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Between Beeps and Blasts: Jordanian Driving Culture's Nonverbal Pragmatics

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ABSTRACT

The pragmatic functions of car horn use in Jordanian urban traffic are examined in this study, with particular attention paid to the interpretations and communicative intentions connected to different horn patterns. The study examines how drivers use horn sounds as non-verbal speech acts, with a focus on their locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary dimensions. It is based on speech act theory and socio-pragmatic analysis. Two tools were used to gather data: semi-structured interviews with a targeted group of ten participants and some observations, as well as an adapted Discourse Completion Task (DCT) that was completed by thirty licensed drivers. A complex system of horn signaling was revealed by the DCT responses, which included repeated beeps for celebratory or expressive purposes, long honks for commands or warnings, and short beeps for alerts or greetings. The interviews supplemented these findings by demonstrating the impact of context, emotion, and social relationships on the interpretation of horn signals in real-life interactions. Results indicate that the use of horns in Jordan serves as a practical, culturally based form of nonverbal communication. While some horn patterns are widely recognized, others can cause confusion or misinterpretation because they rely heavily on situational factors. The study contributes to pragmatics by showing how everyday sound-based activities, like blowing a horn, serve as communication acts that have real social significance, expressing both personal purpose and collective social meaning.

Keywords: Pragmatics; Nonverbal Communication; DCT; Horn Signaling; NVivo; Semiotics

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1. Introduction

In contemporary urban settings, a variety of non-verbal auditory cues are used in addition to spoken language for communication. Among these, using a car horn is a distinctive, deeply ingrained, and pragmatic form of expression. The horn is frequently disregarded in linguistic and sociopragmatic studies, despite being a ubiquitous aspect of traffic life. In order to close that gap, this study looks at the practical purposes of car horn use in Jordanian cities, emphasizing the listeners' interpretations of the horn patterns and the communicative intentions behind them.

Prior studies have highlighted that honking a horn is a structured form of non-verbal communication rather than just a random or mechanical act [1]. Horns are used by drivers for a variety of reasons, such as requests, greetings, warnings, or outbursts of annoyance; depending on the situation, each carries a unique illocutionary force [2]. For instance, a prolonged honk could serve as a warning or command, whereas a brief beep might convey a friendly signal [3].

Horn usage differs greatly between cultures, according to recent ethnographic research. Horn signals are highly contextualized and culturally coded in nations with high-context communication styles, such as India or Jordan [4]. These signals frequently depend on regional traffic norms, common social knowledge, and even the interpersonal relationships of drivers [5]. However, misinterpretations and unclear interpretations are also frequent, especially when different age, gender, or regional groups [6] interpret horn sounds differently.

The theoretical foundation of this study is speech act theory [7], which distinguishes three levels of communicative acts: perlocutionary (the listener's interpretation or response), illocutionary (the speaker's intention), and locutionary (the physical act of honking). Although speech act theory has historically been used to study verbal interactions, it is now being used more and more to examine paralinguistic and nonverbal communication in multimodal settings [8].

This study uses a mixed-method approach to investigate these dimensions. Thirty licensed drivers were given an adapted Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to mimic typical driving situations. Ten participants also participated in semi-structured interviews to record actual horn usage instances, their intended meanings, and the reactions of the listeners. When combined, these tools enable a thorough examination of horn use as a practical act influenced by interpersonal dynamics, culture, and circumstance [9–11].

This study adds to the expanding corpus of semiotic and pragmatic research on nonverbal communication by concentrating on the Jordanian context and provides fresh perspectives on how meaning is created, transmitted, or misinterpreted in routine traffic encounters [12–14].

This research explores the many ways that drivers in Jordanian cities utilize automobile horn sounds to communicate. It looks at how these horn signals work as illocutionary actions, showing things like warning, welcome, or showing that something is urgent. The study also looks at how people react emotionally and behaviorally to the perlocutionary impacts of these signals in various traffic and social situations. The research also looks at how cultural norms and environmental elements including location, time of day, social ties, and expectations affect how people in Jordan use and understand horn honking as a way to communicate without words.

2. Literature Review

Speech Act Theory, first put forth by Austin [15] and then expanded upon by Searle [7], serves as the foundation for this investigation. This theory holds that language is a tool for carrying out actions as well as a means of communicating information. Car horn use in Jordanian urban traffic is regarded as a type of non-verbal speech act in this context. The locutionary act (the horn itself), the illocutionary act (the driver's intended meaning, like warning, greeting, or urging), and the perlocutionary act (the effect on the hearer, like compliance, acknowledgment, or irritation) are the three levels at which each horn sound can be examined. These differences enable a methodical examination of the ways in which horn signals serve as acts of communication in a highly contextual setting [16].

The study uses Dell Hymes' [17] speaking model, an ethnographic tool that analyzes communication through eight contextual components, to comprehend how these horn signals are interpreted and shaped by their setting. For instance, the Setting (such as crowded city streets), Partic-

ipants (such as drivers and pedestrians), and Ends (such as movement or protest) all contribute to the explanation of how and why particular horn patterns appear. When distinguishing between expressive and functional uses, the Key (emotional tone), Instrumentalities (the horn and gestures), and Norms (social rules governing usage) are particularly important. In contrast to random or purely mechanical behavior, this model offers an organized method of understanding horn usage as a culturally situated speech event.

The study also examines how horn usage reflects Jordanian social values by drawing on Wierzbicka's [15] theory of cultural scripts. Cultural norms regarding civility, assertiveness, and public conduct influence honking customs; short honks can convey recognition or solidarity, while longer honks can convey authority or annoyance. Horn sound production and interpretation are further influenced by sociopragmatic factors, including gender (e.g.,

male vs. female driving behavior), age (youthful assertiveness vs. elderly restraint), class (e.g., taxi drivers vs. luxury car owners), and geography (urban vs. rural norms). The use of car horns in Jordan as a context-sensitive and socially significant form of nonverbal communication can be thoroughly examined thanks to these integrated frameworks.

