

الأسلوب غير المباشر كأسلوب حوار في الخطاب الكوردي اللهجة البادية

هلبين بهجت انور

[hilbeen.anwar@uod.ac](mailto:hilbeen.anwar@uod.ac)

قسم اللغة الانكليزية- كلية اللغات – جامعة دهوك

هيفي خالد جميل

قسم اللغة الانكليزية – كلية اللغات – جامعة دهوك

[heevi.jamel@uod.ac](mailto:heevi.jamel@uod.ac)

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الكردية البادية، تانن، المشاركة العالية، المراعاة العالية، إدارة الوجه، تحليل الخطاب.

### كيفية اقتباس البحث

انور ، هلبين بهجت هيفي خالد جميل ، الأسلوب غير المباشر كأسلوب حوار في الخطاب الكوردي اللهجة البادية، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، أيار ٢٠٢٦، المجلد: ١٦، العدد: ٥.

هذا البحث من نوع الوصول المفتوح مرخص بموجب رخصة المشاع الإبداعي لحقوق التأليف والنشر ( Creative Commons Attribution ) تتيح فقط للآخرين تحميل البحث ومشاركته مع الآخرين بشرط نسب العمل الأصلي للمؤلف، ودون القيام بأي تعديل أو استخدامه لأغراض تجارية.

Registered في مسجلة في  
**ROAD**

Indexed في مفهرسة في  
**IASJ**





## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

### **Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse**

**Hilbeen Bahjat Anwar**

Department of English/ College of Languages/ University of Dohuk.  
Kurdistan Region. Iraq.

[hilbeen.anwar@uod.ac](mailto:hilbeen.anwar@uod.ac)

**Hivee Kalid Jamel**

Department of English/ College of Languages/ University of Dohuk.  
Kurdistan Region. Iraq.

[heevi.jamel@uod.ac](mailto:heevi.jamel@uod.ac)

**Keywords** : Badini Kurdish, Tannen, high-involvement, high-considerateness, face management, discourse analysis.

#### **How To Cite This Article**

Anwar , Hilbeen Bahjat , Hivee Kalid Jamel , Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse , Journal Of Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, May 2026, Volume:16, Issue: 5.



**[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)**

#### **Abstract**

The current study explores indirectness as a register of Badini Kurdish discourse on the basis of Tannen's theory of conversational style. Badini Kurdish, a dialect of Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish) spoken mainly in the Duhok Governorate of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, remains relatively unexamined in discourse-pragmatic studies. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, this study identifies indirectness as it appears through hedging, mitigation, storytelling, proverbs, metaphors, questions as substitutes for commands, silence and narrative framing by means of qualitative discourse analysis, supported by quantitative analysis of the



distribution and frequencies of these strategies in a corpus of Discourse Completion Task responses produced by native Badini speakers across diverse age groups, genders, and rural and urban locations. The analysis of these features is framed within Tannen's distinction between highly participatory and highly considerate interaction styles, as well as exploring the potential roles of maneuvering as a mechanism for building rapport, a face-saving strategy, and an indicator of power and solidarity. The quantitative results show that indirect strategies constitute the majority of responses, with narrative framing and proverbs occurring most frequently, while silence appears comparatively less often. The findings indicate that Badini Kurdish discourse combines characteristics of active participation and strong consideration for others, and demonstrate how indirectness plays vital social roles in relation to the relative age of the participants, appropriate communication styles for women and men, and community solidarity. This study also provides cross-cultural evidence for conversational style theories, as it is among the first studies to systematically examine pragmatism in Kurdish dialects.

#### الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف ظاهرة الأسلوب غير المباشر بوصفها نمطاً تداولياً في الخطاب الكوردي اللهجة البادية، وذلك بالاستناد إلى نظرية ديورا تانين في أسلوب المحادثة. تُعد الكوردية البادية لهجةً من لهجات الكرمانجية (الكوردية الشمالية) المنتشرة أساساً في محافظة دهوك ضمن إقليم كردستان العراق، وهي ما تزال قليلة التداول في الدراسات التداولية الخطابية. تعتمد الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً، حيث تحدد مظاهر الأسلوب غير المباشر كما تظهر من خلال التلطيف، والتخفيف، والسرد القصصي، والأمثال، والاستعارة، واستخدام الأسئلة بدل الأوامر، والصمت، والتأطير السردية، وذلك عبر تحليل خطابي نوعي مدعوم بتحليل كمي لتوزيع هذه الاستراتيجيات وتكراراتها في استجابات اختبار إكمال الخطاب (DCT) المقدمة من متحدثين أصليين بالكوردية البادية من فئات عمرية وجندرية مختلفة ومن بيئات ريفية وحضرية متنوعة. ويؤطر تحليل هذه الظواهر ضمن تمييز تانين بين أسلوبي التفاعل عالي المشاركة وعالي المراعاة، إلى جانب استكشاف الأدوار المحتملة للأسلوب غير المباشر بوصفه آلية لبناء الألفة، واستراتيجية لحفظ الوجه، ومؤشراً على السلطة والتضامن. وتشير النتائج إلى أن الخطاب الباديني يجمع بين خصائص المشاركة الفاعلة والمراعاة القوية للآخرين، كما تُظهر كيف يؤدي الأسلوب غير المباشر أدواراً اجتماعية أساسية تتعلق بفروق العمر بين المتحاورين، وأنماط



التواصل الملائمة للنساء والرجال، وتعزيز التضامن المجتمعي. وتقدّم هذه الدراسة كذلك دليلاً مقارناً عبر الثقافات يدعم نظريات أسلوب المحادثة، كونها من أوائل الدراسات التي تتناول التداولية في اللهجات الكوردية بصورة منهجية.

