

## The force behind illocutionary speech acts: Directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative



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### ABSTRACT

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The main purpose of this study is to examine the force and power of language expressions categorized under the rubrics of the types of illocutionary speech acts (directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative), particularly speech acts of permission, apologies, and compliments. A total of 30 male and female EFL (English as a foreign language) students who studied at Ajloun National University participated in this study. The data were collected through discourse completion tasks (DCTs). The students were asked to write down what they identified as permissions, apologies, and compliments similar to what they would use in real-life situations. The responses to the DCTs were analyzed based on suitable taxonomy of compliment and apology response strategies. The frequency of occurrence and percentage of each type were quantified. The analysis of the data confirmed that EFL learners used various strategies in expressing apologies, permissions, thanks and compliments thus leading to the following conclusions: Most EFL students use thanking and complimentary expressions in both formal and informal situations. Secondly, Jordanian EFL learners successfully identified the speech act of permission issued by explicit and implicit performative expressions and declarative construction rather than interrogative and imperative construction. Finally, it was noted that the most frequent responses expressing apologies were IFIDs (illocutionary force indicating devices).

**Contribution/Originality:** This study sheds light on the pragmatic force and power of some expressions which are categorized under the rubrics of directive, commissive, expressive and declarative illocutionary speech acts. The main reason for studying Jordanian performance is because so little is known about EFL learners' knowledge of the socio-pragmatic rules, particularly regarding permission, apologies and compliments.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The force underlying speaking acts has been the subject of in-depth research for many decades. First presented by Austin (1962) in his book "How to Do Things with Words," the idea of the speech act has grown to be an essential aspect of language since it allows speakers to produce an utterance and perform an act. He maintained that speech acts are a tool for carrying out tasks and accomplishing objectives in addition to serving as a means of disseminating information. According to Austin (in Tsui (1994)) and Yule (1996) speech acts are the words that people use to carry out certain tasks. Different speech acts, including requests, permissions, thank yous, invitations, complaints, apologies, agreements, conflicts and compliments, have been the subject of numerous studies. Through

using the right speech acts, people can communicate, understand and show respect and appreciation for others and express their thoughts, feelings and messages.

Many language experts divided speech acts into three classes: illocutionary speech (the utterance of words), illocutionary acts (the acts performed by uttering certain words such as agreement, apology, offering), and perlocutionary acts (the effects that the words have) (Cutting, 2002; Hufford & Heasley, 1983; Yule, 1996). Searle in Levinson (1983) indicated that there are many different types of illocutionary speech acts: a) Directives, which are used to give orders and ask questions; b) commissives, which are used to make offers, promises or refusals; c) expressives, which are used to express feelings such as gratitude and apology; and d) declarations, which are used to make statements of facts such as excommunicating, declaring war, and firing from employment. Speech acts can also be classified by their purpose. For example, they can perform an action, make a statement, or ask a question.

While teaching the speech act in the classroom, EFL teachers should take the classroom setting into account since English is a foreign language for Jordanian learners. When teaching language expressions, such as requests, permission, thanking, invitations, complaints, apologies, agreements, disagreements, and compliments, it is possible for them to be misinterpreted as being offensive. Jordanian EFL students' lack of social and cultural norms of the target language initially leads them to fail so that they try to figure out situations that call for the use of these language expressions (Al-Ghazalli & Al-Shammari, 2014).

Learners in EFL classes may experience significant difficulties with improper use of grammar, vocabulary and phrases as well as improper speech act structure. Cohen (2003) stated that "learners of a language can have all of the grammatical forms and lexical items and still fail at conveying their message because they lack the necessary pragmatic or functional information to communicate their intent". Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the EFL learners' responses to these language expressions to examine the force and power of some expressions which were categorized under the rubrics of the types of speech acts (directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations) which are permission, apologies, and compliments. Through comprehending and mastering the conventions and colloquial phrases of language, students can ascertain their meaning, which broadens their knowledge and ultimately equips them to execute speech acts.

To sum up, the present study is limited by the following:

1. It solely looks at the permission, compliment, apology, and thanking speech acts.
2. During the academic year 2023–2024, 30 EFL students in their second and third years at the Department of English Language and Literature, Ajloun National University, had their discourse completion tasks (DCTs) completed in order to gather data for this study.

It is anticipated that those who are interested in learning more about the pragmatic performance of EFL learners will find this study to be valuable. It is also envisaged that the study will shed light on some characteristics of language that are pertinent to and helpful in research on learning other languages.