Using a car horn has been examined more and more as a component of the nonverbal auditory semiotic system that drivers employ to communicate emotions, negotiate space, and establish their social presence. Chen & Hu [2] who studied driving behavior in urban India, found that drivers employed a variety of horn patterns to accomplish different communicative goals. These ranged from polite requests (short, soft beeps) to dominance or frustration (long, loud honks). Their research highlighted the fact that horn use is influenced by social context, physical limitations, and cultural norms and cannot be comprehended in a vacuum.

Nguyen et al [3] investigated the acoustic structure of horn usage in crowded city streets in a study carried out in Bangladesh. They categorized horn signals into functional categories like "cooperative," "aggressive," "ritualistic" (such as wedding horns), and "phatic" (greeting or acknowledgment) using contextual mapping and sound analysis software. They came to the conclusion that, depending on exposure and local norms, drivers create and interpret a common "honking repertoire," implying that, like language, car horns can create a cultural code.

Similar to this, Mahmood [1] observed in a comparative study across several nations that the horn is not only regarded as a mechanical safety device but also as a social signaling tool in certain high-context cultures, such as many in Asia and the Middle East. Mahmood stressed that using a horn in these situations frequently serves relational and expressive purposes that are either nonexistent or discouraged in driving cultures in the West. The semiotic and pragmatic richness of sound-based interaction in Arab traffic culture is becoming increasingly recognized, despite the fact that there aren't many empirical studies that specifically address Jordan. The horn is used to carry out a number of social acts, including calling someone from a building, greeting acquaintances, alerting careless pedestrians, or expressing emotional agitation, according to Albatayneh et al [6] study conducted at the German Jordanian University in Amman, Jordan, aimed to understand the factors influencing driving behaviors and compliance with traffic regulations among students, academic staff, and university employees. The survey involved over 500 individuals, yielding 300 responses. Notable trends included non-compliance with speed limits, seatbelt usage, and mobile phone usage while driving. The majority of respondents aged 18–19 had experienced one or two accidents. Social media was perceived as the most effective medium for traffic awareness campaigns, while television was deemed the least effective. The findings highlight the need for comprehensive traffic safety education, especially among younger drivers. The study recommends integrating Traffic Awareness as a mandatory module within university curricula to reduce traffic-related incidents and foster a culture of responsible driving.

Studies on headlight flashing and gesture use in traffic, like Jadaan et al. [18] research paper investigates traffic safety culture among Jordanian drivers and identifies common aggressive behaviors. An online survey was distributed in 2019, and results showed high exposure to traffic accidents. 75% of participants considered aggressive driving a serious threat, and 60% honked their vehicles excessively. The most common behaviors were speeding through yellow lights, lack of seat belt use, mobile phone use, and speeding on highways. Male drivers were more aggressive and more exposed to accidents. Significant differences in behavior were found under police and traffic camera sur-

veillance. Preventive countermeasures were recommended to increase safety culture awareness.

Despite these advancements, the literature on the methodical pragmatic analysis of car horn usage in Jordan is still severely lacking. A linguistic or speech-act-based approach to comprehending horn communication is lacking in Jordan's current research, which has mostly concentrated on traffic behavior, road safety, or sociological patterns. Furthermore, previous research has rarely used mixed methods to investigate the intended meanings (illocutionary acts) and interpretive outcomes (perlocutionary acts) of horn signals, especially when combining Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) with in-depth interviews. Most significantly, there is still a lack of research on the everyday communicative value of horn use as a culturally shaped non-verbal system in Arabic-speaking contexts [19–23]. Thus, this study aims to explore the nonverbal communication of horns using a sociopragmatic framework based on speech act theory and investigate the production, interpretation, and social regulation of horn signals using a Jordanian dataset.

3. Methodology

In order to thoroughly examine the practical purposes of car horn use in Irbid, Jordan, this study used a mixed-methods research design that combined quantitative and qualitative techniques. In order to capture the intended illocutionary acts as well as the contextual realities of horn use, the design combined semi-structured interviews, Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), and naturalistic street observations. Thirty (30) Irbid City licensed drivers took part in the DCT stage. As shown in **Table 1** below, the sample was balanced in terms of age and gender.

Ten (10) participants were chosen for in-depth semi-structured interviews from this group. **Table 2** shows their demographics.

Table 1. Demographic Details of DCT Phase Participants (N = 30) Features Type Frequency Percentage (%).

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	16	53.3
	Female	14	46.7
Age Group	18–25 years	8	26.7
	26–35 years	12	40.0
	36–45 years	6	20.0
	46 years and above	4	13.3
Driving Experience	Less than 2 years	5	16.7
	2–5 years	10	33.3
	More than 5 years	15	50.0

Table 2. Demographic Details of Interview Phase Participants (N = 10) Features Type Frequency Percentage (%).

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	5	50.0
	Female	5	50.0
Age Group	18–25 years	3	30.0
	26–35 years	4	40.0
	36–45 years	2	20.0
	46 years and above	1	10.0
Driving Experience	Less than 2 years	1	10.0
	2–5 years	4	40.0
	More than 5 years	5	50.0

In order to document and examine actual horn usage in natural settings, naturalistic observations were also carried out at busy traffic intersections in Irbid. Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) were the starting point for the research. In an effort to ascertain the intended communicative meanings and typical horn use in a variety of traffic and social contexts, participants were required to compose their responses to seven traffic-related scenarios. The following step involved conducting semi-structured interviews, each of which lasted 15–20 minutes. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain the subjective interpretations of horn sounds, perceived social meanings, and affective responses of the participants. Additionally, street observations: Over the course of two weeks during peak traffic hours, researchers captured siren patterns, driver behaviors, and situational contexts at strategic intersections in Irbid to corroborate and validate self-reported data.