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background**

Language represents a greater than just a means of communication; it mirrors interpersonal dynamics, societal norms, and the process of self-formation. One of the most illuminating aspects of language use is indirectness, which occurs when meaning is given by tactics other than the literal content of a speech, such as implicature and allusion. Despite extensive research on indirectness in pragmatics and discourse analysis, its implementation in languages and vernaculars that lack resources remains mostly unknown. Kurdish is a west Iranian language spoken in Kurdistan. It belongs to Indo-Iranian branch from an Indo-European language family. It ranks as the third-largest Iranian language group, after Persian and Pashto, having various dialects. Kurdish has three essential dialects Northern Kurdish (Northern Kurmanji), Central Kurdish (Sorani.) and Southern Kurdish. Badini is a variety of Kurdish that belongs to Northern Kurmanji dialect spoken in Dohuk (Badinan) region. Of the Kurdistan region of Iraq (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2012; Haig & Obengin, 2022).

The Badini Kurdish language lacks development in the area of language and discourse usage or analysis, despite the extensive history of its use in spoken form across various contexts.

The works by Deborah Tannen on the conversational style provide useful information about how speakers create meaning during speech interactions, how they establish relationships with one another, and the impacts speech communication has on society. For instance, in her groundbreaking research titled "Conversational Style: An Analysis of Conversation Among Friends" (1984), Tannen proves that repetitive speech characteristics such as speech rates, overlaps, implied meanings, and storytelling serve as measures of the differences in speech conventions among people from different cultures and ethnicities. The concept of high-involvement and high-consideration interactional styles, introduced by Tannen (2005), serves as a guide to creating relationships and maintaining one's dignity.



In Badini Kurdish communities, a great value is placed on oral traditions and narrative storytelling, as well as a strong adherence to patriarchal social structures and the significance of the family unit. These socio-cultural variables render indirectness as a natural and habitual mode of interaction rather than a merely polite communicative choice. As a result, indirect strategies are a prominent and recurring feature of daily discourse in Badini Kurdish.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing number of pragmatic studies for a wide variety of languages, there does not seem to be any notable study on indirect analysis as a form of conversational strategy in the Kurdish language. For instance, different aspects of the Kurdish language have been analyzed through models that are informed by speech acts theory and politeness theory, including Ali (2019), Abdullah & Saeed (2024), and Mohammed (2025). However, these studies have ignored conversational style as a behavioral system with distinct cultural patterns that are apparent in both speakers. Present research aims to address a gap in the literature by using Tannen's theory of conversational style to natural Badini Kurdish speech and analyzing its indirectness at the discourse level. Without such analyses, dimensions of Badini communicative practice that index more important matters of the ways indirectness mediate forms of power, solidarity and face remain undocumented and under-theorized.

### 1.3 Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are: (a) to identify and categorize the forms and functions of indirectness in culturally embedded Badini Kurdish conversations; (b) to analyze these forms according to Tannen's theory, with particular attention to whether Badini discourse is more reflective of a high-involvement or high-considerateness style; (c) to examine the social functions of indirectness such as rapport building, face management and power/solidarity negotiations; and (d) the role that age, sex or social status plays in relation to subsections within this speech community with respect to their use of these strategies.

### 1.4 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. In Badini Kurdish daily interactions, how is indirectness realized?





## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

2. Does Badini Kurdish exhibit Tannen's definition of a high-involvement or high-considerateness style?
3. What social purposes does indirectness serve in the Badini Kurdish speech community?
4. How do age, sex and social statutes influence the use of indirectness strategies in Badini Kurdish speech?
5. Which indirectness strategies are commonly used in Badini Kurdish discourse?

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The study is limited to indirectness in the northern Kurmanji dialect, specifically Badini Kurdish discourse. It focuses on advice- giving and evaluative strategies as realized in Badini Kurdish discourse. It concentrates on the analysis of indirect linguistic forms to manage face concerns and interpersonal relations in asymmetrical family interactions such as between elders and younger participants.

The study does not aim to provide a comprehensive account of all Kurdish dialects, nor does it compare Kurdish with other languages. Furthermore, prosodic features, non- verbal cues and real time conversational dynamics fall outside the scope of the current study.

### **1.6 The Model**

The study adopts Tannen's Conversational Style model, which views indirectness as a culturally grounded interactional strategy rather than a communicative deficit. The model concentrates on dimensions such as involvement versus considerateness and directness versus indirectness. The selection of this framework is justified because it frames indirectness not as a lack of clarity, but as a sophisticated pragmatic resource used to maintain rapport and manage interpersonal relationships within specific cultural context. The model is applied to Badini Kurdish discourse for the investigation of how speakers strategically balance involvement and restraint. The analysis allows examination of how speakers manage face, solidarity and power relations across contexts involving age and social status. Accordingly, indirect linguistic forms are interpreted as stylistic choices shaped by shared cultural norms rather than as markers of communicative inefficiency.



## 1.7 Significance of the Study

In a number of ways, this study contributes. By expanding its theoretical framework to include a less-studied, non-Western genetic group language community, it provides an opportunity to test how well Tannen's phenomena of conversational style hold up across cultures. Through the presentation of the first study on discourse level indirect speech within Badini Kurdish using a corpus-based approach, there is an unfulfilled need for research within the realm of Kurdish pragmatics that would be satisfied. The results gained from this study will give valuable information on how these features influence communication practices within the Middle East, and they could be used to train those speaking Kurdish who wish to learn other languages, such as English.

