The Speech Act of Complaint: A Contrastive Study of Iraqi and Chinese EFL learners of English

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Abstract

This research investigates the pragmatic ability of Iraqi and Chinese English language students to make complaints in English in different contexts. To evaluate the effects of different cultural dimensions on speech acts of complaint, discourse completion tests, which are used in linguistics and pragmatics to test language proficiency and measure the pragmatic ability of students, were administered to undergraduate students of English from College of Arts/University of Anbar, Iraq and College of Arts/Beijing Language and Culture University, China. The responses of students were then compared to responses obtained from native English speakers of British nationality on the same test. Results have shown that Iraqi EFL learners of English are rather far behind the linguistic and pragmatic competence in performing speech acts of complain while their Chinese counterparts are more indirect than both the Iraq EFL and native British speaker in performing speech act of complain. The results of this study are useful in amending pedagogic process of teaching English language use in countries, such as Iraq and China, where English is not widely used.

المستخلص

يستقصي هذا البحث القدرات التداولية لطلبة اللغة الإنكليزية العراقيين والصينيين على التعبير عن التشكي باللغة الإنجليزية في سياقات مختلفة. كما يستقصي أيضا اثر البعد الثقافي على أفعال كلام التشكي واختبارات اكمال الخطاب المستخدمة في علم اللغة والتداوليات لاختبار كفاءة الطلاب اللغوية وقدراتهم التداولية. تم استخدام هذه الاختبارات على طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية الآداب في جامعة الانبار وكلية الآداب في جامعة بكين للغات والثقافة في الصين. تم بعدها مقارنة ردود فعل الطلاب بمثيلاتها للطلاب الانجليز. ظهر ان الطلاب العراقيين يعانون قصورا في القدرة التداولية على التعبير عن أفعال كلام التشكي مما لدى مثيلاتهم من الصينيين. اما الطلاب الصينيون فقد كانوا أكثر ضمنية من الطلاب العراقيين والانجليز في التعبير عن هكذا أفعال كلام. ان نتائج هذه الدراسة مفيدة في تقويم منهجيات التدريس والتعلم في بلدان مثل العراق والصين حيث لا تستخدم الإنجليزية فيهما بصورة موسعة.

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence is the ability to use different forms of a language in different socio-cultural contexts. Speakers considered fluent in a foreign language based on their ability to correctly use grammar and vocabulary may still lack pragmatic competence, that is, the speakers may still be unable to use the language correctly in socio-cultural contexts. Lack of pragmatic competence is especially of concern for foreign language learners who study a foreign language in their native countries, where their exposure to the language is limited beyond classrooms. Since lack of pragmatic competence may lead to varying degrees of language proficiency and may affect relationships between interlocutors, it is important to understand how an academic environment may be created to develop pragmatic competence for learners in their native countries. As such, by examining how the socio-cultural dimensions of the native countries affect pragmatic competence of students, this research tries to inform pedagogic process of teaching a foreign language in learners' native countries.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted on undergraduate students of English from two different countries, Iraq and China, where English is not the mother tongue and does not have widespread use in daily life. To gather data on pragmatic competence, the students were given a discourse completion test (DCT) that measures their ability to make complaints in English in different contexts. The DCT used in this study was designed and validated by the researchers in consultation with a group of linguists at Al-Anbar University, College of Education and College of Arts.

    Review of the DCT included:

1. Using expert feedback on the test provided by Prof. Dr. Zeydan Kh. Omar, Assist. Prof. Dr. Musleh Sh. Ahmed, and Assist. Prof. Rafi' M. Hussein, all of whom are members of the teaching staff at the college of Education for Humanities/University of Anbar.

2. Reading the test several times to make sure confusing terms and structures were removed from the questions.

3. Administrating the DCT to a native English language speaker, and observing and noting feedbacks and questions.

4. Administrating the DCT to a group of Iraqi students not included in the research and noting feedbacks and questions.

    DCT contained five questions that prompted dialogues between participants in different situations of interaction. These situations were created to represent equal or unequal power relationship, different levels of status and different levels of education between the interlocutors. The interlocutors involved in these situations were a student and a classmate, a student and an instructor, a student and a photo copy clerk, or a normal, powered person and a powerless, needy individual.

