

The Use of Persuasive Speech Acts by Female Arab Fashion Influencers on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the persuasive speech acts used by six female Arab fashion influencers on Instagram, namely, Joelle Mardinian, Ascia, Model_Roz- Ola Al Fares, Dalal AIDoub, and Maya Ahmad based on the framework of Speech Act Theory (SAT). The data were collected manually from the posts of the target influencers on Instagram and were put together in a specialized corpus containing approximately, 20,000 words. The corpus was manually annotated to include pragmatic information about the types of persuasive speech acts used by each influencer. The results reveal that the majority of speech acts identified by Searle (1979) were used by the target influencers with different frequencies except for declarative speech acts whose function is incompatible with the function of persuasion. The results also show that the most frequently used speech act was the assertive act followed by directives and expressives. However, the least used speech acts were commissives and quotations. In addition, the results demonstrate that the majority of the speech acts used by the influencers were indirect speech acts. The study concludes with marketing implications and recommendations for further research.

Keywords: Linguistics; Pragmatics; Marketing; Influencers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2010, Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger launched the photo and videos-sharing mobile phone application *Instagram* (Cited in Robertson, 2018). This application makes capturing and uploading moments easier for users. According to Robertson (2018), Instagram has more than 800 million users, which makes it the best social media platform after Facebook. After the launch of Instagram, it has never been easier to create or send videos and photos. As a result, many owners of various enterprises and brands have started sharing their visual stories and encouraging their customers to buy their products through advertising them on social media websites, such as Instagram. However, this application has changed its impact on large-scale businesses, giving them the opportunity to dramatically change the way their business operates in order to expand it and to communicate with new and existing customers (Robertson, 2018). For instance, owners of brands use Instagram as an intermediary tool to share information about their news, initiatives, operations, and products (Robertson, 2018). These brands' owners recruit individuals that have a cross-sectional knowledge of a sector and/or product category and have the ability to influence the buying habits of consumers; hence, they are called "influencers" (see Section 2.3) (other studies that used this term are: Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, and Freberg, 2011; Braatz, 2017). In order to succeed, these influencers are supposed to use persuasive language or rather the appropriate linguistic strategies to convince their audience to buy the products. Upon reviewing the existing relevant literature, this particular area of research has not been given due attention, at least in the Middle East. Therefore, adopting the framework of Speech Act Theory (SAT), this study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the persuasive speech acts female Arab fashion influencers employ to persuade their Instagram followers to buy certain products. The next section provides an overview of SAT.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical framework

This study mainly draws on the framework of speech acts taxonomy designed by John Searle (1979). Speech Act Theory (henceforth SAT) was developed by the John Austin in 1962. He argued that language is not mainly utilized to convey information or describe things and entities, but it can also be employed to do things. The latter can be achieved through using utterances that perform actions (Austin, 1962). These utterances are called speech acts and are defined as utterances that donate doing an action; not only describing an action, such as “I bet you six pence it will rain tomorrow” (Austin, 1962). Later, Searle (1975, 1979) developed Austin’s (1962) taxonomy of speech acts through classifying the illocutionary acts into five categories, which are presented in Table 1 below:

Table (1): Speech act taxonomy by Searle (1979, p. 8)

Speech Act	Functions
Assertive	Asserting, concluding, describing
Directives	Requesting, questioning, ordering
Commissives	promising, offering
Expressives	thanking, apologizing
Declaratives	Permitting, forgiving, deciding

The above mentioned speech acts are explained below:

- Assertive: They occur when the speaker is committed to the expressed truth proposition (e.g., asserting, concluding, describing, etc.) (Searle, 1979, p. 14). An example is: “It was a warm sunny day”.
- Directives: They occur when the speaker makes the hearer perform a particular action (e.g. requests, advice, commands, etc.) (Searle, 1979, p.27). Yule stated that directives can be positive as in “Could you lend me a pen, please?” or negative as in “Don’t touch that” (Yule, 1996, p.54).
- Commissives: They occur when the speaker is committed to future actions (e.g. promises, offers, oaths, etc.) (Searle, 1979, p.14). Al-Bantany, on the other hand, suggested that the speakers commit themselves to do or not to do something in the future (Al-Bantany 2013, p.26). An example is: “I’m going to get it right next time”.
- Expressives: They are related to the individual’s expression of his/her psychological state based on a specific content. Expressive speech acts are thanking, congratulating, apologizing, condoling, and deploring (Searle, 1979, p.14). Yule (1996, p.53) described expressives as types of speech acts that convey the feelings of the speakers. An example is: “Congratulations!”
- Declaratives: This type can be used to express an explicit announcement or statement. The related actions of this type are permitting, forgiving, and deciding (Searle, 1979, p.17). Yule (1996, p. 53) stated that declaratives impose an institutional role on the speaker in order to perform an action, e.g. when the priest pronounces two couples as a husband and a wife as in “Priest: I now pronounce as husband and a wife”.