## 1.8 The Organization of the Study

The current study is structured as follows: the second section reviews the relevant literature on indirectness and conversational style; the third section describes the research design and methodology; the fourth section presents the results and discusses the results; the fifth section describes findings; and the sixth section concludes the study.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Indirectness in Pragmatics

Indirectness has long occupied a central place in pragmatics, stemming from the foundational work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1975). Searle's (1975) theory of indirect speech acts showed that speakers often do one illocutionary act by way of another—for example, performing an action with a question about ability “*Can you pass the salt?*” to perform a request. He characterized an indirect speech act as one that “is performed indirectly by way of performing another” (Searle, 1975, p. 60). Furthermore, this framework showed that linguistic form and communicative function do not have a one-to-one correlation and that listeners use contextual reasoning, shared knowledge, and felicity conditions to arrive at the intended meaning of indirect utterances.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory introduced this notion in connection to face. They suggested that every communicative act could threaten the positive face (one's wish to be liked) or negative face (the wish not to be coerced) of conversation partners. Indirectness, in their framework, operates as a device that speakers use off record to reduce face threats by keeping the inferential target implicit. According to their





model, three sociological parameters determine what degree of politeness will be used: social distance; relative power and the ranking of the imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

However, the influential study by Blum-Kolka (1987) challenged the assumed linear relationship between hinting and tact. Her study in Hebrew and English showed that traditional hinting was considered the most tactful strategy, while other strategies, such as innuendo (traditionally considered the least direct), were not considered the most tactful. She argued that literature is not a feature of speech, but rather an interactive balance between the need for practical clarity and the avoidance of coercion (Blum-Kolka, 1987). This finding has been replicated in many multicultural contexts, including Turkish (Marti, 2006) and Mexican Spanish (Félix-Brasdefer, 2005).

## 2.2 Tannen's Conversational Style Theory

Deborah Tannen's work on conversational style represents a paradigm shift in speech act-based models of indirect cues. Rather than treating individual utterances as independent pragmatic units, Tannen is concerned with the customary and cultural ways in which speakers share in constructing and understanding discourse. Her seminal book, *Conversational Style: An Analysis of Conversation Among Friends* (1984; 2nd ed. 2005; 2009), examined a Thanksgiving dinner conversation between six speakers from diverse racial and geographic backgrounds, highlighting the linguistic elements that shape their conversational styles.

### 2.2.1 Style as Culturally Patterned

Tannen originally devised conversational style as the set of linguistic and paralinguistic habits that speakers acquire through socialization within their speech communities. These aspects include patterns of turn-taking, pacing or intonation, the use of overlap, storytelling conventions and directness/indirectness strategies. Style is not simply a choice that one makes but rather an unconsciously kinetic orientation towards communication that manifests cultural values and conventions (Tannen, 1984). Differences in conversational style, Tannen contends, are a fundamental cause of miscommunication: Each speaker views the behavior of the other through the prism of his or her own stylistic expectations.

### **2.2.2 Indirectness as Ambiguity and Relational Strategy**

Tannen argues that allusion is not merely a practical strategy that enables speech acts to be performed with implicit meaning, but a fundamental feature of language use that reflects the inherent risk of ambiguity in all forms of communication. She asserts that allusion is "the inevitable result of basic human desires for communication and self-defense" (Tannen, 1986, p. 22). Speakers resort to allusion because they have conflicting demands for communication and autonomy, and the meaning of their veiled speech is negotiated between them in real time. It is important to note that the linguistic strategy itself whether it be overlapping, silence, or allusion can indicate either solidarity or dominance, depending on the context, the participants' styles, and their interactions with one another (Tannen, 1994).

### **2.2.3 High-Involvement Style**

The highly participatory style is characterized by conversational features that encourage and sustain interaction. Speakers in this style may be adept at rapid turn-taking, but with overlapping speech, exaggerated intonation, enthusiastic responses, personal anecdotes, and hints rather than direct statements. Tannen (1984), stating this style, which involve speakers of Jewish New York descent, noted that overlapping speech indicates attentive and empathetic engagement with the speaker, rather than rushing to speak or interrupting. In the highly participatory style, indirectness serves to foster intimacy: Speakers hint at meanings, invite others to read between the lines, and enjoy the collaborative process of meaning-making as an intimate activity.

### **2.2.4 High-Considerateness Style**

The considerate style, on the other hand, focuses on avoiding imposing one's will and gives due respect to individual autonomy. Speakers in this style tend to use longer pauses, are less likely to interrupt, speak at a slower pace, and communicate directly, reducing the burden of inference on the listener. This type of hinting takes a different form, rather than a sign of familiarity, speakers may use it to avoid imposing their opinions or desires on others. Consistent with the requirement to refrain from portraying other people in an unfavorable light, this method considers their feelings (Tannen, 1981, 1984; Brown & Levinson, 1987).





### 2.2.5 Interactional Meaning

One of Tannen's main contributions is the notion of interactional co-construction of meaning. Literary devices have fluid meanings that are determined by the speaker's style, the context, and the collective socio-cultural practices, rather than having a static, absolute, or a right meaning. This perspective also has its limitations, especially when it comes to research such as Gompers's (1982), who demonstrated that speakers build an interpretive framework during interaction by employing rhetorical context, intonation, vocalization and pragmatic markers. According to the empirical scale developed by Holtgraves (1997), conversational allusion is characterized by a shared impact on cultural and individual levels of diversity in language production and indirect interpretation.

### 2.3 Indirectness in Kurdish Contexts

Studies on pragmatic phenomena in Kurdish languages remain relatively limited. The main focus of most previous research is on how Kurdish learners of English as a foreign language perform specific speech acts in English, such as requests (Ali, 2020), refusals (Alzebaree & Yavuz, 2018), and suggestions (Qadir, 2022), often using speech completion tests (DCTs) and frameworks adapted from Bloom-Kolka et al. (1989) and Brown and Levinson (1987). The results show that Kurdish speakers, when making requests to interlocutors of higher status, tend to favor indirect strategies, while they tend to favor direct strategies when addressing their peers, indicating a significant influence of social authority and distance on pragmatic decisions (Majeed & Rasheed, 2019). Similarly, Kurdish proverbs have been approached and analyzed from the perspective of speech acts: they are always double indirect expressions within the context of quotation, and not productive expressions that carry implicit political connotations (Majeed & Ahmed, 2017).