3. Hypotheses

1) Pragmatic competence does not develop fully in EFL classrooms.

2) There is a pragmatic transfer from the native language to the target one.

3) Both Iraqi and Chinese learners are equal in terms of directness in making speech act of complain.

4. Literature Review

4.1 The Speech Act of Complaints

Complaint is one of the expressive categories of speech acts, which include moral judgments expressing the speaker's approval and disapproval of the behavior mentioned in the judgment (Trosborg, 1994:311). In the act of complaining, the events mentioned in the proposition take place in the past and "the speaker passes a moral judgment on something which she/he believes the complainee has already done or failed to do, or is in the process of doing" (Trosborg, ibid).

Complaint is an expression of a psychological state of being dissatisfied or unhappy about something. According to Tanck (2002:3), the speech act of complaint occurs when a speaker reacts with displeasure or annoyance to an action that has affected him/her in an unfavorable manner.

Complaints are generally realized by means of five categories developed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) from their study of the speech act of complaints produced by native and non-native speakers of Hebrew for a given situation in which one colleague has to wait for another who arrives late to a scheduled appointment. Although the categories used to express a complaint may vary with situations and among languages, these five categories which are generally used to analyze complaints are:

1.Below the level of reproach: The speaker avoids explicit mention of the offensive event by means of various remarks without directly blaming the interlocutor٠

 (1) No harm done, let's meet some other time.

2. Expression of annoyance or disapproval: These are realizations of disapproval by means of indirect or vague indications that something has been violated without holding the interlocutor directly responsible for it. In these cases, the speaker avoids direct confrontation with the interlocutor and makes general remarks that something has happened expressing some kind of annoyance at the violation.

 (2) It's a shame that we have to work faster now.

3. Explicit complaint: The speaker explicitly states a direct complaint holding the interlocutor responsible for such violation. This is often a direct or unmitigated complaint addressed to the interlocutor's face.

(3) You are always late and now we have less time to do the job .

4. Accusation and warning: The direct action taken by the speaker making an explicit complain carries potential consequences for the interlocutor.

 (4) Next time, don't expect me to sit here waiting for you.

5. Threat: The speaker explicitly shows a direct complaint having the interlocutor responsible for such violation.

(5) If we don't finish the job today I'll have to discuss it with the boss.

(ibid:202)

In the light of these categories, Olshtain and Weinbach (1993:108) discuss the preconditions that are necessary for the speech act of complaining to take place. These factors present well the speech events that indicate what makes the participants talk, what they are talking about, and what the purpose of complaining is. They are as follows:

(1) Hearer (H) performs a socially unacceptable act (SUA) that is contrary to a social code of behavioral norms shared by Speaker (S) and H.

(2) S perceives the SUA as having unfavorable consequences for herself, and/or for the general public.

(3) The verbal expression of S relates post facto directly or indirectly to the SUA, thus having the illocutionary force of censure.

(4) S perceives the SUA as: (a) freeing S (at least partially) from the implicit understanding of a social commiserating relationship with H; S therefore chooses to express her frustration or annoyance; and (b) giving S the legitimate right to ask for repair in order to undo the SUA, either for her benefit or for the public benefit. It is the latter perception that leads to instrumental complaint aimed at "changing things" that do not meet with our standards or expectations. The main goal of such instrumental complaint is to ensure that H performs some action of repair as a result of the complaint (Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993:108).

It is generally agreed that the speech act of complaint is face-threatening to the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1978,1987; Olshtain and Wienbach,1987). When the speaker makes direct complaints, the speech act of complaining is inherently face-threatening to the hearer. That is, if the speaker presents complaints, it may impair the hearer's face and consequently the relationship between participants. According to (Leech,1983:105) the speech act of complaining is regarded as conflictive acts that should be avoided as they show the negative feelings of the speaker and tend to threaten the hearer. Thus, "politeness is out of the question" and "to threaten or curse someone in a polite manner is virtually a contradiction in terms". It seems, therefore, to be somewhat of a paradox to talk about mitigating devices in connection with the act of complaining, nevertheless, it is obvious that such strategies are needed in order to avoid personal conflicts in communication (ibid).

