A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Gender Differences in the Use of "Walak' (Woe) and Its Variants in Spoken Jordanian Arabic

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Abstract. Using a mixed-method approach, this study examines the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *walak* and its variants in Spoken Jordanian Arabic. It also explores the differences in the use of this discourse marker according to the speakers' gender. The data was collected from a sample of 200 native speakers of Jordanian Arabic, using informal interviews and a validation questionnaire. The results showed that *walak* and its variants perform six language functions: warning, insulting, addressing/vocative, endearment, threatening, and denial. As far as gender differences are concerned, the findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences between males and females in the use of *walak* and its variants in favour of males. This indicates that males agreed more with the sentences expressing each pragmatic function in the validation questionnaire. The study concludes with some pedagogical implications for learners of Arabic as a second language, teachers and syllabus designers.

Keywords: discourse markers, pragmatics, Spoken Jordanian Arabic, warning, insulting, vocative.

Рабабаг Галеб, Аль-Ясін Ноор, Яґі Сане. Соціо-прагматичне дослідження гендерних відмінностей у вживанні "Walak" (лихо) та його варіантів у розмовній йорданській арабській мові.

Анотація. Це дослідження покликане дослідити на основі змішаної методики прагматичні функції дискурсивного маркера *walak* (*лихо*) та його варіантів у розмовній йорданській арабській мові. Також досліджено відмінності у використанні цього дискурсивного маркера відповідно до гендеру мовців. Дані зібрано від 200 носіїв йорданського варіанта арабської мови за допомогою неофіційних інтерв'ю та анкети. Результати засвідчили, що *walak* та його варіанти виконують шість мовних функцій: попередження, образа, звертання/спонукання, прихильність, погроза та заперечення. Щодо гендерних відмінностей, результати показали існування статистично значущих відмінностей між чоловіками та жінками в уживанні walak та його варіантів на користь чоловіків. Це вказує на те, що чоловіки більше погоджувалися з висловленнями, які виражають кожну з цих прагматичну функцію в анкеті. Дослідження завершують деякі педагогічні настанови для тих, хто вивчає арабську як другу мову, а також для вчителів і розробників навчальних програм.

Ключові слова: *дискурсивні маркери, прагматика, розмовна йорданська арабська, попередження, образа, спонукання.*

Introduction

Socio-pragmatic research focuses on the speakers' perceptions of cultural norms that impact speech acts, politeness, implicature, to mention but a few (Haugh, Kádár, & Terkouraf, 2021). It studies how such social variables as gender, age and power determine language use. One of the social variables that has received great attention in literature is gender. Lakoff's (1975; 2004) characterization of women's language and Tannen's (1990) dichotomy of gendered language have been the predominant frameworks adopted in gendered language research. Lakoff (2004, p. 78-81) characterizes women's stereotypical language in seven main features. First, women have a stock of words related to their own interests, such as sewing terms which men rarely use. Second, they use empty adjectives like cute, divine and gorgeous. Third, they use tag questions when a declarative is expected (e.g. it's hot, isn't it?). Fourth, since society constrains their assertion, women use hedges more than men do (e.g. I think, I guess, probably). Fifth, intensive 'so' is also one of their linguistic features which is less assertive than 'very'. Sixth, they use hypercorrect grammar and their language is more polite than men's. This includes exclusivity of jokes to men. Finally, they speak statements with rising intonation.

Tannen's (1990) dichotomy of gendered language, on the other hand, contains six main comparisons (p. 24-28).
1. Status vs. support: men emphasize more power in their language, whereas women express more mutual support.
2. Independence vs. intimacy: men's language shows more independence, while women's language reflects closeness.
3. Advice vs. understanding: in a situation where there is a problem, men tend to propose a solution, whereas women tend to be more empathetic and understanding.
4. Information vs. feelings: men's language is more factual, while women's language is more emotional.

5. Orders vs. proposals: men's language is more imperative while women's language is not. Women give implicit proposals (e.g. 'it's hot in here' to suggest opening the window).

6. Conflict vs. compromise: men tend to argue, whereas women avoid conflict and compromise by finding common ground.

Another approach to studying conversational styles based on gender was introduced by Coates (2004). She asserts that gendered language features are used for different conversational purposes. First, men use minimal responses, such as 'yeah', 'mhm', and 'right', as backchannel to emphasize their dominance. In contrast, women use these responses to indicate support to the interlocutor. Second, men use more profane language (e.g. fuck, damn, shit, bloody), which asserts power and masculinity. Third, men use more commands and directives (i.e. imperative language) and they only use interrogative sentences to receive information. However, women tend to use questions (e.g. tag questions) to express uncertainty. Finally, men's compliments are more associated with skills and performance while women's compliments are more associated with appearance.