Research on speech acts in Kurmanji Kurdish, particularly Badini dialect has explored speakers' use of pragmatic signs to negotiate meaning in family interactions, demonstrating that shared linguistic phenomena at the discourse level are abundant and culturally significant in Kurdish (Çabuk, 2018). However, no study has yet examined indirectness as a feature of overall conversational style among speakers of Badini Kurdish using Tannen's framework.



### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study takes Deborah Tannen's conversational style theory as its main theoretical foundation. By conversational style, it is meant the culturally influenced habitual patterns of speech used by speakers in their interactions, including features such as speech rate, overlapping, role-playing, storytelling, and allusion, as described in Tannen's writings (1984, 2005). These features are not separate practical choices, but rather interconnected aspects of the speaker's overall communicative trajectory, which are shaped through socialization in specific linguistic communities and reflect the values, norms, and social hierarchies of those communities.

Indirectness is not viewed in this study as merely a speech-acting strategy (e.g., Searle, 1975) or a means of saving face (as in Brown and Levinson, 1987), but rather as a stylistic feature, a habitual pattern of meaning-making that extends throughout discourse and reflects deeper cultural logics about communication. Tannen's framework enables us to move from studying individual phrases to exploring how allusion patterns shape a conversational style, and how this style achieves intimacy, saves face, negotiates power, and fosters solidarity. To analyze Kurdish discourse in the Badini language using indirectness, this study activates this concept by identifying and analyzing the following features:

**Table 1:** *Operationalization of Indirectness Features in This Study*

Feature	Definition	Example Context
Indirect Advice	Advice conveyed through suggestion, narration, or general statements rather than explicit directives	A parent telling a story about someone who made a similar decision rather than directly advising the child
Indirect Criticism	Criticism expressed through implication, hedging, or third-person reference rather than direct evaluation	Commenting on a general behavior rather than directly criticizing the interlocutor
Hinting	Making an observation or statement that implies a	Mentioning the cold weather as a hint for





## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*



	desired action or response without stating it explicitly	someone to close the window
Storytelling as Indirect Evaluation	Using narrative to convey evaluative or directive meaning through the moral or implication of a story	Telling a story about a neighbor's experience to evaluate a family member's decision
Proverbs and Metaphor	Employing culturally shared figurative expressions to convey advice, criticism, or evaluation indirectly	Using a Kurdish proverb to comment on someone's behavior without direct confrontation

Each of these features is examined using Tannen's high-involvement versus high-considerateness distinction, and reanalyzed in social terms according to rapport, power and solidarity. The study is able to do double duty by analyzing the social-interactional roles of linguistic forms of indirectness in Badini Kurdish discourse and by identifying them via the use of a framework with two layers of behavior.

### **4. Methodology**

#### **4.1 Research Design**

This study involved qualitative dominant mixed- methods research design, combining qualitative discourse-pragmatic analysis with limited quantitative description. The main objective of the study is to explore how indirectness strategies are used in Badini Kurdish interaction and to interpret their pragmatic functions in expressing politeness, power, and solidarity. Qualitative discourse analysis is therefore the central methodological approach, allowing for close, context-sensitive interpretation of language use and the culturally embedded meanings conveyed through interaction (Schiffrin, 1994; Tannen, 2007), and this approach is particularly suitable for examining conversational style and pragmatic choices in under-researched linguistic contexts (Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998).

The research uses quantitative frequencies to identify patterns and trends in the occurrence of indirectness strategies within the corpus. The use of



quantitative methods is merely for descriptive purposes, and their role is simply to support and strengthen the qualitative results obtained from the analysis of the data. This is because it helps in gaining an understanding of the functioning of the strategies and also identifies which strategies are commonly used.

Due to the lack of previous research on conversational style and indirectness in Badini Kurdish, the present study is exploratory in nature. The mixed-methods design allows the study to capture the complexity of indirectness as a socio-pragmatic phenomenon while also providing empirical evidence of its relative prominence across different interactional contexts. Because of the exploratory focus of the study and the limited prior research on Badini Kurdish discourse, the study relies on research questions rather than hypotheses in order to allow patterns of indirectness to emerge from the data.

#### **4.2 Data Collection**

The technique for data collection in this study is the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which consists of a questionnaire containing a set of carefully constructed scenarios. The scenarios were reviewed and approved by a panel of experts to ensure content validity. Discourse Completion Task is a data elicitation procedure that contains a questionnaire with designed situations to elicit a particular speech act. The informants are required to read each context, imagine themselves in the given situation and respond accordingly (Billmyer & Varghese, 2000, cited in Ali 2019, p.16).

The DCT used in this study contains eight scenarios, each targeting indirectness in culturally recognizable and socially meaningful contexts in Badini Kurdish society. The topics of the scenarios include career choice advice, indirect criticism in traditional gatherings, offering condolences indirectly, evaluation of a marriage proposal, indirect praise, requesting support, indirectness across social hierarchies, and negotiating family decisions such as wedding dates. These domains were selected because they are widely recognized as recurrent and culturally salient in Badini Kurdish interaction. The scenarios were designed by the researchers, drawing on everyday social practices in Badini Kurdish culture and informed by previous pragmatic research using DCT. They were not directly taken from a single existing questionnaire but were adapted to reflect local norms, values and interactional expectations.





Consistent with Discourse Completion Task- based pragmatic research (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Kasper & Dahl, 1991), and Tannen’s qualitative approach to conversational style (Tannen, 1984, 1994), the present study adopts a limited number of scenarios in order to prioritize analytical depth over breadth. The selection of eight scenarios was intended to show the most recurrent and culturally salient domains of indirectness in Badini Kurdish interaction, namely family decision-making, advice-giving, moral evaluation, gendered interaction, and hierarchical negotiation. These domains repeatedly emerged in the data and allowed for in-depth qualitative analysis of indirectness strategies rather than surface-level frequency counts.

