locutionary which is the ostensible meaning as it refers to the actual words of the speaker; illocutionary act refers to the communicative value the utterance carries, so it the intended meaning; the third type is the perlocutionary act which refers to the influence of the speech on the hearer. Searle (1976) suggests five types of illocutionary acts that include the speaker and the hearer: representatives (assert, deny, claim), expressives (thank, apologize, congratulate), directives (requests, commands, orders), commissives (promise, offer) and declaratives (declare, appoint, resign).

For the conversation to be successful, a kind of cooperation between the speaker and the hearer is essential. On the part of speaker, it is necessary to be clear enough in a way to allow the hearer understand the act.

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Grice (1975) proposed the cooperative principle (CP) as a framework for language use. It is intended to describe the ordinary linguistic behaviour of people when interacting. According to this principle, participants in a conversation should maintain four maxims: relation, quality, quantity and manner. Grice (1989) states that if these maxims are maintained by the interlocutors, there will be “the effective exchange of information” (p. 28).

2 Literature Review

In this study the speech act of responding is investigated in light of Leech’s (2014) General Strategy of Politeness (GSP). Relying on Grice’s conversational principles, Leech (1983) proposed the Politeness Principle (PP) in order to develop a pragmatic framework in which politeness is viewed as a regulative factor in communication operating within a set of principles and maxims. He is mainly concerned with the pragmatic phenomenon of indirectness because, as he argues, politeness is the reason why speakers violate the cooperative principle. Thus, leech attached his PP to Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle (CP) accounting for the reasons of violation of this principle. This Politeness Principle works within a set of six maxims. However, Leech (2014) introduced the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP) as a single superconstraint that grasps all the maxims which, when employed, shows that *S* tries to make sure that offense is avoided. Leech’s GSP states that “In order to be polite, *S* expresses or implies meanings that associate a favourable value with what pertains to *O* [*O* = others including *H*] or associates an unfavourable value with what pertains to *S* (*S* = self, speaker)” (2014, p. 90). He increased the number from six to ten. As seen in Table 2.1 below, the pos-politeness maxims are with odd numbers which are *S*-oriented whereas the neg-politeness maxims are with even number which are *H*-oriented. All maxims are labelled in a sequence number (1-10) preceded by the letter M standing for Maxim.

Table 0.1 The component maxims of the General Strategy of Politeness (taken from Leech (2014, p. 91))

Maxims (expressed in an imperative mood)	Related pair of maxims	Label for this maxim	Typical speech event type(s)
(M1) give a high value to <i>O</i> ’s wants	Generosity, Tact	Generosity	Commissives
(M2) give a low value to <i>S</i> ’s wants		Tact	Directives
(M3) give a high value to <i>O</i> ’s qualities	Approbation, Modesty	Approbation	Compliments
(M4) give a low value to <i>S</i> ’s qualities		Modesty	Self-devaluation
(M5) give a high value to <i>S</i> ’s obligation to <i>O</i>	Obligation	Obligation (of <i>S</i> to <i>O</i>)	Apologizing, thanking
(M6) give a low value to <i>O</i> ’s obligation to <i>S</i>		Obligation (of <i>O</i> to <i>S</i>)	Responses to thanks and apologies

(M7) give a high value to O's opinion	Opinion	Agreement	Agreeing, disagreeing
(M8) give a low value to S's opinion		Opinion reticence	Giving opinions
(M9) give a high value to O's feelings	Feeling	Sympathy	Congratulating, commiserating
(M10) give a low value to S's feelings		Feeling reticence	Suppressing feelings

M1 can be direct as seen in offers, invitations and promises. M2 is used to soften S's imposition on H such as the case with requests which are direct as they allow H an opportunity to refuse. M3 is used in compliments which are familiar occurrences and virtual necessity whereas the insincere or excessive ones are considered as flattery in which CP clashes with PP. Criticisms of O are hedged and muted, especially when the social role of S is a dominant one or if O is a third party rather than the hearer. M4 appears in S's self-criticism which is a kind of modesty that produces a denial or paying a compliment in return from H. M5 represents a situation in which S apologises for some offense he or she did to H, so S presents a polite speech act that shows prominence to his or her fault and obligation to O. Responses to apologies or thanks by O reduce the fault or the debt of S towards O, a polite speech act represented by M6. M7 states that S's agreement with O's opinions is preferred while S's disagreement is dispreferred, usually preceded by delay or hesitation. M8 refers to softening the force of S's opinion by using certain forms such as, I think, I guess, etc. M9 is used in sharing others their feelings such as in congratulations and condolences. So, S shows sympathy to O. M10 somehow corresponds negatively to M9. Here it is polite for S to give low value to his or her feelings.

Studies on linguistic politeness are countless in number. The literature on this phenomenon is very rich. In the Jordanian Arabic (henceforth, JA) many studies have been conducted in terms of speech acts aiming for establishing a kind of relation between them and some selected social variables (e.g., Al-Qudah, 2017; Abushihab, 2015; Bani Mofarrej & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2015; Al-Harashsheh, 2014b; Al-Khawaldeh, 2014; Almutlaq & Jarrah, 2013; Al-Sobh, 2013; Rababa'h & Malkawi, 2012; Al-Momani, 2009; Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001, among others). As for the present study, it focuses on the differences in the expressions of responding acts by Jordanian males and females found in their naturally-occurring interactions with the call-centre-customer service of a leading telecommunications company in Jordan.