To analyze the data, Speech Act Theory by Searle [7], which views communication as performative actions rather than just the exchange of information, serves as the foundation for this investigation. Three levels of nonverbal speech acts are considered to be involved in car horn sounds:

- The locutionary act, which is the actual horn sound.
- The driver's intended communication function, such as warning, greeting, or urging, is known as the illocutionary act.
- The perlocutionary act: the listener's reaction (e.g., compliance, acknowledgment, irritation).

The study uses Dell Hymes' speaking model [17], which examines communication through eight components—Setting, Participants, Ends, Key, Instrumentalities, and Norms—to contextualize horn use. According to this model, honking a horn is a culturally situated speech event that is considerate of local customs and social context. Furthermore, the analysis of how horn usage reflects Jordanian social values, such assertiveness and politeness, with sociopragmatic influences like gender, age, social class, and geography is informed by Wierzbicka's cultural scripts theory [15].

This study used NVivo 14 (QSR International, 2024), a qualitative data analysis program, to help us organize, code, and understand the data we had gathered in a systematic way. NVivo 14 is a sophisticated program that many people use in qualitative research to handle vast amounts of text and audiovisual data. The program was very important for doing theme coding, looking for trends, and putting together mixed-methods data in a way that was organized and could be traced. The researchers were able to compare themes across diverse forms of data, such as interviews, DCT replies, and field notes, thanks to its sophisticated capabilities like matrix coding searches, node hierarchies, and visualization tools.

Based on speech act theory, a coding system was constructed that shows the three types of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. Each category was divided into nodes, and sociocultural characteristics including age, gender, setting, and relationship type were classified as subnodes so that they could be compared across groups. NVivo's data visualization capabilities, such as charts, word trees, and cluster maps, made it easier to find patterns and connections inside and across datasets, which made the interpretation clearer and trustworthy. Using NVivo (see **Figure 1**)was also helpful for making sure that the analysis was thorough, that all coders were consistent, and that the results could be repeated. It also made it easy to find and compare samples from various participants who used the same codes, which helped to come up with well-supported theme findings on the communicative roles of automobile horn usage in Jordanian city traffic. The theoretical constructs were mirrored in the coding framework, which divided the data into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Sociocultural variables were captured by subnodes. Among the key analyses were:

- A coding structure that arranges subnodes (like Warning, Greeting) and main nodes (like Horn Types, Illocutionary Functions).
- Coded references that show sample passages that demonstrate each speech act.
- Matrix coding queries that investigate connections, like those between illocutionary horn functions and gender.

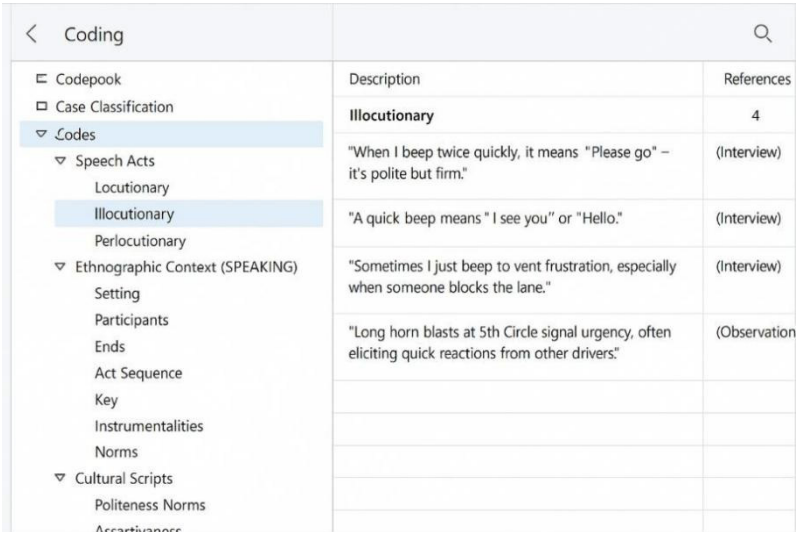

Figure 1. NVivo 14's analysis.

A methodical, theory-driven examination of horn communication as a sophisticated social practice was made possible by this exacting qualitative and quantitative coding.

To meet the ethical considerations, this study explained the objectives and methods of the study and each participant gave written informed consent. Moreover, all records were securely stored, and data were coded to protect participant confidentiality and anonymity. The study also complied with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects and was approved by Jadara University's Research Ethics Committee. In accordance with privacy standards, street observations were made in public areas without documenting any personally identifiable information.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results of Illocutionary Functions

Eight main illocutionary functions of car horn use were identified in Irbid based on observations, interviews, and DCTs. Context, urgency, and social roles all influence these functions, which mirror culturally patterned behaviors. A description and three real-world examples in Arabic, transliteration, and English are provided for each function below.

1. Warning (تحذير): 31%

Justification:

The most typical horn function is this one. To alert cars, pedestrians, or animals to impending danger, drivers honk quickly and sharply. Rather than being aggressive, these are typically defensive and preventive.

For instance:

Arabic: رح تخطِني !انتهِ!

Intabeh is the transliteration. Raḥ tikhbaṭnī Translation: Be careful! You're going to strike me!

Arabic: زمرتله لن بيطلع فجأة من الزقاق

Translation: Zammartillu li'annu biyṭlaʿ fajʾa min az-zuqāq Translation: He was abruptly emerging from the alley, so I honked.

Arabic: كنت بمشي بسرعة، وزمرت لولد كان بيقطع الشارع

Kint bimshī bisurʿa, w zammart li-walad kān biyaqṭaʿ ish-shāriʿ is the transliteration. Translation: I honked at a child crossing the street while I was driving quickly.

2. Making a request or pressing (طلب أوستعجال):22%

Justification: When drivers want other people to move, hurry, or yield, they use this phrase. These honks are longer and frequently convey frustration.

For instance:

Arabic:!حرك! الشارة خضرا من زمان

Transliteration: Ḥarrik! Khaḍrā min zamān il-ishāra

Translation: Get moving! For a long time, the light has been green!

