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ARTICLE

A Pragmo-Semantic Analysis of Colloquial Referring Expressions: A Study in Jordanian Arabic

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ABSTRACT

In language, context is described as the information that is available to participants. For effective communication, participants need to share knowledge and they may use relevant elements that help interactants share common ground, such as a definite article, a definite relative clause or a post-nominal adjective. In certain contexts, a mismatch between the speaker's target referent and the hearer's interpretation occurs, which leads to "uncertain referring expressions" and causes distraction for the receiver. This study investigates the role of Givenness Hierarchy Theory in shaping referring expression (RE) choices in Jordanian Arabic (JA) and explains the potential confusion beyond using such REs. Also, the notion of tacit knowledge was employed to analyze the assumed shared knowledge in using such REs. Analysis of the naturally occurring discourse revealed that speakers used indefinite phrases for given referents, such as demonstratives and impersonal items, mitigating religious expressions, the dummy RE: *ʃu: ismo*, and *how are you*. The findings also showed that there is an ambiguity in using such expressions, which can be due to flouting the maxim of quantity. In addition, it was noticed that speakers tacitly know more than what they say. The findings contribute to understanding how cognitive principles influence RE selection and extend the applicability of Givenness Hierarchy to Arabic spoken language. The study also identifies potential areas for future research, including the impact of gender and broader cross-linguistic comparisons. Despite limitations in data size, this research highlights significant theoretical and practical implications for linguistic studies on referentiality.

Keywords: Givenness Hierarchy Theory; Reference; Referring Expressions; Tacit Knowledge

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1. Introduction

The term "context" in language is the information available to participants[1]. Shared knowledge of context or script is one of the shared knowledge elements of a genre[2]. Tawalbeh[3] summarized some other elements as: shared knowledge of text content, shared knowledge of formal text features, shared name of the genre, shared register and shared communicative purpose. The shared communicative purpose interacts with other elements including participants and vocabulary[4]. Vocabulary is considered a crucial element of language to convey meaning. Each participant attempts to communicate a referent that a receiver can identify. For example, the use of foreign words in Jordanian Arabic serves the communicative purpose of expressing modern and global concepts that align with the social and contextual realities of the speakers[5]. Also, using a definite article, a definite relative clause or a postnominal adjective in English and Arabic would indicate shared information on a specific entity[6]. The concept that identifies the relation between a language expression and an entity in the world is called reference[7]. The entity is named as a referent and the language expression that identifies it is a referring expression (RE). Hurfod et al.[7] define the RE as "any expression that can be used to refer to any entity in the real or imaginary world."

In some cases, a mismatch between the speaker's target referent and the hearer's interpretation occurs, which leads to "uncertain referring expressions". This in turn causes reference failure. For example, a non-specific expression refers to non-specific entities. This causes difficulties for recipients to identify referents because the provided information is inadequate. The pronominal references in Arabic and English are examples of references that require further explanations by the participants to avoid any possible confusion that may take place[6].

Sometimes, a speaker may utter a non-specific expression because they forget the main language expression at the moment of speaking. In addition, speakers may assume that the receiver would be able to identify the referent of a non-specific expression. The speaker, by uttering such expressions, may falsely assume a lot of shared knowledge on the part of their receivers. If there is a long duration that separates an expression from the context where that expression has occurred, non-specific reference, misunderstanding, and confusion might take place because the receiver may not recognize the referent of the RE. During collecting the data for the present paper, the occurrence of non-referring demonstrative pronouns and expressions was noticed. Their occurrence in inappropriate contexts results in distraction for the receiver, a matter that pushes the speaker to repair and clarify their expression. The semantic dynamics of presuppositions involved within non-referring expressions in Jordanian daily conversation provide insights into understanding the Jordanian referential colloquial system, which is an interesting scope for semanticists and scholars interested in pragmatics.

The current study aims to answer the following questions:

(1) What forms of REs do occur in JA?
(2) What do the speakers assume is known to receivers?
(3) What does cause the mismatch between the speaker's target referent and the hearer's interpretation?

2. Literature Review

A number of studies have shed light on REs in various languages tackling them from different perspectives, such as Albufalasa[8], Gundel, Hedberg and Kowalsky[9], and Runge[10].

Gundel et al.[8] examined different types of REs, such as definite and indefinite descriptions, demonstratives and pronouns. The study examined naturally occurring REs in five languages: English, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Spanish and Mandarin. A cognitive model is proposed in the study to clarify the choice of certain REs by speakers. The choice depends on the prominence and accessibility of entities in the discourse context. A correlation with the Gricean maxim of quantity occurred to account for the actual distribution of different forms of reference. The researchers argue that the givenness hierarchy status of referents is one of the variables that affect the chosen RE. The findings showed that there is a relationship between the occurred RE in discourse and cognitive status. The speakers in their turn were able to manage givenness and accessibility while communicating together.

Albufalasa[8] and Runge[10] examined the REs in the Divine books. Runge[10] shed light on the pragmatic effects of semantically redundant anchoring expressions in biblical Hebrew narratives. The noticed REs (proper names and epithets) are usually used to thematically link a participant to

the discourse in a realistic method to achieve the objective implications as in Isaac and his son. Albufalasa [8] analyzed the REs of Paradise and Hell in the Holy Quran, particularly in Chapter 30, Amma part. It was noticed that there are direct and indirect references to Paradise and Hill, and all of them are confirmed in the context to achieve the objective implications which are encouraging people to do good deeds to enter paradise and warning them of doing bad deeds to not enter Hill.

Albufalasa and Runge employed the qualitative approach differently. On one hand, Runge used the Levinsohn framework to explore the default function of anchoring expressions and to mark structures in language by analyzing the linguistic phenomena. This framework showed that the choice between unmarked and default structure is influenced by factors like discourse and pragmatics. On the other hand, Albufalasa did not use a specific framework. She used qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the data. The researcher categorized the data into two groups: REs of hell and REs of paradise. Then, she interpreted the categorized data based on the REs and referent concepts. Finally, the researcher investigated which of the two groups (REs of hell and paradise) is statistically more frequent. In both studies, a focus was given to the communicative goals and the intention of participants in producing discourse to achieve the objective implications.

Gundel, Ntelitheos and Kowalsky [9] and Saadi [11] conducted an analytic study on children's use of REs. The researchers noticed the use of definite and indefinite articles by children. However, each study used the REs to examine different areas. In Saadi's thesis [10], two experiments have been performed to examine language development in the child language: the first one focused on the difference in the use of the personal pronoun (you and I) and the 3rd person pronoun as deictic expressions. In the second experiment, the focus was on the use of personal pronouns and locative adverbs in an anaphoric sense. The findings showed that the function of the definite article may initially be predominantly deictic. In the first experiment, it was found that the person pronouns are deictic because they refer to non-linguistic aspects whereas the third person pronouns are cohesively used. In the second experiment, the findings showed that the definite NP referents do not represent a real anaphoric sense as they refer to specific contexts. As for Gundel et al. [9] study, the investigation of REs helped explain the reason beyond using the examined REs forms correctly by children aged 3 before they exhibit pragmatic ability.