The five speech acts that were proposed by Searle were also divided into two subcategories: direct and indirect speech acts. Searle explained that direct speech acts can be achieved when the speaker conveys the message with its exact meaning and the hearer can understand the message without any misunderstanding (Searle, 1985, p. 30). This type can sometimes be perceived as an impolite speech act as the speaker might offend the hearer (e.g. direct requests) (Searle, 1985, p. 37).

Having discussed the adopted theoretical framework, the next section reviews some previous studies on persuasive speech acts on social media.

2.2. Previous studies on the use of speech acts on social media

Due to the importance of social media nowadays, numerous studies have been carried out to examine various

aspects of this newly-launched cyber venue (e.g. Heldman, Schindelar, & Weaver, 2013; Rog, 2014; Abidin, 2015 and De Veirman; Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). The focus on persuasive speech acts in this study stems from the importance of this act in having an impact on people's thinking patterns and purchasing behavior. Frederick (2011) stated that the aim of persuasive writing is to obtain a result. This can be done through business and cover letters, emails, or advertisements. In addition, any advertisers or influencers in social media have a specific goal, which is primarily to spread their word and reach out to a substantial number of individuals using particular strategies, which were analyzed in this study from a pragmatic perspective, especially based on SAT.

Nartey (2015) conducted a case study on students enrolled in University of Cape Coas to analyze the speech acts used on status updates on Facebook. The researcher used a combined framework of Austin and Searle's speech act theory and Warschauer and Herring's notion of computer-mediated communication to analyze a corpus of 60 online Facebook status updates. Nartey discovered that the students used five speech acts, namely: directives, assertives, expressive, commissives, and quotations. The most used speech acts were directives (e.g. "Fellows -to those still on campus, remember Jesus is being buried. Don't try anything that would wake Him before Sunday!") and assertives (e.g. "My phone battery lasts longer than most relationships nowadays.").

In a study conducted by Sarah (2015) on the use of direct informing speech acts as an advertising strategy in "Malang Kuliner" Facebook group. The researcher concentrated on the direct informing speech act by designing a case study using a qualitative analysis approach. The findings showed that the assertive speech act of informing was the most used speech act by the popular vendors in "Malang Kuliner" group (43.7% from 293 utterances). Based on the results of the study, the researcher concluded that a successful advertisement can be built by giving more information about the product, rather than telling people directly to purchase a particular product or making promises related to a specific product. This, according to Sarah (2015), will achieve the target of the sellers in online advertisement.

A similar study was conducted by Banikalef & Bataineh (2017) on speech act realization patterns in Jordanians' Facebook status updates. The data were collected from 200 students from two Jordanian universities, Irbid National University and Jadara University. The data were analyzed using Searle's speech acts taxonomy. The researchers found that there are six speech acts used in the status updates on Facebook by the students: expressive, assertive and directives following Searle's speech act taxonomy, and God's invocation, quotation and humor based on the researchers' observations of the participants' socio-cultural background. On the other hand, they found that there were no declarative and commissive speech acts in the collected data. Thus, they concluded that expressive speech acts were the highest compared to other speech acts that reflect emotional reactions to a certain situation, followed by assertive speech acts that have the function of informing others about related information and then directive speech acts that have the function of requesting, asking or giving an advice. However, God's invocation, quotation and humor were the least used speech acts. Quotations were found to reflect users' feelings or beliefs by sharing song lyrics, poetic verse, Quranic verses and famous quotes.

In a recent study on speech acts, Patimah, Asiyah, & Mustikawati (2018) examined the speech acts used in Instagram captions by students, in Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo in Indonesia. The purpose of the study was to classify the type of speech acts and to identify the context based on the illocutionary act found in the Instagram captions. The data of this study was collected from 41 captions on Instagram written by English education students in the academic year 2017/2018. The results showed that students highly used assertive speech acts, such as informing, concluding, confirming, and predicting something. In addition, the results indicated that expressives were the second highest used speech acts by the students as they are used to express speakers' feelings. However, the students also used directive speech acts since they were employed to get permission, such as ordering, asking and suggesting.

In another recent study, de Aquino Carlsson (2018) investigated how fitness influencers on Instagram use different persuasive speech acts in their posts. He examined 200 Instagram posts from four fitness influencers. The samples consisted of two American females, one American male, and one Spanish male. Their ages were between 29-43 years old. The researcher selected them based on his own observation of their popularity that can be measured based on the

number of their followers and their activity on Instagram. The total number of speech acts that were coded was 638. The results of the study revealed that directive sentences were highly used by all fitness influencers as they ask their followers to accomplish a certain action. The limitation of de Aquino Carlsson's study was that it only analyzed 200 posts, which may not be enough to draw conclusions. The results of de Aquino Carlsson's study (2018) are compared with the results of the current study to examine the similarities and/or differences between western influencers and Arab ones.

Based on the above literature, it seems that persuasion as a speech act has not been given due attention as evidenced by the few number of studies that tackled this issue, especially on social media websites. This provides more reasons to conduct the current study. Accordingly, the current study concentrated on Instagram to contribute to the body of knowledge in this field, especially pertaining to this platform. The results of the relevant studies discussed in this section are compared to the results of the current study. The following section provides an overview of influencers marketing on social media.