## **2. THE POWER OF THE COMPLIMENT SPEECH ACT RESPONSES OF EFL STUDENTS**

Goffman (1967) and Bruti (2006) stated that compliments are primarily aimed at building relationships, creating positive feelings and improving communication. They are a key part of social interaction and are used to maintain, enhance and support the addressee and show appreciation for someone's work. Holmes (1988) defines a compliment as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speakers, usually the person addressed, for some "good" (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (p. 446).

Giving and accepting compliments determine the success of any social interaction. By using complimentary expressions, people can build relationships, create positive feelings, raise self-esteem and confidence, show appreciation for the other person and improve communication (Heidari, Rezazadeh, & Rasekh, 2009). Complimentary responses can range from a simple "thank you," "thanks," or "I appreciate it" to a more detailed

response with more information about why the compliment is appreciated, such as "I am glad you like it/them" or "you did a good job in the meeting." When accepting compliments, one should be genuine and sincere and respond with a simple thank you and a smile to make the conversation more enjoyable and make the other person feel valued. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the use of complimentary speech acts. Farghal and Al-Katib (2001) stated that male and female Jordanian speakers accept and appreciate simple compliments. Moreover, their responses to compliments were affected by the gender of the interlocutors. Chen (2003) examined the main use of complimentary speech acts among Chinese EFL students and American English native speakers and found that most Chinese EFL students rejected compliments whereas the American English speakers accepted and appreciated compliments. Al-Rousan and Awal (2016) also conducted a study to examine responses to compliments among male and female Jordanian learners. A sample of 36 learners participated to collect the data. The results revealed that agreement strategies were used more frequently than other strategies.

A cross-cultural study of complimentary speech acts among Yemeni and American native speakers was carried out by Almansoob, Patil, and Alrefae (2019). A discourse completion test was used to gather data to fulfill the study's objectives. According to the findings, Arabic praises had a variety of formulae, whereas American compliments were consistent and focused.

### 3. THE POWER OF APOLOGY: POLITENESS SPEECH ACTS EXPRESSED BY STUDENTS

Apology as a politeness speech act is a way to mend a relationship. It is an expression of regret over doing a hurtful thing. Many ways of making and accepting apologies can be used to express respect, humility and politeness in interactions between people.

An apology can be expressed in many ways in formal and informal situations. In informal contexts, an apology can be expressed verbally, such as "sorry," "my apologies" or "please forgive me," or non-verbally through body language, such as bowing or turning the head. In formal situations and writing, students often use more formal structures, such as "I offer my sincere apologies" or "I really feel bad about my actions."

Searle (1999) stated that an apology is classified as an expressive illocutionary act because it expresses one's inner sorrow and regret. The way an apology is expressed can have a crucial influence on how it is perceived by others. A verbal apology can be the most effective method to express genuine feelings of sorrow and regret about a misunderstanding, while an apology expressed through body language may be seen as less sincere.

An apology is considered a first step to show respect and rectify misunderstanding. Holmes (1989) defines apology as "a speech act addressed to B's face that needs to remedy an offense for which he takes responsibility and thus to restore the equilibrium between A and B (A is the apologizer, and B is the person offended)." Many researchers have conducted studies concerned with the act of apologizing (Brokin & Reinhard, 1987; Fruser, 1980). According to Holmes in Majeed and Juanjua (2014) expressing regret is a speech act meant to mend social relationships between speakers. Engel (2001) also stated that there are five reasons for expressing apologies: "First, expressing apology shows respect to others. Second, apologizing shows that we can take responsibility for our actions. Third, apologizing shows that we care about the other person's feelings. Next, apologizing shows that we have good integrity. Finally, apologizing shows that we want to make a peace condition and restore relationships with others."

Ahmed (2017) studied the speech act of apology employed by Iraqi English language learners as well as native Arabic speakers and looked at how they were perceived and produced. The findings showed that the social and religious views on apology, along with the characteristics of Iraqi culture, had an impact on the tactics used for apologizing. Kurdi, Al-Megren, Althunyan, and Almulifi (2018) investigated the ways in which Saudi EFL students apologized. The most often employed tactic, according to the findings, is the explicit statement of apology through illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs). Alshehab and Rababah (2020) investigated the apology strategies used among Jordanian Arabic speakers and native English speakers. The results revealed that the most frequently used apology strategy is IFIDs, and the explanation strategy was not used much.

