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Culture-specific discourse in marketing: a study of socio-cultural traditions in Jordanian shops and streets

<https://doi.org/10.1515/lass-2024-0046>

Received September 4, 2024; accepted November 1, 2024

Abstract: This study investigates the various marketing strategies employed in the malls and streets of Amman, Jordan. Specifically, it aims to identify the different methods salespeople use to attract customers' attention to their products indirectly, and sometimes through non-verbal means. The study illustrates how the theoretical concepts of speech acts, as discussed by Searle and Grice, are utilized in the marketing strategies observed in Jordanian malls and streets. It also examines how vendors and advertisers employ language not only to convey information but also to perform actions, such as persuading or invoking cultural values, without explicitly stating their intentions. By analyzing the subtleties of language use in advertisements, product promotions, and street performances, the study reveals how indirect speech acts are employed to engage consumers, foster a sense of community, and promote products. Indirect speech acts can imply more than what is explicitly stated, adding layers of meaning that facilitate communication between the customer and the salesperson. The findings indicate that each of the products discussed in this paper, commonly found on Jordanian streets, in shops, and in malls, has a unique marketing discourse crafted and employed by business owners or their staff to attract customers. Overall, indirect speech acts in Jordanian malls and streets reflect a sophisticated form of communication that is deeply rooted in local cultural and social practices, utilizing non-verbal cues such as music and scents to convey messages subtly. These methods are highly effective in achieving advertising objectives, aligning with cultural values that emphasize respect and subtlety in interpersonal interactions.

Keywords: marketing discourse; culture; indirect speech act; co-operative model of communication; socio-cultural; speech community

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1 Introduction

Marketing and consumption rely heavily on discourse to create, organize, disseminate, and reinforce product knowledge. Marketers can infuse products with culturally significant knowledge and meaning through the use of shared discourse (Thompson 2004). Although many aspects of consumer behavior, such as identity, self-perception, and rational decision-making, are often experienced individually, they are ultimately constructed and reconstructed within the context of discourse (Fitchett and Caruana 2015) (Picture 1).



Picture 1: Written signs in storefronts.

Cultural factors play a significant role in cross-national communication, and many errors in international marketing arise from misunderstandings in cross-cultural interactions (Kale 1991). Marketing strategies often reflect the cultural differences that embody the traditions, values, and social norms of a particular society. In regions like the Middle East, where culture plays a key role in shaping consumer behavior, understanding these socio-cultural elements is crucial for effective marketing. For instance, Jordanian salesmen have developed unique ways of communicating with customers, especially when their role involves reaching customers while they are resting in their homes (see Altakhineh et al. 2024).

The purpose of examining speech acts is to understand how communication takes place and to explore the differences and similarities in interactions across various languages and cultures. Studying speech acts is valuable for identifying the influence of cultural and social norms and beliefs that shape how speech acts are performed within a specific community (Al-Ghamdi and Alrefaei 2020). In the Middle Eastern cultures, where maintaining social harmony and preserving face are critical

(Uskul et al. 2023), indirect speech is used to navigate sensitive topics and avoid potential offense. For instance, when making requests or offering criticism, individuals may employ euphemisms, metaphors, or vague language to soften their message. This allows them to maintain respect for the listener and prevent any loss of dignity, especially in contexts where hierarchical relationships are important. By being indirect, the speaker gives the listener the chance to interpret or respond without feeling pressured, thus preserving social balance.

Moreover, indirect speech in the Middle East is tied to values of honor and hospitality, which are central to interpersonal interactions. Direct refusals or negative responses may be considered impolite or even disrespectful, as they could harm the honor of either party. Therefore, people often use indirectness to decline offers or navigate disagreements without causing embarrassment or discomfort. This indirect approach fosters a sense of mutual respect and understanding, allowing individuals to maintain relationships while handling delicate matters with grace. In this way, indirect speech becomes a culturally significant mechanism for preserving both personal dignity and collective harmony.

To analyze these culturally embedded marketing practices, this study adopts the Theory of Indirect Speech Acts, primarily developed by philosopher John Searle. Building on J.L. Austin's foundational work in *How to Do Things with Words* (1975), Searle further expanded speech act theory in his seminal 1969 book *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. While Austin's focus was on the performative nature of language, Searle introduced the distinction between direct and indirect speech acts and offered a more detailed classification of speech acts, dividing them into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This distinction is crucial for understanding how business owners communicate with customers. The use of indirect speech acts allows them to convey messages subtly, helping maintain social harmony while achieving business goals and maximizing profits. Searle's theory has been widely influential, providing valuable insights into how language functions in everyday communication, both in philosophy and linguistics.