Consequently, the directness of complaining can be controlled by the speaker through the use of different linguistic forms and nonverbal signals in order not to threaten the hearer's face and to remain polite. The perception of threatening and politeness, however, is not always the same as it varies cross-culturally. Hence, nonnative speakers may unintentionally perform inappropriate complaints. They may not be quite familiar with the native speaker's conventions in complaining, and hence they might not be able to use the appropriate linguistic forms or non-verbal signals that might help to mitigate the face-threatening effects of the speech act. That is, performing the speech act of complaining is very challenging for non-native speakers. Their communication failure is caused by a lack of not only socio-cultural competence, but also linguistic competence, therefore, nonnative speakers should know

the native speaker's conventions in the speech act of complaints and should be able to choose the appropriate linguistic forms (Sauer,2000,cited in Moon,2001).

More particularly, the Iraqi and Chinese undergraduates of English, from whom the sample of this study is drawn, are expected to face greater challenge in performing appropriate speech act of complaint in English as their language and culture is markedly different from that of the target language community. Based on the native speakers' conventions in making complaints, this study examines how the complaints of nonnative speakers deviate from those of native speakers.

4.1.1.Types of complaint

A complaint is an expressive speech act that can be expressed directly or indirectly and categorized as such. In the speech act of complaining, "the speaker (S) expresses displeasure or annoyance as a reaction to a past or on-going action, the consequences of which affect the S unfavorably. This complaint is addressed to the hearer (H), whom the speaker holds responsible for the offensive action" (Olahtain and Weinbach, 1987). Murphy and Neu, (1996).

A direct complaint is "a face-threatening act through which a speaker makes complaint about someone or something that is present in the speech act scene", as defined so by Olahtain and Weinbach, (1993), and cited in Salmani-Nodoushan (2009). For example: "Could you be a little quieter? I'm trying to sleep." Such a complaint is a face-threatening act, so it is very possible to make the complainee angry or insulted. Thus, it can break the relationship between the complainer and the complainee.

An indirect complaint, on the other hand, is defined as "the expression of dissatisfaction to an interlocutor about oneself or someone/something that is not present" (Boxer, 1996: 219); or in D'Amico-Reisner's words (1983) cited in Salmani-Nodoushan an indirect complaint is "a non-face-threatening speech act in which the responsible party or object of the complaint is not present during the interaction within which the speech act is performed"

(7) A: I sat through yesterday's class with total non-comprehension!

B: Oh, yesterday was the worst!

Both direct and indirect complaints have the potential of leading to lengthy interactions between speaker and addressee; however, it is usually in the indirect complaint or griping that one finds conversational material upon which shared beliefs and attitudes may be expressed (Tatsuki, 2000). As such, the indirect complaint becomes a solidarity-building device since it freely invokes the listener to engage in a series of commiserative responses to demonstrate attention and concern, or to maintain intimacy and stable social relationships (Ali, 2006: 2).

Accordingly, making a complaint expression in English is mostly operated indirectly. Native speakers usually use indirect complaints as a positive strategy for establishing points of commonality; they frequently employ indirect complaints in an attempt to establish rapport or solidarity between themselves and their interlocutors to be more polite and have less effect on the interlocutor or the hearer (Ali, ibid: 3).

5.1. Data collection

For the data collection, a direct instrument called the Discourse Completion Test (DCT), was used. According to the definition given by Umar (2004:22), it is "a form of questionnaire depicting some natural situations to which the respondents are expected to react making complaints". In this study, following questions were used in the DCT:

-Q-one:

How do you make a complain expression to your classmate who spilled coffee on your lectures?

-Q-two:

How do you make a complain expression to your instructor for unfair marks in the exam?