#### 4. THE POWER OF PERMISSION SPEECH ACT RESPONSES

One type of directive speech act is permission, which entails requesting consent or permission to do something. Permission, according to Thomson (1996) is "the lowest degree of pressure, leaving the decision to them and opening the possibility for other persons to do the action". There are two types of permission speech acts – requests (asking for permission) and offers (giving permission). Because it takes the form of a query, declaration or order, a request is the most popular type of permission utilized by EFL learners. Both types of speech acts involve the speaker and the hearer. In asking for permission, the speakers have no authority over the hearers, contrary to giving permission, which reflects the fact that the speakers have control over the listener. Students often face difficulties in understanding and using permission expressions correctly. This leads to misunderstanding and miscommunication. Using permission speech acts correctly is crucial for successful communication, building relationships and creating positive feelings. Asking for, giving, and not giving permission should be done politely and respectfully. Trosborg (1995) stated that "a request is an illocutionary act whereby a speaker conveys to a hearer that he wants him/her to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker."

Bach and Harnish (1979) indicated that there is a strong relationship between requesting and asking for permission. They stated that in asking for permission, the speakers have no authority over the hearers, and the responses performed by these hearers will be of benefit to the speakers." For example:

- Could you pass me the newspaper, please? (Requesting).
- May I come to class a little late on Monday? (Asking for permission).

Bach and Harnish (1979) also explained that modal verbs (will, can, could, may and shall) are used to make an offer in addition to asking for permission. For example:

- Can I get you some aspirin for you? (Offering).
- Can I open the window? (Asking for permission).

In the first example (offering), the speaker offers help, while in the second example (asking for permission), there is no help offered. Many researchers have stated that it is crucial to be aware of the power of using different types of permission speech to act correctly in different contexts. These expressions help to ensure that requests and offers are made and responded to appropriately, and that respect and politeness are maintained, and misunderstandings are avoided. Investigations have been conducted by several researchers, such as Betti, Igaab, and Al-Ghizzi (2018) who identified different types of permission, obligation, and prohibition among Iraqi EFL learners, and it was found that the learners had deficiencies at the practical level of learning EFL.

Alzebaree (2021) investigated Kurdish EFL university students' performance of the speech acts of permission. A sample of 97 students participated in the study to provide data through a DCT. The researcher found that there were significant differences in the frequency and percentages of strategies of the speech act of permission.

#### 5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although a speech act is "an utterance as a functional unit in communication" (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992) an activity of spoken language and the ability to convey some language functions, such as giving an opinion, agreeing or disagreeing, liking or disliking, giving and accepting compliments, apologizing, promising, requesting, complaining and giving permission, can be difficult to use appropriately and correctly. This is because "speech acts differ cross-culturally not only in the way they are realized but also in their distribution, their frequency of occurrence, and in the functions they serve" (Wolfson, 1981). For example, in some cultures, it is polite to use certain speech acts which in other cultures are seen as rude. In other words, what is considered appropriate in one culture and language may not be in another. Moreover, the context plays an important role in which speech acts are used. This means that the same speech act may have a different meaning depending on the situation. For example, the speech act of thanking may be an expression of gratitude in one situation and a compliment response in another.

## 6. STUDY QUESTIONS

1. To what extent are Jordanian students able to respond to the speech act of compliments?
2. To what extent are Jordanian students able to ask for and respond to the speech acts of permission?
3. To what extent are Jordanian students able to respond to the speech acts of apologies?

## 7. METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitative because it depends on percentages and frequencies to achieve the study goal. The results are discussed to determine the most common strategies adopted by EFL learners which are categorized under the rubrics of the different types of speech acts. This was achieved through the use of a written discourse completion test (WDCT).

### 7.1. Participants

Thirty EFL students from Ajloun National University, both male and female, were randomly selected to participate in the study. They spoke Arabic as their first language and were aged between 18 and 28 years old. Their results in the university entrance exam showed that their level of language proficiency ranged from intermediate to advanced.

### 7.2. Instrument

Discourse completion tasks were used to gather the data. A DCT is an open-ended question that simulates a real-world scenario and asks the respondent to give a spoken response. According to O'Keeffe, Clancy, and Adolphs (2019) they are a particular kind of language questionnaire in which participants are given descriptions of scenarios and asked to elicit what they think they would say in a certain situation. The students recognized and recorded expressions of consent, apologies, and compliments that they would use in everyday interactions. The exam had a few scenarios that were created to mimic various events that speakers might encounter daily. The instances used various settings to elicit responses from the speakers, such as compliments, permission, and apologies.