Arabic:زمرتله عشان يطلع من الموقف بسرعة

Translation: Zammartillu ʿashān yiṭlaʿ min il-mawqif bisurʿa

In other words, I honked to get him to move out of the parking space more quickly.

Arabic:واقف بنص الشارع، اضطريت أزمر له

Transliteration: Wāqif b-nuṣṣ ish-shāriʿ, iḍṭarraīt azammir-lu. Translation: I had to honk because he was in the middle of the road.

3. Salutation and Acknowledgment (تحية أو معرفة): 11%

Justification:

Honks are short, upbeat greetings that are frequently used in local neighborhoods to welcome friends, neighbors, or family. One of the horn's few amiable applications is this.

For instance:

Arabic: زمرتله لن ابن عمي واقف قدام الدكان

Transliteration: Zammartillu li'annu ibn ʿammī wāqif uddām id-dukkān Translation: My cousin was near the store, so I honked.

Arabic: زمرت لما شفت صاحبي داخل الدكانة

Zammart lammā shift ṣāḥbī dākhil il-dukhaneh.

Translation: As soon as I spotted my friend inside the supermarket, I honked.

Arabic: صديقي بالسيارة المقابلة، زمرتله وابتسم

Ṣadīqī bissayyāra il-muqābila, zammartillu w ibtisim is the transliteration. Translation: When I honked at my friend in the car across from me, he grinned.

4. Complaining or expressing annoyance (شكوى أو إزعاج): 13%

Justification:

Drivers aggressively use the horn to vent their rage, particularly when someone is being reckless, slow, or breaking the law. These honks are emotional and lengthy.

For instance:

Arabic:يا أخي، مش شايف الصف؟!

Translation: Yā akhī, mish shāyif aṣ-ṣaff? Translation: Do you not see the line, man?

Arabic: زمرتله لن واقف غلط ومسكر الشارع

Zammartillu li'annu wāqif ghalat w msakkir ish-shāriʿ is the transliteration. Translation: He was parked incorrectly and obstructing the road, so I honked.

Arabic: طول الطريق قاعد يزمر بل سببٍ، زمرتله ردا

Transliteration: Ṭūl iṭ-ṭarīq qāʿid yzammir bilā sabab, zammartillu raddan Translation: I responded to his incessant honking by honking back.

5. Expressing gratitude or

acknowledgment (شكرأوامتنان): 7% Justification:

Short, courteous honks are used to express appreciation, such as when a driver yields or assists in traffic. Though uncommon, these are interpreted favorably.

For instance:

Arabic: شكرته بزمره خفيفه لما أعطاني الولوية

Transliteration: Shakartuh b-zamra khafīfa lammā aʿṭānī al-awlawiyya Translation: When he gave me priority, I gave him a small honk of thanks.

Arabic:! زمرتله كإشارة شكر !يسلمو

Transliteration: Yislamū is the transliteration! Zammartillu ka-ishārat shukr Translation: Many thanks! I expressed my gratitude by honking.

Arabic: السائق فتحلي الطريق، زمرتله شكرا

Transliteration: As-sāʾiq fataḥlī iṭ-ṭarīq, zammartillu shukran Translation: I thanked the driver by honking as he made room for me.

6. Notifying of Presence (تنبيه غيرمهدد): 7%

Justification:

used to prevent surprises when passing by, entering small lanes, or making blind turns. These honks are neutral and circumspect.

For instance:

Arabic: الزقاق ضيق، بزمر بس عشان الناس تنتبِه

Transliteration: bazzammir bass ʿashān in-nās tintibih, az-zuqāq ḍayyaq Translation: I honk to warn people that the alley is narrow.

Arabic: قبلِ ما أطلع من الكراج، بزمر

Transliteration: Qabl ma aṭlaʿ min il-karāj, bazzammir. Translation: I honk before I leave the garage.

Arabic: في دوار مزدحم، بزمر وأنا داخل

Transliteration: Fī dawwār muzdiḥim, bazzammir wa-anā dākhil Translation: I honk as I enter a congested roundabout.

7. Joy/Celebration (احتفال أوفرح): 5%

Justification: used at social gatherings, particularly weddings and sporting events. These honks are expressive, rhythmic, and socially acceptable.

For instance:

Arabic: بالزفة بنظل نزمر فرح وسعادة

Transliteration: Bil-zaffa bnḍall nzammir faraḥ w saʿāda

Translation: We continue to honk happily during the wedding convoy.

Arabic: لما الردن فازت، الشوارع كلها كانت بتزمر

Transliteration: Lammā il-ʾUrdun fāzat, ish-shawāriʿ kullhā kānit bitzammirز Translation: Every street was

honking when Jordan won.

Arabic: في حفلة التخرج، الشباب زمروا قدام الجامعة

Transliteration: Fī ḥaflat at-takharruj, ash-shabāb zammaru uddām il-jāmiʿa.

Translation: The guys honked in front of the university during the graduation celebration.

8. Command/Instruction (أمرأوتوجيه) : 4%

Justification: used by drivers, particularly those in delivery services or taxis, to signal to other drivers to perform a certain action (e.g., move, reverse, or open a gate).

For instance:

Arabic: بزمر لصاحا البِت عشان يفتح الإب

Transliteration: Bazzammir li-ṣāḥib il-bēt ʿashān yiftaḥ il-bāb. Translation: To get the homeowner to open the gate, I honk.

Arabic: زمرة طويلة تعني ارجع شوي

Transliteration: Zamra ṭawīla taʿnī irjaʿ shwayy. The meaning of a long honk is "back up a bit."

Arabic: الدليفري بزمر من تحت عشان ينزلوا له

Transliteration: Ad-dilīvrī bizzammir min taḥt ʿashān yinzillū-luh Translation: They emerge when the delivery man honks downstairs.

Table 3 below lists the dimensions of the Car Horn Functions to Speech Act.