2.3. Influencers' marketing on social media

Influencers can be found on Instagram and other social media platforms, such as Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter. As a user, you log into your Instagram account to find different posts on different topics, e.g. a celebrity posting his/her favorite type of clothes from a particular brand or your friend posting a picture of his favorite juice. Both of these are examples of influencer marketing but the first one is paid to write such posts, while the second is not. Influencers are considered a strong weapon for word of mouth strategy and consumers perceive their messages positively since they think that they are trust-worthy influencers sponsored by a company (Woods, 2016).

Nielsen stated that 92% of consumers accept as true suggestions and recommendations posted by family and friends in the field of advertising (cited in Whitler 2014). Accordingly, companies and advertisers are seeking to interact with consumers through social media and convey their message through influencers who can almost be regarded as friends. In addition, there is a joint study by Twitter and analytics firm Annalect in which they found that 56% of users, after conducting a survey, said they truly depend on their friends' recommendations, while 49% of users stated that they depend on influencers (Swant, 2016). Consequently, influencers are being paid substantial amounts of money to promote for brands and products as this will achieve the goals of advertisers (Woods, 2016).

The popularity of influencers is associated with the desired results the advertisers are seeking. Influencers can be described as "microcelebrities". There are influencer agencies that are searching for opportunities to recruit influencers and to help them in contract negotiations (Woods, 2016). Influencer agencies also have connections with advertising agencies that can suggest influencers for them to promote a particular brand or campaign (Woods, 2016). These influencer agencies normally take services' fees from the influencers since they are giving them good opportunities. Accordingly, the number of influencers in these agencies has notably increased and so has the number of people working as influencers (Woods, 2016). A new practice in influencer marketing is to send free trial products to influencers in order to promote for this product through using it themselves first and if they like the product, they will certainly post it on their accounts to persuade their followers to purchase it (Braatz, 2017). Braatz (2017, p.7) stated that the "Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey" in 2015 pointed out that 66% of consumers are convinced by influencers, which makes influencers marketing the third-most-trusted advertising method.

These influencers can become micro-celebrities and be great idols for their followers if they upload regularly, connect closely with their followers, and post unique and beautiful pictures and videos (Braatz, 2017). When the influencers allow their followers to participate in their daily life, they will be accepted by their followers (Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016) and will be perceived as friends by their followers (Isosuo, 2016; Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016). These practices increase the trust between the followers and the influencers and affect buying decisions.

Drawing on the above literature, this study aims to investigate the use of persuasive speech acts by female Arab fashion influencers on Instagram. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the persuasive speech acts used by female Arab fashion influencers in their marketing posts on Instagram?
2. To what extent are the persuasive speech acts used by the selected fashion influencers on Instagram different and/or similar from each other?
3. What are the most and least frequent persuasive speech acts used by the target influencers on Instagram?

The following section discusses the methods adopted in the current study.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data collection procedure

The female Arab influencers in this study, namely, Joelle Mardinian, Ascia, Model_Roz- Ola Al Fares, Dalal AlDoub, and Maya Ahmad were selected based on their popularity and the number of their followers, i.e. more than 1 million followers. However, the selection of influencers' nationalities was random based on the aforementioned two factors as the researchers are concentrating on Arab influencers and not on a specific Arab country. Therefore, there were two Kuwaitis, one Jordanian, two Lebanese, and one Saudi. The age of the influencers is between 25-40 years old. Most of the Arab female influencers are sponsored by popular brands or their own brands. Since this study focuses on persuasive speech acts used to persuade followers to buy certain products, marketing posts were only collected, which suggests that all the personal posts were excluded. The selection process was random; since all marketing posts were selected without exclusion until 75 posts were collected from each influencer. The influencers' posts were copied and pasted onto word document files with each influencer having a separate file to facilitate their analysis (cf. Zibin, 2018). For the purposes of this study, 75 posts were collected from each influencer to be able to arrive at a better understanding of the persuasive strategies used. Thus, in total, the specialized corpus built in the current study included 450 posts with approximately 20,000 words.

3.2. Data analysis

3.2.1 Corpus annotation

A corpus is "a collection of sampled texts, written or spoken, in machine readable form which may be annotated with various forms of linguistic information" (McEnery, Xiao, & Tono, 2006, p. 6). Corpora mainly include two types, firstly, the ready-made corpus which is usually built to represent a certain language or a language variety, e.g. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is meant to represent contemporary American English (Zibin, 2018). Secondly, the specialized corpus that is collected by the researcher to study a language in a certain context or to examine a certain genre or text type (Zibin, 2018; Zibin & Abdullah, 2019). Since the current study examines the persuasive techniques used by female Arab fashion influencers on Instagram, the adopted corpus is a specialized one (cf. Altakhaineh, 2017). As suggested by McEnery et al. (2006, p. 6) above, corpora could be annotated. In this respect, annotation is defined as the practice of making a corpus linguistically informative by adding information automatically or manually to the corpus (Leech 1997, p. 2). This information can be of different natures, e.g. prosodic, lexical, pragmatic, textual, and stylistic annotation (Wynne, 2005, p.25). Since this study aims to analyze persuasive speech acts, then the collected corpus was annotated manually to include pragmatic information through adding words/expressions, e.g. (assertive, commissive, etc.) to the corpus to illustrate the type of persuasive speech act used by each Arab female influencer on Instagram.