Indirect speech acts are a concept in the field of pragmatics, a branch of linguistics that studies how language is used in context. An indirect speech act occurs when the speaker's intention differs from the literal meaning of their words. For example, when a sign says, 't̄as'li:h dʒami:ʃ ʔanwa:ʃ ʔassæ:ʃat,' which, in English, translates "Repair of all types of watches," it is not just stating the ability to fix watches but actually inviting you to have your watch repaired at that store. The literal statement about the ability is an indirect way used by salesmen to attract customers to their shops and offer their services to gain profits. This study focuses on streets and malls where data was collected and where salesmen communicate with customers in various ways.

John Searle, a prominent figure in speech act theory, distinguished between direct and indirect speech acts. A direct speech act is when the form of the sentence matches the speaker's intention. In contrast, an indirect speech act involves a mismatch between the literal sentence form and the intended meaning. For example, if a salesman says, 'bukset ?lbandu:ra bile:ra,' the literal meaning is a statement about the price, i.e., "A box of tomatoes for one JOD," but the intended indirect speech act is a request to buy tomatoes. The videos and screenshots were analyzed based on the salesmen's indirect speech acts. Indirect speech acts are common in everyday communication because they allow speakers to be polite and courteous (see Ja'afreh 2023). They mitigate commands, requests, or criticisms to make interactions more socially acceptable.

In this study, the requests being discussed are requests to purchase items, food, etc. In marketing, indirect speech acts can be used to persuade or influence consumers. For instance, an advertisement that says, 't'as'li:h dʒami:f ?anwa:f as 'sæ:fat' is not just a statement, but it is an indirect way of suggesting that the salesmen can fix your watches here (in this store). The indirect nature suggests less aggressive and more persuasive. The speech act of requesting, for example, is very rarely performed by means of an imperative in English. Instead, it is standardly carried out indirectly. This is exactly what this research paper tries to prove through the data that was collected and will be analyzed in this study.

Overall, measuring both marketing culture and behavior offers valuable insights into an organization's overall market strategy (Harrison and Shaw 2004). Specifically, this study explores the discourse employed in Jordanian shops and streets, highlighting how local socio-cultural traditions influence marketing practices. By examining the communication styles, language use, and cultural symbols employed in Jordanian marketplaces, this research aims to uncover the distinctive ways in which marketing strategies are used to resonate with Jordanian consumers. It particularly aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Why do business owners (salesmen) use indirect speech acts?
2. How are indirect speech acts interpreted and analyzed in marketing discourse?
3. How do business owners use these types of speech acts in their marketing discourse?

The study would provide valuable insights into how local socio-cultural traditions in Jordan shape marketing practices. The findings could contribute to the broader field of cross-cultural marketing by offering a detailed case study of Jordan. Understanding the use of indirect speech acts and other culturally specific communication methods can guide international businesses in adapting their marketing strategies to local contexts.

2 Literature review

Several studies have significantly contributed to the understanding of marketing discourse and offered insights into various aspects of communication in marketing. An example is the study conducted by Cialdini (2009) which focused on the psychological mechanisms behind effective advertising language. His research identified key persuasive strategies and linguistic techniques that marketers use to influence consumer behavior, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of various advertising approaches.

Al-Kharabsheh et al. (2014) conducted an examination of language usage and word selection relevant to commercial marketing and consumer purchasing behaviors was conducted. Data were collected from a diverse range of shop signs in three distinct urban areas across the nation. The signs were meticulously analyzed and categorized into various business types, such as restaurants, food and household stores, clothing retailers, boutiques, coffee houses, barbershops, car dealerships, home appliance and cellphone outlets, supermarkets, pharmacies, and exhibitions, among others. The study acknowledged the deep-seated connection between social class, cultural upbringing, and the language employed in local commercial signage. This relationship was treated as a socio-linguistic phenomenon that reflects the desire to exhibit status symbols associated with wealth and class by both consumers and marketers, as well as by merchants and shop owners. The research thus highlighted the complex interplay between cultural, socio-linguistic, and psycholinguistic factors that emerge from the ostentatious and exaggerated language of shop signs. It also explored the implications of how such culturally ingrained displays of commercial status are conveyed in translations.