Table 3. Mapping Car Horn Functions to Speech Act Dimensions.

Function	Locutionary Act	Illocutionary Act (Intent)	Perlocutionary Act (Effect on Hearer)
1. Warning (تحذير)	Short, sharp honk	Alerting of danger	Increased awareness; preventive reaction
2. Request/Pressing (استعجال)	Long, urgent honk	Urging to move, yield, or speed up	Compliance, annoyance, or stress
3. Salutation (تحية)	Quick, cheerful beep	Greeting, recognition	Acknowledgment, friendly return gesture or smile
4. Complaint (شكوى)	Long, emotional honk	Expressing frustration or protest	Irritation, aggression, escalation
5. Gratitude (شكر)	Soft, polite honk	Expressing thanks or acknowledgment	Appreciation, friendly nod, or smile
6. Notifying Presence (تنبيه)	Soft, neutral honk	Preventing collision, alerting of one's approach	Preparedness, avoidance of accidents
7. Celebration (فرح)	Rhythmic, repeated honks	Expressing joy or communal spirit	Positive emotion, solidarity, social bonding
8. Command/Instruction (توجيه)	Single firm or patterned honk	Giving directive (e.g., open gate, reverse)	Action taken (e.g., movement, opening gate, compliance)

According to the study's findings, using a car horn in Irbid, Jordan, is not at all random or purely mechanical. Rather, it represents a sophisticated, pragmatic system of nonverbal communication with unique illocutionary functions that align with the Speech Act Theory of Austin [15] and Searle [7].

1. Contextual Sensitivity and Functional Diversity

As demonstrated by the eight recognized horn functions—Warning, Requesting/Urging, Greeting, Expressing Annoyance, Thanking, Alerting to Presence, Celebration, and Command—honking in Jordan is a multipurpose tool that is impacted by relational, emotional, and situational factors. In high-stakes, fast-paced public settings (such as crowded intersections or impromptu meetings), these functions resemble illocutionary speech acts present in spoken interaction, indicating that the horn serves as a verbal utterance substitute.

Although it is strongly influenced by local context, the warning function's dominance (31%) is consistent with universal driving behavior. Short, sharp honks are frequently used by Jordanian drivers to both anticipate and avert danger, particularly in small alleys or unmarked intersections. This implies a preventive communication approach, similar to what Wierzbicka [15] calls "culturally scripted politeness within assertiveness."

2. The Social and Interpersonal Aspects of Honking

The interpersonal warmth ingrained in Jordanian culture is reflected in functions such as Greeting/Recognition (11%) and Thanking/Acknowledging (7%), particularly within familiar social circles and neighborhoods. In

these situations, honking has a relational function, such as expressing gratitude or preserving social ties. Though less prevalent in Western settings, these forms are consistent with Hymes' [17] speaking model, especially in the way that the horn is shaped as a socially acceptable gesture by the Participants, Ends, and Norms. Annoyance (13%) and Urging (22%) on the other hand, which frequently function as negative, face-threatening behaviors, express frustration and pressure in urban traffic. According to the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson [24], these honks could jeopardize the hearer's competence or autonomy. However, local driving norms in Jordan, where honking is more expected as direct feedback and less stigmatized as rudeness, may normalize such behavior.

3. Sociopragmatic and Cultural Factors

Culturally salient are the Command (4%) and Celebration (5%) functions. Car horns have evolved into a semiotic tool for public emotion and collective expression, as demonstrated by honking at graduations, football games, and weddings. This lends credence to the idea that horns serve as indexical indicators of socially shared experiences. The Command function, frequently employed by delivery workers or taxi drivers, emphasizes even more how social hierarchies and economic roles affect horn usage. For example, in crowded or unofficial urban areas, lower-income workers frequently use horns for practical coordination.

4. Theory of Speech Acts and Nonverbal Understanding

Every horn function that has been identified fits neatly into Speech Act Theory's illocutionary component. The physical horn sound is the locutionary act. Tone, duration, context, and culture all affect the illocutionary act, or what the honk signifies. The listener's response, or perlocutionary effect, can vary from compliance to offense.

This supports the idea put forth by Austin [15] that "saying is doing," even in situations where the "saying" is nonverbal. Because car horns serve as directives (urging, commanding), expressives (thanks, greetings), commissives (implied acknowledgment), and declaratives (as in celebrations), the study also supports Searle's [25] classification of illocutionary acts.

5. Useful Consequences

These findings imply that Jordan's traffic laws, driver education programs, and urban planning must acknowledge that using horns is practical communication rather than just noise. In addition to recognizing the cultural purposes of horns, policy should seek to control excessive or aggressive horn use. Future initiatives to lessen "noise pollution" should distinguish contextual horn behavior rather than enacting outright bans.

4.2. Results of Perlocutionary Effects

Listeners (both drivers and pedestrians) react to car horn signals in socially patterned and contextually dependent ways, according to data gathered from DCTs, interviews, and observations in Irbid. Traffic situations, interpersonal relationships, emotional tone, and the honker's perceived intent all had different perlocutionary effects. Five primary perlocutionary categories were identified from these interpretations

1. Behavioral Adjustment and Compliance

Definition: The horn causes the listener to change their behavior (e.g., moves forward, yields, looks behind). The most common effect was this one.

Situations:

- Parking exits, small roads, and traffic lights

For instance:

- "لما زمر وراي، انتهت وتحركت"

Transliteration: Lammā zammar warāy, intabaht wa taḥarrakt.

Translation: I realized and took action when he honked behind me.

- "الزامور نهني لني كنت حاجز السير"

Transliteration: Il- zammourr nabbaḥnī annī kunt ḥājiz is-sayr.

Translation: I was warned by the horn that I was obstructing traffic.

- Short, moderate honks were most likely to elicit this response.

2. Emotional Reaction (Stress, Annoyance, Startle)

Definition: An affective response to the horn can range from irritation or panic to feelings of embarrassment and anxiety.