We aim here to examine the impact of the social variable, gender, in the Jordanian community on the use of the Jordanian-Arabic discourse marker *walak* (WOE) and its variants. Let us first define a discourse marker. Despite the uncertainty about their functions, discourse markers can be generally defined as words or phrases that contribute to the flow of meaning and structure of discourse (Blakemore, 1987; Andersen, 2001). Fraser (1990) argued that, although most scholars have concurred that discourse markers join discourse elements together, they are still undecided on their definitions and functions. For instance, Lenk (1998, p. 246) defined them as "expressions in spoken discourse that are used pragmatically, with a structuring and organizational function". However, Fraser (1990) defined them as "a class of expressions, each of which signals how the speaker intends the basic message that follows to relate to the prior discourse" (p. 387).

Discourse markers are optional; a sentence would still be meaningful and grammatical without them (Schiffrin, 1987; Brinton, 1996; Abuseileek & Rabab'ah, 2013; Rabab'ah et al., 2016; Alghazo et al., 2021; Rabab'ah et al., 2022). Nevertheless, Fraser (1990, p. 30) affirmed that the absence of discourse markers may result in a "communicative breakdown." Heine, Kaltenböck, Kuteva and Long (2021, p. 5) stated that "there is both massive evidence and wide agreement to the effect that DMs are as a rule historically derived from sentence grammar units". Lexically, discourse markers come from lexical words and phrases, such as verbs, prepositions and modal words (Wang, 2011). Syntactically, they are often not attached to the beginning of a sentence (Fraser, 1990; Östman, 1995). They are not part of the syntactic structure of a sentence; hence, they do not have a clear grammatical function (Fraser, 1990; Östman, 1995). Ranger (2019) provided keys to understanding the value and the functions of English discourse markers since they can be a precious resource for language learners and scholars.

As far as the Arabic language is concerned, Kanakri and Al-Harahsheh (2013) assert that spoken Arabic discourse markers should be studied thoroughly since they

help non-native speakers of Arabic better understand the Arab culture. *Walak,* which is the main concern of the present research, is a colloquial word used in Spoken Jordanian Arabic (SJA); it has several morphosyntactic variants: *walak*, *walah*, *walik*, *walih*, *walkum*, *walku*, *walkin*, which may imply positive and negative meanings.

Prompted by a reviewer's comment, we conducted a swift etymological investigation of 'walak'. At first, we looked it up in a large range of dictionaries, then checked it out in the ArabicDiwan Corpus of Dialects, and we traced it in our own historical corpus (HAC) (Hammo et al., 2016). We concluded that it is not likely for 'walak' to have developed from 'ya walad' for the following reasons: (1) There are multiple forms of 'ya walad' in current use. There are 'ya walad', 'ya wleid', 'ya wild', 'ya wleidi', 'ya wleidti', etc. Had the vocative been so vulnerable, it would have been deleted in all of these forms, but it has not. (2) Had the third radical consonant in 'walad' been so vulnerable, it would have been elided too. (3) We found instances of 'walak' and 'walik' in seven spoken varieties of Arabic: Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Lebanese, Syrian, Jordanian, Palestinian, and Ta`iz Yamani dialects (Alshargi, 2022). It is not very likely that all seven dialects simultaneously deleted the k radical. From past experience, we observe frequent divergence in their phonological development. (4) The third consonant, k, appears to be so essential that it has been retained in the longer forms of this word, in 'ya wildizzina' *bastard* and 'ya wildilharam' *born out of wedlock*. (5) There is no phonological process that we are aware of, which would change an alveolar plosive to a velar plosive without being caused by assimilation. Where is the assimilation that would convert 'walad' into 'walak'?

Most likely, 'walak' developed from 'wai-k' or 'wail lak'. What led us to this conclusion is the following: (1) 'Walak' functions as an interjection exactly like 'wai', 'waik', and 'wai li' which according to Murtaḍá al-Zabīdī (1994) are used for exclamation and 'wai' is an abbreviation of 'wail', "It is said, 'waik astami` qawli' *Woe! Listen to me!* It is also claimed to mean 'wailak' *woe unto you!*". (2) There are counterparts of this interjection that have the same pragmatic function, behave in a similar fashion, and have multiple spoken forms: 'waiH', 'wais', 'waih', 'wail', and 'waib'. (3) All these interjections are used to communicate the same meaning (cf. Ibn Fāris al-Qazwīnī, 1985).

We may account for the alteration that produced 'walak' from 'wai lak' and 'wail lak' as follows: (1) Probably, the original form was 'wail lak', then it got shortened by dropping the prepositional phrase lak, ending with 'wail'. Then at a later stage, the lateral approximant got elided for the benefit of economy of effort and time, resulting in 'wai'. (2) The same motivation could have resulted in a different line of development where the the diphthong ai got reduced to the monothong a, producing 'walak'. (3) After hundreds of years of use in the spoken language varieties, 'walak' got conjugated to suit the addresse's gender and number: 'walak' *woe to you (masculine singular);* 'walik' *woe to you (feminine singular);* 'walko' and 'walkom' *woe to you (masculine plural);* 'walkin' *woe to you (feminine plural).* So, the k here is a segment of the second person pronouns. (4) In the final stage of development, the k got dropped because it is in word final position and the context of conversation requires no need for identifying the person or gender or number of the

addressee since they are right before the speaker; henc, the form 'wala' for 'walak' and 'wali' for 'walik'.