Additionally, Kotler and Keller's research (2016) underscored the pivotal role that language plays in the development of marketing strategies. Their study illuminated the ways in which strategic choices in language can significantly influence consumer perceptions and reinforce a brand's position in the marketplace. This seminal work laid the groundwork for a deeper comprehension of how marketing communication tactics are intentionally constructed to meet specific commercial aims. Their investigation delved into the psychological aspects of consumer responses, highlighting how linguistic features can trigger emotional reactions, communicate core values, and establish meaningful connections with the intended demographic. The research presented by Kotler and Keller indicated that language serves not only to inform consumers about the functional benefits of a product or service but also to craft a compelling narrative that shapes a brand's identity and sets it apart from its rivals.

Song et al. (2018) also explored the interplay between national culture and marketing strategy, and its impact on consumers' post-consumption satisfaction with culturally rich entertainment products. Using a communication theory framework, the research formulated hypotheses regarding the interactive effects of cultural factors and marketing strategies on product evaluations by consumers. The hypotheses were tested through the analysis of consumer reviews for 260 films across 25 different country markets. The findings corroborated the hypotheses, revealing that cultural congruence between the entertainment product and the target market led to more favorable consumer reviews. This effect was found to be more pronounced in societies with tendencies towards collectivism, femininity, and uncertainty avoidance, and was particularly strong for products with a high degree of cultural content. Additionally, the study discovered that the adverse impact of delayed product launches was mitigated in cultures with a long-term orientation. Moreover, the beneficial influence of advertising expenditure on consumer evaluations was more significant in cultures with a high acceptance of power distance.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Iqbal et al. (2020) investigated the use of politeness strategies in the transactional conversations between Pushtoon salesmen and Lahori customers. The research was based on the premise that politeness served as a strategic tool for persuasion in these interactions. Data were collected from 26 Pushtoon service providers working in Auriga and Barkat Market, ensuring a representative sample of the group. The collected data were transcribed and analyzed through the lens of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. The analysis revealed that Pushtoon salesmen frequently employed culturally specific address terms to mitigate the impact of face-threatening speech acts. For example, the use of imperatives combined with kinship terms such as "Baji" and "Bhai" served to soften the directness of their speech. These findings highlighted the significance of socio-cultural norms in shaping polite discourse. The study suggested that incorporating culturally relevant polite markers could partially offset language proficiency limitations.

In the same vein, Mohamad et al. (2021) explored the roles of cultural politeness, which is a concept that integrates intellect and moral values to shape marketing communication behavior and ethics from various cultural perspectives. This conceptual paper investigated how contemporary marketing communication practices were affected by and manifested through existing knowledge of cultural politeness. The study found that, increasingly, global brands must integrate elements of culture into their marketing communication to enhance receptiveness in local markets. The perceived cultural politeness of a communicated message emerged as a key factor determining the success or failure of marketing efforts involving cultural elements. It was noted that the emphasis on cultural intention often outweighed the

consideration of cultural abilities concerning the effects of cultural politeness. The study also highlighted that local brands should negotiate more effectively with local markets by integrating perceptions of cultural localness and politeness.

While existing studies provide valuable insights into various aspects of marketing discourse, including persuasive strategies, discourse analysis, and cultural politeness, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these theoretical concepts specifically apply to the context of Jordanian marketing environments. The literature highlights the influence of psychological mechanisms, linguistic techniques, and cultural politeness in shaping marketing communication, but there is limited research focusing on the particular socio-cultural traditions and indirect speech acts employed in Jordanian shops and streets.

In other words, the studies reviewed above focus on broader contexts or specific cultural settings outside Jordan. There is a notable absence of research that delves into how Jordanian vendors and advertisers employ indirect speech acts and culturally specific marketing discourse to engage consumers. The unique socio-cultural traditions and marketing practices in Jordanian malls and streets have not been thoroughly explored through the lens of speech acts theory and indirect communication. Thus, the gap lies in a detailed investigation of how Jordanian marketers use language to perform actions, persuade, and invoke cultural values subtly. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the application of speech act theory in the marketing discourse of Jordanian shops and streets, offering a nuanced understanding of how indirect communication and cultural nuances shape consumer engagement in this specific context.

3 Methodology

This study investigates the discourse used in Jordanian streets and malls, with a focus on the use of indirect speech acts in marketing. Fieldwork was conducted in various regions of Amman, specifically Hai Nazzal, Deir Ghbar, and Bayader Wadi Al Seer. These areas were purposively selected to capture a diverse range of socio-economic settings, as each represents a distinct demographic profile, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of how marketing practices vary across different communities. Similarly, three major malls in Amman – Mecca Mall, City Mall, and Yasser Mall – were chosen for their prominence and high customer foot traffic, offering valuable insight into the marketing strategies employed in these popular commercial hubs.