The two studies used different frameworks to analyze the data. In Saadi's study, the data was analyzed from the perspective of a developmental pragmatic approach which describes the development of communicative competence. Whereas Gundel et al. [9] applied the Givenness Hierarchy theory that acknowledges an explanation for the occurrence of different types of REs, articles, including personal pronouns and demonstrative determiners, within and across languages. Information was encoded about the cognitive accessibility of the referent for the addressee at the point just before the nominal form was encountered. However, both studies investigated the same forms of REs (articles, demonstratives, determines and personal pronouns) without paying attention to any new form that may function as a RE in a specific context.

Recent studies adopted Givenness Hierarchy theory to explore the application of this framework to human communication and the artificial agents in robotics. For example, in a study by Pal, Clark, and Williams [12], a computational cognitive model was presented using Givenness Hierarchy theory to investigate referential choices in situated contexts. This model applies computational techniques and real-world data to understand the referential choices of humans. The model aimed to stimulate how the speakers use the Givenness Hierarchy levels to choose referential expressions in situated communication. It evaluates the appropriateness of choosing RE forms according to the assumed knowledge for the listeners. In another study conducted by Spevak [13], Givenness Hierarchy theory was adopted to analyze the use of robots of natural language in collaborative tasks that must refer to objects in their environment. However, robots had to determine the content of utterances before creating REs. Robots could think a head about how objects must be referred to. The purpose beyond using Givenness Theory was to inform the planner to create utterances with high inter-sentential coherence, so this will enable robots to keep objects at a high cognitive status and to use anaphoric referring forms.

While previous studies have examined definite and indefinite pronouns, demonstratives and descriptions in different written and spoken formal contexts and artificial con-

text, little attention has been paid to the use of indefinite descriptions in the context of spoken language. This study addresses this gap by investigating the occurrence of indefinite descriptions in the JA spoken language, contributing to the pragmatic and cognitive linguistic fields by offering new insights into cultural and linguistic phenomena.

Theoretical Framework

The Givenness Hierarchy theory is a framework that is used to analyze REs and information structure in discourse. This theory is originated by Prince[14] and developed by Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski[15]. The theory classifies the REs into six levels according to the degree of cognitive accessibility or activation speakers assume for the listeners, as follows:

(1). In focus (pronouns) where the referent is currently being talked about, so it is highly accessible.
(2). Activated (demonstrative pronouns) where the referent was recently mentioned, so it is moderately accessible.
(3). Familiar (Definite descriptions) where the referent is assumed to be known by the listener, but not currently being discussed.
(4). Uniquely identifiable (Definite descriptions) where the listener can uniquely identify the referent without previous mentioning.
(5). Referential (Indefinite descriptions) where the speaker refers to an identifiable object or entity.
(6). Type identifiable where the speaker assumes the listener can understand the type of entity being referred to, but it is not a specific one.

In the present study, the Givenness Hierarchy theory was adopted to investigate the REs in the Jordanian cultural discourse as it helps analyze how speakers use divergent linguistic forms (e.g., pronouns, definite/indefinite articles, demonstratives and impersonal items, mitigating religious expression … etc.) to refer to ideas, people, or objects. The theory provides a framework to understand the accessibility of these referents in the speakers and listeners minds, which can vary depending on cultural norms of communication. These norms can vary based on shared knowledge, politeness strategies, or social relationships[16]. The Givenness Hierarchy provides a way to systematically investigate how cultural factors influence these norms. For example, specific terms, as in the current paper, might be used differently even when the referent is already "in focus," due to politeness norms or hierarchical social structures. In the case of shared knowledge, some expressions might require more overt signaling of referents to avoid misunderstanding, while others might rely on shared context. According to politeness strategies, indirect or formal references (even if a referent is highly accessible) might be used to maintain politeness or show respect.

The researchers identify the entities being referred to by looking at their givenness status if they are "Discourse-given or Repeated information", "Discourse-old or Familiar information", or "Discourse-new or Non-specific information". Then, the researchers determine the RE whether definite descriptions, indefinite descriptions, general nouns, or pronouns. The researchers, then, follow the givenness hierarchy order starting from "Discourse-new or Non-specific information". Discourse and contextual factors play a crucial role in clarifying the occurrence of certain REs and help show their contribution to a specific context.

In order to identify the shared knowledge between participants, the concept of tacit knowledge is employed in the present analysis. Tacit knowledge, according to Polanyi[17], means "we know more than we can tell". Different positions regarding tacit knowledge notion were observed. Zappavigna[18] indicated that there is a strong version of tacit knowledge, which confirms the inability to articulate tacit knowledge while the weak version states that it is only difficult to articulate what we tacitly know. Tawalbeh[4] clarified that it does not make sense to separate knowledge from language and that the weak version can be adopted to reveal what information has been explicitly stated –and what has not been explicitly stated.

Tacit knowledge can be useful in identifying referents using the functional relation between two entities[19]. The first entity is proximal "a set of sounds" and the second entity is distal. In other words, tacit knowledge can integrate a set of sounds, which is the proximal entity, into a distal entity. These sounds give tacitly a name to that distal entity, attending to which makes sense of the sounds that represent the proximal entity.

Non-verbal linguistics can be indirectly considered aspects of REs in relation to non-verbal communication. For example, Gestures and eye gazing can function as non-verbal

cues to identify the referent being referred to. They can provide contextual information that clarifies the intended referent in communicative contexts.

Attention has been drawn to the Cooperative Principle that was proposed by Paul Grice [20]. The Grice's Maxims describe how participants can communicate effectively in conversation, and to do so they must adhere to four maxims:

(1). **Maxim of Quantity:** Speakers should provide enough information to convey their message. They should provide as much information as needed, and no more.
(2). **Maxim of Quality:** Speakers should be truthful and provide information that is supported by evidence. They should not say things they believe to be false, or for which they lack adequate evidence.
(3). **Maxim of Relation:** Contributions to the conversation should be relevant to the ongoing topic or context. Irrelevant or tangential contributions can disrupt communication.
(4). **Maxim of Manner:** Speakers should communicate clearly and avoid ambiguity, obscurity, or unnecessary complexity.