Jordanian speakers use inflections to mark the gender of the addressee. The following are the different variants of the discourse marker *walak*:

Discourse marker	Meaning
Walak / Wala (2nd person singular, Masculine)	He boy
Walik/ Wali (2nd person singular, Feminine)	Hey girl
Walkum /Walku (2nd person plural, Masculine)	Hey all
Walkin (2nd person plural, Feminine)	Hey all

Exciting as the etymology of the various forms of *walak* might be, the present study is not going to study the morphosyntax of this term but rather its role as a discourse marker and the pragmatic functions it serves in everyday conversation. More specifically, the study aims to answer two questions:

1. What are the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *walak* and its variants in SJA?

2. Are there any statistically significant differences in the use of this discourse marker according to gender?

Literature Review

Language and Gender

For decades, scholars have been studying the difference between men's and women's language. Based on their gender roles in society, research has studied how their language is affected. Some studies reached similar conclusions that women's language is more emotional and sensitive (McMillan et al., 1977; Haas, 1979). In a study that investigated male and female unscripted TV interviews, Brownlow, Rosamond and Parker (2003) lend support to previous literature by showing that women's language is simpler and more emotional, whereas men's language is more complex. Nonetheless, some other studies did not find major divergence in men's and women's language in e-mail messages and phone voice messages with regards to politeness and accommodating the other gender by using same-gender preferential style (e.g., Thomson et al., 2001; Hobbs, 2003). Yet, Sheridan (2007) examined gendered language in workplace meetings and found out that males generally interrupt others more, while females use more hedges showing more hesitance compared to males. This implies that women's language is more tentative and polite (Bi, 2010; Robnett & Leaper, 2011).

These findings were also evident in a study applied to Emirati male and female co-workers. Ahmad's study (2014) revealed that men interrupt others more and they focus on convincing the listener, whereas women use more emotional and supportive language. In addition, Banikalef (2019), who studied gender differences of speech acts in a Jordanian-Arabic context on Facebook, found out that male Jordanian Facebook users are more assertive. In contrast, female Jordanian Facebook users are more expressive and emotional. The study implied that male Jordanians boost their

male dominance in the Jordanian community by being assertive while female Jordanians tend to focus on their social relations (p. 410). A more recent study by Almegren (2022) investigated gender differences between Saudi males and females in the speech act of persuasion. After carrying out a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), the findings indicated that male Saudis used more direct persuasion strategies (e.g. mood derivable, performatives, hedge performatives, obligation statements, and want statements) than female Saudis. It was also found that the direct strategies are mostly applied by males.

Discourse Markers in English and Other Languages

Empirical research has paid great attention to discourse markers. Scholars were more concerned with their pragmatic functions. One of the prominent studies of discourse markers was presented by Schiffrin (1987). After studying the English discourse markers: 'oh', 'well' (particles), 'and', 'but', 'or', 'so', 'because' (conjunctions), 'now', 'then' (time deictic), 'you know', and 'I mean' (lexicalized clauses), Schiffrin concluded that discourse markers serve an integrative function that contributes to discourse coherence by connecting what is being said to what has already been said. Montolío Durán and Unamuno (2001) studied the discourse marker *a ver* (Catalan, *a veure* 'to see'). They suggested that such discourse markers may function differently in certain social interactions such as teacher-student interaction, doctor's office and therapy sessions.

Tchizmarova (2005) studied the function of the Bulgarian discourse marker *xajde* 'come on/let's/why don't we' as a hedging device. She concluded that *xajde* is used for requests, suggestions, warnings, in addition to showing agreement and surprise. Chodorowska-Pilch (2008) studied the Peninsular Spanish discourse marker *verás* 'you'll see' to examine its function in invoking positive and negative politeness since it reflects attitude towards interlocutors. Pishghadam and Kermanshahi (2012) studied the pragmatic functions of *insha'Allah* 'God's willing' in a Persian context. The results of the study showed that some of this discourse marker's functions are to empower the speaker, to wish and to reflect religious identity. Pishghadam and Kermanshahi also argued that these functions may differ in an Arab context since the difference in language may play a role.

Discourse Markers in Arabic

Discourse markers in the Arabic language have been the highlight of some pragmatic research. For example, Al Kohlani (2010) examined the functions of the Arabic discourse markers: *wa* 'and', *fa* 'then', *munthu* 'since', and *inna* 'certainly' in Arabic newspaper opinion articles both at the sentence level and paragraph level. The results of the study indicated that the discourse markers can be additive, contrastive, explanatory, inferential, sequential, alternative, subjective and interactive at the sentence level. At the paragraph level, they imply continuity, refocus, and change of topic. Some pragmatic research investigated discourse markers in different Arabic

varieties, such as Saudi Arabic, and Syrian Arabic. Al-Rousan (2015), for example, studied the pragmatic functions of the Saudi Spoken Arabic discourse marker *maʕ nafsak* 'with yourself' in Saudi online conversations. The findings revealed several pragmatic functions, such as refusal, lack of interest, doubt, and disappointment. In her gender-based study, Habib (2021) investigated the discourse markers *yaʕni* and *ʔinnu:* 'I mean' in Syrian Spoken Arabic. The study showed that *ʔinnu:* is used more by children than adults and by women than men**.** However, it also showed that *yaʕni* usually occurs in initial position while *ʔinnu:* occurs in medial position.