3.1 Shop and employee selection

The selection of shops and employees was purposive, based on their use of indirect speech acts in marketing goods and services. Shops were selected across a diverse range of business types, including watch stores, cotton candy vendors, and cosmetics stores, ensuring a broad representation of marketing strategies. Employees were chosen based on their active role in customer interactions and marketing, specifically their use of indirect speech acts. The sampling was not random but instead focused on ensuring the inclusion of various commercial sectors where indirect marketing techniques were prominent.

3.2 Participants

A total of 25 interviews were conducted with employees from different types of shops. The participants were diverse in terms of gender, age, and professional background. Approximately 60 % of the interviewees were male and 40 % were female. The age range of the employees varied from 20 to 50 years, providing perspectives from both younger and more experienced salespeople. This diversity allowed for an examination of how indirect marketing strategies are employed across different demographics.

3.3 Interview format

The interviews followed a semi-structured format, allowing for open-ended responses while still focusing on specific questions related to the use of indirect speech acts. This format enabled the interviewees to share detailed insights into the strategies they use to attract customers indirectly. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 min, providing sufficient time for an in-depth discussion of the marketing techniques. Most interviews were conducted in person within the shops, although some were conducted remotely due to logistical constraints or participant preferences.

3.4 Data collection

In addition to the interviews, data collection involved video recordings and photographs to analyze both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Videos were recorded in a variety of shops, capturing the interactions between salespeople

and customers. These recordings allowed for the observation of tone, body language, and other subtle communication techniques. Photographs and screenshots of advertisements and shop displays were taken to examine the visual and textual elements of indirect marketing. All photos and videos were captured using a phone camera, allowing for spontaneous documentation of marketing discourse as it naturally occurs in these settings.

This study adopts the Theory of Indirect Speech Acts as its theoretical framework, focusing on how indirect communication is performed and used to attract customers to specific products or services. This theory guided the research design and analysis by shaping how interview questions were structured and how participant responses were interpreted. In designing the interview questions, the theory influenced the inclusion of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to express themselves in ways where indirect speech might naturally occur, allowing the study to capture both literal and implied meanings in their responses. For instance, instead of asking direct questions that would prompt straightforward answers, the interview prompts were crafted to explore deeper layers of communication, such as how participants express politeness, criticism, or requests, which are often communicated indirectly. This approach ensured that the study could identify instances where the speakers' intended meaning differed from their literal words.

In terms of analysis, the theory provided a framework for interpreting responses by focusing on the pragmatic context, enabling the identification of indirect speech acts in participants' language. This allowed the research to explore not just what was said, but how it was said, and what it implied, thus aligning the study's objectives with the nuanced understanding of communication that the Theory of Indirect Speech Acts offers. By combining qualitative interviews, video recordings, and photographic analysis, this multi-method approach provides a holistic view of how socio-cultural traditions influence marketing practices in different commercial environments in Amman, Jordan.

3.5 Ethical considerations

To maintain ethical considerations, informed consents were obtained from all participants prior to the interviews and video recordings. Each participant was told about the purpose of the study, the types of data being collected, and how the data would be used. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. To ensure privacy, participants were given the option to remain anonymous, and any identifying information, such as names or specific shop details, was either anonymized or omitted in the final report. Additionally, confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, with data securely stored and accessible only to the

researcher. Video and photographic data collected in public spaces followed ethical guidelines, ensuring that individuals who were not directly involved in the research were not identifiable in the final analysis or publication. The study adhered to ethical principles outlined by standard research ethics boards, ensuring respect for participants' autonomy, privacy, and dignity throughout the research process.

3.6 Limitations

This study faces several limitations that impact its scope and generalizability. The sample size, consisting of 25 interviews, may not fully represent the diversity of marketing practices across Jordan, as it focuses on a specific group of shops and employees selected purposively for their use of indirect speech acts. Additionally, the research is geographically limited to Amman, which may not reflect marketing behaviors in smaller cities or rural areas where socio-economic and cultural factors differ. The reliance on in-person interviews and observations also introduces potential biases, as participants might alter their responses or behavior when they are aware of being observed. Furthermore, logistical constraints led to some interviews being conducted remotely, which may have affected the depth of interaction compared to face-to-face interviews.

4 Results

This section presents the findings of the study, organized according to the research questions raised. Each result is accompanied by specific examples from the field-work, showing how indirect speech acts are used and interpreted in marketing practices across various Jordanian contexts.