-Q-three:

How do you make a complain expression to the photocopy shop clerk who loses your lectures?

-Q-four:

How do you make a complain expression to someone that you feel is superior or has more power than you?

-Q-five

How do you make a complain expression to a poor man who asks you to give him money?

Students of English from College of Arts, Al-Anbar University, Iraq and College of Arts, Beijing Language and Culture University, China were asked to fill out the validated DCT. The same DCTs were also given to British native speakers of English. In this study, the responses from the latter group were used as the standard against which the level of appropriateness of the nonnative subjects' responses and pragmatic competence were measured.

5.2 Data Analysis

For data analysis, answers given by all three groups to each of the five questions in the DCT were reviewed. Answers given by nonnative speakers which were not speech acts of complaint were taken out for separate analysis. Responses by native English speakers were categorized into different components as follows.

Responses made by the native English speakers (British) to the first question in the DCT, which is "How do you make a complain expression to your classmate who spilled coffee on your lectures?", included the following components:

1-Indirect complaint: "I would jokingly swear at them and have a laugh. Then go home and reprint the lectures."

2-Direct complaint: "Tell him/her to clean the mess up and get a copy of the lecture."

3-Sense of humor: "I would purposely spill coffee on theirs too, and laugh at them."

4- Annoyance: "Get very annoyed and make them re-do it."

Native speakers' response to the second question in the DCT, "How do you make a complain expression to your instructor for unfair marks in the exam?", contained the following components:

1- Sense of dissatisfaction: For example, "Write a strongly worded letter to the exam board."

2- Indirectness: "Sir/madam, can you please re-mark my exam. Could you please look into this as soon as possible."

3- Directness: "Argue with the teacher for the unfair mark."

4- Humor: "I would ask for it to be re-marked and most likely cry if not."

Their answers to the third question, "How do you make a complain expression to the photocopy shop clerk who loses your lectures?", contained the following components:

1- Sense of dissatisfaction: "This is unacceptable sir! I needed those lectures and now you have caused me a day or two of trouble in re-acquiring them"

2- Directness: "Get them fired."

3- Annoyance: "I would be upset and ask them to find it or I would have to do it again."

4- Anger: "Shout at the clerk and get some reimbursement."

5- Indirectness: "Tell them that I wouldn't mind if they did the work again for me. Otherwise, I will make a complaint and walk away."

Their response to the fourth question," How do you make a complain expression to someone that you feel is superior or has more power than you?", had the following components:

1- Directness: "No one is more superior than me in my eyes."

2- Eloquent: "Make the complaint in a subtle but firm manner with valid reasoning."

3- Balance: "Make sure they respect me or I won't respect them."

4- Annoyance: "Stand up to them no matter who it is."

5- Respectful: "I would be polite and respectful in any conversation conflict."

The answers to the last question by British native speakers, "How do you make a complain expression to a poor man who asks you to give him money?", the following components:

1- Indirectness: "Go and buy him a drink and a sandwich so he does not waste it on drugs or alcohol."

2- Ignorance or carelessness: "If I had money I'd keep it, and say I' m poor and walk away."

3- Intensifying humor aspect: "Laugh and walk away."

4- Feeling sorry: "I would hope I have money on me to give them, and if not I would politely say that I 'm sorry don't have any."

5- Directness: "Advise him to get a job."

The variety of these components suggests that the use of one or more of these complain expressions depends largely on the social background, or the distance between the interlocutors and also the illocutionary act. For example, the answer to the fifth question by the native speaker, "Go and buy him a drink and a sandwich so he does not waste it on drugs or alcohol", shows the perception of the nature of poor men in the native English culture. This perception is of those who waste money on unproductive, unhealthy things, and the response by the speaker is thus formed accordingly.

With these components decided on, the responses of non-native speakers were analyzed by comparing them against the responses of native speakers. The results are presented in tables below.

6. Results and discussion

Here, frequency of occurrence is used to show the disparity between the native and nonnative responses on the same DCT questions, and findings are discussed in detail.