Investigating how Arabs attach politeness in their interactions, Samarah (2015) conducted a study to find out what types of expressions are the most common. Rather than selecting one particular dialect, he focuses on spoken Arabic in general under the title 'Politeness in Arabic Culture'. Following no clear methodological approach, he concludes that there are two main factors that control Arabic politeness, namely, religious faith and social convention. Religious faith expressions usually contain a reference to God such as /baraka llahu fik/ 'God bless you' in performing thanking and /allah yisamhak/ 'May God forgive you' when the speaker is being offended (p. 2011). Religious faith expressions have more power than the social convention expressions as far as politeness is concerned. He mentions some semantic categories under which Arabic politeness can be analysed including sociability, gratitude, benevolence and

felicitation, guilt, permission, appreciation, hospitality and generosity, and respect (p. 2015). As for the Arab society, he argued that high-class people follow religious recommendations when they are in doubt whether to rely on the social conventions or religious recommendations (p. 2015).

Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001) explore the responses to compliments in Jordanian Arabic produced by Jordanian college students. The analysis of the data shows that simple compliment responses were preferred by the students to those complex responses. The results of the study also revealed that the gender of the speaker seems to be an important factor in the formulation and acceptance or rejection of a compliment. For example, male participants use simple responses when responding to males rather than females but use more non-verbal responses when interacting with the opposite gender. Moreover, male participants have a tendency to accept compliments more than females do whether responding to males or females. Similarly, Al-Faqeer (2006) investigates the strategies that children employ in responding to compliments in Jordanian Arabic. Using a corpus of 418 responses, the results indicate that participants use simple responses more frequently when compared with complex responses. The results also show that non-verbal type of response is one of the most striking features of children's language. It is also revealed that literal compliments were clearly understood by children between 6-9 years old, whereas understanding ironic compliments seemed to be somehow problematic for them. Children between 10-12 years old did not encounter any problem in responding to literal and ironic compliments. Responses to thanking is investigated by Al Rusan (2018). The study explores the strategies employed by native speakers of Jordanian Arabic when performing thanking responses through natural observation of the participants in real-life situations. The results of the study show that the most frequent type of responses is acceptance followed by denial, whereas the non-verbal gestures and no response strategies were the least common ones. Moreover, as for the length of the response, it is correlated with thanking expression; the more sincere the thanking expression is, the longer the response is. The author argues that thanking responses may function as a tool to strengthen relationships between interlocutors.

Criticism, as a speech act, in Jordanian Arabic is investigated by Al Kayed and Al-Ghoweri (2019). Using DCT, they collected data from 73 undergraduate Jordanian students living in Jordan. The results of the study indicate that participants have a tendency to employ indirect strategies in performing the speech act of criticism more than the direct strategies suggesting that criticism is perceived by Jordanians as a face threatening act.

Al-Khawaldeh (2014) compares the linguistic expression of gratitude in Jordan and England in order to find out how gratitude is perceived and realised cross-culturally. She collected the data from 46 Jordanian Arabic native speakers and 46 English native speakers using DCTs, role-plays and interviews. The results revealed that there are significant differences between the two cultures in the perception, number and the type of strategies employed when communicating gratitude. The author argued that gratitude should be viewed as a means of establishing and maintaining social relationships instead of being viewed as face threatening act.

Al-Harashseh (2014b) analyses twelve dyadic conversations produced by students of a Jordanian university in order to find out the gender influence on their Jordanian Arabic in terms of the politeness strategies they employ. He divided the participants into two groups: the mixed-sex group and the same-sex group; each group was divided into two sub-groups: friends and strangers. The results of the study revealed that gender

plays a significant role in the choice of the participants' style of communication as women show a tendency to maintain social relationship with other interlocutors and avoid disagreement. Moreover, they try to get the listener engaged in the interaction more than men do using more facilitative strategies. Al-Harabsheh (2014b) concludes that in terms of cooperation with the other interlocutors, women seemed to be more professional conversationalists than men.

The above studies investigated a number of speech acts in the Jordanian context relating them to different social variables including age, gender, region, religion, relationships, etc. Although their focus was speech acts in Jordanian Arabic, none of them, according to the best knowledge of the researcher has targeted the interactions between Jordanian people and government or private organisations in general, and the context of CCCS of telecommunications companies in particular. Thus, this constitutes a gap in the literature on politeness behaviour in the Jordanian Arabic context. Therefore, this study aims and hopes to enrich the literature on the JA context by bridging the above-mentioned gap.

3 Methodology

Data for this study were collected from 28 participants; they were randomly chosen from the employees of the CCCS of the telecommunications company and customers. Their ages, genders and social statuses were uncontrollable as the researcher could not do any pre-interaction arrangements with them because interactions were naturally-occurring ones. The participants were divided into two groups: the customers (C) and the call centre's employees (E). The study involved qualitative data collection using recordings of naturally-occurring interactions that took place between the customers and the call centre's employees and the use of imaginary situations designed by the researcher to elicit precise information about certain response strategies. Being spoken in Arabic, the data was transcribed and translated into English then divided into groups according to the response strategies used by the participants.