The use of indirect speech acts in Jordanian marketing discourse is deeply rooted in cultural norms and practices that value politeness, respect for the customer, and subtlety in communication. Indirect speech allows vendors to avoid direct sales pressure, making the customer feel more at ease, which aligns with the Jordanian preference for non-verbal and non-confrontational communication. Business owners use these strategies to maintain social harmony and ensure that customers feel respected in the marketplace.

In the picture, the sign “sⁱija:nit d^zami:[?] ?anwa:[?] as^sa:[?]at as^swejsirja waljæ:b:ni:[?]ja,” which translates to “Repair of all types of Swiss and Japanese watches” in English, shows that the store offers repair services in addition to selling watches. The sign is an example of written discourse used in marketing. It saves customers time and effort, as they do not have to stop by every store to ask if they repair watches. This

sign is also an example of visual and non-verbal discourse. It indicates the quality of the watches they repair (Swiss and Japanese).

The use of Arabic in the sign directly addresses local customers, ensuring that the message is clear and accessible to the target audience, especially those who care about quality. The mention of “Swiss and Japanese” watches suggests a focus on high-quality, reputable brands, which could appeal to customers who value durability and precision.

The sign about watch repair services suggests that the store is not only a seller but also a place that offers after-sales services, which enhances customers’ trust and loyalty. It implies that customers can rely on the store for both purchasing and maintaining their valuable timepieces. The display appears to target a variety of customers, offering different types of watches, from luxury to more accessible brands. The focus on Swiss and Japanese watches may specifically attract customers who are familiar with the quality associated with these countries.

The placement of the sign suggests that the store is positioning itself as a specialist in quality watches and reliable repair services. This positioning could help differentiate the store from others that may only sell watches. This combination of clear messaging, strategic branding, and emphasis on quality and service creates a persuasive discourse that attracts customers (Picture 2).



Picture 2: Subtle invitations: a multimodal approach to local alternatives.

The man in the picture waits for customers to pass by so he can stop them and offer a very small cup of a spice blend made by his company. This product replaces an item that was previously on the boycott list. To address this, the producer developed their own product and used indirect speech acts to inform people that they can find a local alternative. The type of discourse used here is Multimodal Discourse, which combines multiple modes of communication. This includes spoken words, written

text on the product label (which displays the ingredients and the country of production), the taste of the product (the real experience), and gestures, to create a cohesive message (Picture 3).



Picture 3: Street vendor's musical invitation.

The vendor in the picture uses an indirect speech act through musical discourse to communicate with the people in the neighborhood. He employs a simple musical instrument to send a message that his street vendor cart, filled with hot, delicious corn, has arrived.

The man playing music on the street represents a form of informal entertainment commonly found in urban settings. This type of street performance adds cheerfulness and vitality to the neighborhood. Music is a universal language, and the man's performance can be seen as a way to engage with the community, offering a moment of joy to passersby.

The nighttime setting enhances the mood, making his music a magnetic tool that draws a crowd, especially children, toward him. This scene underscores the role of music in attracting people, even in informal, everyday contexts. Street vendors often rely on the generosity of those who enjoy their music.

The man's performance is accessible to everyone in the area, regardless of their background or status. It is a form of art that brings culture directly to the streets, creating a shared experience among community members. The music he plays is a traditional Jordanian song called “ردي شعر انش rddi: jaʃra:tj”.

The photo symbolizes a cultural narrative, where the street becomes a place of spontaneous music and community interaction. The man's music creates a moment of connection where art meets everyday life in a public setting (Picture 4).



Picture 4: Fried potatoes and local delights.

In the photos, the lady is preparing fried potatoes and advertising a Jordanian brand of mayonnaise, ketchup, and other products. The discourse used here is persuasive. These stands are typically set up on Fridays and Saturdays, which are holidays in Jordan, and attract a large number of customers who visit malls for shopping. The lady is wearing a t-shirt with the brand's name and logo, and the stand features pictures of the different products being advertised. In one photo, the fried potatoes are prominently displayed. The company uses non-verbal communication to engage customers by offering them a taste of the potatoes with one of their products of their choice. This gesture symbolizes generosity and chivalry in Jordanian culture.

The brand's value is conveyed through the taste experienced by customers at the mall, as well as through the gloves the lady is wearing, which symbolize cleanliness. The logo on the stand represents both the taste of the brand and serves as a playful greeting to the customer, incorporating a pun. The Jordanian identity is integrated into the brand's logo, which implies "tasty" when discussing the flavor and "good man" when addressing people.