The Discourse Completion Tasks are widely adopted in qualitative pragmatic studies for the elicitation of a specific speech act (Golato, 2003, p. 90). This technique is time- saving and enables the researchers to collect a large amount of focused data on a particular pragmatic phenomenon (Beebe & Cuming, 1996; Cohen, 1998 cited in Ali, 2019, p. 16). In the present study, the task was translated into Kurdish to ensure accessibility for native speakers from diverse educational backgrounds.

The study focuses on Badini Kurdish conversational practices, and participants were informed of this general aim. However, they were not told that the specific focus of the investigation was on indirectness or the strategies used to achieve it, in order to reduce observer effects and elicit more natural responses (Labov, 1972). The study adopts a qualitative analytical perspective within a broader mixed- method design, and participants’ written responses to the hypothetical situations were analyzed rather than spontaneous spoken interaction. All responses were later translated into English for analysis.

### 4.3 Participants

Using snowball sampling, participants who speak Badini Kurdish, and live in the Duhok Governorate in Iraq's Kurdistan Region were recruited. The study used the following demographic parameters to achieve a representative sample:

**Table 2:** *Target Participant Demographics*

Variable	Categories	Number of participants	Rationale
Native Language	Badini Kurdish (L1)	36	Ensures authentic representation of Badini



			conversational style
Age Groups	Young adults (18–30)	12	Captures generational variation in indirectness use
	Middle-aged (31–50)	12	
	Older adults (51+)	12	
Gender	Male	18	Examines gender- based patterns in indirect conversational style
	Female	18	
Setting	Urban	18	Explores potential urban/rural differences in conversational norms
	Rural	18	

The target number of participants involved in this study was a total of 36, all native speakers of Badini Kurdish. The sample was evenly distributed across age groups, with 12 young adults (18-30), 12 middle- aged adults (31-50), and 12 older adults (51+). Gender representation was balanced, comprising 18 male and 18 female participants. There were 18 participants from cities and 18 from rural regions, which made it possible to compare conversational norms across different settings. The appropriate institutional review board gave its ethical approval, and all participants gave their informed consent before taking part.

The same group of participants took part in both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study, allowing for integrated analysis of frequency-based patterns of indirectness as well as in-depth discourse interpretation. The sample size of 36 participants was considered sufficient to support descriptive quantitative patterning across demographic variables while also allowing for detailed qualitative discourse analysis.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

DCT responses were transcribed using modified conversational analysis conventions adapted for Badini Kurdish phonology and discourse features. Instances of indirectness were identified and codes according to operationalized categories (Table 3), including edges, mitigation, questions instead of commands, narrative framing, silence, proverbs, and metaphors.





**Table 3:** *Analytical Categories for Identifying Indirectness*

Discourse Feature	Description
Hedges	Expressions that soften the force of an utterance (e.g., “maybe,” “perhaps,” “I think” equivalents in Badini)
Mitigation	Strategies that reduce the directness or impact of potentially face-threatening statements
Questions instead of commands	Using interrogative forms to perform directives or express preferences
Narrative framing	Embedding advice, criticism, or evaluation within a story or personal anecdote
Silence	Strategic use of pauses or non-response to convey disagreement, disapproval, or deference
Proverbs	Use of culturally recognized sayings to convey indirect meaning
Metaphor	Figurative language used to express evaluations or directives without literal assertion

Coding and interpretation were guided by Tannen’s conversational style framework, examining whether indirectness reflected a high-involvement orientation (the use of indirectness for rapport-building, indications of engagement, or closeness) or a high-considerateness orientation (the use of indirectness in service to non-imposition, showing deference, or respecting autonomy). The analysis explores the interaction between rapport and power within the Badini speech community.

Following coding, the frequency and distribution of indirectness strategies were quantified to allow comparison across demographic variables such as age, gender, and setting. Quantitative patterns were then interpreted qualitatively to explain how indirectness strategies function in relation to rapport, power, and politeness in Badini Kurdish discourse.



## 5. Results and Discussion

This section provides an analysis of the data collected, organized according to five thematic categories of indirectness identified in Badini Kurdish discourse. Each sub-section introduces a specific strategy of indirectness followed by representative extracts from the data; the extracts are analyzed in terms of their linguistic form and pragmatic functions, and they are interpreted within Deborah Tannen's framework of conversational style.

Although Discourse Completion Tasks cannot fully replicate spontaneous interaction, they are particularly effective in eliciting culturally normative responses to sensitive situations such as advice, criticism, and hierarchical negotiation. The following analysis therefore focuses on patterns of indirectness across eight recurrent interactional scenarios.

Overall, analysis of the Discourse Completion Task responses showed that the majority of participants favored indirect strategies. However, the degree and form of indirectness varied across scenarios and social roles. Not all responses were fully indirect; direct strategies were rare and tended to occur primarily in peer-level interactions or in situations where speakers held clear authority. Indirectness was most consistently observed in scenarios involving elder-younger relations, family advice and moral evaluation, where participants overwhelmingly relied on storytelling, proverbs, hedging, and mitigation. Thus, these patterns suggest that indirectness in Badini Kurdish is systematic rather than incidental, and sensitive to contextual variables such as age, status, and relational distance.

Although the Discourse Completion Task consisted of eight situational prompts, these were analytically grouped into five core scenario categories based on shared pragmatic functions. Table 4 presents the distribution of indirectness strategies across these five thematic groupings.