3.2.2 Pilot study

As mentioned previously, due to the lack of studies on persuasive speech acts employed by Arab influencers on Instagram, and in order to obtain preliminary results regarding such speech acts, the researchers conducted a pilot study (cf. Zibin, 2018) on one of the influencers, "Joelle Mardinian". The number of posts analyzed for the purpose of the pilot was 25 posts collected from Joelle's Instagram account. Preliminary data analysis results reveal that Joelle used 48 speech acts in 25 posts. The results show that the most used speech acts were directives (38%) and assertives (35%).

However, the least used speech acts were expressives (19%) and commissives (8%). Declaratives and quotations were not found in the data collected for the pilot study in the first 25 posts by Joelle.

3.2.3 Qualitative and quantitative analysis

The data was qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. In the qualitative analysis, the collected data were pragmatically annotated using the taxonomy of speech acts developed by John Searle (1979). The reason behind using Searle's framework is due to its comprehensive classifications in conveying the intended language function of speech acts (cf. De Aquino Carlsson, 2018). One speech act, namely Quotation, was added to this study which was identified by Banikalef and Bataineh (2017) who investigated the speech acts used in Jordanians' Facebook updates (see Section 2.2). Quotations can be used as persuasive strategies as shown by the data collected from some of the target influencers where an influencer uses a quotation as a method to persuade followers to buy a certain product. Furthermore, note that declarative speech acts were excluded from the current study as they were not found in the collected data based on the results obtained in the pilot study. This could be due to their function, e.g. declaring war or pronouncing two people as man and wife.

3.2.4. Statistical analysis

In the quantitative analysis, the researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze if the persuasive speech acts used by the selected fashion influencers on Instagram were different and/or similar from each other, and to determine the most and least frequent persuasive speech acts used by each influencer. In addition, to determine whether the differences between the target influencers were statistically significant in terms of the persuasive speech acts they used, the researchers employed chi-square test. This test was selected in the current study since the quantitative part of the study mainly relies on frequencies, which allow the researchers to assess whether the observed counts and frequencies are significantly different from the expected counts and frequencies (Einspruch, 2005, p.64).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Qualitative analysis

Influencer One: Joelle Mardinian

The results show that the assertive speech act was the most frequently used speech act by Joelle with a percentage of 52.1%, followed by directives (22.9%), expressives (18.8%), and commissives (6.3%). On the other hand, quotations were not used by Joelle.

Example (1):

New Pantene 3 minute Miracle repairs 3 months hair damage in just 3 minutes. Acts like a mask but for daily use. Leaves hair soft and shiny #pantenehair @pantene.arabia#3minutemiracle #joelle #joellembc1 #offer#competition #love #prize.

In example (1), Joelle is describing the effect of Pantene on the hair. The aim is to indirectly persuade the followers to purchase this product by mentioning its advantages. Thus, the sentence is assertive since it informs the followers about the benefits and quality of Pantene.

Influencer Two: Ascia

The results show that Ascia highly used assertives (58.6%), followed by directives (23.3%), expressives (15.5%), and finally commissives (2.6%). However, quotations were not used by Ascia.

Example (2):

Who's ready for #HMoschino to drop on November 8th in @hm? Anyone know what pieces they're going to cop?

In example (2), Ascia used a directive speech act with an interrogative form. She is asking the followers directly about the HMoschino event, specifically about who is ready for it to drop on November 8th in H&M. Consequently, Ascia is directly asking the followers to attend this event in H&M since this may increase the sales of the store

Influencer Three: Dalal Al-Doub

The results show that assertives scored the highest percentage (64.8%), followed by directives (17.1%),

commissives (10.5%), and finally expressives (7.6%). Regarding quotations, similarly to Joelle and Ascja, there were none used by Dalal in her marketing posts.

Example (3):

اليوم لابسَة قست من كولكشن دلاليد وانوتا
Today in #dalalidxanotah vest 😊✳️

In example (3), Dalal used an assertive speech act to tell the followers about her outfit from DalalidxAnotah. However, she is indirectly informing the followers in a declarative form to buy from this collection as most of the followers imitate her and consider her as a role model, so this may persuade them to buy from this collection.

Influencer Four: Ola Al-Fares

The results show that assertives scored the highest percentage (50.0%), followed by quotations (19.8%), expressives (19%), directives (10.3%) and finally commissives (0.9%).

Example (4):

حلو الواحد يستخدم اشياء تخلي ملامحة احلى ويضل طبيعي !
خاصة مع اجواء الصيف @lorealmakeup

Translation: It is sweet to use things that make your face look more beautiful and natural especially in summer.

In example (4), Ola used an assertive speech act in a declarative form to indirectly promote for L'Oréal makeup. She stated that using products from L'Oréal makes one's face more beautiful and natural, implying indirectly that girls may want to buy such products.