Situations:

- Horns in the early morning or late at night, busy intersections, and pedestrian crossings

For instance:

Arabic:خفت الكل يطلع ،اتهدلت بسبِ الزمور

Transliteration: khift il-kull yiṭṭalliʿ, itbahdalt bisabab az-zamūr

Translation: The honk made me feel ashamed, and I was worried that people would notice.

- "صرت متوتر كل مرة أسمع زمور"

Translation: Ṣirt mutawattir kull marra asmaʿ zamūr Translation: Every time I hear a horn, I get nervous.

- Long, loud, or aggressive honks were strongly linked to emotional effects, particularly in older pedestrians or female drivers.

3. Appreciation and Social Interaction

Definition: The horn is interpreted by the listener as a salutation, acknowledgement, or gesture of goodwill.

Situations:

- Familiar streets, local neighborhoods, and shops outside For instance:
- "ضحكت لما زمر صاحي ومرق بسرعة"

Translation: Ḍaḥakt lammā zammar ṣāḥbī w maraq bisurʿa Translation: When my friend honked and hurried by, I laughed.

- "زمرتلي جارتي، حسيت بدفء العلاقة"

Transliteration: ḥassēt bidifʾ il-ʿalāqa, Zammartlī jārtī Translation: I felt warm when my neighbor honked at me.

- Usually, short, rhythmic, or upbeat honks would cause these effects.

4. Ambiguity or Misunderstanding

Definition: The listener misinterprets the honk or is unclear of its meaning. Situations:

- Multiple vehicles, unclear timing, and multi-lane roads

For instance:

- " مافهمت لمين الزمور، توقعت إلي وتحركت"

Translation: mā fihimt limīn az-zamūr Tawwaqaʿt ilay wa taḥarrakt,

Translation: I moved because I thought it was me and didn't know who the honk was for.

" مرات الزامور محرج ، بتحس الكل بطلع فيك "

Translation: marrāt az-zamūr muḥrij li'annuh mish ilayk Bass biṭḥiss il-kull ṭāliʿ fīk, Translation: It can be awkward at times when you feel like everyone is staring at you even though it's not for you.

- Common in congested areas and among younger drivers.

5. Opposition or Retaliation

Definition: The listener reacts negatively, either by ignoring the honk, returning the ring, or displaying annoyance.

Situations:

- Aggressive tone, perceived unwarranted honks, and interactions based on class For instance:
- "زمرلي بدون داعي، طنشته"

Translation: Zammarlī bidūn dāʿī, ṭananshtuh

Translation: I ignored him when he honked at me without cause.

- "رجعت زمرتله كنوع من الرد"

Translation: Rajjaʿt zammartillu kanawʿ min ar-radd Translation: In a sense, I responded by honking back.

- Young people and cab drivers were more likely to confront or retaliate.

The results demonstrate that a variety of perlocutionary effects are elicited by car horn signals, and that these effects are significantly influenced by the listener's relationship to the honker, contextual expectations, and social background. According to Speech Act Theory [7,15], the same horn signal can produce different results based on the perceived intent and usage context. The speaker's illocutionary goal is not always met by the listener's interpretation, indicating that miscommunications or misfires are frequent in the following parts.

1.The Predominance of Adjustment and Compliance

Many drivers and pedestrians in Irbid view horn signals as valid forms of communication, as evidenced by the most common perlocutionary response, compliance or behavioral adjustment. The normative force of traffic communication is reflected in these responses, as horns are sup-

posed to cause abrupt behavioral changes (such as yielding or moving forward). Because the listener correctly understands and responds to the honker's intent, there is a high degree of illocutionary-perlocutionary alignment in these situations. This is consistent with Hymes' [17] "Ends" and "Norms" in communicative events, which demonstrate how honking becomes a socially acceptable instruction in situations with heavy traffic.

2.Emotional Impacts: Anxiety and Unease in City Environments

Emotional disturbance (e.g., stress, embarrassment, or fear) was the second most common response, and it was particularly prevalent among female drivers, older pedestrians, and those with less experience. According to these participants, honks are startling, frequently overdone, and emotionally intrusive, especially when they are sudden or excessively loud. These responses demonstrate the perlocutionary power of sound, where the horn transforms from a request into a public performance that has the potential to embarrass, annoy, or threaten.

This is consistent with the face theory of Brown and Levinson [24], which holds that honking can be a threat to one's face, particularly if it is perceived as dominance or criticism. Such honks are frequently internalized as criticisms of competence or decorum in the Jordanian cultural context, where public humiliation carries significant social weight.

3.Honks as Positive Perlocutions for Recognition and Social Warmth

It's interesting to note that some horn patterns—like rapid, rhythmic honks—produced favorable perlocutionary effects, like joy, warmth, and recognition. These honks, which are frequently heard in neighborhoods or close to well-known places, strengthen social ties and a sense of community. When friends or family honked at them, participants said they smiled, waved, or laughed. Wierzbicka's [16] theory of cultural scripts, which holds that nonverbal cues like honking have ingrained cultural meanings that are amicable rather than combative, is supported by this type of horn use.

4.Misunderstanding: Practical Ambiguity in Nonverbal Communication

The frequency of misunderstandings or confusion was one important finding. Numerous participants related instances in which they thought a honk was aimed at them, causing them to act awkwardly or needlessly, only to discover it was intended for someone else. This demonstrates the practical ambiguity of horn communication, particularly at busy intersections or in situations with multiple lanes of traffic where auditory cues are unclear in their directionality. It also highlights the limitations of nonverbal speech acts, which run the risk of being misunderstood or disregarded in the absence of clear context or accompanying cues.