2 Findings and discussion

When a person makes a request, an opinion, a compliment, etc., he or she expects a response. So, responding to such utterances can be achieved in a number of ways. One way is agreement with what is said by the speaker. In this respect, Leech (2014) labelled Maxim 7 as Agreement Maxim which states, "Give a high value to *O*'s opinions" (p. 96); he emphasizes that agreement is the preferred response to the speaker's opinions or judgments whereas disagreement is the dispreferred response. Agreement can be in different forms. One way is by the use of a word or a phrase that shows direct agreement with the speaker. In the following sub-sections 2.1-7 response strategies-will be discussed.

2.1 Agreement by */ʔmfa:lla/* 'God willing'

The term */ʔmfa:lla/* is a combination of three words: */ʔm/* 'if', */fa:ʔa/* 'will' and */ʔalla:h/* 'Allah'. However, as a result of phonological process in Jordanian Arabic the three words are merged into one. In the religious context, it is used as a future marker since Muslims link and condition the success of their future deeds with the willing of Allah, so whenever referring to any future activity, they use */ʔmfa:lla/*.

Example 1	21	E2	<i>tudxul far risa:law tħđifha</i>
			Open the message and delete it.
	22	C2	<i>ʔmfɑ:lla</i> God willing.

In example 1, E2 makes a request to C2 in line 21 indicated by the use of the indirect imperative verb. In line 22, C2 says /ʔmfɑ:lla/ which, in this context, means ‘I will do that’. Another instance of agreement with the speaker’s wish or request is shown in example 2 below.

Example 2	31	E8	<i>bnitmannɑ nku:n ʃind ħusnuz zɑn</i>
			We hope that we met your expectations.
	32	C8	<i>ʔmfɑ:ʔalla</i> God willing.

The response is performed by C8 in line 32 which is a response to the wish made by E8. By saying /ʔmfɑ:ʔalla/ C8 agrees with what E8 said that his expectations are met.

In the above two examples, C2 and C8 are implementing Leech’s Maxim 7 in that they give high value to the speaker’s request as they agree to what is said by the speakers indicated by the use of /ʔmfɑ:ʔalla/. This term involves the use of God’s name, Allah. Samarah (2015) states that such politeness expressions with God’s name are used to amplify the expression of politeness. However, in this study, especially in /ʔmfɑ:ʔalla/, it has another function which is to show agreement with what others said.

2.2 Agreement by /tɑmɑ:m/ ‘OK’

Another agreement marker is /tɑmɑ:m/ which means ‘good’ or ‘OK’ (lit.: exactly). According to the available data for this study, it is used to indicate the speaker’s agreement to what is said. Its use is found to be very frequent by participants of this study. However, because of the similarity in the use of such marker, only two examples are discussed below to avoid repetition.

Example 3	9	E5	<i>walay ħimmak (.) tħammalnı laħaza:t</i>
			Don’t worry. Be patient for moments.
	10	C5	<i>tɑmɑ.m</i> OK.

In example 3, E5 in line 9 requests C5 to be patient which means to allow him some time to check his line. The request is /tħammalnı laħaza:t/ for which C5 in line 10 responds by /tɑmɑ:m/ with the indirect meaning ‘I will be patient’.

Example 4	62	E6	<i>bnınzıl bılxıyyɑ:ra:t latıħıt laħatta nla:ħız ʔısmıl mustaxdım</i>
			We go down in options to see the username.

63 C6 *tama:m*
OK.

Similarly, in example 4 E6 requests C6 to check the options in order to find the username. C6 response is simply */tama:m/* which means here ‘yes, I’ll do’.

2.3 Agreement by */ukei/* ‘OK’

Being country’s first foreign language, English presence is very clear in Jordanian’s conversations not only at the site of this study but also at other formal and informal communication. In the data of the present study a number of English terms are used by participants such as ‘offer’, ‘available’, ‘mobile’, ‘service’, ‘customer’, and ‘OK’, among others. However, since the main theme of this study is not to discuss the English language influence on Arabic, the researcher will focus on the use of ‘OK’ as a response to certain requests in interactions between callers and CCCS employees. Similar to */tama:m/*, */ukei/* ‘OK’ is very frequent in the available data and used by most of the participants. For instance, in example 5, C8 in line 11 complies with the request of E8 that she needs some time to check his line in her attempt to solve his problem. C8 says */ukei/* to mean ‘yes, take your time’.

Example 5	11	E8	<i>tama:m</i> (.) <i>halla? binnisbih lalxa? safwan ?il f3:r d3i: mfa?alu ba?r: ? lanit?akkad minha tımhlını laħaza:t</i>
			OK. Now as for the line sorry 4G, it is activated and slow. Be patient for a while so I can make sure.
	12	C8	<i>ukei</i> OK.

In example 6 line 28, again C8 repeats the same politeness strategy of agreement by using */ukei/* as a polite response to E8’s statement that there is something she wants to say giving a high value to her opinion implementing Leech’s Maxim 7.

Example 6	27	E8	<i>?il?afu bas mula:ħaza</i>
			You’re welcome. I have a note.
	28	C8	<i>ukei</i> OK.