EFL learners were asked to make a compliment about each of the following:

- Your mother's new hairstyle.
- A piece of furniture in someone's house.
- A friend's new shirt.
- A man's necktie.
- A presentation someone gave in a class.
- A friend's speech in the meeting.

EFL learners were asked to use different apology expressions for different situations about each of the following:

- Being late for the lecture.
- Forgetting to mail some letters to a friend.
- Making too much noise during the lecture.
- Forgetting to return a friend's book.
- Keeping a friend waiting.
- Missing a friend's birthday party.
- Dropping a glass and breaking it.

#### 7.2.1. Asking for Permission to Do Each Activity

EFL learners were required to ask for and give permission in the following situations:

- Borrowing a friend's coat.

- Opening a friend’s bedroom window.
- Coming to class a little late on Thursday.
- Driving a friend’s car to the ceremony.

7.2.2. Giving Permission to Other People to Do Each Activity

- a. A friend: Can I use your phone? You .....
- b. A friend: Would you mind if I ride in your car today? You: .....
- c. A friend: Would it be possible for you to park here? You: .....
- d. A friend: Can you answer the phone for me? You: .....

Data were collected during the second semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. Before administering the tests, the researcher sought the participants' permission. They were informed that the data would be used for research purposes to investigate their responses to permission, thanks, apologies, and compliments.

7.3. Data Analysis

After the DCTs were completed, the types of responses were categorized using the Olshtain and Cohen (1983) taxonomy of apology responses, the Herbert (1990) taxonomy of compliment response strategies to analyze the compliment responses collected from the Jordanian students, and the types of thanking expressions that are categorized in thanking, appreciation, expressing positive feelings, apologizing, and expressing repayment. The percentage and frequency of occurrence of each type of response were measured.

8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

8.1. Results Related to Question 1

To what extent are Jordanian students able to respond to the speech act of compliments?

To answer this question, the overall distribution of the compliment response types is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of compliment response types used by EFL learners.

Response strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A. Agreement		
1. Acceptance		
• Appreciation token	39	18%
• Comment acceptance	21	10%
• Praise upgrade	14	7%
Subtotal	74	35%
2. Comment history		
	27	13%
3. Transfer		
	29	13%
• Reassignment	15	7%
• Return	14	6%
Subtotal	56	26%
Total	130	60%
B. Non-agreement		
1. Scale down		
	18	8%
2. Question		
	19	9%
3. Non-acceptance		
	24	11%
• Qualification	12	6%
• Disagreement	12	6%
Subtotal	24	11%
4. No acknowledgment		
	12	6%
Total	73	34%
C. Other interpretation		
1. Request		
	12	6%
Overall total	215	100%

The results in the table above indicate that EFL learners employed various types of compliment responses. More specifically, they employed the agreement responses, consisting of acceptance responses categorized into appreciation tokens, comment acceptance and praise upgrade, and non-acceptance responses which are comprised of comment history, reassignment and return. In addition, they employed non-agreement responses that consist of sub-types such as scale-down, disagreement, qualification, question, no acknowledgment, and request.

Table 1 shows that, with 60% of the total replies, agreement was the most common compliment among the EFL learners. With 34% of the total replies, non-agreement was the second most common way to respond to compliments. Requests were the least common response strategy, with only 6% of the total. This indicates that the learners preferred agreement strategies over other interpretation strategies and non-agreement.

Based on the results, most of the EFL learners used appreciation tokens, such as a simple 'thank you' and a big smile to express appreciation for being complimented on their appearance, work, food, talent, etc. comment history (13%), comment acceptance (10%), reassignment (7%) and return (7%) were also practiced and used by learners to express their agreement with responses to compliments.

The analysis of the English DCTs showed some examples of acceptance and agreement with the compliment, such as "Thank you," "Thank you, I am so glad you like it," "Thank you for saying that," "I appreciate that," "I needed to hear that," "You're so kind," and "Thanks, my pleasure." To sum up, 60% of the compliment responses were categorized as agreement. These findings are supported by many studies (Enssaif, 2005; Nelson, Bakary, & Batal, 1993) which showed that learners prefer using acceptance and agreement responses to compliments.