The following table shows the frequency of use and measure of the pragmatic competence of the nonnative subjects (Iraqi and Chinese students) against those of the native (British) speakers for responses to the **first question**:

Table 1: Complaints made to a classmate who spilled coffee on the lectures

No	Components	complainer	Frequency of use
1	Indirect complain	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	%14.28 %41.66 % 25
2	Direct complain	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	%42.85 %16.66 %33.33
3	Sense of humor	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	%14. 28 %16.66 % 00
4	Annoyance	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	%28.57 %16.66 %8.33

BNS: British native speakers; CUSEL: Chinese undergraduate students of English language; IUSEL: Iraqi undergraduate students of English language

Table 1 clearly shows the disparity in the frequency of use of the four components by the native (BNS) and the nonnative (IUSEL and CUSEL) respondents. For the first component CUSEL are more likely to make indirect complain than BNS and IUSEL to a classmate who spills coffee in his/her lectures. This reservation can be attributed to the following reasons:

1- CUSEL might consider their classmates as friends rather than just fellow members in the class. A friendship for CUSEL is important and CUSEL are ready to excuse mishap from their friends.

2- Their socio-cultural transfer (their native society and culture) which make them able to do more direct complain only occurs in very offensive situations.

3-The CUSEL are less tough in dealing with their colleagues.

For the second component, the "direct complaint", the BNS and their counterpart the IUSEL show higher frequency in applying the direct complaints, and appear closer to each other than CUSEL. Both BNS and IUSEL are firmer than CUSEL even if it is a classmate who have made the mistake. The IUSEL closeness to the BNS can be attributed to the following reasons:

1-The IUSEL are more frank in making a complain expression to a classmate.

2-Their socio-cultural transfer (their native society and culture) that make them more audacious than their CUSEL counterpart.

For the third component, "the sense of humor", the frequency of use is much less than other components. While IUSEL don't show any use of sense of humor, the CUSEL respondents come first with %16 followed by the BNS with %14.28 frequency of use. The failure of the IUSEL in performing any humorous act can be attributed to the following reasons:

1- Limitation of the pragmatic competence in which none of the IUSEL could think in a British style, deviating from the first language background.

2-Limitation of the linguistic competence of the IUSEL to form a humorous act, or

3- The IUSEL are very serious in dealing with others even if they are their classmates.

For the fourth component, "annoyance", the BNS come first followed by the CUSEL and the IUSEL. This difference shows the important role socio-culture transfer plays in deciding the illocutionary force of the complain expression even if it is done in the second language and not the first. Low level of annoyance shown by the IUSEL, as may be attributed to their carelessness and no concern for losing their lectures. The most common response by IUSEL was "I don't care".

While comparison of responses provides useful information on pragmatic competence, analysis of each individual response also provides some useful information on the linguistic competence of second language learners. The following samples of complains made by the CUSEL in response to the first questions are analyzed for linguistics competence:

1-"No, I seldom make a complain expression to your classmates if they doing it deliberately."

2-"Why do we need to complain. Just wipe it clean. If the wanted is in China, the person who've done it wid apologize for many times."

3-"Hey, please be careful."

4-"How can you be so careful..."

5-"Ok! I am so lucky and happy to have a beautiful picture."

The examples above are typical answers given by the CUSEL to the first question. In the first example, "No, I seldom make a complain expression....", the respondent fails to make a complain expression by starting with the word "no" and also says "I seldom make a complain expression" which is a clear transfer from the first language or culture. The example also shows linguistic competence failure. The student commits grammar errors: instead of saying "my classmate" the respondent says "your classmate", and uses continuous form "doing" without the verb to be.

In the second example, the respondent commits a pragmatic failure by refusing to make a complain expression by saying, "Why we need to complain ". The respondent raises a question wondering why s/he needs to make a complain expression by objective measures or by using the pronoun "we" which refers to subjectivity. The response also shows a clear socio-cultural transfer, especially with the use of "if the wanted in China". The student brings the target language culture to the second language performance.