These four maxims provide an outline for effective communication where participants can understand each other. However, participants may not always adhere to these maxims. In contexts like politeness, humor or rhetorical effect, participants may flout the maxims, as follows:

(1). Flouting the Maxim of Quantity: Giving either more or less information than is needed.
(2). Flouting the Maxim of Quality: Making a statement that is unsupported by evidence or false.
(3). Flouting the Maxim of Relation: Mentioning irrelevant information in the conversation
(4). Flouting the Maxim of Manner: Using language in an ambiguous or overly complicated way.

Flouting the maxims can be a powerful tool in communication if a receiver could recognize the violation and infer the intended meaning behind it. However, in the current paper the focus is on the flouting of maxim of quantity and how it affects the understanding of the shared referent where listeners may not infer the intended meaning, which confuses receiving a message.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample of the Study

A total of 113 REs was collected within five months (March–July) in 2023. The data was collected from different daily spoken contexts in Jordan, such as universities, shopping malls, relatives and neighbors' visits and family talk.

3.2. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative methodological approach. It has been chosen to classify the data according to the Givenness Hierarchy theory. This theory was used to analyze the occurred REs. The theory helped analyze how speakers use divergent forms of REs (e.g., demonstratives and impersonal items, mitigating religious expression … etc.) to refer to objects, people, or ideas. This framework provides an understanding of the accessibility of referents in the participants' minds. The researchers classified the data according to the six levels that refer to the degree of cognitive accessibility or activation they assume for the listener (see Section 2.1). These levels are crucial because they provide a structured way to analyze how speakers choose referential forms based on the listener's presumed knowledge of the referent. REs are not chosen randomly; they depend on the context of the conversation and the assumed cognitive state of the listener. Therefore, these levels helped explain how speakers adapt their language based on the contextual needs of the conversation. The use of tacit knowledge also helped identify shared knowledge between interactants (see Section 2.1) and supported what the Givenness Hierarchy theory intends to explore.

As misunderstanding and confusion might take place because the receiver may not recognize the referent of an RE, Givenness Hierarchy also helped in diagnosing miscommunication. When speakers misjudge the listener's cognitive accessibility to a referent, they might use a pronoun where a more explicit reference is needed. Conducting the analysis through the lens of the Givenness Hierarchy could provide insights into how and why miscommunication occurs. Grice's [19] Cooperative Principle was also adopted to find out what maxims have been flouted in the data under investigation and led to a misunderstanding of the referent.

3.3. Data Analysis Procedures

The present study is based on naturally occurring data as they provide rich contexts for varying referential accessibility. In this study, the researchers applied Givenness Hierarchy[15] to analyze REs in JA. The Givenness Hierarchy categorizes referents based on their cognitive accessibility to the listener, ranging from "in focus" to "type identifiable." This framework allowed us to systematically examine how speakers choose different forms of references depending on the listener's assumed knowledge.

The data were classified according to the six levels that represent the degree of cognitive accessibility. Each expression was assigned to one of the levels based on its assumed cognitive accessibility to the listener. The recurrent forms were classified into five specific groups: demonstratives and impersonal items, mitigating religious expression, *illi ba:li ba:lak,* the dummy RE: *ʃu: ismo*, and *how are you.*

An analysis of the contextual information has been provided to justify the intended referent in the communicative contexts. In addition, the researchers provided detailed explanations for not identifying the referent of a non-specific expression.

4. Results

This section shows an analysis of the REs in JA spoken language by adopting the Givenness Hierarchy Theory. This section was divided according to the recurrent forms of REs: demonstratives and impersonal items, mitigating religious expression, *illi ba:li ba:lak*, the dummy RE: *ʃu: ismo*, and *how are you*?. (See **Table 1**).

Table 1. The distribution of the occurred forms of REs according to the cognitive accessibility levels.

No.	Forms of Referring Expressions	Cognitive Accessibility Levels
1.	Demonstratives and impersonal items	Activated
2.	*Allahu Akbar*	Type identifiable
3.	*illi ba:li ba:lak*	Activated
4.	*ʃu: ismo*	Type identifiable
5.	*how are you*	Type identifiable

Attention has been drawn to the six levels of cognitive accessibility: In focus, Activated, Familiar, Uniquely identifiable, Referential and Type identifiable to classify what the speakers assume for the listeners. Then, a detailed analysis took place to clarify how speakers manage the flow of information and how they can control the clarity of the conversation. In addition, the adopted framework helped diagnose miscommunication when speakers misjudge the listener's cognitive accessibility to a referent. This can also be supported through the deploying of tacit knowledge and Grice's maxim of quantity as follows.

4.1. Demonstratives and Impersonal Items

In Extract 1, the husband was in a call with a friend to ask about something. After the end of the call, the wife asked her husband about his friend's answer. The husband's reply was as follows:

Extract 1

Wife: e:ʃ haka?
what said?
"What did he say?"
Husband: he:k o he:k
this and this
"This and that"
Wife: mitwaqiʕ ʔaʕrif?
expect-PART-2SM know-PRES-1ST?
"Do you suppose I know? (sarcastically)"

The use of the Arabic demonstrative expression by the husband is an "activated" level of accessibility which indicates that the referent has recently been mentioned. So, the wife was expected to retrieve this information quickly. The husband tacitly knows more than what he says. He did not give all the information to make the referent clear to his wife. He assumed that she could understand what *he:k o he:k* refers to. However, the wife expressed her confusion with laughter and then asked him how she could guess the answer. In this extract, the husband misjudged the wife's cognitive accessibility to the referent. He used the demonstrative pronoun to refer to a referent that was recently mentioned and

supposed that the wife was in the context and could retrieve the information. However, it seems that the wife was not in the context as she could not retrieve the information, which led to confusion.

The speaker here flouts the maxim of quantity by using a deictic demonstrative pronoun that lacks referentiality except for the conversation being said as being just 'this and this'. Holding this information by using this expression can be found if the speakers want to be too reserved about it, too tired to explain it, or too trivial to explain it. The deictic/impersonal nature of these pronouns *he:k* 'this', *katha* 'such'*, inn-u* 'that is', etc. makes the respondent's statement minimal. It seems like all of the items that can be impersonal can be mitigated to flout the Maxim of Quantity and hold information due to their semantically or syntactic 'dummy' or 'hollow' primitive nature.

This is found in English as the husband's reply fits to be "*such and such*", "*so and so*", "*this and that*", etc. This dummy nature of these expressions seems to serve the speaker in holding information in different contexts.

(1)

(a) Speaker A: Who did you meet yesterday?
Speaker B: *someone*
Speaker A: I know it's someone for God's sake, but spill the beans who?

(b) Speaker A: what did he say?
Speaker B: *such and such.*
Speaker A: seriously? It seems nothing significant.

(c) Speaker A: What did he say to you?
Speaker B: *Nothing*
Speaker A: Tell me

These expressions that flout the Maxim of Quantity are usually realized as:

a. *Impersonal pronouns*: Someone, one, someplace, somewhere, thing, iʃi 'thing', wa:had 'somoene', etc.