2.4 Agreement by a statement

Agreement to the speaker’s request is a polite response to that request as discussed above. This agreement can be indirect; it can be implied in a statement that the hearer uses his/her pragmatic competence in order to understand that meaning.

Example 7	9	E2	<i>yareit tıthammalnı</i>
			I hope that you can be patient.


10 C2 *xuḏ ra:ḥtak*
Take your time.

In example 7, E2 makes a request to C2 to allow him some time to provide C2 with the answer. C2’s response in line 10 is /*xuḏ ra:ḥtak*/ ‘take your time’ (lit.: take your rest). The pragmatic meaning according to the context is something like ‘I don’t mind. Take your time’ or ‘I agree to allow you the time you want’. In example 8, C7’s request is indirect since he does not make any request explicitly; rather, he describes the problem he has with his Internet connection.

Example 8	10	C7	<i>ʔinnit ʕind: buʕʕl bīrdzaʕu bīʕbīk laḥa:lu (.) buʕʕl bīṭawwīl bīṭawwīl kθī:r</i> The net disconnects and reconnects again. After it disconnects, it takes long long time to reconnect.
	11	E7	<i>zawwīdḥī bīrraqam</i> Give me the number.

E7’s response is clear and unambiguous. This means that E7 agrees to solve the problem that C7 has with his connection and in order to do that she needs his number as she says in line 11 /*zawwīdḥī bīrraqam*/ ‘give me the number’ indicating that that agreement is granted and having C7’s number is the first step to perform the action.

Agreement to do the required action can be achieved by promising the requester to perform his/her request. Such promises can be indicated by a number of markers, for instance the use of /*walay ḥimmak*/ ‘don’t worry’. In example 9 below, the implied meaning of /*walay ḥimmak*/ is not only ‘don’t worry’ but also something like ‘I promise you to do this action for you’ which is an agreement at the same time. In this example, the marker /*walay ḥimmak*/ is followed by a request which confirms the agreement to do the activity and act as the first step in doing the caller’s request. Since E5 asks C5 not to worry, he is considering his feelings and showing some sympathy with him saying ‘don’t worry’. Therefore, it can be counted as an adherence to Leech’s (2014) Sympathy Maxim: (M9) give a high value to O’s feelings.

Example 9	6	C5	<i>baddī:: ʔaxalbak baddī ʔaḥwwīl raqamī xa:ʕ (.) keʕf</i> 
			I want to bother you. I want to change my number to a private one. How?
		...	
	9	E5	<i>walay ḥimmak (.) ṭḥammalnī laḥaza:t</i> Don’t worry. Be patient for moments.

The use and function of /*walay ḥimmak*/ by the participants of this study differ from Samarah’s (2015) explanation of the same term. He stated that people use it to apologise when their advice for someone was disappointing and did not bring any results. Although he classified it as a polite expression used by Arabic speakers, the function he mapped it on differs from the finding of this study.

Responding in an agreement to do the speaker's request is found frequent in interviewees' responses to the designed situations. For instance, in response to situation 2, represented below, the respondents show the use of promises indicating their agreement to perform the action.

You received a call from a subscriber requesting to add a service that is available for his or her subscription category. The caller praised the company's services. What would you say to the caller? **Situation 2**

In example 10, the respondent (R2) is a male participant with five years of experience in the company. R2 thanks the caller for his/her praise of the company assures them that he will add the service they require by saying 'few seconds only and the service will be added'. So, the agreement to do the activity is implied in his statement.

Example 10 R2 *tama:m (.) fukran ʔɪlak sayyɪd fula:n (.) ʔakɪ:d (.) θawa:nɪ bas bɪtku:n mazyu:fa ʕɪndakɪl xɪdmɪh*
 OK. Thank you Mr. so and so. Sure, few seconds only and this service will be added.

Similarly, R1 in example 11 is a female participant who has been working in the company for 14 years. She thanks the caller and promises him/her to add the activity by saying */ʔɪla:n baʕɪ:fha ʔɪlak/* 'I will add it for you now', a statement based on the prior agreement of R1 to do the activity of adding the service.

Example 11 R1 *ʕa:kɪra ʔɪttɪʕa:lak (.) ʔɪla:n baʕɪ:fha ʔɪlak*
 Thank you for calling. I will add it now.

In example 12, R5's response is little different in that he achieved the service just before responding to the caller which means that he agreed to do the activity and the promise of agreement is already achieved, he says */tam ʔɪza:fatɪl xɪdmɪh/* 'the service has been added'. Before saying this, he thanked the caller, and at the end of his turn he assures his availability for any other help or service the caller needs.

Example 12 R5 *fukran ʕala lutfak (.) tam ʔɪza:fatɪl xɪdmɪh wɪhna mawdzu:dɪ:n bʔay xɪdmɪh*
 Thanks for your kindness. The service has been added. We are available for any service.

What can be observed here is that the responses produced by female participants are shorter and less sophisticated than those made by male participants. Such a difference between the two genders agrees with findings of Eckert (1998) and Holmes (2008) who stress that women's language is more conservative than that of men. However, as far as the Jordanian context is concerned, the difference between men and women in relation to their linguistic style opposes the findings of Al-Harashsheh's (2014b) study in which he states that women try to get the listener engaged in the conversation by using more facilitative strategies showing more cooperation with the hearer than men do.