The Jordanian EFL students were aware of the non-agreement technique for praise responses, as seen in Table 1. Five subcategories—scale down, disagreement, qualification, question, and no acknowledgment—were identified under this method. According to the research, this method was the second most popular among EFL learners, accounting for 34%. The DCTs were analyzed, and the results showed that the students responded to complimentary comments with a range of non-agreement techniques, such as "Do you think so?" "Thanks for saying that, but I don't think so," and "Are you serious? These old things? I've had them forever." These findings contradicted those of Holmes (1995) who showed that unfriendly politeness tactics used by speakers are not the standard ways in which they respond to compliments.

Under the "other interpretation" category, the request approach was the one that the students employed the least (6%). These students responded to compliments with a variety of request responses, including jokes, promises, and hopes. One example of a request response is "If you like it, you can borrow it anytime you want." In summary, EFL learners preferred agreement strategies over non-agreement and alternative interpretation strategies. According to the results of this question, agreement was the most common method, which is consistent with the findings of other studies (e.g., (Farghal & Al-Katib, 2001; Herbert, 1990)). However, other researchers, including Ye (1995); Gajaseni (1995) and Chen (1993) contradict the study's conclusions (as noted in Yousefvand (2010)).

Table 2. Percentages of students' use of the speech act of asking and giving permission.

Category	Permissive performative sentence (Explicit and implicit)		Imperative construction		Interrogative construction		Declarative construction		Would you mind/Would it be ok if...		Can/ Could/ May/ Might		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	19%	22	22%	
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	21%	20	19%	
3	2	3%	1	6%	0	0	0	0	8	19%	19	18%	
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	17%	23	22%	
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	24%	20	19%	
6	15	21%	7	41%	0	0	8	22%	0	0	0	0	
7	18	26%	2	12%	0	0	10	28%	0	0	0	0	
8	17	24%	4	23%	0	0	9	25%	0	0	0	0	
9	18	26%	3	18%	0	0	9	25%	0	0	0	0	
<b>Subtotal</b>	70	100%	17	100%	0	0	36	100%	42	100%	104	100%	269
	26%		6%		0%		13%		16%		39%		100%



### 8.2. Results Related to Question 2

*To what extent are Jordanian students able to ask for and respond to the speech acts of permission?*

After the data were collected via the discourse completion test (DCT), they were analyzed by coding the participants' responses and determining the speech act of permission expressions used. The permission strategies were then analyzed, and the percentages of students' use of permission strategies are presented. In [Table 2](#), items 1–5 express situations of asking for permission, and items 6–9 express situations of giving permission. The learners' ability to identify the speech act of asking for permission expressed by the modal verbs "can, could, may and might" was considered to be very good since the score of their responses is 39%. Learners using the expression "Would you mind if..." to ask for permission was also good since the mean score of their responses is 16%. For items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, the speech act of asking for permission is expressed by using modal verbs and the expressions "Would you mind if...?" or "Would it be ok if...?" The use of modal verbs to ask for permission achieved the highest score (39%), followed by use of the expressions "Would you mind if..." and "Would it be okay if..." with a percentage of 16%. This means that the learners are structurally good at asking for permission and they prefer to use modals more than other strategies. [Table 2](#) also indicates that the learners use some phrases and expressions in polite ways to grant others permission. Items 6, 7, 8 and 9 express situations in which learners can use general expressions of agreement. It can be noticed that the learners' ability to identify speech acts of permission expressed by explicit performative expression is good, according to the mean score of their responses (26%). Some of the explicit performative expressions used by learners are as follows:

- I permit you to ride in my car.
- I authorize you to start teaching English.
- You can park here.

Only 16% of the EFL learners used declarative sentences to give permission. In this case, they can use various expressions to grant permission in English, such as:

- I give you my permission to ride in my car/answer the phone/park here.
- I will let you ride in my car/answer the phone/park here.
- You can park here.

[Table 2](#) also shows that the learners' comprehension of speech acts of permission represented by imperative sentences is poor, and the EFL learners can be characterized as "extremely limited users" in this regard given the mean score of 6% for their responses. [Quirk, Sidney, Geoffrey, and Jan \(1985\)](#) state that "directives typically take the form of an imperative sentence." Additionally, they claim that imperative sentences can demonstrate a variety of illocutionary forces, including warning, advising, proposing, threatening, and granting permission. The results also show that although EFL learners can use this construction to ask for permission by employing modal verbs such as "could, may, can, and would you mind if I...," they choose not to use interrogative constructs to express giving permission. To sum up, the force of response to speech acts of permission is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. EFL learners' responses are influenced by a range of social, cultural and psychological factors and can vary depending on the type of speech act, the context in which it is used, and the relationship between the speaker and listener. The Jordanian EFL learners successfully identified the speech act of permission issued by explicit and implicit performative expressions and declarative construction, rather than interrogative and imperative constructions.