**Table 4:** *Distribution of Indirectness Strategies Across 36 Participants (5 thematic scenario groups)*

Scenarios	Indirect advice	Indirect criticism & condolence	Marriage evaluation & praise	Gendered indirect request	Hierarchy, age & status	Total	% of 140	Mean per participant
Hedges	5	4	5	7	3	24	17.14%	0.67
Mitigation	5	6	4	3	4	22	15.71%	0.61
Questions instead of commands	4	2	3	2	3	14	10.00%	0.39
Narrative framing	9	6	9	4	6	34	24.29%	0.94
Silence	0	2	1	0	2	5	3.57%	0.14
Proverbs	6	9	7	3	4	29	20.71%	0.81
Metaphor	3	3	4	1	1	12	8.57%	0.33
Total	32	32	33	20	23	140	100%	3.89 tokens per participant

The distribution in Table 4 shows that narrative framing and proverbs dominate advice and evaluative scenarios, accounting for the highest frequencies across participants. Hedging and interrogative forms are more prominent in gendered and hierarchical interactions, reflecting speakers' preference for minimizing face-threats in socially delicate contexts; Otherwise, silence and metaphor occurred less frequently, suggesting that they are highly context-sensitive and selectively used rather than default strategies. These findings demonstrate that indirectness in Badini Kurdish discourse is shaped by interactional context rather than uniformly applied across situations.

The frequencies reported reflect the total number of indirectness tokens identified in the dataset and are independent of the number of participants; participant number only affects normalized measures such as mean frequency per speaker.

### 5.1 Indirect Advice as Rapport Strategy

Indirect advice is among the most prevalent ways of communicating in Badini Kurdish. Badini speakers prefer to express their directives indirectly, such as in advice or commentary within stories or third-person references. Thus, if an older person wants to tell a younger family member what career choice to make, they might frame the decision through telling a story about someone in their community who has been



in that situation and then give comparisons rather than informing them directly of the decision.

This resonates with Tannen's (1984) claim that shared storytelling in highly participatory communicative and cultural environments leads to mutual understanding and solidarity. The advice-giver demonstrates intimacy by assuming that the hearer will get what is left unsaid, and then the hearer demonstrates competence by doing just that.

In contrast, employing narrative framing shows a high-considerateness sensitivity to the autonomy of the hearer: not issuing a direct command acknowledges their right to choose for themselves. This indirect form of advice fulfils two purposes (to foster camaraderie while also acknowledging autonomy), which suggests that Badini discourse may exhibit a hybrid conversational style.

### **Scenario: Choosing a career**

**Situation:** a nephew who is the hearer wants to study Fine Arts, but his uncle who is the speaker believes he should study Civil Engineering for long-term stability.

**Dialogue:** *"Maşallah, evro hemî genc yê diçine zankoyê. Bîra te li cîranê me, Aşty, dihêt. Ew yê xwedan şivan bû di wênekêşanê da. Gelek yê zîrek bû, belê piştî derçûnê jiyana wî ya bi zehmet bû, çunkî delîveyên karî di kêmbûn. Lê birayê wî ewê bûye endazyar, noke yê harîkariya hemî malê diket û xwedan rêzeka mezin e di nav civakê da. Xodê dergehê xêrê bo te jî veket û tu ya baştr bo xwe dizanî."*

**Translation:** Mashallah, all the youths are heading to university these days. Do you remember our neighbor Ashti? He was talented at drawing, and he was very smart. After he graduated, his life was difficult because the job opportunities were few. But his brother, the one who became an engineer, helps the whole family now and has gained a great respect in the community. May God open doors of goodness for you and you yourself know what is best for you.

In this case, the uncle is telling the story instead of giving orders as an authority figure. The speaker gives advice by comparing two things in the third person, which lets them lead the hearer's decision without telling them what to do. This way of telling the story reduces the threat to the person's face that comes with direct demands and keeps the relationship strong by respecting the person's freedom. Following Tannen's



conversational style framework, the interaction reflects high-involvement through shared community knowledge, while simultaneously displaying high-considerateness by avoiding overt imposition. Direct instructions such as “*Do not study Fine Arts,*” “*You will not make money,*” or “*Go, be an engineer*” create a face-threatening act and are therefore strategically avoided in Badini Kurdish family discourse.

This finding aligns with earlier work on indirect advice in family discourse, which shows that narrative framing reduces face threatening while maintaining relational closeness (Tannen, 1984; 1986). Similar uses of storytelling as indirect advice have also been reported in other collectivist speech communities suggesting that Badini Kurdish follows a broader cross-cultural pattern while employing locally specific narrative forms.

### **5.2 Indirect Criticism and Face Management**

Indirect criticism is a key strategy for examining the relationship between indirectness and face management in Badini Kurdish discourse. Badini speakers commonly avoid direct criticism, specifically when communicating with elders, authority figures, or guests. They employ a variety of mitigation strategies in which one prominent strategy is the use of Kurdish proverbs; it frames criticism within culturally accepted wisdom, often prefacing evaluations with hedges, rephrasing critiques as observations rather than accusations, and directing attention to the actions of third parties rather than the interlocutor.

The use of proverbs to achieve this form of indirect criticism is particularly remarkable. Indirect quotations like these serve a dual purpose: first, they allow the speaker to avoid responsibility for their words by quoting them from somewhere else; second, they give rise to interpretations beyond what the speaker actually says. (Majeed & Ahmed, 2017). In Badini Kurdish, a proverb such as “*hemî dojminê kewî ne, u kew dojmnê xo ye* (roughly: “all are enemies of a partridge, partridge is its own enemy”) could be utilized to criticize a person in a family who is causing his own problems without naming the people involved, keeping everyone's face saved. This strategy reflects both the high-considerateness concern for face preservation and the high-involvement expectation that culturally competent hearers will successfully interpret the proverb's relevance to the immediate context.

**Scenario:** The overly talkative youth



**Situation:** a young man is constantly interrupting elders in a gathering (diwan) showing lack of manner or etiquette. Instead of shaming him indirectly, the elder might use a proverb to show that listening and being silent is valued in Kurdish culture.

**Dialogue:** *"Maşallah, gencên me xwedan şiyan in. Belê bira dibêjin: 'Xodê du guh û azmanek yên dayne me, da du caran guh lê bîn û bi tenê carekê bi axevin. evca, eger em guhê xo nedeyne gotnên mazina, em çi fêrî jiyane nabîn."*

**Translation:** Mashallah, our youth are capable. But, brother, they say God gives us two ears and only one tongue, so that we can hear twice and speak once. Thus, if we do not lend our ears to the words of elders or listen to proverbs, we will learn nothing of life.