Many studies, however, have been conducted on discourse markers in Spoken Jordanian Arabic. Since this variety is rich with discourse markers, Arab scholars have examined them, carrying out corpus-based studies, studying their pragmatic functions, applying speech act theory and studying their syntactic distribution. In their translation study, Hamdan and Fareh (1999) indicated that the Arabic discourse marker *wa* 'and' has six functions: the resumptive, the sequential/additive, the alternative, the comitative, the adversative, and the circumstantial (Hamdan and Fareh, 1999). These different functions can sometimes be translated using one marker. For instance, the alternative, the comitative, and the adversative can be translated into English as *and*.

Some Arab scholars were interested in studying the pragmatic functions of discourse markers. For instance, Farghal (1995) studied the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *inšallāh* 'God willing' in Spoken Jordanian Arabic (SJA). He identified the functions of *inshallah* from a speech act theory perspective. The study concluded with several non-literal meanings of *inšallāh* including affirming, threatening, wondering, wishing, and being ironic. Moreover, the study revealed that the meaning of some utterances differs when the discourse marker is omitted. Farghal's findings, however, showed different functions for the discourse marker *inšallāh* in SJA from those found by Pishghadam and Kermanshahi (2012) in Persian. In their study that investigated the non-literal meanings of the expression *inshallah*, Mehawesh and Jaradat (2015) found that the utterances which include *inshallah* do not give the same meaning after its removal. They also found out that *inshallah* implies irony, threatening, wishing, wondering, etc.

Applying Relevance Theory, Al Harahsheh and Kanakri (2013) examined the pragmatic functions of the Spoken Jordanian Arabic discourse marker *tayyib* 'okay' and its cognate *tabb*. The study concluded that this discourse marker conveys different pragmatic functions, such as showing objection, introducing a new topic, and mitigating an utterance. In another study, Kanakri and Al Harahsheh (2013) examined the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *ʔa:di* 'normal, usual' in Spoken Jordanian Arabic.the researchers suggested that *ʔa:di* 'normal, usual'serves several functions based on the context in which it is used like disapproval and permission.

Jaradat (2014) examined one of the most common discourse markers in Spoken Jordanian Arabic, *yalla* 'let'. This marker has undergone a phonological process. It is phonologically derived from (*yā allāh*) which is a vocative for seeking God's support. The expression (*yā allāh*) got blended into *yalla*. He argued that *yalla* is used sometimes to mean (let's) in addition to other pragmatic functions (p.61), namely assuring, suggesting, urging people of doing or repeating something. It can also mean

forget about it and it's ok. Another study by Hammouri (2017) probed into the pragmatic functions of *yalla* 'let' but it quizzed, in a questionnaire, Jordanian university students on the use of this discourse marker. The study revealed 27 pragmatic functions for *yalla*, eight of which recorded the most agreed upon functions, namely approval/acceptance, entreating, signaling the start of an action, spreading enthusiasm, commanding, urging, surrendering, and announcing the start of a new stage.

The discourse marker *bas* 'but' was examined by two researchers using two different methods of data collection, yet they obtained similar results. A corpus-based study by Al-Rousan, Al Harahsheh and Huwari (2020) examined the pragmatic functions of *bas* 'but'. This discourse marker serves various pragmatic functions, such as initiating a topic, ending a conversation, mitigating Face Threatening Acts, showing contrast and expressing regret. Similarly, Ennasser and Hijazin (2021) examined the pragmatic functions of the Jordanian discourse marker *bas*. Based on a corpus of 22 dyadic conversations by Jordanians, their study showed that the DM *bas* is multifunctional; it has 12 pragmatic functions, such as making a repair, returning to main topic, showing threat, denying of expectation, indicating insufficient information, mitigating face-threating acts and topic shifting. It also revealed that it functions as a modifier, filler marker, expressive marker and directive marker. In examining a corpus of 250,000 words to find out the pragmatic functions of 'to say' in Jordanian Spoken Dialect in Irbid, Al-Shawashreh, Jarrah and Zuraikat (2021) showed that the main lexical function is to introduce direct or indirect speech. However, the results also revealed that there are three more functions, namely expressing the mental state of the speaker, signalling indirect evidentiality, and showing the speaker's disbelief in the accompanying utterance.

Recent studies have paid more attention to the syntactic distribution of discourse markers in Spoken Jordanian Arabic. For instance, Jaradat (2021) highlighted the issue of discourse markers as grammatically non-integrated elements. Providing evidence from three Spoken Jordanian Arabic discourse markers *ma*, *hu* and *mahu*, he concluded that these markers share syntactic processes under a domain of grammar. Another recent corpus-based study by Harb, Jarrah and Alghazo (2022) investigated the pragmatic functions of the Spoken Jordanian Arabic discourse marker *ʕaad* (past form of *ʔiʕaawid/ʔiʕuud* 'return') and its syntactic distribution. The study concluded that when the position of the discourse marker is sentence-initial, it mainly functions as disagreement to the addressee. On the other hand, when it is in final position, it reflects the speaker's best of knowledge (p.14).