### 8.3. Results Related to Question 3

*To what extent are Jordanian students able to respond to the speech act of apologies?*

After the data were collected via the discourse completion test, they were analyzed by coding the participants' responses and determining the speech act of apology expressions used. The [Olshtain and Cohen \(1983\)](#) taxonomy of apology responses was used. The percentages of students' use of the speech act of apology strategies were then calculated.

Table 3. Percentages of students' use of the speech act of apology.

Category	Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)		IFID + Explanation		IFID + Request		IFID + Explanation + IFID		IFID + Explanation + Request		IFID + Promise + Request		IFID + Explanation + Promise	
Situation	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	11	14%	2	5%	2	11%	3	13.6%	3	18.8%	8	30.8%	0	0
2	10	13%	5	12%	3	17%	4	18.2%	1	6.3%	6	23.1%	1	11.1%
3	12	16%	3	7%	4	22%	4	18.2%	2	12.5%	3	11.5%	2	22.2%
4	10	13%	7	17	2	11%	3	13.6%	3	18.8%	4	15.4%	2	22.2%
5	11	14%	8	19	3	17%	3	13.6%	2	12.5%	2	7.7%	1	11.1%
6	11	14%	9	21	2	11%	2	9.1%	3	18.8%	1	3.8%	2	22.2%
7	12	16%	8	19	2	11%	3	13.6%	2	12.5%	2	7.7%	1	11.1%
<b>Subtotal</b>	77	100%	42	100%	18	100%	22	100%	16	100%	26	100%	9	100%
<b>Total</b>	210	36.7%	20%		8.6%		10.4%		7.6%		12.4%		4.3%	

Table 3 contains seven structures expressing apology that were used by the students in different situations. These expressions can be categorized as: Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), IFID + Explanation, IFID + Request, IFID + Explanation + IFID, IFID + Explanation + Request, IFID + Promise + Request, and IFID + Explanation + Promise. Based on the results, 77 responses expressed IFID apology expressions (36.7%), 42 responses represent IFID + Explanation (20%), 18 responses expressed IFID + Request (8.6%), 22 responses represent IFID + Explanation + IFID (10.4%), 16 responses represent IFID + Explanation + Request (7.6%), 26 responses used the IFID + Promise + Request strategy (12.4%), and nine responses used IFID + Explanation + Promise (4.3%).

The data from the table shows that most of the students used different apology expressions in different situations. These situations are:

1. Being late for the lecture.
2. Forgetting to mail some letters to a friend.
3. Making too much noise during the lecture.
4. Forgetting to return a friend's book.
5. Keeping a friend waiting.
6. Missing a friend's birthday party.
7. Dropping a glass and breaking it.

Some examples of the apology expressions and strategies used by EFL learners in situations from 1–7 are: *Sorry, can I enter? I'm sorry for being late. Sorry, I had a bad situation. Could you accept my apology? I'm sorry for coming late. Excuse me, teacher, I came late to class. I had some problems with the traffic so I'm late coming to the lecture. I was stuck in traffic; it is not as usual, so I'm sorry. Excuse me for making so much noise. I am sorry I was noisy. I apologize for forgetting to return your book, I will bring it tomorrow. Sorry for keeping you waiting. I'm sorry for missing your birthday party.* It can therefore be concluded that EFL learners use various strategies to express apology. These results are in line with many studies, including Kurdi et al. (2018), Alshehab and Rababah (2020) and Ahmed (2017).

## 9. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a speech act is an utterance and activity spoken as a functional unit in communication. It allows people to express their thoughts and feelings in a way that can be understood by others. When teaching language expressions, EFL learners should be aware of the different cultures and contexts and how the different conventions of speech acts should be used appropriately. Through conveying language functions correctly, good relationships and understanding between people can be built effectively. The analysis of the data confirms that EFL learners used various strategies in expressing apologies, permission, thanks and compliments and yields the following: Firstly, the most frequent responses to compliments used were related to agreement, accounting for 60% of the total responses. Secondly, the Jordanian EFL learners were successful in identifying the speech act of permission issued by explicit and implicit performative expressions and declarative construction, rather than interrogative and imperative constructions. Moreover, the most frequent responses expressing IFID were apology expressions (36.7%). Based on these results, it can be concluded that speech acts are powerful tools for learners to communicate their needs and feelings appropriately and effectively and build confidence.

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**Transparency:** The author states that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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