Influencer Five: Model-Roz

The results demonstrate that assertives scored the highest percentage (47.8%), followed by commissives (20.9%), directives (13.4%), expressives (12.7%) and quotations (5.2%).

Example (5):

Happy 10th anniversary to SHEIN. @shein_ar.SHEIN and I give big gifts to my 9M Roz'es -- ✳️FREE EXPRESS& Extra 25% OFF Entering the new season with code: ROZ25. تهنئة شي إن بالعيد السنوي العاشر. @shein_ar. انا ROZ25: شحن سريع مجاني خصم إضافي 25% دخول الموسم الجديد بالرمز M Roz'es وشي إن نقدم هدايا كبيرة لك 9

In example (5), Model Roz used a commissive speech act in a declarative form as she offered a big gift from her and SHEIN with extra 25% off when they use her code ROZ25. This technique of giving gifts and extra discounts can help to increase the sales of a particular company.

Influencer six: Maya Ahmad

The results show that assertives and directives scored the highest percentage (36.2%), followed by expressives (18.5%), and commissives (9.2%). Concerning quotations, there were none used by Maya Ahmad in her marketing posts.

Example (6):

Effortless way of masking, prepping and mattifying the skin as I am using @foreo UFO with the matte maniac mask sheet before starting my face makeup (that's why I have an eyeliner on since I'm loving also the No makeup Only eyeliner look) Check the link in bio to know more! @foreo_me #ForeoUFO #UrFutureObsession.

Example (6) shows that Maya used two speech acts: assertives and directives. Maya employed an assertive speech act, at first, to talk about the mask she is using "Foreo" to influence her followers' opinions about this product and to encourage them to buy it. Second, she used a directive sentence in an imperative form: "Check the link in bio to know more". The aim behind using this directive sentence is possibly to sell this product and to increase the sales of the company by making the followers purchase it.

Having presented a sample of the influencers' marketing posts, the next section provides an overview of the quantitative analysis.

4.2. Quantitative analysis of persuasive strategies on Instagram

Table (2) below shows the most and least frequent persuasive speech acts used by the target influencers on Instagram. It also shows the results of the chi-square test which determines whether the differences between the different strategies were statistically significant.

Table (2): Frequency and percentage of the most and least frequent persuasive speech acts used by the target influencers on Instagram

Type	Frequency	Percent	Df	Chi ²	Sig.
Assertive	380	51.0	4	509.208	0.000*
Directive	155	20.8			
Commissive	64	8.6			
Expressive	116	15.6			
Quotations	30	4.0			
Total	745	100.0			

*: $p \leq 0.05$

Table (2) demonstrates that the most used persuasive speech act by the target influencers (Joelle, Ascia, Dalal, Ola Al Fares, Model Roz and Maya Ahmad) on Instagram was the assertive type with a percentage of 51%, followed by directives (20.8%), expressives (15.6%), commissives (8.6%), and finally quotations (4%). The results indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the most and least frequent persuasive speech acts used by the influencers in favor of assertives; (p value = 0.00).

5. DISCUSSION

Regarding the first research question, the data analysis revealed that all the examined influencers employ the majority of the persuasive speech acts suggested by Searle (1979) with the exception of declarative speech acts (see Section 3.2.3). In addition, quotations, which have been added by the researchers based on Banikalef & Bataineh (2017), have also been found in the collected data. These findings are in line with Nartey (2015) who concluded that students are using directives, assertives, expressive, commissives, and quotations in their online Facebook status updates. In addition, De Aquino Carlsson (2018) found that fitness influencers on Instagram used directives, assertives, expressive, commissives, inquiries and quotations. Banikalef and Bataineh (2017) have also reported that there were no declaratives in their collected data on Jordanians' Facebook status updates. Based on the above, it seems that this non-use of declarative speech acts seems to be a feature of general online speech acts, not just persuasion.

Regarding the second research question, the findings of the current study indicated that all the target influencers were similar in their usage of assertives as persuasive strategies to encourage their followers to buy the products they are promoting. This high percentage could be ascribed to the fact that the target influencers often integrated assertives with other speech acts, which in turn increased the frequency of their usage. For example, assertives were used with directives in Dalal's data where she got more interaction from her followers by asking a question (directive speech act), e.g. "Have you tried Johnson's Vita Rich Smoothies Body Lotion and Body Wash? I would love to hear which one is your favorite!" and answering her question by giving information about the brand (assertive speech act), e.g. Mine is Peach and Coconut".

On the use of informing speech acts as an advertising strategy in "Malang Kuliner" Facebook group, Sarah (2015) concluded that a successful advertisement can be built by giving more information about the product, rather than telling people directly to purchase a particular product or making promises related to a specific product. Based on these studies and the results of the present study, it seems that Arab female fashion influencers prefer to use assertive speech

acts as a persuasive strategy because this speech act enables them to inform their followers about the brands they are promoting through stating their beliefs about what they think is true about these products (cf. Yule, 1996, p.53). Since these influencers are regarded as an authority on their brands (cf. Senft, 2013; Woods, 2016), stating what they think about these brands could be the most obvious persuasive strategy to convince their followers to buy their products. In this regard, Braatz (2017, p.7) stated that the “Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey” in 2015 showed that 66% of consumers are convinced by influencers, which makes influencers marketing the third-most-trusted advertising method. Simply, if, for example, Joelle (being considered an authority on X brand) states that X brand is good then it is most likely true that X is good from the viewpoint of followers. This may explain the lack of statistically significant differences between the influencers in their use of assertives since all of them use this persuasive speech act, relatively, to a similar degree.