2.5 Agreement by repeating part of what is said

Showing agreement can be accomplished by repeating what the speaker says or part of it; such repetition confirms the truthfulness or the possibility of achieving what is said. In example 13 line 31, E3 requests C3 to do the evaluation and he indicates his wish for the highest evaluation, he says /ʔɪnfɑ:lɪla nku:n ʔɪnd ɦusn zannaku tɪʔtɪ:nal ʔaʔla/ ‘we hope that we met your expectations and give us the highest’. In line 32, C3 responds by repeating /ʔɪnfɑ:ʔalla:/ which implied that ‘you met my expectations and I agree to give the highest’.

Example 13	31	E3	<i>ʔɪt taqyyɪ:m mɪn wa:ɦad laʔafra (.) wa:ɦad ʔaqaɪ taqyyɪ:mu ʔaʔraɪ ʔaʔla (.) ʔɪnfɑ:lɪla nku:n ʔɪnd ɦusn zannaku tɪʔtɪ:nal ʔaʔla</i> Evaluation is from one to ten. One is the least and ten is the highest. We hope that we met your expectations and give us the highest.
	32	C3	<i>ʔɪnfɑ:ʔalla: (.) yaʔtɪ:kɪɪ ʔa:fɪɪɦ</i> God willing. May God grant you health.


In example 14, E6 requests C6 to do certain processes to adjust the settings of his device. After each step, C6 responds by repeating some of what E6 said. In line 25 he repeated the word /ʔɪlʔɪʔda:da:t/ ‘settings’, he repeated /ʔɪlmazi:d/ ‘more’ and /ʔabaka:tɪl ha:tɪf wɪl dʒawwa:l/ ‘mobile networks’ in lines 31 and 33 respectively.

Example 14	24	E6	<i>tama:m ʔawwal ʔɪʔi: bnɪtwadʒdʒa lɪl ʔɪʔda:da:t ʔawɪz ʒabɪʔ</i> Good. First thing we go to the settings or configuration.
	25	C6	<i>ɦayɪl ʔɪʔda:da:t</i> Here it is.
	...		
	30	E6	<i>nɪxta:rɪl mazi:d</i> We choose ‘more’.
	31	C6	<i>ɦayɪl mazi:d</i> This is ‘more’.
	32	E6	<i>ʔabaka:tɪl ha:tɪf wɪl dʒawwa:l</i> Mobile networks.
	33	C6	<i>nɪxta:r ʔabaka:tɪl ha:tɪf wɪl dʒawwa:l (.) tama:m</i> Mobile networks. OK.
	...		
	64	E6	<i>ʔɪnd ʔɪsmɪl mustaxdɪm bnuktub nɪt</i> Under the user name we type net.
	65	C6	<i>nɪt tama:m</i> Net OK.
	66	E6	<i>kalɪmatɪl muru:r taɦtɪryu muba:ʔara ʔayʒan bnuktubɦa nɪt</i> Below that the password we also type net.

67 C6 *nit tama:m*
Net OK.

In lines 64 and 66, E6 requests C6 to use the word */nit/* ‘net’ as both the username and the password. For both requests, C6 responds with the repetition of the word */nit/* being the most important item in the request with more confirmation by adding */tama:m/* ‘OK’.


In example 15, the female caller, C10, wants to confirm her information about the period of time, she says */ʔarbaʔ ʔaʃhur yaʃni/* ‘it means four months?’. E10 responds with the repetition of most of what she said */ʔarbaʔ ʔaʃhur/* ‘four months’ and continues explaining the matter.

Examp	2	C	<i>ʔarbaʔ ʔaʃhur yaʃni</i> 
le 15	6	10	That means four months?
	2	E	<i>ʔarbaʔ ʔaʃhur naʃam</i>
	7	10	Yes, four months.

The participants’ responses discussed above show agreement to the requests or ideas of the other participants, so they are giving values to others’ opinions and judgements by minimizing disagreement and maximizing agreement with them. In doing so, participants of this study adhere to Leech’s Agreement Maxim: (M7) Give a high value to *O*’s opinion. Leech (2014) stresses that to agree with what others state or suggest is the preferred response to that suggestion or idea.


2.6 Responding with invocation or appreciation

Participants’ responses to the speakers’ requests or suggestions include invocation or some expressions of appreciation whether the request is achieved or not. Living in a Muslim society influenced by Islamic traditions and norms, the participants’ strategies include a reference to God (Allah). For instance, the invocation structure */ʔalla yidzʔa:kil xeir/* ‘May God reward you well’ is found to be used by them in a number of responses.

Example	10	C4	<i>yaʃni ma: biltaxi</i> 
16			That means it cannot be cancelled?
	11	E4	<i>ʃidqan ha:ða huwal muta:h</i> Honestly, not available.
	12	C4	<i>ʔayyib ʔalla yidzʔa:kil xeir</i> OK. May God reward you well.