As far as the literature review is concerned, many discourse markers have been examined in Spoken Jordanian Arabic. However, the discourse marker *walak* (WOE) and its variants have not been explored yet, despite its popularity among the Jordanian community. Moreover, despite the extensive literature on Spoken Arabic discourse markers, none of the previous studies have studied gender differences. Habib (2021) was the only researcher, as far as Arabic language is concerned, who examined gender differences in the Syrian discourse marker *yaʕni and ʔinnu:* 'I mean'. Therefore, the present research aims to fill this research gap by exploring the gender differences in the most prevalent pragmatic functions of *walak (*WOE*)*, and its variants in Spoken Jordanian Arabic.

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Methodology

Participants

The participants of the study were 200 students selected from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Jordan, Jordan. They were enrolled in a variety of specializations, such as English Language and Literature, Applied English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Chinese, Turkish, and Korean. They were male and female native speakers of Jordanian Arabic who came from different towns and cities. Their age ranges from 20 to 23 years old. Convenience/availability sampling was used for data collection. The participants' consent was taken to participate in the study.

The sample was divided into two groups; the first group consisted of 50 participants, while the second consisted of 150 participants. The first group were interviewed for identifying the pragmatic functions of *walak* and its variants in Spoken Jordanian Arabic. This group consisted of equal number of male and female informants (25 males and 25 females). The second group were to validate the questionnaire that was based on the interviews with the first group, and it was designed to check whether they concurred with our assessment of the pragmatic functions of *walak* and its variants.

Data Collection Tasks

Informal Interview Task

A research assistant had individual interviews with 50 students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages during the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021. All the interviews were held in Arabic, the native language of the participants. Each participant was informed about what the research assistant aimed to obtain from them. She took their permission to audio-record the interview for research purposes. The interview questions included, but not limited to: Do you use *walak* and its variants in every day conversation and how often? Why do you use this discourse marker? What are the function of this discourse marker? Will you give me an example utterance you use to perform some language functions like threatening, warning, insulting, etc.? The participants' spontaneous production was audio-recorded for further analysis and for the validation questionnaire. The same procedure was used with all the 50 participants.

Validation Questionnaire

The interviews yielded six pragmatic functions for *walak* and its variants, namely *warning, insulting, addressing, endearment, threatening,* and *denial*. Based on these

interviews, the researchers designed a validation questionnaire, which consisted of 24 sentences that came from those recorded in the interviews, four representing each pragmatic function. Using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), the participants were asked to specify their level of agreement with our characterization of the function of the discourse marker in each sentence.

Validity of Data Collection Tool

The questionnaire was given to a jury of three English language professionals who were asked to validate the questionnaire items and our pragmatic function characterization of each instance of *walak*. As a result of this questionnaire, only three sentences were rewritten to take the jury's views into account; the rest of sentences won unanimous approval.

Results

The responses of the 150 participants were analyzed using SPSS. The analysis also aimed to find out if there were any significant differences in the realization of the pragmatic functions of this discourse marker due to gender. Table 1 presents the results related to the six main pragmatic functions of *walak* and its variants in SJA.

Table 1
Results of the t-Test for Each Domain (Individual Pragmatic Functions) according to Gender

Pragmatic Function	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Sig.
Warning	Males	75	4.6800	.40595	148	.001*
	Females	75	4.4500	.40894		
Insulting	Males	75	4.6267	.45651	148	.000*
	Females	75	4.3533	.37011		
Vocative	Males	75	4.5333	.36607	148	.278
	Females	75	4.4600	.45404		
Endearment	Males	75	4.7333	.45644	148	.232
	Females	75	4.6400	.49532		
Threatening	Males	75	4.4233	.45205	148	.462
	Females	75	4.3667	.48861		
Denial	Males	75	4.5200	.38502	148	.309
	Females	75	4.4500	.45210		
All	**Males**	**75**	**4.5861**	**.33202**	**148**	**.015***
	Females	**75**	**4.4533**	**.32686**		

As shown in Table 1, the overall t-test results of the validation questionnaire, concerning the specified pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *walak* and its variants in SJA, show that there are significant differences between the male and female participants' opinion in favour of males at α .05 (sig. .015). Males agreed more than the females that the six pragmatic functions, i.e. *warning, insulting, vocative, endearment, threatening,* and *denial*, were reflected through *walak* and its variants. Since the authors of the present research are Jordanians, they have observed that males use such a discourse marker in everyday conversation. This use could be attributed to the fact that the Jordanian community is a male-dominant one. Male Jordanians boost their male dominance through some lexical choices, which are sometimes face-threatening as in the case of their use of *walak*, which is sometimes used to express threat or insult to show masculinity and power. Therefore, the overall finding that male Jordanians agreed more on the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *walak* than females implies that males use it more to assert their dominance and masculinity. This finding fits in with Tannen's (1990) and Coates's (2004) hypothesis that males assert their dominance in society through their language. It also lends support to previous theories on gender differences (Lakoff, 1975; Lakoff, 2004; Tannen, 1990; Coates, 2004). This implies that women's language is different from men's language.