In this example, instead of saying directly *"you are being rude," "you talk too much,"* or *"go serve the guests,"* The elder addresses all the participants with a complement and a proverb. The proverbs convey the expected behavior as a general truth, encouraging the young man to listen more and speak less. By framing it this way, the elder humbles himself and avoids direct confrontation; the critique is attributed to cultural wisdom and the ancestors rather than to his own authority.

In this regard, the use of proverbs as an instrument of indirect criticism reflects the results of earlier pragmatics researches where proverbial discourse is mentioned as one of the important instruments of face saving in the context of Middle Eastern culture and Kurdish language (Majeed & Ahmed, 2017). While comparing with other types of criticism common in Western cultures, it should be noted that Badini Kurds prefer indirect communication strategies in any case.

Since indirectness is a widespread mechanism of softening criticism in Badini Kurdish, it becomes very important to manage emotional face in highly emotional situations like bereavement.

**Scenario:** Offering condolence

Badini Kurdish speakers, in condolence contexts, often avoid explicit reference to death or loss, and instead rely on religious framing, euphemism, and metaphorical expressions of empathy. Consider the following friend to friend condolence:





**Situation:** A friend is offering condolences after the loss of a family member.

**A friend to friend:** “*Xodê bêhna we fireh biket. Peşîmanî ya vê dinyayê nebît. Xodê rehma xo pê bibt. Xodê li ser we sivikket. Domahîk nexoşî bît. Helgirêt xema weyne.*”

**Translation:** May God give you patience. May there be no regret in this world. May God grant his mercy. May God ease it upon you. May it be the last illness. May your sorrow be lightened.

Here, the loss is euphemistically framed as an illness hoped to be final as *Domahîk nexweşî bît*. Meanwhile, metaphorical mitigation such as *helgirtina xemê* helps to soothe emotions further. Religious expressions and indirect expressions are used by the speaker to express solidarity and empathy without having to use language about death that might add emotional weight for the mourner. It appears that Badini Kurdish is aware of its speakers' emotional vulnerability as well as their hierarchical standing in using indirect language, thus validating Deborah Tannen's interpretation of indirectness as a relational strategy indexing involvement and care rather than mere politeness.

### 5.3 Storytelling as Indirect Evaluation

Storytelling appears to be a central communicative practice in Badini Kurdish discourse, and this pattern was recurrent in the data consistently across family and community interactions. Family and community speakers often respond to situations or decisions with narratives of appropriate stories either of themselves, the community or folk stories whose socio-evaluative implications are neutralized by the transformational process.

Consider a situation in which a mother addresses her daughter about her suitor, and she simply could tell some story that another family had with their match and what the result of it let the evaluation be improvised from the story instead of being an explicit statement like “*it's good or bad*”.

Tannen's (2007) analysis of storytelling in everyday conversation shows how speakers use narrative as an important resource to enact involvement, co-construct understanding and negotiate relations. Badini Kurdish storytelling functions as both high-involvement strategy and an indirect evaluative resource, allowing speakers to convey judgment while minimizing face threat, allowing the interlocutor to semantically encode



evaluative sensibilities while circling around face threat involved in direct assessment. Instead of drawing conclusions from a story, the evaluation is left to the listener to draw their own judgements about the story's moral or implications. Collectively negotiating meaning in this way helps people feel more connected to one another and reduces conflict in ways that would be impossible if everyone was left to their own devices.

**Scenario:** Marriage proposal

**Situation:** Hinar, the daughter, is considering a marriage proposal from a wealthy suitor who is known to be arrogant and disconnected from his roots. Her mother seeks to guide her daughter's evaluation without issuing an explicit judgment, allowing Hinar to reach her own conclusion while maintaining high-involvement interactional bond.

**Dialogue:** *“Hinar, bîra te li Xece, cîrana xalêta te di hêt? Demê ew li temenê te, zelamek ji bajarî hat bi trombêleka tijî tiştên biha-giran. Hemî kes li ser gostîrka zêrî diaxivtin. Xece hizir kir ku dê çûte qesrekê, lê dema dergeh hatye girtin, bo wê diyar bû ku zêr na axivît û armîş guhê xwe nade tê. Ew kesek bû ku bihayê her tiştî dizanî, lê bihayê kesan nedizanî. Di mawê salekê da, ew vejeriya ber derê babê xwe û got: “Nan û pivaz bi dilê xweş çêtir e ji goştê bexê bi şer.”*

**Translation:** Hinar, do you remember your aunt's neighbor Khadje? When she was your age. A man came from a city with a car full of precious things. Everyone was talking about the golden ring he gave her. Khadje thought she was entering a palace, but once the door closed, she found out that gold could not speak, and the silk could not listen. He was a man who knew the price of everything but the value of no one. Within a year, she was back at her father's door saying *“nan u pivaz bi dilê xweş çêtir e ji goştê bexê bi şer”* / *“Bread and onions with a content heart are better than lamb meat with conflict.”*

In the above example, instead of criticizing the suitor's character directly, the mother employs a folk story showing the daughter's current situation. Through storytelling, she indirectly communicates her reservations about the marriage while allowing Hinar to infer the evaluation herself. This strategy exemplifies how storytelling in Badini Kurdish discourse functions as an indirect evaluative mechanism that balances moral guidance with face preservation.

The findings thus support the position of Tannen (2007) that stories are not merely narrations but evaluation and relational resources as well. This



## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

finding is similar to those obtained from other studies where narrative-based evaluations were conducted using Arabic and Persian languages, as moral evaluations are often implicit in shared stories rather than explicit evaluations.