In example 16, E4 could not help C4 in cancelling certain service or option and confirms his inability in line 11 by saying ‘honestly, not available’. In spite of the fact that C4’s request was not achieved, he politely responds with a wish for E4, he says */ʔalla yidzʔa:kil xeir/* preceded by */ʔayyib/* ‘OK’ accepting what is said by E4, so the strategy is confirmation + invocation. Same marker is also used in conversation 7 shown

in example 17. C7 uses /ʔalla yidʒza:kil xeir/ along with other markers of gratitude and appreciation as a kind of reward for her efforts.

Example 17	54	E7	<i>ʔumu:rak tama:m</i> 
			Is everything OK?
	55	C7	<i>ʔaʃkurik (.) ʔaʃkurik xaytı ma: qaʃʃartı (.) yaʃtı:kı ʔalf ʔalf ʃa:fyih (.) ʔalla: yidʒza:kil xeir</i>
			Thank you, thank you, sister, thanks. May God grant you health. May God reward you well.

The combination of invocation and thanks by Jordanians as a polite response has been indicated in the study of Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001). Moreover, the use of many markers by C7 in line 55 while responding to E7 indicates that C7 is maximising his praise to E7, so he is giving a high value to E7’s abilities of doing her work. This means that C7 is adhering to Leech’s (2014) Approbation Maxim: (M3) give a high value to O’s qualities.


Another marker that includes God’s name used in responding to speaker’s actions or requests is /ʔalla yisifdak/ or /ʔalla yisifdik/ ‘May God grant you happiness’, the alternation between the two depends on the gender of the addressee. In example 18, C4 uses this invocation marker two times in his responses to E4. It is a polite response to what E4 said in lines 13 and 15. According to the data of this study, invocation is used in by both genders. For example, in conversation 4 it is a male-to-male communication whereas in conversation 7, shown in example 19, it is a male-to-female one. In both /ʔalla yisifdak/ is found to be a marker of making a wish for the speakers in an attempt to thank them for their efforts. The same structure /ʔalla yisifdak/ is also used Farghal and Al-Khatib’s (2001) participants in their responses.

Exempl e 18	1 3	E 4	<i>ʔay xıdmih ʔuxra</i> 
			Any other service?
	1 4	C 4	<i>ʔalla yisifdak</i>
			May God grant you happiness.
	1 5	E 4	<i>kulıl ʔihıra:m mula:ħaza ʔaxı:ra mım baʃıd ʔıðnak</i>
			All respect. A last note after your permission.
	1 6	C 4	<i>ʔalla yisifdak</i>
			May God grant you happiness.


Example 19	38	C7	<i>ʔaʃkurik xaytı wallahı ma: qaʃʃartı</i>
			Thank you, sister. Thanks.
	39	E7	<i>ʔalla yisifdak</i>

May God grant you happiness.

Happiness wishes include the structure /yɪsɪdli masa:k/ ‘have a happy afternoon (lit.: May God make your afternoon full of happiness). In example 20, E5 asks C5 whether he would like any other service. C5 response is /yɪsɪdli masa:k/ which means that ‘I don’t want any other service and I wish you a happy afternoon’, so this is a polite response since it has supplication for E5 for his efforts.


Example 20	45	E5	<i>ʔilɪafu (.) ʔay xɪdmɪh θa:nyɪh</i> 
			Welcome. Any other service?
	46	C5	<i>yɪsɪdli masa:k</i> Have a happy afternoon.

Another marker that has invocation is /ʔalla:h yaɟɪ:kɪl ɟa:fyɪh/ ‘May God grant you health’ which is very frequent especially at the beginning of the conversations as a salutation or after having your request or work achieved by someone. It has at least another form which is /yaɟɪ:kɪl ɟa:fyɪh/ where the word /ʔalla:h/ is omitted as it is implied in the verb /yaɟɪ:kɪl/ giving no difference to the meaning.


Example 21	43	E10	<i>tama:m</i> 
			OK?
	44	C10	<i>xalaɟ ʔa: yaɟɪ:kɪl ɟa:fyɪh (.) fukran</i> Yes, done. May God grant you health. Thanks.
	45	E10	<i>ʔallay ɟa:fi:k (.) fa:kɪrlɪt tɪɟa:lɪku ʔahlaw sahla fi:kɪ</i> May God grant you health. Thanking your call and welcome.

In example 21, E10 completes his task and asks C10 whether everything is OK; C10’s response includes the use of /yaɟɪ:kɪl ɟa:fyɪh/ which has the intended meaning of ‘everything is Ok and I wish that God give you good health’.


Sometimes this wish is amplified by adding a number as a premodifier for the noun ‘health’. In example 22, C7 indicates his thankfulness to the female employee (E7) for her efforts by using a number of markers including /yaɟɪ:kɪl ɟa:fyɪh/, but he amplifies the noun ‘health’ by adding /ʔalf ʔalf/ ‘thousand thousand’ before it.

Example 22	54	E7	<i>ʔumu:rak tama:m</i> 
			Is everything OK?
	55	C7	<i>ʔaɟkurɪk (.) ʔaɟkurɪk xaytɪ ma: qaɟɟartɪ (.) yaɟɪ:kɪ ʔalf</i> <i>ʔalf ɟa:fyɪh (.) ʔalla: yɪdza:kɪl xeɪr</i> Thank you, thank you, sister, thanks. May God grant you health. May God reward you well.