In the third example, the word "please" is used to make complain expression. With its use the respondent appears to beseech rather than make a complaint. This may be justified by and support the concept that was discussed earlier that a classmate is considered to be a friend, friendship is something precious in the Chinese culture, and so the respondent is reserved in making a complain to a classmate.

In the fourth example, a reader would be confused as to whether to consider this expression a complaint, an interjection or, a question. The form is question but the illocutionary act seems to be an interjection. This is also clear in the fifth example, in which the complainer is expressing astonishment rather than complain expression. The example begins with "Ok" and s/he seems to agree with the spill of coffee rather than be annoyed.

The CUSEL complains are characterized to be more timid, less direct and also very less annoyed than BNS in making complains to classmates. This could be a socio-cultural transference.

The following are responses made by the IUSEL which are also analyzed for linguistic and pragmatic competence:

1-"Please be careful next time. It's okay, no problem."

2-"I do not care about it, but let him know his mistake."

3-"I will not do anything, because I don't care."

4-"It's ok: never mind, it'll dry later."

5-"It's okay, no problem, please be careful next time."

6-"Do not worry."

The first example sounds beseeching rather than making a complaint. While the second and the third show clear pragmatic and linguistic limitations, because the complainers sound careless and unable to make complaints in English. The fourth and the fifth examples begin with "It's ok" as if the complainers are complacent rather than complaining, and also show clear pragmatic failure of Iraqi complainers. In the sixth example, the complainer sounds apologizing rather than making a complaint.

The Second Question

The following table shows the frequency of use and measure of the pragmatic competence of the nonnative subjects (Iraqi and Chinese students) against those of the native (British) speakers for responses to the **second question**:

Table 2: Complaints made to an instructor for unfair marks in the exam

No	Components	Complainer	Frequency of use
1	Direct complain	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	%14.28 %41.66 %58.33
2	Indirect complain	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	%71.42 %58.33 %41.66
3	Sense of humor	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	00 00 00
4	Sense of dissatisfaction	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	%14.28 00 00

Table 2 above shows a clear discrepancy between the native and nonnative responses to the second question. While BNS and CUSEL most frequently adopt an indirect approach to make a complaint to an instructor, IUSEL are more direct. When compared to native speakers, the directness of IUSEL, which may be attributed to the effects of their cultural dimension, may be less appropriate in the target language context. As for, "Sense of dissatisfaction" only the BNS appear to use this approach, though with a very small frequency of use of %14.28, while both CUSEL and IUSEL fail to use it.

Further analyzing some of the complaints made by CUSEL to the second question, it is observed that the nature of complaints deviate from the standard quite a lot, and in some cases to the extent of being inappropriate and offensive in target language context.

1-"What the hell! And to find my instructor to renew my marks."

2-"I'll complain to my fellow classmates."

3-"I will say to myself "I hate you just the way you hate me! I'll never speak to you. ...... you!"

In the first example above, by saying "What the hell", the respondent shows offensive and low courtesy level in complaining to an instructor. This would be inappropriate in the target language context. While in the second example, the

complainer shows a deviant complaint. S/he demonstrates her/ his annoyance to fellow classmates rather than to the instructor. In the third example, the complainer also shows no courtesy by being very frank and direct though speaking within self.

When complaints made by IUSEL to the second question are analyzed, it is seen that they lack linguistic competence. Here are few examples of complaints made by IUSEL to an instructor.1-"I protest against him, and demand my right."

2-"I will demand to get my right marks."

3-"I would like you to review my marks in the exam."

The examples above are typical in showing the linguistic limitations of the IUSEL in making complaints in English. In the first example, the complainer seems to rebel rather than complain by using the verb "protest". In the third example, the complainer asks rather than complain by using the "would like" expression.

The Third Question

Responses received for the third question were similar to those for the fourth and fifth questions. Since the results of the analysis of these responses are similar to fourth and fifth questions as well, detailed presentation of the results are omitted here and focus is instead given to fourth and fifth questions below.