The results also showed that the directive speech act was used as the second highest speech act by four influencers: Maya Ahmad, Joelle, Ascia and Dalal unlike Ola Al Fares and Model Roz who used directives less than the other influencers. Directives were often used to directly request and to command the influencers’ followers to perform a particular action, i.e. buying a certain product by asking them to tap for more details, to tag their friends, or to follow a particular brand. It can be suggested that these strategies can help to increase the sales of a company. Similarly to assertives, directive speech acts can also be used with other speech acts as persuasive strategies. For instance, Dalal, Ola Al Fares, Model Roz, and Maya Ahmad used directives with assertives to request the followers to perform a certain action, e.g. “My gorgeous make up was done by the most talented Makeup Artist. @artbyhector Using @fentybeauty products by @badgalriri. Hurry up and get yours from @sephoramiddleeast today”. This integration into other speech acts may account for directives being used frequently by the influencers. Researchers (e.g. Ingeish, & Hassan, 2009 p.7) emphasized the importance of using directives in the field of advertising, since they capture people’s attention encouraging them possibly to buy a particular product as in the example “Win up \$ 1000 in this week’s competition” which has an “informative function” that directly requests people to perform an action. Since influencers use speech acts as persuasive strategies, then it is expected that they use directives to encourage their followers to buy their products either by requesting or using imperatives. This is in line with Carr, Schrock, & Dauterman (2012) who indicated that directive sentences can be used to encourage followers to perform an action. The statistically significant differences between the influencers on the use of directives were in favor the Lebanese influencer Maya Ahmad and it can be attributed to her personality which tends to be more direct than the other influencers based on the researchers’ observation of her posts. Maya Ahmad may have a preference for this particular speech act as she could have noticed that her followers respond more to directives or that it could have resulted in an increase in the sales of the products and brands she is promoting. This may explain why most of Maya’s persuasive strategies were direct since the majority of directives found in this study were direct speech acts as reported in the remainder of this section.

Moreover, expressive speech acts were often used to express love and admiration for the brand’s quality, e.g. “One of my favorite piece of @creativestyle_kw fall/winter collection”. Expressive speech acts were also used to show gratitude or to congratulate the owners of the brand for their services, e.g. “Congratulations and Happy SHEIN @shein_ar 10th Anniversary! I love all the sweet embroidery detailing, the neat colours and the fabric. Plus, it’s so comfy, flattering and very lightweight”. In addition, expressive speech acts were used to show favoritism for a certain product. Such data may propose that expressives can be used as a persuasive strategy by Arab female fashion influencers since they rely mainly on the influencers expressing their feelings or emotional reactions about their products (cf. Banikalef & Bataineh, 2017). Since their audience is mainly females (since compared to males females tend to be more interested in fashion and makeup at least in the Middle East), it can be argued that expressing feelings about the products may appeal to the female audience and may encourage them to buy the products the influencers are promoting. In this regard, Lukic and Flyholm (2009) stated that social marketing academics use two terms of appeals: negative and positive. Positive appeals can occur when using a product that causes a positive feeling; however, negative appeals can be the opposite in which it causes negative emotion by not using a product (Lukic & Flyholm,

2009, p.23). Both appeals can motivate people, especially females, to buy a certain product either by removing or reducing the use of a product (negative appeal) or by acquiring or experiencing a new product (positive appeal) (Lukic & Flyholm, 2009, p.24). They also added that the use of emotional appeals is considered as one of the most common persuasion tools. The result of expressive speech acts is also in agreement with that of Patimah, Asiyah, and Mustikawati (2018) who stated that expressives were the second highest used speech acts by the students in Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogoas and they were used to express speakers' feelings. The statistically significant differences between the influencers on the use of expressives in favor of Joelle may be because she noted through her posts that her audience responds more to expressing emotions, which can be influential to affect the consumption behaviors of her followers. This is supported by a study conducted on the influence of emotional advertisements on women's consumption behavior by Majeed, Lu, & Usman (2017). Their data were mainly collected from 240 responses by Chinese women. The results revealed that show business celebrities who express their happiness by music and color are more likely to affect the consumption behavior of women (Majeed et al., 2017). This can also be true of fashion influencers on Instagram who use pictures and expressive strategies to appeal to the emotions of their audience, which is mostly made up of females, and encourage them to buy the products they are advertising.