The advertisement emphasizes quality, taste, and local production through its use of language. It is designed to appeal to families and children who can resist fried potatoes, especially with a tasty sauce of their choice? The taste and aroma of the potatoes, combined with the right sauce, create an unforgettable experience for customers. Additionally, the use of an air fryer to prepare the potatoes targets health-conscious individuals (especially mothers) who prefer fresh and healthy food.

The interaction between the lady and the customer, where she hands over a product sample, shows active engagement and can create a more memorable and positive shopping experience. This direct interaction is effective in encouraging immediate purchase decisions and serves as an indirect form of communication through an unforgettable experience. By promoting a local brand, the advertisement likely taps into a sense of supporting local businesses and products, which can be a strong motivator for consumers in Jordan, especially in the context of the recent boycott.

The products in the pictures are prominently displayed with bright, eye-catching colors. The large images of the brand's condiments, such as Texas, Dutch, and BBQ sauces, are designed to attract attention and clearly convey the variety of flavors available in the mall. The use of vibrant colors like yellow, red, and black aligns with the branding strategy to stand out on store shelves. Overall, the discourse used in this visual setting combines elements of cultural relevance, practical demonstration, and strong brand visibility to create a persuasive advertisement aimed at engaging local consumers and encouraging them to try and buy the products.

The woman wearing a hijab presents a culturally appropriate and relatable image for the target audience in Jordan. This aligns with cultural norms and makes the promotion feel more personal and trustworthy. In addition, the fried potatoes served with the condiments provide a practical demonstration of how the products can be used. This makes the advertisement more effective by showing the product in action and appeals to shoppers looking for quick and tasty meal solutions (Picture 5).



Picture 5: Applying makeup in the store.

The image shows a woman standing in front of a mirror in a cosmetics store, applying makeup to her own face. She appears to be focused on her reflection, making adjustments to her appearance. The store's layout is modern, with neatly organized makeup products on display. The woman applying makeup in front of the mirror engages in an act of self-presentation, where she is actively shaping her appearance. The photo reflects a broader societal discourse on beauty, where makeup is often used as a tool for enhancing one's identity and self-expression.

The act of applying makeup in a public setting suggests a certain level of comfort and confidence, which is what women look for. The store's decor, with mirrors and accessible products, encourages customers to experience the products directly and reinforces a hands-on, self-directed shopping experience. Cosmetic stores usually offer testers for customers to try different products in various colors, and the interior

of this store, with these mirrors, helps engage customers in the experience and supports a feeling of elegance and self-care.

The woman's engagement with the mirror encourages customers to interact with the products as she utilizes the space to enhance her personal appearance. Her interaction with the mirror and makeup products reflects a personal approach to beauty, emphasizing the importance of appearance in social identity. The scene underscores that this is what a woman might feel she needs to buy from the store.

The primary aim is to promote, market, and sell products. This type of discourse is persuasive, seeking to influence the attitudes and behaviors of others. The act of applying makeup in a store serves as a demonstration that persuades customers of the product's quality and benefits, in addition to how it might enhance their appearance when applied.

Commercial discourse often relies on visual signs, as seen here. The application of makeup in a public setting acts as a live advertisement, drawing attention to the products and their use. By applying makeup in the store, the woman engages potential consumers, encouraging them to try the products themselves or make a purchase. This form of discourse is common in marketing, where the goal is to create a compelling experience that drives sales (Picture 6).



Picture 6: Cotton candy vendors use music to attract customers.

Each vendor in the pictures has a unique approach and a personalized strategy for selling cotton candy and toys. Each of them has their own way of playing music and chooses a neighborhood or a specific park to visit daily at a particular time, where kids and adults wait for the music to announce their arrival so they can buy their favorite toys.

The vendors play music not to explicitly ask kids and adults to buy cotton candy, but to give them the choice of purchasing their products. This is an off-record politeness strategy where customers are indirectly communicated with, and the

vendor's message is received non-verbally. This is a classic example of an indirect speech act where the music serves as an indirect request for customers to approach and make a purchase. The choice of music likely evokes nostalgia or creates a pleasant atmosphere, indirectly encouraging people to buy cotton candy, especially children, who are attracted to the familiar, playful tunes.

The music also creates a shared auditory experience, signaling the presence of the cotton candy vendor. It acts as a nonverbal sign, conveying the vendor's intention to sell cotton candy. This nonverbal communication is understood culturally; people recognize the sound associated with cotton candy sales and understand the vendor's purpose.