The Fourth Question

The fourth question in the DCT was "How do you make a complain expression to someone that you feel is superior or has more power than you?" The responses received for this question are classified in the table below with their frequency of use showing.

Table 3: Complaints made to someone superior

No	Components	Complainer	Frequency of use
1	Direct complain	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 28.57 % 8.33 16.66
2	Eloquent	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 14.28 % 25 00
3	Balance	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 14.28 % 25 % 8.33
4	Annoyance	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 14.28 % 16.66 00
	Respect	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 28.57 % 16.66 00

Table 3 shows clearly the disparity among the three groups when compared against each other. However, if one looks at the frequency of use percentages associated with different components for BNS, they don't vary much, rather some are equal, and the same appears for CUSEL as well. Here, ignoring the percentages, the

comment that can be made is that the CUSEL succeeded in using the same components as that used by the BNS. But, when IUSEL is considered, out of five components, the IUSEL failed to use three components completely. The reason for this failure can be attributed to the following:

1- Pragmatic failure to make a complain expression to a superior person.

2- Linguistic limitation to complain in such situations.

3- Socio-cultural transfer in the second language from the first language, in which a person is unable to complain with more powerful person or superior individual that a person is unable to complain with more powerful person or superior individual.

4- The pragmatic competence does not fully develop in L2 classrooms to make the IUSEL able to perform complain expression in situations like this.

Analyzing each response made by CUSEL and IUSEL, it is seen that there is an apparent lack of pragmatic competence among them. Below are few, sample complaints made by CUSEL to the fourth question:

1- "No complain."

2- "No expression, just admiring the someone in my heart."

3- "I admire you work."

4- "I'll say to myself "Try not to talk with her. She's addicted to making command."

The first example, "No complain", shows clear pragmatic failure. The complainer failed to make complain expression for this situation to someone superior. In the second and third examples, the complainers show admiration rather than making complains. This is also lack of pragmatic competence. In the fourth example, the complainer monologues with him/her self complaining within and afraid to say it aloud which might be called "inward complain". As such, it can be said that this situation may provide difficulty to Chinese learners of English who may not be used to making complaints to superior.

And, here are few sample complaints made by IUSEL to the fourth question which show pragmatic failure by Iraqi students:

1- "Take it your place, because someone will take it later."

2- "Don't worry."

3- "The power in mind not in body man."

4- "I can't explain."

These responses impair communication with native speakers since they are typical examples of first language transfer. In the first example, the complainer is using his/her first language socio-pragmatic transfer to communicate something in the target language. Such transfers may lead to communication problems between interlocutors.   In the third example, the complainer is giving an advice, philosophizing rather than complaining by telling the interlocutor to be modest, to avoid showing his/her physical power. The fourth example shows the frankness of the complainer's inability to perform in this situation, and affirms linguistic and

pragmatic limitations of Iraqi students. In fact there were other IUSEL who did exactly the same. They did not make any complaints to someone superior.

The problem of being unable to make complaint to a superior individual or someone perceived to have more power seems to be a big problem for IUSEL. Blank responses and failure of IUSEL complainers to utilize all of the components touched by BNS and CUSEL show IUSEL's limited ability in making complaints in real world of the target language.

The Fifth question

The following table below shows the frequencies for the fifth question, "How do you make a complain expression to a poor man who asks you to give him money?":

Table 4: Complaints made to a poor man

No	Components	Complainer	Frequency of use
1	Direct complain	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 14.28 % 8.33 00
2	Indirect complain	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 42.85 % 41.66 % 50
3	Ignorance or carelessness	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 14.28 % 8.33 00
4	Condescension	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 14.28 00 00
	Feeling sorry	BNS CUSEL IUSEL	% 14.28 00 % 8.33

The above data reveal that all groups use the second component "Indirect complain" the most, the frequency of use lying within % 41-50, and seem to have socio-cultural affinity toward poor people and in making complaining expression in their native languages. The CUSEL fail to use two components: "Ignorance or carelessness" and "Condescension", while the IUSEL fail to use three components: "Direct complain", "Ignorance or carelessness" and " Condescension". This finding can be attributed to the fact that in IUSEL's native culture poor individuals who ask for money are not ignored and made fun of, or complained about directly.