With regard to commissive speech acts, all influencers used this type of speech act to offer or promise their followers of getting extra discounts or free samples of their products (cf. Carr et al., 2012). This can be followed by a request or a command using a directive speech act to use particular code for extra discount or tag and like a certain brand's page, e.g. "Enjoy 25% on selected watched, get a free strap and save up to 49% by adding my code DALALID Hurry though! Offers end Nov 26th!!!!". Due to the fact that commissives are used to express what the speakers want to do in the future (Yule, 1996, p.54), it is expected that these influencers use this type of speech act to persuade their followers to buy the products they are promoting. Simply put, what could be better to female followers than getting a discount on a certain famous brand or get a chance to try a sample for free before purchasing the product. The statistically significant differences between the influencers on the use of commissives in favor of Model Roz may be because her sponsors offer her more discounts and free samples which enable her to offer her followers more codes for discounts, gifts and free samples. This may explain why she employed commissives the most as she can support her commitment to her audience by providing more real offers and free samples. This argument is in agreement with that of Rebelo (2017, p.24) who stated that consumers may acknowledge this kind of activity of giving free samples or coupons by influencers as an opportunity to try a certain product, indirectly affecting their purchasing habits.

Finally, Ola Al Fares and Model Roz were the only influencers who used quotations without mentioning the author of the quotes. However, their quotations were always followed by tagging the name of the brands either by putting it as a hashtag, e.g. #ImseehJewelryXOlaAlFares#ImseehJewelry#gold or tagging the brand in the picture itself or in the post, e.g. @imseehjewelry as in "Don't talk, just act. Don't say, just show. Don't promise, just prove! And always "smile". Thus, this could be a reflection of the influencers' feelings towards a particular brand. This finding is consistent with Banikalef and Bataineh (2017) who found that quotations were employed in Jordanians' Facebook status updates to reflect users' feelings or beliefs by sharing song lyrics, poetic verse, Quranic verses and famous quotes. De Aquino Carlsson (2018) also found quotations in fitness influencers' posts on Instagram. The statistically significant differences between the influencers on the use of quotations in favor of Ola Al Fares may be attributed to the socio-cultural background of Ola Al Fares of being a Jordanian. It can be argued that Jordanians may respond to quotations as they may believe that quotations are stated by a wise or an experienced individual. Thus, the influencer's cultural background may have affected her persuasive strategy and encouraged her to use more quotations in her marketing posts even though her audience may not be all Jordanians. The influence of quotations on Jordanians was one of the findings of Banikalef & Bataineh (2017) who found that the use of quotations can be shaped by the social norms of the participants.

Concerning the third research question, the findings revealed that the most used persuasive speech acts by the target

influencers (Joelle, Ascia, Dalal, Ola Al Fares, Model Roz and Maya Ahmad) on Instagram was the assertive speech act with a percentage of 51%, then the influencers used directives with a percentage of 20.8%. This was followed by expressives with a percentage of 15.6%, while commissives were used with a percentage of 8.6%. The least used type was quotations with a percentage of 4%. These findings are in line with Sarah (2015) who found that assertives were the most used speech acts as an advertising strategy in “Malang Kuliner” Facebook group. The same was found by Patimah, Asiyah, and Mustikawati (2018) who examined the speech acts used in Instagram captions by students in Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo. Narthey (2015) found that the most used speech act was directives by the students in University of Cape Coas on their status updates on Facebook. Furthermore, De Aquino Carlsson (2018) also found that the most used speech act was directives by fitness influencers on Instagram. The findings of De Aquino Carlsson (2018) are different from those found in the current study regarding the most frequently used speech act. De Aquino Carlsson found that directives were the most used speech acts by three fitness American influencers and one Spanish influencer. However, the current study found that fashion Arab influencers used assertives more than directives and other types of speech acts. The difference in these two studies can be due to the differences in the cultures. Many studies have been conducted on directness as a speech act (e.g. Al-Ali & Alawneh, 2010; Tawalbeh & Al-Oqaily; 2012). Their findings indicated that Arabs are less direct than Americans and Spanish, which explains why Arabs use less directives (mostly direct) than other cultures. In this respect, the investigated Arab female fashion influencers in the current study were more likely to inform the followers about their favorite products, the advantages of using a product and any upcoming events related to a certain brand usually in an indirect way as they are using social media, i.e. Instagram, as a medium to advertise for their products. In this respect, Rebelo (2017, p.30) mentioned that consumers are more likely to look for products information through their social media accounts, especially Instagram in which they take previous feedback by other users, i.e. influencers. Thus, it can be concluded that the cultural background of the Arab female influencers (being generally indirect), the field of fashion, the nature of advertisements through influencers and the use of social media by influencers might require them to use more indirect speech acts to encourage the followers to purchase the promoted products.

6. MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study also have implications concerning the field of advertising. Promoting cosmetics and fashion on social media and the use of influencers to advertise for certain brands may be increasing lately due to the increase of online advertisements, the availability of online payment and house door deliveries. This may suggest that the number of such influencers may also increase not only in the field of fashion, but also in other fields. Advertising companies need to take into account that some consumers may respond to a certain persuasive strategy, while others may not. They need also to take into consideration that in some cases more than one persuasive strategy can be used to increase the effectiveness of the marketing post. As such, these companies need to hire influencers belonging to different cultural backgrounds, bearing in mind the difference characteristics of their audience and which persuasive strategy could be more effective. In the current study, even though the target fashion influencers are all Arab, they exhibited certain cultural differences resulting in having different percentages of using certain speech acts to promote a certain product. In the field of fashion, the use of different mediums such as written texts, pictures, tags is essential as they allow the influencers to combine between more than one persuasive strategy, and thus, produce a stronger combined strategy that may have a bigger impact on the consumers. Data analysis showed that the marketing posts of the target influencers included written text, pictures, videos, tags, hashtags and links which can be efficient in forming an influential advertising post to help in persuading the followers and affecting their purchasing habits. In addition, advertising through social media influencers can be characterized by the use of indirect strategies to build and retain a bond of trust with followers. This may suggest that the use of direct persuasive strategies should not exceed the use of indirect ones as consumers do not like products to be forced on them. Finally, the results of the present study can provide insights into the persuasive strategies of famous influencers. In turn, female and male individuals who aspire to

become Instagram influencers may benefit from the results of this study, especially in shaping their persuasive strategies taking into account the characteristics of their audience, methods to attract popular brands' owners, the most suitable persuasive strategy that elicits the highest response rates, the choice of pictures, and whether they should use direct or indirect speech acts depending on the culture of their audience among others.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main goal of this study was to analyze the persuasive speech acts used by six female Arab fashion influencers in order to understand how speech acts can be used to persuade followers to buy certain products and how persuasion as a speech act is used on social media websites, such as Instagram, as opposed to face-to-face interactions. This study analyzed the marketing posts by the six female Arab fashion influencers namely, Joelle Mardinian, Ascia, Model_Roz-Ola Al Fares, Dalal AlDoub, and Maya Ahmad to identify the persuasive speech acts used by them on Instagram. In addition, this study investigated if there were any similarities and/or differences by the selected fashion influencers on Instagram in order to identify the most and least frequently used persuasive speech acts. The results showed that *assertives* were the most frequently used speech act. The second most frequently used speech act among the six influencers was *directives*. Other speech acts were used less than assertives and directives but they were also in employed by the influencers, such as *expressives*, *commissives*, and *quotations*. This study also examined the similarities and differences between the selected female fashion influencers. The results showed that all influencers were similar in their use of assertive speech acts. The differences between influencers were in their usage of speech acts as each influencer has some preference to a particular speech act. Furthermore, the data analysis showed that directive speech acts were mostly expressed using direct speech acts. However, the other persuasive speech acts were used indirectly in the marketing posts to persuade the followers to buy specific products. Based on these results, it can be suggested that a study of the persuasive speech acts by influencers from different platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter is needed in order to make a comparison between the results in these platforms. Furthermore, fields other than fashion can be examined to determine whether influencers in different fields use different persuasive strategies. Finally, a study that makes a comparison between male and female influencers can also shed light on how the two genders employ persuasive speech acts and whether they have similarities and/or differences.

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استخدام الاناث العرب المؤثرين في مجال الازياء أفعال الإقناع اللفظية في الانستجرام

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ملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى البحث في أفعال الإقناع اللفظية التي تستخدمها ست اناث عربيات مؤثرات في مجال الأزياء في الانستجرام ، وهن: جويل ماردينيان و آسيا و عارضة الأزياء روز وعلا الفارس و دلال الدوب ومايا أحمد استنادًا إلى إطار نظرية الأفعال اللفظية، وتم جمع البيانات يدويًا من منشورات المؤثرات المستهدفات في الانستجرام وتم تجميعها في مُدونة نُصوص متخصصة تحتوي على ما يقرب على عشرين ألف كلمة. إضافة تعليق توضيحي يدويًا لإدراج معلومات برجماتية حول أنواع أفعال الإقناع اللفظية التي تستخدمها كل مؤثرة، وتظهر النتائج أن هناك تشابهات واختلافات بين المؤثرات المستهدفات فيما يتعلق باستخدامهن لأفعال الإقناع اللفظية على الانستجرام. تم استخدام معظم أفعال الإقناع اللفظية التي حددها سيرل (1979) من قبل المؤثرات المستهدفات بتكرارات مختلفة باستثناء أفعال الإقناع الإعلانية التي تتعارض وظيفتها مع وظيفة الإقناع. أظهرت النتائج أن الفعل الأكثر استخدامًا في الكلام كان الفعل التأكيدي. تبعت أفعال التأكيد الأفعال التوجيهية والتعبيرية. أظهرت النتائج أن أفعال الإقناع اللفظية الأقل استخدامًا كانت الأفعال الإلزامية والاختصاصات إضافة إلى ذلك، أظهرت النتائج أن غالبية أفعال الإقناع اللفظية التي تستخدمها المؤثرات كانت أفعال كلام غير مباشرة تشير المقارنة مع الدراسات الأخرى حول أفعال الإقناع اللفظية إلى أن ثقافة المؤثرات تلعب دوراً في نوع أفعال الإقناع اللفظية التي يستخدمونها. وخلصت الدراسة إلى توصيات لعمل مزيد من الأبحاث.

الكلمات الدالة: اللغويات، البرجماتية، تحليل الخطاب، مُدونة نُصوص.

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