In responding to participants' efforts, especially the employees, callers used the structure /*ma: bitgaşşır*/ as a marker of appreciation. It is somehow similar to English 'I know you will do'.

Example 23	78	E6	<i>ʔilʕafu walay hımmak xıdmıh ʕa.nyıh</i> 
			Don't worry. Any other service?
	79	C6	<i>la: ma: bitgaşşır</i> No, thanks.

In example 23, E6 asks C6 whether he needs any other service; C6 responds with 'no' followed by /*ma: bitgaşşır*/ which means that 'I don't want any other service and if I want one, I know you will do that', so it is something like 'I admit that you are helpful'. Example 24 consists of two extracts from conversation 7; the caller (C7) is male and the employee (E7) is female.

Example 24	37	E7	<i>raħ tku:n ʔumu:rak tama:m</i>
			Everything will be OK.
	38	C7	<i>ʔaʕkurık xaytı wallahı ma: qaşşartı</i> Thank you, sister. Thanks.
	...		
	54	E7	<i>ʔumu:rak tama:m</i> 
			Is everything OK?
	55	C7	<i>ʔaʕkurık (.) ʔaʕkurık xaytı ma: qaşşartı (.) yaʕtı:ki ʔalf ʔalf</i> <i>ʕa:fyıh (.) ʔalla: yıdʒza:kıl xerr</i> Thank you, thank you, sister, thanks. May God grant you health. May God reward you well.

E7 assures C7 that everything will be OK, but there is a need to do some configuration; in response to this, C7 thanks her for her help and appreciates her efforts. His response includes two markers: /*ʔaʕkurık xaytı*/ 'thank you, sister' and /*wallahı ma: qaşşartı*/ 'by God you did everything you could do'. The inclusion of the act of swearing /*wallahı*/ 'by God' in the latter marker is meant to intensify the response. The act of swearing seems to be common in Jordanians' interactions as it appears in this study in both types of data: conversations and the designed situations (e.g., situation 10). This seems inconsistent with Al-Khawaldeh (2014) who found it used only in role-plays in her data.

In line 55, again he thanks and appreciates her efforts by using /*ʔaʕkurık*/ 'thank you', /*ʔaʕkurık xaytı*/ 'thank you, sister', /*ma: qaşşartı*/ 'you did everything you could do', the amplified /*yaʕtı:ki ʔalf ʔalf ʕa:fyıh*/ 'May God grant you health', and /*ʔalla: yıdʒza:kıl xerr*/ 'May God reward you well'. Such intensification of the responses by C7 in lines 38 and 55 makes the responses strongly polite which can be attributed to either or both of two facts: first, it is towards the end of the conversation, and second he meant to be very polite because E7 is female and he follows the norms of the Jordanian culture in dealing politely with women, elders, strangers, etc. Following the social and cultural norms, according to Leech (2014), is

the sociopragmatic facet of politeness that strengthens the politeness value. Moreover, like other Arab cultures, the Jordanian culture is based on reciprocity in which people give each other help and advantages, especially when the power factor is equal. Therefore, it is necessary to reward the person who helps you in something in a way to reflect appreciation for the time and efforts of that person. Alrefai (2012) states that such a reward can be in the form of a prayer for that person or in the form of a promise that the favour will be returned in the future. As for the context of this study, the relation between the callers and the CCCS employees is temporary as it ends at the end of the call, so they use only invocation or appreciation.

2.7 Responding with an apology giving a reason or a suggestion

Participants of this study, especially the employees, apologise for not being able to help customers with some of their requests. Either the requested act is not available or they are not allowed by the rules of their company to do so. In these situations, they apologise to the caller for not doing so providing the reason for their inability to perform the act or suggesting what the caller can do to get his request done.

The designed situation number 1, shown below, aims to elicit a rejection for a request made by the caller. The responses of the interviewees include a term of apology, for instance, most of them begin with */baʃtiðir minnak/* 'I apologise' followed by a reason for this apology and sometimes a suggestion for the caller to get his request done.

You received a call from a subscriber requesting to add a service that is not available for his or her subscription category. Although you told the caller that it is not possible, s/he insisted on his or her request.

What would you say to the caller rejecting the request? **Situation 1**

In example 25, R2, a male participant with five years of experience, says */baʃtiðir minnak/* 'I apologise' followed by the reason why he cannot help the caller 'this service is not available on this offer'. Moreover, R2 suggests that 'we may change your line to another offer on which this service is available'. This way of rejecting the request is a polite one since it includes an apology, reason and suggestion.

Example 25 R2 *baʃtiðir minnak marra θa.nyih basil xidmih miʃ mawdzu:da ʃala ha:ðal uʃar (.) ʔiða biθihb mummkin nħawlak ʃala uʃar θa.ni tku:nil xidmih avilabil ʃaler*

I apologise once again, but this service is not available on this offer. If you like, we may change your line to another offer on which this service is available. (situation 1)

The same strategy is used by R4 in example 26. R4, who is a female participant with six years of experience, tries to be very polite in her response as she apologises, gives the reason and suggests a solution for the caller. Each of these acts is made twice trying to reduce the negative effect she caused to the caller's desire.