With regard to each individual pragmatic function, the results related to *warning* revealed significant differences (Sig. .001) between males and females in favour of the male participants. Males registered a higher mean score than females (Mean score = 4.6800 and 4.4500, respectively). This finding is arguably related to the Jordanian norms of men giving warnings, commands and directives, which is in line with Tannen's (1990) and Coates's (2004) observations that men use more imperative language than women. This also supports the findings of Sheridan (2007), Bi (2010) and Robnett and Leaper (2011) that men's language is more directive while women's language is more tentative.

Moreover, the results show that the *insulting* function recorded significant differences (Sig. .000) between males and females in favour of males (mean score = 4.6267 and 4.3533, respectively). Male participants agreed more than females that the discourse marker *walak* functions as an *insulting* discourse marker. As previously stated, since the Jordanian society is male dominated, male Jordanians use more dysphemistic language, whereas females use more euphemistic terms as stated by Olimat (2020). This implies that female Jordanians are more polite than males, and that males use more insults that trigger more use of the discourse marker *walak*. These findings lend support to Lakoff's (2004) argument that women's language is more polite than men's, and Coates' (2004) suggestion that men use more profane language to assert power and masculinity.

The t-test results, however, showed that there are differences between males and females' agreement on the other pragmatic functions, i.e. *vocative*, *endearment*, *threatening* and *denial*, but these differences were found to be not significant. This

implies that both groups agreed almost equally that these pragmatic functions are reflected through the discourse marker *walak* (WOE) and its variants with a mean score of 4.4967, 4.6867, 4.395, and 4.485, respectively. The fact that there are no significant differences can be justified through the subjects in this study being young adult university students, who are also colleagues of the same college. On this account, their age group and shared study environment may impact their speech to become rather similar than divergent.

Tables (2 – 7) present the percentages of agree, uncertain and disagree responses for the six pragmatic functions of the discourse marker under investigation.

Table 2

Percentage of Agree, Uncertain and Disagree Responses for Warning

No.	Warning Function Statements	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
1	وَلَه شوي شوي عليها لا تنكسر. *walah ʃwai ʃwai ʕleha la: tinkasir* Careful, hey boy! You will break it.	-	3.33	96.67
2	وَلَك أوعى الكتاب لا تنكب المي عليه! *walak ʔu:ʕa lkta:b la: tinkab lmai ʕleh* Watch the book, hey boy! You will spill water on it.	-	1.33	98.67
3	وَلكُم انتبهوا السياره مسرعة! *walkum ntabhu lsajja:ra misrʕa* Watch it, hey all! That car is going fast.	6.67	16.00	77.33
4	صوتكوا عالي! وَلكو وطو صوتكم *sˤoːtku ʕa:li walku watˤtˤu sˤoːtkum* Your voice is loud. Lower your voice, hey all.	.67	5.33	94
	Average	1.9	6.34	91.67

One of the most popular pragmatic functions of *walak* as shown in the examples in Table 2 is warning. Native speakers of Jordanian Arabic use the discourse marker *walak* to advise the addressee not to do something or to prevent them from doing something that is unsafe to avoid danger or punishment. Overall, 91.67% of the participants agreed that the four sentences function as a warning to the hearer, while less than 2% disagreed that they perform such a function. Another important finding is that 98.67% of the participants agreed that sentence two is used to warn the addressee against spilling water on the book. However, sentence three recorded the least agreement (77.33). Sentences one and two recorded the highest agreement percentage (96.67 and 98.67, respectively), which could be attributed the fact that these two could be the most familiar expressions they use on daily basis.

Table 3

Percentage of Agree, Uncertain and Disagree Responses for Insulting

No.	Insulting Function Statements	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
5	وَلِكَ عمرك ما بتتعلمي *walik ʕumrik ma: btitʕallami* You will never learn, hey girl.	8.67	22	69.34
6	وَلِكِ اقعدي واسكتي *walik ʔuguʕdi wuskuti* Sit down and shut up, hey girl.	2.67	13.33	84.00
7	لأ مو هيك! وَلَك إنته شو بَفْهَمَك la? mu: hek – *walak ʔinta ʃu: bfahmak* No, not like this. – What do you even know, hey boy?	1.33	24.00	74.67
8	وَلَك إنته واحد واطي! *walak ʔinta wa:ħad wa:tˤi* You are a decadent, hey boy!	0.67	12.67	86.67
	Average	**3.33**	**18**	**78.67**

Insulting is used in everyday conversation; it could be between friends and strangers. The results of the analysis have shown that the four sentences recorded the least agreed-upon function of the discourse marker *walak*. 78.67% of the participants agreed that such sentences are used to insult the addressee. It is important to note that these sentences cause insults even without the discourse marker *walak*. Another significant finding is that only 69.34% of the participants agreed that sentence five is used to insult. Although this is considered a majority, still it is the lowest when compared with the other sentences. This can be explained by the fact that sentence five shows rather disappointment rather than just an insult compared to the other utterances that clearly derogate the hearer. The results also indicate that 18% of the participants were uncertain whether these utterances are used to insult, while only 3.33% disagree with the statements. Overall, the majority agreed that *walak*, and its variants are used as an insulting discourse marker in these contexts. As shown in the examples above (5-8), the speaker is insulting the hearer by telling her that she will never learn, implying that she is stupid (S5), telling the second hearer to sit down and shut up (S6), accusing the hearer of not being able to do a task because she does not understand (S7), and humiliating the addressee by telling him that he is a decadent (S8).