By playing music, the vendors are participating in a socially recognized practice, where the act of playing a certain type of music nonverbally announces the vendor's presence in the area and the availability of the product. This indirect communication relies on shared knowledge and expectations within the community.

The indirect nature of using music rather than verbally calling out to potential customers can be seen as a polite form of communication. It respects the listener's decision to buy the products, allowing them to choose whether to engage with the vendor without feeling pressured. The use of indirect communication through music also shows an understanding of the social norms of vendor-customer interactions on the Jordanian streets.

The use of music by the cotton candy salesmen functions as an indirect speech act that communicates their intent to sell while engaging with the community in a culturally appropriate and socially acceptable manner. This indirect approach serves multiple purposes: attracting attention, evoking emotional responses, and maintaining politeness, all of which contribute to the effectiveness of their sales strategy (Picture 7).



Picture 7: Gas truck music as indirect communication.

“Every day, many groggy Jordanians are woken by the sound of Beethoven blasted down the street. Trucks selling gas cylinders drive around playing a tinny electronic version of ‘Für Elise’ in the early hours of the morning, alerting customers in the style of an ice-cream van. Residents in need of gas flag down the van when they hear the sound. Some consider the gas-truck music a part of Jordanian life’s rich soundtrack. Others think it is noise pollution.” – The Economist.

- “Gas Truck” delivers gas cylinders to homes and businesses in various neighborhoods.
- In Jordan, trucks delivering gas cylinders signal their presence by playing Beethoven’s music. This is particularly common in areas where homes are spread out, allowing the truck to alert potential customers to its arrival.
- The music played by the truck serves as an indirect speech act. Instead of explicitly announcing, “The gas truck is here, come out, call us, and we will deliver your cylinder,” the music implicitly conveys this message to the residents.
- Indirect speech acts occur when the speaker’s intention is understood by the listener, even though it is not explicitly stated. In this case, the truck’s music is a non-verbal form of communication that indirectly conveys the truck’s presence and the availability of gas for purchase.
- The sound becomes a way to replace the verbal announcement, creating a shared understanding within the community. It relies on the cultural and social context where the music’s meaning is widely recognized.
- The effectiveness of this indirect communication depends on the shared cultural knowledge of the community. Residents understand that Beethoven music is associated with the gas truck. With this shared understanding, the music functions as a communicative act.
- Additionally, the use of music instead of a direct verbal announcement may be seen as more pleasant, fitting into the soundscape of the neighborhood without disturbing residents with loud, repetitive verbal messages.
- The timing of when the truck passes through the neighborhood and when it plays the music also contributes to the implicit communication. Residents know when to expect the truck and are ready to respond, hearing the sound as a signal to take action if they need gas.
- This practice also reflects the community’s adaptation to indirect communication methods, where non-verbal cues are just as powerful and meaningful as spoken language.
- The indirectness may also be culturally influenced, where non-verbal communication is preferred, or where direct speech may be considered less effective in certain contexts.

The use of music by the gas delivery truck is a prime example of an indirect speech act. It effectively alerts people to the truck's presence without the need for direct verbal communication. This method relies heavily on the shared cultural knowledge and pragmatic understanding within the Jordanian community. Intertextuality appears in the use of the phrase "in the style of an ice-cream van" from *The Economist*, referencing how the same music was once played by ice-cream trucks in Jordan. This suggests that the act is not a new technique but a familiar one in Jordanian society (Picture 8).



Picture 8: Scent as a non-verbal indirect speech act.

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cream van" from *The Economist*, referencing how the same music was once played by ice-cream trucks in Jordan. This suggests that the act is not a new technique but a familiar one in Jordanian society.

- The use of a diffuser enhances the sensory experience in front of the store's door, creating an atmosphere that attracts customers and influences their decision-making process.
- The scent can evoke feelings of relaxation, luxury, or cleanliness, depending on the fragrance used.
- The salesman's strategy is to use the environment to his advantage, indirectly guiding customers towards a favorable impression of the products without the need for explicit persuasion.
- This practice reflects a sophisticated understanding of consumer behavior, where indirect strategies can be more persuasive than direct sales tactics. It also highlights the cultural significance of scent and how it can be used as a communicative tool in different social contexts.
- The indirectness of this speech act respects the customer's desire to buy the perfume, allowing them to come to their own conclusion about the product's value, rather than feeling pressured by direct sales language.