(2)

Speaker A: mi:n ʃufit?
Who saw?
"Who did you see?"
Speaker B: wahad.
"Someone"
Speaker A: balla mi:n?
for-Allah's sake who
"For God's sake, who is it?"

b. *Demonstratives: this*, that, such, so, *he:k, katha*, etc.

(3)

Speaker A: ʃu haka?
what said?
"What did he say?"
Speaker B: kaða wa kaða
such and such
"Such and such"
Speaker A: miʃ rah ahzar
not will guess
"I can't guess!"

c. Items holding default dummy pronominal features such as inn-u, ʃu ismo 'what is called', kaʔinn-u 'as-if', etc.

(4)
Speaker A: ʃu ga:llak?
what said
"What did he say?"
Speaker B: inn-u
"That is …."
Speaker A: inn-u ʃu:?
what?
"That is what?"

There are other occurrences for the Arabic demonstrative in Extract 2, where a conversation between a teacher and her students has been built. The teacher asked them a question and was looking for an answer. One of the students answered her as follows:

Extract 2
Teacher: What is the difference between derivational and inflectional morphemes?
Student: *ha:y* closes the words o *hadi:k* does not close the word.
This closes the word and that does not close the word.
Teacher: ʃu: gasˁdak bi ha:y o hadi:k?
What mean by this and that
"What do you mean by this and that?"

In this example, the student code switched from Arabic to English. He used the Arabic demonstrative expression *ha:y o hadi:k* assuming the teacher was sharing information with him. According to Gundel et al.[15], demonstratives are an "activated" level of accessibility as the student assumes the teacher will retrieve the information that is supposed to be recently mentioned. However, the student used two demonstrative pronouns in the same utterance "*ha:y o hadi:k*"; therefore, the teacher got confused. The student tacitly knows more than what he says. He did not give all the information to make the referents clear to the teacher. In this extract, confusion occurred when the teacher asked "What do you mean by this and that?" So, in this case, demonstratives occur as non-specific references.

The student flouted the maxim of quantity by using deictic demonstrative pronouns that lack referentiality. The use of these two demonstrative pronouns in this context led to misunderstanding by the teacher. The student misjudged the teacher's cognitive accessibility to a referent through providing less information than needed.

4.2. Mitigating Religious Expression

A mitigating device expresses either politeness or harshness[21–24]. Since common Islamic expressions are held dignified among Muslim Arab communities, such mitigating expressions can protect a positive face through religious wishing, and cultural-social desires, they can also mitigate negative reactions in the case of surprise, tragedy, anxiety, bother, and other situations. Man calls upon God in good or worse, and so does his religious-cultural language. This bipolar pragmatic function of these expressions is found in Christian American culture in which the word 'Jesus' is uttered as a positive or a negative reaction[25].

(5)
(a) Positive Interpretation (Int.):
Speaker A: We won the cup
Speaker B: Jesus!
(b) Negative Int.:
Speaker A: We lost the cup
Speaker B: Jesus!

Muslim linguistic-religious culture is heavily lexicalized with such expressions as:

- *Allahu Akbar* 'Allah is the Greatest',
- *Mashallah* 'Allah has willed it'
- *Hasbunallahu Wa Niʔmal Al-Wakeel* 'God is sufficient for us'
- *Astaɤfirulla*h 'I ask Allah for forgiveness'
- *La Ilaha Illa Allah* 'No God except Allah'

These expressions are not only endowed religiously, but also culturally[24, 26] to the extent they might be used by non-Muslims in the Arab world[27] since they carry mitigating purposes that are utilized in the deep sense of the surface religious meaning form. This includes mitigating politeness, harshness, antagonism, and other forms of social mitigation via these expressions. The connotation of such expressions determines whether the expression achieves a positive face or mitigates a negative one. By way of illustration, *Allah Akbar*, as seen below, achieves a positive face in 6 (a) and mitigates negativity in 6 (b). *(Allah Akbar* is a dignified Islamic statement emphasizing Allah is the greatest, which does not semantically force any connotation beyond this literal sense. This enables the expression to be pragmatically available in positive or negative contexts).

(6)

(a) Positive Int.:

Speaker A: faz-u: bil-ka:ʔis
won in-the-cup
"They won the cup"
Speaker B: alla:h-u akbar
allah-NOM great-SUP
"Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest)"
Pragmatic Trans. "Well-done!"

(b) Negative Int.:

Speaker A: xisru l-kaʔis
lose-PAST-3MPL the-cup
"They lost the cup"
Speaker B: allahu akbar
"Allahu Akbar"
Pragmatic Trans.: "Hard luck!"

While the expression *Mashallah* addresses God's will which is associated only with positivity, as in 7(a) below. Therefore, it is not possible to mitigate it negatively at least in the literal sense, as in 7(b).

(7)

(a) Positive Int.:

Speaker A: fuz-na l-kaʔis
won the-cup
"We won the cup"
Speaker B: ma-ʃa-llah
C-will-allah
"Mashallah (Allah has willed it)"
Pragmatic Trans.: "Well done!"

(b) Negative Int.:

Speaker A: xisr-na l-kaʔis
lose-PAST the-cup
"We lost the cup"
Speaker B: *maʃallah
"Mashallah"

It can, however, signal sarcasm if positivity is not tenable within a possible context.

For instance:

(8)

Speaker A: ma hdirit min ʃahar
not attend since month
"I did not attend (any classes) for a month".
Speaker B: maʃallah
"Mashallah!"
Pragmatic Translation (Trans.): "Attaboy!" (Sarcastically said).

In the case of *Hasbunilah Wa Niʔma Al Wakeel and Astaɤfirullah*, the former is an expression of self-piety and reverence that means literally 'we suffice ourselves with Allah, which acts as a linguistic self-defense mechanism against atrocities, tragedies, noise, evil, bother, patience, etc. The latter is associated with forgiveness, which is a form of human tolerance acting similarly as another self-defense mechanism. Either can only mitigate negative reactions toward a situation. This explains why 9 (a) is not possible if the fact that respondents want their team to win the cup, while 9 (b) fits perfectly.

(9)

(a) Positive Int.:
Speaker A: faz-u: bil-kaʔis
won in-the-cup
"They won the cup"
Speaker B:
(a) *hasb-un-allah wa nʔma al-waki:l
sufficient-1MPL-allah and bless-EGR the-Great
"Allah is sufficient for us"
(b) *a-staɤfir-ullah
forgive-allah
"I ask Allah for his forgiveness"

- Both pragmatic translations crash.