Analyzing each response made by CUSEL, it is observed that they lack pragmatic competence to make complaints to a poor man. Few of complaints provided below which are made by CUSEL in response to the fifth question clearly show their pragmatic limitations in this regard. This limitation may be due to socio-cultural transfer, that is, in their native culture no complaints are made against someone who's in need. This marks a clear deviation from the complaints made by native English speakers. 1-"I'll just give him."

2-"I won't complain."

3-"I don't complain. I'd simply give him some."

Similar to CUSEL, IUSEL also show pragmatic limitations to make complaints to a poor man. This can be seen in following complaints made by IUSEL.

1- "Take the money."

2-"I'm sorry I'm broken."

3-"Supply him more as much I can in all sides of needing."

4- "God with you."

The first response example, "Take the money", is an indication of acceptance to the fifth question rather than speech act of complaint. The second response, "I'm sorry I'm broken", is an apology and excuse, the word 'sorry' means that the speaker is making an apology and excuse to the interlocutor. There's also a linguistic failure in this example with "I'm broken" written instead of "I'm broke". In the third example, the complainer is showing generosity instead of complaining. In the last example, the expression "God with you" emphasizes the idea that some learners of English have no pragmatic competence towards the target language, instead they transfer from their native language.

7. 1. Conclusion

This paper attempted to investigate and compare the pragmatic and linguistic competence of two different groups – CUSEL and IUSEL – in performing speech act of complain in the target language, by comparing them against the BSN responses to the same DCT. The analysis shows that some EFL learners from both the groups failed to act like the native speakers in performing the speech act of complain. This failure in both groups is largely attributed to socio-cultural differences and contexts, pragmatic transfer, and limitations of linguistic competence. The pragmatic failure appears as the discrepancy in expressions and the inability to express complaints in terms of appropriateness to the situation as compared to native speakers. On the other hand, the linguistic limitations are clearly apparent in grammatically incorrect use of sentences or semantic deviation in the use of the correct verbs.

The study demonstrates that the cross-cultural differences provided real difficulties to both nonnative groups, especially in the fourth question. On how to make a complain expression to more powerful person or superior individual some of the learners failed even to write any complaint asked by the situation.

The study shows that the frequency of use of the semantic formulas of components by the CUSEL is close to the native speakers' frequency of use for the first, second and fourth questions, but is clearly different for the fifth question. Although, the Chinese government is developing and updating curricula to improve the second language teaching, especially English language teaching, in China, it is still far behind in providing real life interaction situations to Chinese learners of second language.

On the other hand, the Iraqi learners show that there is a clear transfer from their first language to the target language which could lead to impaired communication or complete communication breakdown. It is also shown that there's a

big disparity between the Iraqi learners and native speakers in terms of frequency of occurrence of the semantic components. Iraqi learners produce fewer components of the semantic divisions for the fourth and fifth questions. The research reaffirmed that Iraqi learners of English continue having linguistic limitations, and the research shows the limitation is great in making complain expressions, especially in situations involving powerful, superior person.

Finally, it is proved that both Iraqi and Chinese learners are equal in terms of directness in making speech act of complain.

7.2. Implications

The study shows that the Iraqi learners do not acquire the cultural norms of the target language in the EFL classrooms. This can be largely attributed to the pedagogic concentration on the linguistic aspect of the language, although the study also shows clear linguistic limitations in Iraqi undergraduate students of English in spite of the three years of intense study of the target language.

Teachers should provide real life interactions to the second language learners to make their students understand and experience the way the native speakers perform their speech acts in different situations in every day interactions.

This study proves the validity of the DCT in measuring the pragmatic and linguistic competence of the second language learners. Therefore it is strongly recommended that the teachers use the DCT in their classes to measure the social distance and the acquisition of the socio-pragmatic competence in nonnative classrooms.

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