The use of a diffuser to spread scents in the store is a clear example of an indirect speech act. The fragrance does the "speaking" by conveying the quality and appeal of the products without the need for direct verbal communication. This method relies on the customer's ability to interpret the scent as a sign of the product's desirability, making it an effective form of marketing discourse in Jordanian malls and shops.

5 Discussion

The reliance on indirect speech acts, such as music from gas trucks and scent diffusion in stores, underscores a deep cultural practice in Jordan. These methods are not merely marketing tools but are embedded within the social fabric, reflecting a shared cultural understanding. This familiarity with non-verbal cues highlights how profoundly cultural norms shape communication practices in Jordan, illustrating a preference for subtlety and sophistication over direct expression.

The effectiveness of these indirect speech acts in communicating with customers without explicit language emphasizes the importance of nuance in Jordanian culture. By creating sensory experiences that attract attention or signal the availability of products, these methods achieve their goals in a way that aligns with traditional values of respect and politeness. This cultural preference for indirect

communication allows messages to be conveyed more subtly, resonating with the community's emphasis on respectful interaction. Previous studies, especially Iqbal et al. (2020) and Mohamad et al. (2021), emphasize how politeness strategies and cultural considerations influence marketing discourse. This aligns with the notion that indirect speech acts, like music and scent diffusion, are embedded in Jordanian culture, reflecting a shared understanding of communication norms.

In retail environments, the impact of sensory cues like scent diffusion on consumer behavior is profound. These non-verbal cues create a pleasant atmosphere that enhances the shopping experience, encouraging purchases while respecting the consumer's autonomy. By fostering positive interactions and respecting local customs, these practices align with cultural values that prioritize creating harmonious and enjoyable environments. Here, Cialdini's work (2009) on persuasive strategies and the findings on the effectiveness of indirect speech acts highlight a preference for subtle communication over direct approaches. This is consistent with the idea that Jordanian vendors use non-verbal cues to signal their presence and attract customers without overtly demanding attention.

The integration of indirect speech acts into everyday Jordanian life highlights their cultural relevance. These practices are woven into the daily routine, blending naturally into social interactions and public spaces without disrupting the flow of activities. This integration reflects how communication strategies in Jordan are designed to fit within the cultural context, demonstrating the importance of non-verbal communication in both social and commercial settings.

Overall, the use of indirect speech acts in Jordanian public spaces highlights the significance of non-verbal communication. These practices are culturally sensitive and align with local social norms and values, showing how cultural context shapes the effectiveness and acceptance of communication strategies. By adhering to these cultural values, indirect speech acts serve as powerful tools in both social and commercial contexts, reinforcing the role of cultural context in shaping communication practices.

6 Conclusions

The concept of indirect speech acts has existed for many years and is still prevalent in the streets and malls of Jordan. It is a cost-effective way of advertising for vendors and can be more expensive in malls. This form of communication has evolved according to the needs of vendors and business owners in advertising. It can be inferred that indirect speech acts, as observed in Jordanian malls and streets,

represent a sophisticated form of communication deeply embedded in the cultural and social practices of the vendors and salespeople in the region. These non-verbal forms of communication, whether through music, scents, or other sensory experiences, effectively convey messages without the need for explicit verbalization. They enable shared cultural understandings and environmental contexts to influence behavior in a powerful way.

These indirect speech acts are highly effective in achieving their communication goals. They manage to attract customers or signal product availability by creating sensory experiences, thereby leading to the desired actions without explicit verbal communication. In Jordanian society, where interpersonal relations and community awareness are highly valued, these indirect methods of communication provide a respectful and polite approach to interaction. They allow messages to be conveyed in a manner that is more harmonious with everyday life and fits seamlessly into the soundscape of public spaces. The integration of these indirect speech acts into daily Jordanian life reflects their natural fit within local social interactions. They blend into the environment, supporting communication without disrupting daily activities.

Overall, the emphasis on non-verbal communication highlights a broader cultural value in Jordan, where indirect methods of interaction are seen as more respectful and polite. This approach aligns with social norms that value subtlety and the avoidance of overt persuasion, demonstrating how cultural values shape the effectiveness and acceptance of communication strategies. Building on this understanding, future studies may explore how these principles of indirect speech acts are applied in digital and social media marketing. Additionally, research could investigate the use of indirect communication strategies in online shopping platforms, examining their impact on user engagement and sales. This could involve analyzing how visual cues, color schemes, and layout design subtly guide consumer behavior, further illustrating the role of indirect communication in shaping modern marketing practices.

Competing interests: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Research funding: This research received no funding.

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