(b) Negative Int.:
Speaker A: xisru il-kaʔis
lose-3MPL the-cup
"They lost the cup"
Speaker B:
(a) hasbunallah wa nʔma al-wakeel
(b) a-staɤfir-ullah
Pragmatic Trans.: "Oh Jesus/Oh my God"

Moreover, some of these expressions are used during religious activity and can denote religious reverence or they can mitigate only negativity to the surrounding during such an activity. For instance, there are some expressions exclusively used during Islamic prayer such as:

(10)

(a) allah-NOM Great-SUP
allah-u Akbar
"Allah is the Greatest"
(b) aθabna wa aθaabakum
reward and reward-2MPL
"May Allah reward us and you for our deeds"
(c) bism l-lahi l-rahma:n l-rahi:m
by-name allah the-merciful the-gracious
"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"
(d) sadaGa l-lahu al-ʕaðˤi:m
speak-truth allah the-almighty
"Allah, the Almighty, has spoken the truth"

Since these expressions are said in Islamic prayer at certain points of the prayer such as bowing, straightening, or kneeling, they are iconic linguistic expressions of the prayer. Since they are to be said in a silent or a low-pitch tone, Arab speakers sometimes tend to utter the expressions loudly and more probably in an angry-like tone, alerting the addressee of a situation happening that makes them annoyed or unpleasant. Therefore, by flouting the Maxim of Manner, the speaker changes their tone to signal their negative attitude toward the surroundings where they pray.

In this scenario, the context is a little bit different in Extract 3. The mother is praying and she wants to tell her daughter something but without interrupting her prayer, so she says *Allahu Akbar* loudly to indicate what she wants as follows:

The mother is praying in the sitting room where her daughter is sitting there.

Extract 3

Mother said: *Allahu Akbar (loudly)*
Daughter to herself (loudly): yee, mama bid-ha ʔaṭfi: l-foron.
EXC, mom want-3SF turn off-1S the-oven
"Oh, Mom wants me to turn off the oven"
Mother: *Allahu Akbar (loudly)*
Daughter to herself (loudly): yee la: yimkin bidha iyani: ʔaṭfi:
EXC no maybe want-3SF turn-off
t-tilfizyo:n
the-TV
"Oh no. Maybe she wants me to switch off the TV"
Mother: *Allahu Akbar (loudly)*
Daughter to herself (loudly): ʔatwaqaʕ bidha ʔatfaggad ʔaxu:y ṣ-ṣʁi:r
think-1S want-3SF check-1S brother-1S brother
"I think she wants me to check out my little brother"
Mother: *Allahu Akbar (loudly)*
Daughter to herself (loudly): ke:f biddi ʔaḥzar ʃu: biddik?
how shall-1S guess-1S what want-2SF?
"How shall I guess what you want?"
The mother after she has finished praying: ke:f ma fhimiti: ʔinn-u ṭhuṭṭi: l-akil
how not understand C-3SM put the-food
bi-t-tallaʒeh?
on-the-table
"How did not you understand that you have to put the food back in the fridge?"
Daughter to her mom: ʃu:?!
"What?!"

In this example, the mother used a totally different expression as a referring expression which is *Allah Akbar*. The mother used it as "Type identifiable" level which is the least cognitively accessible level. The mother assumed her daughter could understand the type of entity being referred to without any previous context. The mother tacitly knows more than what she says. She cannot give all the information to make the referent clear to her daughter. It was a challenge for the daughter to guess what her mother wanted because it was a new discourse without any shared information. The daughter failed to guess the referent as the mother flouted the maxim of quantity and manner through providing unclear and less information than required. In this extract, the mother misjudged the daughter's cognitive accessibility to the referent. She used *Allah Akbar* to refer to a referent that the daughter has no prior knowledge of. As a result, the daughter could not retrieve the information, which led to miscommunication and confusion.

4.3. *Illi: Ba:li Ba:lak*

By holding a quantity of information, the speaker uses this expression to point to the addressee about common knowledge of some information that signals a level of secrecy

executed for the sake of conservation, politeness, ridicule, or insult shared between the two.

4.3.1. Conservation

In Extract 4, two brothers were talking about their desire to go to the cinema. They both decided that the little one would ask their dad to take them to the cinema. After an hour, the elder brother asked the little one:

Extract 4

Elder brother: ʃu: sˤa:r bi-lli: bal-i: ba:l-ak?
what happen-PAST-3SM in-C mind-1S mind-2S?
"What happened with that is in my mind and yours?"
Little brother: ʃu: huwwa?
what C-3SM?
"What is that?"
Elder brother: tisʔal ba:ba ʕaʃa:n nru:ḥ s-senima?
ask-2S dad regarding go-INF the-cinema?
"to ask dad about going to the cinema"
Little brother: ʔa:h ḥaka huwaa maʃʁu:l l-yo:m
yeah said-3SM he busy the-day
"Yeah. He said he is busy today".

The expression *illi: ba:li: ba:lak* is "activated" level of accessibility, as it indicates that the brothers are sharing knowledge about the topic; therefore, it is moderately cognitive accessible. Consequently, the elder brother flouted the Maxim of quantity by holding the information about their desire to go to the cinema and using this expression instead to signal his question without explication. This is referred to the father as the little brother should be asking his permission. The elder brother expects his young brother to retrieve the shared information. However, confusion takes place as the little brother asks "What is it?" (It seems that the little brother could not remember the context because of the long period (an hour) between the discussed topic and the question). The elder brother assumed a higher level of accessibility than the young brother could handle. *illi: ba:li: ba:lak* is cognitively accessible but the young brother did not share that understanding. It seems that he expected a more cognitively accessible reference to share the understanding. This confusion is reflected in the shared communicative purpose between the two brothers, so the elder brother had to remind his little brother of the topic.

4.3.2. *Illi: Ba:li Ba:lak vs. You Thinking What I Am Thinking*

This expression overall holds this level of secrecy due to various pragmatic reasons. The conservative attitude entailed by this expression is associated with various mitigating purposes including politeness, fear, and inappropriate referencing, among other contexts that require implication acting similarly to the English colloquial phrase *you thinking what I'm thinking*. While this English phrase might be more of a suggestive nature in the context of motivating the addressee to do an action in agreement with the addresser as in:

A: you thinking what I'm thinking?

B: Breaking into the house? Absolutely!

However, *illi: ba:li ba:lak* meaning literally 'that is in my mind and your mind'; not in terms of common actual thinking of the same thing, but rather in terms of common concern between the two. The word *ba:l* means 'concern', which makes the following sentence mean something like *what happened with our communal concern*, while *ba:l* does not exclusively connotate negativity as in the case of the English question 'What is your concern?', as it could be any type of concern shared between the two whether a secret, a joke, an incident, an explanation, etc. Therefore, this expression, though similar to *your thinking what I'm thinking* in

terms of shared knowledge, remains contextually different as it refers to shared knowledge of a different static nature without any suggestive hedging. Extract 5 shows how this expression can be a way of criticism by emphasizing two speakers share some judgment of a third party without explicating such a judgment. B utters the expression to signal not only to A who shares the same opinion, but also to C to express criticism of C's behavior.