Table 4

Percentage of Agree, Uncertain and Disagree Responses for Vocative/Addressing

No.	Addressing/Vocative Function Statements	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
9	ماما بتنادي عليكوا! وَلكو تعالوا جاي ma:ma bitna:di ʕale:ku *walku* taʕa:lu dʒai Mom is calling you! Come here, hey all!	1.33	8.00	92.67

No.		Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
10	ناديت عليكِ ثلاث مرات! وَلِك ردي			
	na:det ʕale:ki θalaθ marra:t *walik* ruddi	1.33	6	92.66
	I called you three times! Answer, hey girl.			
11	وَلَه هات اشوف شوه عملت!			
	walah ha:t ʔaʃu:f ʃu: ʕmilit	1.33	6.66	91.99
	Let me see what you have done, hey boy!			
12	وَلِكُ نسرين تعالي!			
	walik nisri:n taʕa:li	1.33	6	92.67
	Nisreen, come, hey girl!			
	Average	**1.33**	**6.67**	**92**

Native speakers of Arabic sometimes use several discourse markers to call upon someone, such as *walak* and its variants, and *yallah*. The results of the study showed that the vocative function of *walak* was the second most agreed upon. As seen in Table 5, 92% of the participants agreed that it is used to perform this function in the given contexts. However, only 1.33% disagreed that the four utterances perform a vocative function, while 6.67% were uncertain of their decision that the four utterances perform a vocative function, while 6.67% were uncertain of their decision. This implies that the discourse marker *walak* is still influenced by its original form *yā walad* which includes a vocative marker *yā*.

Table 5

Percentage of Agree, Uncertain and Disagree Responses for Endearment

No.	Endearment Function Statements	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
13	وَلِك شو بحبك أنا!			
	walik shu: baħibbik ʔana	-	3.33	96.66
	How much I love you, hey girl!			
14	وَلِه انتِ قمر! (لمخاطبة بنت)			
	walih ʔinti ʔamar	-	6	94
	You are gorgeous, hey girl!			
15	إيش هاد! ولك حليان!			
	ʔe:ʃ ha:d *walak* ħalja:n	1.33	4.66	94
	What's this? You are getting prettier, hey boy!			
16	وَلَك انت صاحبي!			
	walak ʔinta sˤa:ħbi	.66	2.66	96.66
	You're my friend, hey boy!			
	Average	**.66**	**4.16**	**95.18**

Endearment expressions in SJA are many; one of which is the discourse marker *walak* which is used to indicate intimacy and closeness. It can be used among friends in everyday conversation to show endearment and sometimes compliment. The

results show that this discourse marker recorded the highest degree of agreement among all the pragmatic functions of this discourse marker (95.18%). Another important finding is that the participants agreed more that sentences 13 and 16 perform endearment since these two sentences highlight close relationship between the speakers. This could be because of the fact that sentences 14 and 15 show compliment more than endearment. The results also show that only 0.66% of the participants disagreed that these sentences are used to endear someone, while 4.16% were not sure of their decision. In addition to the context, there are some words that accompany this discourse marker to show that it is used to endear someone. For example, the use of *walak* with words like 'love you, you are gorgeous, you're getting prettier, you are my friend' performs the pragmatic function of endearment.

Table 6

Percentage of Agree, Uncertain and Disagree Responses for Threatening

No.	Threatening Function Statements	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
17	وَلَه اطلع برا أحسن ما أجيلك! *walah ʔitˤlaʕ barra ʔaħsan ma: ʔaʒi:lak* Get out before I come and get you, hey boy!	-	12.66	87.34
18	الي بحياتكم ما شفتوه! وَلكُو والله لتشوفوا *walku walla latʃu:fu ʔilli bħaja:tkum ma: ʃuftu:h* I swear you will see what you've never seen in your lives, hey all!	.66	16	83.34
19	ولك روح من هون وبحياتك ما ترجع! *walak ru:ħ min ho:n wu bħaja:tak ma: tirʒaʕ* Get out of here and never come back, hey boy!	.67	3.33	96
20	وَلَك بقلك مشِي معاملتي! *walak bagullak maʃʃi muʕa:malti* I told you to speed up my paperwork, hey boy!	1.33	16	82.67
	Average	**.66**	**12**	**87.34**

Threatening is a speech act that is realized by using a variety of discourse markers in SJA, such as *walak*, *bas* 'stop' , *khalas* 'stop it' and *bikaffi* 'enough'. The results presented in Table 7 show that *walak* and its variants (*walah, walku, walak*) are used to threaten the addressee. It was found that 87.34% of the participants agreed that the four sentences convey threatening to the hearer. Another significant finding is that utterance 19 recorded the highest agreement percentage (96%) followed by

utterance 17 (87.34) where both include forcing someone to leave. However, only .66% disagreed, while 12% were uncertain of their response.