5.Assertive Perlocutionary Results of Resistance and Retaliation

Sometimes, especially among young male drivers or taxi drivers, honks that were viewed as aggressive or unwarranted led to resistance or retaliation. These participants talked about vocally expressing their disapproval, ignoring the honk, or honking back. These behaviors indicate counter-illocutionary responses, in which the listener asserts their own communicative power and rejects the honker's pragmatic intent. Giving in to criticism, particularly in public, is seen as a loss of face, which is consistent with regional conceptions of honor and masculinity.

All things considered, this study demonstrates that perlocutionary acts are socially filtered, emotionally charged, and contextually mediated; they are not merely the passive outcome of speaker intent. Depending on past experiences, gender, social status, and spatial awareness, the same horn sound may cause one listener to move, another to feel stressed, and a third to retaliate. These results support a contextual, ethnographic understanding of traffic interaction—where meaning is co-constructed rather than imposed—and highlight the significance of taking into account both speaker and hearer perspectives in pragmatic analysis.

4.3. Findings Regarding Research Question 3

How is the use and comprehension of horn honking as a nonverbal communication method in Jordan influenced by situational and cultural factors?

This section presents findings that demonstrate how cultural norms, social identities, and situational factors significantly influence horn use and its interpretation. These findings are based on Speech Act Theory, Hymes' speaking model, and Wierzbicka's [16] theory of cultural scripts. Five

primary cultural and situational factors were identified in the data as structuring both the perlocutionary effects (interpretation) and illocutionary acts (intent) of car horn signals in Irbid, Jordan.

1. Communication Norms by Gender

The use of car horns differs greatly by gender. Horns were more frequently used assertively by male drivers to urge, command, and show annoyance. On the other hand, female drivers stated that they felt socially inhibited from honking outside of emergencies because they were afraid of being perceived as aggressive or unfeminine. This is a reflection of Jordanian cultural scripts that tend to link men with assertiveness in public settings.

"أنا بزمر بس ...بحس الناس بيفكروا البنِت وقحة إذا زمرت كثير إذا في خطر"

Baḥiss inn il-nās bifakkru inn il-bint wảḥa iza zamrat ktīr… ana bazammer bass iza fī khatar.

I feel like people think a female is impolite if she honks a lot... I only honk when I'm in danger.

This lends credence to Wierzbicka's [15] theory that gendered cultural expectations filter both pragmatic behavior and emotional expression.

2. Experience and Age

While older drivers used horns more traditionally and cautiously (mostly for warning and thanking), younger drivers tended to use them more frequently and casually, frequently incorporating them into peer signaling or expressions of frustration. Youth who overused their horns and strayed from "respectable" horn etiquette were frequently chastised by the latter group.

"إحنا زمان كنا نستخدم الزمور وقت اللزوم ...الشباب بزمروا على أي شي"

ish-shābb bizammru ʿalá ayy ishī, iḥna zamān kunnā nistaʿmil iz-zammūr waqt il-luzūm

"Young people honk for anything. Back in the day, we only used the horn when it was absolutely necessary." These results are consistent with Dell Hymes' "Norms of interaction," which holds that communicative appropriateness is influenced by age-based expectations.

3. Vehicle Type and Social Class

Older cars, delivery trucks, and taxi drivers relied more on honking as an instrumental communication method, frequently using it to direct others, claim space, or indicate arrival. The horn was used less frequently by drivers of luxury or newer cars, who frequently saw excessive honking as a sign of poorer social behavior.

"سواقين التكاسي دايما بزمروا ... إحنا بنحاول نكون راقين بالسواقة"

suwāqīn it-takāsī dāyman bizammru …iḥna binḥāwil nkūn rāqīn bis-sawāqah

"Taxi drivers constantly honk, so we try to drive more elegantly."

This is in line with Wierzbicka's theory [15] of class-based cultural scripts, in which the use of horns serves as a social identity indicator.

4. Environmental and Geographical Contexts

In uncontrolled intersections, roundabouts, and small alleys, honking was a common—even expected—locutionary alert. On the other hand, excessive honking was considered obtrusive and socially inappropriate in formal or upper-class neighborhoods.

"بالحارات الكل بزمر، بس بالمناطق الراقية، الزمور بيزعج"

Bil-ḥārāt il-kill bizammir, bass bil-manāṭiq ir-rāqiyye, iz-zammūr byizʿij.

"Everyone honks on the side streets, but it's annoying in affluent neighborhoods."

One of Hymes' speaking elements, setting, is crucial in determining how people communicate when using horns.

5. Ritualized Use and Event-Specific Norms

Honking assumed a symbolic, expressive role during national celebrations, football games, and weddings. These honks were ceremonial expressions of happiness and solidarity rather than commands or warnings. They were generally perceived by listeners as upbeat and joyous.

"لما فازت الاردن، الشوارع كلها ، انت بتزمر فرح "

Lammā fāzat il-Urdun, ish-shawāriʿ kullha, inta bt-zammir faraḥ.

"The streets erupted in cheers when Jordan triumphed."

This illustrates how event-based cultural scripts redefine illocutionary intent, turning the perlocutionary reception into a celebration instead of a source of annoyance.

The results unequivocally demonstrate that horn honking in Jordan is a highly context- sensitive, culturally influenced speech event rather than a neutral mechanical act. The study uses Speech Act Theory to show how context, social identity, and cultural norms influence both the

illocutionary force of a honk—what the driver intends to say—and the perlocutionary effect—how it is perceived. To put it another way, honking is both pragmatic and socio-pragmatic.

1. Cultural Scripts Mediate Speech Acts

Every speech act is enmeshed in cultural norms, as Wierzbicka [15] contends, and this study shows that horn usage is no exception. For example, women honk less frequently because Jordanian cultural scripts link frequent public noise or assertiveness from women with inappropriate behavior, not because they have less need to drive. This is consistent with previous studies on gendered pragmatics in the Arab world, which found that women's public communication is more constrained [26].

Similarly, the more restrained conduct of older drivers contrasts with the informal and occasionally expressive horn use of younger drivers. This suggests that norms are changing across generations, with honking possibly becoming less purely functional and more expressive or performative.