Extract 5

Speaker A: mi:n illi: laʏa qara:r t-tamwi:l?
who C canceled decision funding?
"Who canceled the decision for funding?"

Speaker B: illi: ba:li: ba:lak, mi:n jaʕni:?
C mind-1SM mind-2SM who mean-INF?
"It's obvious. Who do you think?!"

Speaker A: Ah! (Speaker A starts looking at Speaker C during the meeting).
"I got you"

Speaker C: ka:n lazim aʕmal he:k. ma fi: mizaniya laṣ-ṣe:f
be-PAST-3SM must do this. Not there budget for-the-summer
"I had to! There is not enough budget for this summer."

By using *illi ba:li: ba:lak* to indicate common knowledge between A and B, Speaker B flouts the Maxim of Manner by indirectly signaling sarcasm or criticism toward Speaker C without explication.

It is possible to imagine the phrase *you thinking what I'm thinking* fits here as this phrase can be suggestive as given earlier, but can also emphasize a common area of concern by meaning 'you thinking of what I'm thinking that the one who canceled the funding is Speaker C?'; and Speaker B says 'yes'.

A: who canceled the funding decision?
B: you think what I'm thinking

Despite pushing the context of this English phrase to be close pragmatically to *illi: ba:li: ba:lak,* the question formation of the English phrase is more strongly associated with a suggestion or motivating the addressee to think or do alike while *illi: ba:li: ba:lak* is more of an affirmative statement that presupposes that the two participants are aware of some shared knowledge.

4.4. The Dummy RE: *ʃu: Ismo*

This RE is called 'dummy' as it seems to be non-referential at least in the surface structure and holds default syntactic features as in the default masculine of the noun phrase *ismo* 'his name'. While this RE is 'abstractedly' referential in the sense that this phrase is related to the actual intended RE that might have been implicit due to different pragmatic reasons. The nature of the surface non-referential of this RE facilitates the ability of the speaker to utilize it by flouting the Maxim of Quantity, which is the unmentioned lexical RE. There are different pragmatic scenarios of *ʃu: ismo* found in JA.

4.4.1. *ʃu: Ismo*: Resolving Forgetfulness

In Extract 6, the speaker uses another form of REs which is *ʃu: ismo* (what is called) as follows:

The two speakers are in the sitting room.

Extract 6

Speaker A: marrirl-i ʔil ʃu: ismo
pass-2nd-1S the what name-3SM
"Pass me the "what is called?"

Pragmatic Trans.: pass me the thing. I forgot what it is called.

Speaker B: e:ʃ ʃu: gasʕdak?
what what mean-2nd?
"What! What do you mean?"

Speaker A: marrirl-i rimo:t t-tulfizyo:n
pass-2nd-1SM remote the-TV
"Pass me the remote TV controller"
Speaker B: tama:m
"okay"

In this example, speaker A asked B to pass him the TV remote. However, for a particular reason, the speaker did not use the name of it in the first utterance, instead, he used a non-specific reference: *ʃu: ismo*. In this RE, a shared communicative purpose is assumed as a way to identify the genre and achieve communication between the two speakers [28]. Speaker A did not give Speaker B explicit information on what he tacitly knows. The shared communicative purpose has not been achieved as Speaker B could not catch the referent of the non-specific RE. Therefore, it would typically fall under "type identifiable" in the Givenness Hierarchy because it is used to introduce a general kind of an entity, rather than a specific, identifiable individual. Speaker B is expected to understand the general type of referent being introduced, but not a specific referent.

Following the Cooperative Principle [1], Speaker A held a quantity of information as he seems to have forgotten the lexical RE by using a dummy reference that presupposes referential familiarity with Speaker B. By flouting the maxim of quantity, Speaker A resolved for a referential dummy noun phrase to transcend presupposition of common knowledge to Speaker B to be familiar with the intended RE that they forgot.

4.4.2. *ʃu: Ismo*: Propositional Word Filler

This RE can be used as a filler indicating uncertainty or hesitation, but utilized to support the flow of speech as being familiar with the addressee, as seen in Extract 7:

Extract 7

ku:nit beddi ahki:lak, ʃu: ismo, nawi:
Be-PAST-1SM want-1SM talk-1SM-2SM, what name-3SM, intend-PART
tehdar l- iʒtimaʕ
attend-INF-2SM DEF meeting
"I wanted to ask, mmm, if you will attend the meeting".

The dummy RE here is similar to English word fillers such as *mmm*, *eh*, etc., however, this Arabic RE is particularly lexicalized indicating hesitance or more of an implied signal for the addressee to be familiar with the intended RE in the speaker's mind. The abstract RE seems to be propositional in this case, as the intended RE of the speaker is the whole proposition or message that the Speaker struggles to convey.

This RE mitigates different signals in other situations as in the case of the trivialness of the intended RE in which it is subtitled by the dummy RE or in the case the addresser attempts to ridicule the intended RE by opting for the dummy one.

4.4.3. *ʃu: Ismo: Syntactic 'Dumminess'*

The default singular masculine features of the NP *ismo* further support that this expression is primarily non-referential at some level while utilized to resonate with some abstract intended RE in the speaker's mind, as seen above. However, if the NP holds feminine features, it is predicted to crash the dummy usage of the RE. Instead, the NP turns 'non-dummy' by being referential to a feminine NP [29]. The reply as in the example is 'Alice'.

(11)
Speaker A: ʃu isim-ha?
what name-3SF
"What is her name?"
Speaker B: 'Alice'.

This restriction of this dummy RE is also found in number and person features in which the pronominal must be third-person singular. When pluralized, the NP turns referential of a group of things or people.

(12)
Speaker A: ʃu isim-hum?
what name-3MPL
"What is their name?"

The same applies with person features when changed to a second person, the RE is no longer a 'dummy'.

(13)
Speaker A: ʃu ism-ak?
what name-2SM
"What is your name?

The study also confirms the behavior of this dummy phrase in other Arab dialects as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2 shows how this phrase is realized as well in other Arab dialects in a similar phonetic fashion and is positioned pragmatically as a propositional filler as in JA.

Table 2. Forms of *ʃu ismo:* in Arab dialects.