Example 26 R4 *baʃtiðir minnak (.) ha:yil xidmih miʃ mitwafrih laʔiʃtira:k ħazirtak (.) mumkin tuʃlub xidmih θa.nyih ʔaw tittadzih ʔila markizil xadama:t mumkiny sa:ʃdu:k bha:ðal mawzu:ʃ bas ʔana: baʃtiðir minnak miʃ min ʃala:ħryya:tı ʔazı:f ha:yil xidmih*

I apologise. This service is not available for your subscription. You may request another service or contact the service centre; they may help you in this regard, but I apologise. It is not in my power to add this service. (situation 1)

In response to situation 10, the nine-year expert female participant (R7) apologises two times and gives two reasons for her refusal of giving the caller the number he is asking for. In example 27, she says ‘the number is not available’ and ‘I cannot give you such information’. The participants’ strategy of apologising with a reason for not doing the activity has been indicated in the literature as well. For instance, Al-Khawaldeh (2014) states that her Jordanian participants opt for apologising by giving reasons or excuses starting their apology by the word /*baʕtiðir*/ ‘I apologise’.

Example 27 R7 *bniʕtiðir minnak (.) ʔirraqam miʕ miʕwaffir ʕinna (.) baʕtiðir minnak ma: bagdar ʔaʕti:k ha:yil maʕlu:ma:t*
We apologise. The number is not available. I apologise, I cannot give you such information. (situation 10)



A less complicated structure is used by R2 in response to situation 10 shown in example 28. R2 is a male participant with five years of experience. He apologises, gives the reason for not performing the action and suggests a solution to the caller directing him or her to speak to the inquiries where the request can be achieved.

Example 28 R2 *walla baʕtiðir minnak bas ha:yil xidmih miʕ mawdzu:da ʕinna mumkin tha:wi tihki maʕil ʔistiʕla:ma:t ʔaki:d raħi fi:du:k*
I apologise, this service is not available here. You may try to speak to the inquiries; sure, they will help you. (situation 10)

In example 29, the male participant, R2, apologises to the mistaken caller saying /*bniʕtiðir minnak*/ ‘we apologise’. R2’s response to situation 9 consists of an apology and two suggestions. Although R2’s response includes an apology, it somehow corelates to Leech’s (2014) first maxim, viz., M1: give a high value to *O*’s wants. Giving a high value to the caller’s want is indicated in this example by the use of two suggestions.

Example 29 R2 *bniʕtiðir minnak bas law tra:dziʕ ʔif ʕarikal muzawwida ʔilak mumkiny fi:du:k ʔakθar ʔaw tʕarrifna tɔ:xid min ʕinna xaʕ*
We apologise, you may contact the provider; they may help you or you may visit us and take a line. (situation 9)

Apology may not be said directly in the participants’ responses; it might be implied in the structure and understood in the reason or suggestion made by the speaker. For instance, in example 30 the respondent (R6) does not produce any verbal apology to the caller; instead, she begins with /*mumkin*/ meaning ‘may’ or ‘Is it possible?’ responding to the child caller in situation 7 is ‘May I speak to your mother? Where is your mother?’. In this response the apology is implied and understood from the speakers’ utterances.

Example R6
30 *mumkin ʔatwa:ʃal maʃ ma:ma*  *wein ma:ma baddi ʔaħki maʃ*
ma:ma (.) ma:ma mawdzu:da 

May I speak to your mother? Where is your mother? I want to speak to your mother. Is your mother there? (situation 7)

5 Conclusion

This study is an attempt to examine the types of politeness strategies employed in the interactions between Jordanians and the employees of CCCS of a major telecommunications company in Jordan. It focuses on their linguistic behaviours upon responding speech act. The researcher analysed the request strategies and the responses strategies as produced by the participants of this study indicating the types of each and the degree of politeness involved in the different strategies. Moreover, the researcher mapped these strategies on the previous studies conducted in the area where possible showing the similarities and differences between the findings of this study and those of the previous ones.

The results of the analysis show that participants employ a number of strategies in their responses to others' requests, wishes, opinions, etc. Showing agreement to what has been said includes using */ʔmfɑ:lla/* 'God willing', */tama:m/*, */ukei/* 'OK'. They also use certain statements to indicate their agreement with the speaker on what he or she said, such as 'take your time' and 'don't worry'. Other agreement strategies include the repetition of some of what is said by the other interlocutor and by using certain invocation or appreciation. However, disagreement is found to be communicate politely. It usually begins with */baʃtɔr minnak/* 'I apologise' followed by a reason for not doing the activity with or without a suggestion. The results of the study have revealed that sociocultural norms of the Jordanian society including Islamic culture were followed to a great extent in a number of the response strategies used by the participants of this study showing politeness and respect. Therefore, it can be concluded that the acquisition of these norms is essential for learners of Jordanian Arabic.

As for Leech's Maxims, based on their various response strategies, participants adhered to a number of maxims. For instance, in their strategy of agreement with what is said by the other interlocutor they give high value to the other's opinion, thus implement Maxim 7. Moreover, the inclusion of */walay himmak/* 'don't worry', in their responses is a way to consider the feelings of the other interlocutor and show sympathy with them which can be counted as an adherence to Maxim 9. Furthermore, participants maximise the praise to the other in giving high value to their abilities of doing their work which is an adherence to Leech's Maxim 3 as in example 17 above.

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