Table 7
Percentage of Agree, Uncertain and Disagree Responses for Denial

No.	Denial Function Statements	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
21	وَلَكُو إنتو الي بتحكوا هالحكي! *walku ʔintu ʔilli btiħku halħaki* You're the ones saying this, hey all!	2.66	24.66	72.66
22	وَلَك مين انته! *walak mi:n ʔinta* Who are you, hey boy?	1.33	4.66	94
23	بتقلي رح تعملها! وَلَك إنت؟! bigulli raħ tiʕmalha *walak* ʔinta You're telling me you're going to do it? You, hey boy?	1.33	6	92.67
24	وَلِك بتقولي انتي فعلا شفتيها! *walik bitgu:li ʔinti fiʕlan ʃufti:ha* You're saying that you actually saw her, hey girl?	1.33	8	90.7
	Average	**1.33**	**10.9**	**87.77**

Denial is realized in SJA by using a variety of discourse markers, such as *bas* 'stop', *bikaffi* 'enough' and *walak* and its variants. Table 7 shows that 87.77% of the participants agreed that the four sentences are used in SJA to express denial. However, as observed in the table, 1.33% of the participants disagreed that these sentences are used to express denial, while 10.9% of them were uncertain of their decision. The speaker usually denies the acts done by the hearers as shown in the example sentences. In sentence 22, which has the highest percentage of agreement (94%), the speaker denies the worth of the addressee trying to belittle him. Following this, the percentage of sentence 23 is 92.67%. In sentence 23, the speaker denies the hearer's ability to do something. These two sentences imply that *walak* is used more often with denying a person's significance or abilities. In contrast, sentences 21 and 24 have relatively lower percentages. These two sentences mainly deny the hearer's actions of saying something or seeing someone rather than denying the hearer's competencies.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to examine the prevalence of the discourse marker *walak* and its variants in SJA. Therefore, the study presented two research questions: what are the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *walak* and its

variants in SJA? Are there any statistically significant differences in the use of this discourse marker according to gender?

The first research question was answered by conducting interviews with native speakers of SJA and using a validation questionnaire. The results have shown that the discourse marker *walak* serves six pragmatic functions, viz. *warning, insulting, vocative, endearment, threatening,* and *denial*. Regardless of gender, the findings suggested that some pragmatic functions have more prevalence than others. The pragmatic function *endearment* registered the highest percentage (95.18%). In addition, two of the sentences, which presented *walak* as an *endearment* highlighting the solidarity between the addresser and the addressee, had higher percentages than other sentences. Following that, the pragmatic function *vocative* came in second with 92%. This finding implies that the discourse marker *walak* is still affected by its original form *yā walad* 'hey boy' which includes the vocative marker *yā*. This is in line with Hammouri (2017) who revealed that the Jordanian discourse marker *yalla* also functions as a vocative since its original form similarly begins with a vocative marker *yā* as in *yā Allah*. Nonetheless, the pragmatic function *insulting* came in last (78.67%). This finding implies that there is a possibility of marking insult in the sampled sentences with or without the occurrence of the discourse marker *walak*. Therefore, meaning might not be affected if we remove *walak*, but its use produces an everlasting effect on the speaker. In contrast, Farghal (1995) asserted that meaning is often affected when the discourse marker *inšallāh* is removed.

To find out if there are any significant differences between genders with regard to their responses in the validation questionnaire in an answer to the second research question, a t-test was carried out. The results showed that there were significant differences between male and female participants. Overall, males agreed significantly more than females in their opinions concerning the six specified pragmatic functions, i.e. *warning, insulting, vocative, endearment, threatening* and *denial*, of the discourse marker *walak* and its variants. This finding is in line with theories of gender differences (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990; Coates et al., 2004). Males also agreed significantly more than females in their opinions regarding the functions *warning* and *insulting*. Nevertheless, although there are differences between the two genders with regard to the functions of *vocative, endearment, threatening* and *denial*, these differences were not statistically significant. These findings imply that male Jordanians use the discourse marker *walak* more in their warnings and insults since their language is more directive and less polite than females' language.

In conclusion, similar to other discourse markers in SJA or Arabic in general, the discourse marker *walak* serves various pragmatic functions in different contexts. The bulky literature on discourse markers and their pragmatic functions especially in Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) has pedagogical implications. ASL learners often struggle with context-dependent language items like JA discourse markers. Therefore, it is important to include such discourse markers in the syllabus. This will help Arabic language learners understand the intended meaning of such discourse markers in spoken discourse. Teachers should also pay more attention to the various pragmatic functions that JA discourse markers (e.g. *bas, inshallah, walak, shekl,* etc.)

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express. They should provide ASL learners with many oral examples of the above discourse markers and the like in context so that they can comprehend them and their use in real life, and use them as well.

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