	Arab Dialect	**Dummy *ʃu ismo:***
1.	Egyptian Dialect	*eh ismu*
2.	Levantine Dialect	*ʃu ismo:*
3.	Gulf Region	*ʃismu*

This phrase is applicable syntactically as a filler as utilized in the Gulf dialect in example (14) below with its dialectical realization as *ʃismu*:

(14) ruħt ʃuft il-waraga ma:l ʃismu illi ware:tak iyaha mbariħ
Go-PAST see-PAST paper which what-name-3SM C show-1SM-2SM her-ACC yesterday
"I saw the paper, mmm, which I showed you yesterday".

This expansion on other Arab dialects provides more evidence of the abstract usage of this filler across the board in the Arab World.

4.5. *How Are You*

In Extract 8, Speaker A uses the *how are you* expression as it seems to be non-referential. However, this expression can be used to achieve communication between the two speakers as follows.

The speakers are arranging a party.

Extract 8

Speaker A: tamam rah ʔhʒiz ʔimalʕab ʔilalih. bisˁir
Ok will book-1SM the playground tonight. to-be-possible
ʔihaʒiz ʕ8:30 ʔilmasa?
the reservation at-8:30? pm?
"Ok, I will book the playground tonight. Is it ok to make the reservation at 8:30 pm?"

Speaker B: kwais wa rah ʔʕzim kol ʔisˁhabna
gopd o will invite-1SM all our friends
"that's fine and I will then invite all of our friends."

Speaker A: kwais. ʃow ra?ijak tiʃtari kol ʔiaɣradˁ
good what about buy-INF all the goodies
bokrah ɡareeb 7 ʔilmasa
tomorrow about 7 pm?
"It sounds good. What about buying all the goodies tomorrow around pm?"

Speaker B: kef halak?
how status-2SM?
"How are you?"

Speaker A: tamam tamam kwais ʕ-lxamseh ʔilmasa
ok ok good at-five pm
"Ok ok. Is it good at 5 pm?"

"Ok ok. Is it good at 5 pm?"
Speaker B: ʔah ʔahsan
yes better
"Yes. That's better."

In the current extract, the participants were arranging for a party in a playground. They were dividing all the missions among them. However, when Speaker A suggested that Speaker B buy the goodies at 5 pm, Speaker B did not like the idea as he responded with a "*How are you*" question. Speaker B did not mean to ask his friend such a question in the middle of the conversation. In the Jordanian culture when someone uses the *how are you* expression in this way it indicates that a particular context is not acceptable and this is what happened in the current example. Abu-Elrob [30] noticed that the "HRY" question can be used in medical consultations for several reasons according to the position of the question: Salutation and gathering information.

The *how are you* question could align with the "type identifiable" level of cognitive accessibility, as it often refers to a general concept rather than a specific entity. Speaker B assumed that Speaker A shared knowledge with him, so he did not give explicit information on what he tacitly knew. Consequently, Speaker A could recognize the referent of the RE and suggested a new time that was acceptable for Speaker B. This indicates that despite of the least cognitive accessibility level of this expression, Speaker A could refer to an identifiable entity. So, in this context, *how are you* can be classified as Referential (Indefinite descriptions) in the Givenness Hierarchy. It seems that Speaker B did not flout the Maxim of Quantity as he provided the required information to get the message beyond this expression.

5. Discussion

The current study has examined the Arabic REs in the Jordanian culture to show the new forms of REs in Jordan and to analyze the information structure in discourse according to the divergent levels of cognitive accessibility in Givenness Hierarchy theory [14]: In focus, Activated, Familiar, Uniquely identifiable, Referential and Type identifiable to classify what the speakers assume for the listeners. In this section, the results are presented to explain how they contribute to the existing literature in REs. A link between the research questions and the results is presented as follows:

(1). ***What forms of REs do occur in JA?***

After analyzing the collected dataset, it was noticed that REs do not only include pronouns, definite/indefinite articles, and demonstratives [9, 15]. The current paper revealed that there are different new forms of REs in JA which refer to objects, people, or ideas: mitigating religious expression *Allahu Akbar, illi ba:li ba:lak, ʃu: ismo,* and *how are you*. These forms of expression could be referential or non-referential according to the context.

(2). ***What do the speakers assume is known to receivers?***

Givenness Hierarchy Theory [13] was deployed to help analyze the explored REs, and reveal differences in how speakers navigate shared knowledge and what is considered accessible. The recurrent REs in the present study were classified according to the six levels of cognitive accessibility: In focus, Activated, Familiar, Uniquely identifiable, Referential and Type identifiable. These levels are essential as they provide a structured way to analyze how speakers choose referential forms based on the listener's presumed knowledge or attention to the referent. Furthermore, these levels help explain how speakers adapt their language according to the contextual needs of the conversation.

The findings revealed that Activated, Type identifiable, and Referential are the recurrent levels. Each one of them indicates a different explanation for the receiver's presumed knowledge. For example, the "Activated" level, as in demonstratives and *illi ba:li ba:lak,* indicates that the referent is not the immediate focus but has recently been mentioned. So, the receiver was expected to retrieve this information quickly. In the case of the "Type identifiable" level, as in *Allahu Akbar, ʃu: ismo,* which is the least cognitively accessible level, the speaker assumed the listener could understand the type of entity being referred to without any previous context. Finally, the "Referential" level, as in the *how are you* question, refers to the ability of the speaker to refer to an identifiable entity. The findings go with the ones given by Gundel's et al. [15] regarding the levels of cognitive accessibility. The difference between the two studies is that Gundel et al analyzed the REs in different languages and all the levels of accessibility were

discussed whereas the current study focused on the REs in JA, and only three levels occurred. Furthermore, Gundel's et al.[9] applied the six levels of cognitive accessibility to explore the link between the theory of mind and children's use of referring expression whereas the current paper applied them to investigate their applicability to the new forms of REs and to explain the causes of the misunderstanding for the shared referent.

(3). *What does cause the mismatch between the speaker's target referent and the hearer's interpretation?*

In the current paper, misunderstanding of the correct referent occurred in most of the cases. The Givenness Hierarchy theory helped in diagnosing miscommunication when speakers misjudged the listener's cognitive accessibility to a referent. The occurred REs were outlined according to levels of accessibility. It was noticed that a mismatch occurred when a speaker used a particular RE and assumed a particular level of accessibility from the listener. As a result, the listener could not retrieve the referent. For example, the speaker assumes that a referent is activated or familiar in a listener's mind. Therefore, confusion or miscommunication occurs because listeners need more clarification to understand and retrieve the referent, as in Extracts 1, 2 and 4. This gives support to Dowarah and Sinha[31], who assert that the wants of human beings influence communication. In those extracts, the speakers expected the listeners to retrieve the information quickly as they were supposed to mention recently. However, listeners expressed their confusion by laughing or asking questions like *What do you mean by this and that* and *What is that?*

In other cases, as in Extracts 3 and 6, miscommunication can occur when the speaker uses a less specific RE than needed, assuming the listener can infer the referent, but the listener is unable to do so. For example, *Allah Akbar* in Extract 3 is "Type identifiable" level of accessibility. The mother, in this extract, assumed her daughter could understand the type of entity being referred to without any previous context. The mother tacitly knows more than what she says and she cannot give more information to make the referent clear to her daughter. As a result, the daughter failed to guess the referent as the mother flouted the maxim of quantity and manner by providing unclear and less information than required. The same case occurred in Extract 6 when the speaker used *ʃu: ismo*. It is also a "type identifiable" level of accessibility because it is used to introduce a general kind of an entity, rather than a specific one. Thus, the listener is expected to understand the general type of referent being introduced, but not a specific referent.