2. Setting, Norms, and Participants in the Impact of Hymes' Speaking Model

The study uses Dell Hymes' [17] model to show how participants (such as a taxi driver versus a private vehicle owner) and setting (such as a crowded alley versus an upscale neighborhood) greatly affect the type of honking that is expected or acceptable.

For instance:

- Short, frequent honks are regarded as helpful or clarifying in close quarters or at busy intersections.
- Because of differing "norms of interaction," the same honks are frequently perceived as impolite or disruptive in affluent neighborhoods.

These results are consistent with earlier research on the ethnography of communication in traffic behavior [27], which found that honks function as interactionally shaped, culturally limited forms of signaling.

3. Social Identity and Honking: Status, Occupation, and Class

According to the data, socioeconomic identity is also reflected in horn use. More often and more effectively, drivers of delivery trucks, taxis, and other low-income vehicles honk. They frequently use their honks as a survival tactic, directing movement, announcing arrival, and securing road space. On the other hand, excessive honking was frequently interpreted by drivers of luxury cars or those from affluent areas as an indication of impoliteness or lower- class conduct. This supports the idea that language, or more specifically, nonverbal communication acts, are socially stratified [27]. Honking turns into a semiotic tool for preserving social differentiation.

4. Ritual Honking: Festivity and Social Unity

Its ritualized, symbolic use is revealed by the discovery that honking is used at national events, weddings, and sporting triumphs. Similar to Austinian declaratives, these joyous honks transform public space into a stage of shared emotion by performing joy rather than merely describing it. As seen, this type of honking is socially acceptable and even expected, and it rarely causes offense. By demonstrating how instrumental sounds can convey expressive and communal meaning, particularly during shared cultural moments, such ritualized honking subverts conventional speech act categories.

5. Negotiating Meaning and Cultural Pragmatics

In the end, this conversation confirms that honking horns is a cultural performance in Jordan. Depending on who is honking, to whom, where, and when, the same sound—a quick honk, a long honk, or a rhythmic honk—can have drastically different meanings. This is precisely

what Searle [7] meant when he pointed out that the context of any speech act determines its force. Therefore, the communication is not just in the horn but also in the surrounding cultural frameworks, situational cues, and shared norms.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Car horns are non-verbal communicative acts that are woven throughout Jordanian traffic and cultural life. This study examined the pragmatic functions of horn honking in Jordan using the Speech Act Theory [7,15]. The study categorized horn sounds into illocutionary and perlocutionary acts and determined the impact of situational and cultural factors on their use and interpretation by examining data from ten in-depth interviews and thirty Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs). The findings show that car horns in Jordan have a wide range of social connotations, serving as

greetings, sarcastic or protesting tools, and alerts as well as ways to express annoyance or joy. Due to common cultural norms and traffic laws, these horn usages are methodical rather than sporadic.

Significantly, by applying the classic Speech Act Theory to nonverbal sound-based communication, this study demonstrated how pragmatic tasks like warning, expressing, and requesting can be accomplished without the use of words. The dynamic relationship between speaker intention and listener interpretation was also made clear; depending on factors like location, gender, emotional state, timing, and social context, the same horn sound can be interpreted either favorably or unfavorably.

This study adds to growing conversations in multimodal pragmatics, urban semiotics, and intercultural communication by showcasing the semiotic richness of car horn communication and proving that non-verbal clues like horn honking merit more scholarly attention.

The following scholarly and practical suggestions are put forth in light of the findings:

A.Policy and Education Suggestions

1. Include Nonverbal Pragmatics in Driver Education

- The practical and social aspects of horn use should be covered in Jordanian driving schools and public safety initiatives.
- In addition to learning when it is legal to wear horns, trainees should also learn how they are viewed in various social contexts.

2. Policies for Gender-Sensitive Driving

- Awareness campaigns should encourage gender sensitivity in road behavior, including proper horn use, since research shows that female drivers frequently perceive horn honking as intimidating or judgmental.

3. Control of Horn Usage at Social Gatherings

- Although Jordanian customs include celebratory honking, towns may want to think about setting aside specific times or locations for loud horn celebrations (such as weddings or sporting events) in order to strike a balance between custom, noise control, and public comfort.

4. Signage in Urban Areas for Noisy Areas

- Visible signage that forbids the use of horns in residential areas, schools, and hospitals can lessen miscommunications and conflict by reinforcing behavior that is appropriate for the situation.

B.Research and Academic Suggestions

5.Extend Speech Act Theory to Multimodal Fields

- To push the limits of pragmatic theory, linguistics and communication departments should encourage students to investigate non-verbal acts (such as gestures, horns, and silence) as valid data for speech act analysis.

6.Create a Horn Act Taxonomy

The development of a culturally sensitive horn lexicon can be supported by additional research that can systematically classify horn acts (e.g., directive, expressive, phatic, commemorative) and map them to particular social outcomes.

7.Comparative Studies of Different Cultures

- To compare how cultural values influence how non-verbal cues are interpreted, this research model could be repeated in other Arab or non-Arab cultures, advancing intercultural pragmatics.

8.Examine How Emotions Affect Perlocutionary Effects

- To connect pragmatics with psycholinguistics and social psychology, future research could look at how listener reactions to horn use are mediated by emotional states (such as stress, exhaustion, and social anxiety).

Even though the results are interesting, this research has certain problems. The people who took part were mostly from cities; therefore, the results may not reflect how horns are used in rural or less crowded parts of Jordan. In addition, using self-reported data from interviews and DCT answers might lead to bias, such as selective remembering, subjective interpretation, and social desirability effects. The limited sample size, especially for the interviews, might also make it hard to apply the results to other situations. Adding real-time ethnographic observation or audio recordings in different geographic areas to future research might make them more reliable and in-depth.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, as it involved minimal-risk, non-invasive procedures and voluntary participation of adult drivers, in accordance with local regulations and institutional policies.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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