It was noted that in only Extract 8, the speaker could manage the level of accessibility in a way that the listener could refer to the referent. The listener could share the assumption of *how are you* despite of its different context usage. This example aligns with Gundel et al.[15] where speakers were able to manage givenness and accessibility while communicating together.

Integration between the Givenness Hierarchy Theory, tacit knowledge and Grice maxims, particularly the quantity maxim, played a crucial role in explaining the mismatch between speakers' assumptions and listeners' understanding. The integration of approaches goes with Gundel et al.[14] where integration occurred between the Givenness Hierarchy Theory and Grice maxims, particularly the quantity maxim. The addition in the current paper is the integration with tacit knowledge[18]. According to the tacit knowledge theory, it was noticed that speakers know more than what they say. They assume that listeners can understand the referent of a RE. Furthermore, according to Grice's maxims, the speakers flout the maxim of quantity by using expressions that lack referentiality. Therefore, listeners could not guess the intended referent.

The findings offered significant insights into the role of Givenness Hierarchy Theory in determining referring expressions. The theory predicts that speakers favour the use of definite noun phrases when referring to previously introduced or highly familiar referents to support that the accessibility of a referent in memory influences the choice of referring expression. However, the current paper extended the application of this framework to JA spoken language and revealed how the use of indefinite descriptions could flout the maxim of quantity and does not support the accessibility of referents in memory.

The current study reveals notable cross-linguistic similarities and differences in the use of referring expressions. Similar to findings in previous studies in different and similar languages and in different contexts, speakers of JA preferentially used different phrases to refer to given referents. However, in contrast to other studies like Gundel et al.[9, 15]; Saadi[11]; and Albufalasa[8], which exhibit the use of definite

pronouns and particular words to refer to a previously given referent, the current study shows the use of indefinite forms to refer to a given referent based on discourse context.

6. Conclusions

This study offers a novel application of Givenness Hierarchy Theory to JA spoken language, shedding light on how REs are shaped by the use of indefinite expressions to refer to given referents, which has not been adequately addressed in previous studies.

The current study aimed to analyze different RE forms that occurred in the Jordanian spoken language and to investigate what speakers assume is known for receivers. The adopted framework for this paper was the Givenness Hierarchy Theory Prince[13], in addition to tacit knowledge and Grice's maxims. The researchers analyzed the data according to the six levels of cognitive accessibility or activation they assume for the listener: In Focus, Activated, Familiar, Uniquely identifiable, Referential, and Type identifiable.

The analysis of referring expressions in Jordanian culture revealed that speakers use new forms of REs. The researchers noticed the occurrence of non-specific expressions to refer to a specific referent. The non-specific expressions were classified as follows: demonstratives and impersonal items, mitigating religious expression, *illi: ba:li: ba:lak*, the dummy RE: *ʃu: ismo*, and *how are you* question. The forms were classified under "Activated", "Referential" and "Type identifiable" levels of accessibility. The analysis of the occurred REs also revealed the reasons beyond the confusion that listeners face. The use of expressions that lack referentiality significantly influences the understanding of the reference.

The findings of the current paper contribute to the broader theoretical discussion on the universality of the Givenness Hierarchy theory, supporting the claim that the referential choice is influenced by cognitive factors related to discourse structure. The Givenness Hierarchy theory provided a useful lens for identifying how Jordanian culture affects the choice of particular expressions as REs and in turn affects cognitive accessibility, particularly in the informal Jordanian context as in the current paper. This adds a cultural dimension to the theory's application. It becomes evident that speakers in informal contexts opt for more explicit referring expressions as in the formal ones. This sheds light on the value of culture in shaping cognitive accessibility. These levels of accessibility must be understood in light of the cultural and social norms that guide communication in different settings. This aligns with Abushihab's study[32, 33] who noticed that cultural norms impact how requests, apologies, and expressions of gratitude are formulated in JA and Turkish

Understanding how speakers can misjudge the listeners' cognitive accessibility to the referent in Jordanian culture can be valuable for educators and professionals working in intercultural settings, providing strategies to navigate clarity in communication to interact more effectively in different social contexts. This can lead to the design of training workshops for students and employees to engage more thoughtfully in educational and business contexts.

This study has contributed to our understanding of the role of Givenness Hierarchy in referential choice, showing that JA speakers of mostly rely on indefinite phrases for referents that they think are highly accessible in memory. By extending this framework to colloquial spoken Arabic, this study provided new insights into the cognitive processes underlying referential strategies across languages. Moreover, our findings offer valuable evidence of the cross-linguistic applicability of Givenness Hierarchy Theory.

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of Givenness Hierarchy in referential choice, the results are constrained by the limited number of REs. The small sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings, as a larger number of REs is likely to increase the chances of discovering additional potential forms and patterns in the data. Given this limitation, caution is needed when extending these results to other populations or contexts, as different linguistic or cultural settings might exhibit different patterns of referential choice.

Additionally, the study has not thoroughly explored potential gender and participant differences in the use of REs, which could yield important insights into how social factors influence referential choices. Future research could address this gap by increasing the sample size and exploring the relationship between gender and the choice of RE structures. Further investigation into these factors would enrich our understanding of how Givenness Hierarchy applies to diverse contexts. Finally, a mixed-methods approach, combining

quantitative analysis with qualitative insights, could also be employed to capture a wider range of referential forms and better account for contextual and social variations.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, T.M.F. and R.A.A.-E.; methodology, T.M.F. and A.I.T.; validation, R.A.A.-E., T.M.F. and A.I.T.; writing—original draft preparation, T.M.F.; writing—review and editing, R.A.A.-E. and A.I.T.; supervision A.I.T.; funding acquisition, R.A.A.-E., T.M.F. and A.I.T. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

We agree to share research data.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Glossary

1SM	first singular masculine
2SF	second singular feminine
3SF	third singular feminine
2SM	second singular masculine
3SF	third singular feminine
3SM	third singular masculine
F	Feminine
INF	infinitive
M	Masculine
MPL	masculine plural
PART	participle
PAST	past
S	Singular

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