**Scenario:** Indirect praise to a marriage proposal

Badini Kurdish mothers, in marriage proposal contexts, typically avoid overt self-praise and instead rely on indirect, culturally valued expressions to evaluate their daughters. Common expressions include:

**Situation:** A mother is praising her daughter to a visiting family in a marriage proposal.

The following expressions are commonly used indirectly and metaphorically:

- *kiça min xatîne.*  
Translation: My daughter is a prince.
- *kiça min dest u tibil zêrîne.*  
Translation: My daughter's hands and skills are golden.
- *kiça min gule.*  
Translation: My daughter is a flower.
- *kiça min parçeke ji dilê min.*  
Translation: My daughter is a piece of my heart.
- *kiça min emanetî xodê u we ye.*  
Translation: My daughter is a trust from God and from you.

The mother employs a layered indirect praise strategy that constructs a positively evaluated identity while avoiding overt self-boasting. Praise is conveyed through moral evaluation as *xatîne*, metaphorical attribution as *dest û tibil zêrîn* to refer to skillful person, symbolic imagery as *gule* to refer to beauty, and *parçek ji dilê min* to refer to preciousness, and religious framing as *emanetî Xudê*, which collectively shift evaluation away from personal assertion toward culturally legitimate forms of endorsement. In Badini Kurdish marriage negotiations, such indirectness is crucial, as explicit praise, particularly of beauty or superiority may



violate norms of modesty. Instead, metaphor and religious attribution allow the mother to affirm her daughter's suitability while preserving humility, and relational harmony, functioning as a face-saving and rapport-building strategy.

This pattern illustrates how indirect praise indexes modesty and care, supporting Deborah Tannen's view of indirectness as a relational resource rather than a simple politeness marker. It also reflects gendered expectations, as mothers in Badini Kurdish communities frequently rely on indirect evaluative strategies to exercise authority while maintaining modesty and relational harmony.

#### **5.4 Gender Differences in Indirect Style**

The study shows that there is important gender-based distinction in the use and interpretation of indirectness in Badini Kurdish speech. Speakers typically use less direct communication techniques when talking about sensitive subjects, such as marriage problems, family issues, and social obligations, especially when interacting with individuals of different ages and genders. This tendency corresponds with extensive sociolinguistic literature suggesting that women are socialized into more face-attentive communication practices among various linguistic communities (Tannen, 1990; Holmes, 2013). Female indirectness should not be interpreted as passive or powerless. It functions as a tool for female authority, emotion, and influence (Tannen, 1994).

Women in Badini Kurdish communities often have to work within the limits of patriarchal societal norms. They achieve this by using subtle communication techniques, including storytelling, indirect suggestions, metaphor, and the strategic use of proverbs. These kinds of strategies let women say what they need, and what they want without putting themselves in danger and keeping the peace. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be indirect depending on the situation. When talking to older people or in formal situations, men often use indirect and polite speech. However, when talking to their peers, they tend to use direct language.

This contrast is illustrated in the following examples:

**Scenario:** Gendered use of indirect request





**Female style (context: requesting support indirectly):** *"Xudê kesê neêşînît. Hindek caran kes neşêt barê giran bi tinê raket. Dibêjin 'Destê bi tinê deng jê nahêt.' Em noke di rewşeka nexweş dayne ku em pêtivî harîkariyê ne."*

**Translation:** May God not let anyone suffer. Sometimes a heavy load cannot be lifted alone. They say "one hand makes no sound." We are currently in a situation that we need help and support.

**Male style (peer interaction):** *"Bira, ez yê di deravekê teng da û pêtivî harîkariya te me bo vî karî. Hîvîye destê xo bidene ber."*

**Translation:** Brother, I am in a tight spot, and I need your help for this task. Please, get involved.

**Male style (addressing elders):** *"Em yê bi hêvîya Xudê ve û paşî li hêvîya rehm û kerema weyne."*

**Translation:** Our hope is in God and then in your kindness.

Such examples show that female speakers tend to rely on indirect strategies such as hedging, metaphor, and proverbs to manage face concerns and maintain relational harmony; however, male speakers shift between direct and indirect styles depending on the interactional context, particularly the presence of hierarchy or social distance.

These findings correspond with earlier claims that women often use more indirect, face-attentive strategies (Tannen, 1990; Holmes, 2013). They also challenge essentialist views of gendered communication (Tannen, 1994). In Badini Kurdish, indirectness is context-dependent rather than gender-fixed.

### **5.5 Indirectness and Hierarchy (Age and Status)**

It seems that age and social position are the most important factors in deciding the degree of indirectness in Badini Kurdish speech. The noticeable indirectness in younger speakers' speech toward elder interlocutors exemplifies the multi-level interaction between the generations. For instance, when young people share their thoughts or preferences in front of older people, they use hedges, mitigated demands, and narrative framing to show how seriously Kurdish society takes age-based hierarchy.

**Scenario:** Taking turns at a bakery

**Situation:** People are waiting their turns at the bakery. A younger comes and cuts the queue.

In bakery queue interactions, age and social distance systematically shape the degree and type of indirectness used in Badini Kurdish. When a younger person violates the queue, older speakers typically employ mitigated directive, combining mild correction with affective softening as in the following example:

**Older to younger:** *Kurê min, em hemî bi lez in. Ma baştir nîne tu li hêviya dora xo bimînî?*

**Translation:** My son, we are all in a hurry. Would it not be better for you to wait your turn?

It is illustrated that how kinship term and interrogative framing function as softening devices that reduce the face-threatening force of the directive. In some cases, elders may adopt a more direct imperative as in this example:

**Older to younger:** *Kurê min, dora te ya maye. Cihê xwe bi raweste.*

**Translation:** My son, your turn is behind. Go and take your place.

This formulation remains mitigated through parental address which decontextualizes authority as care rather than confrontation. By contrast, peer-to-peer interactions show a noticeable reduction in mitigation. When a younger speaker addresses another younger individual, correction tends to be more direct and norm-oriented, as in this example:

**Younger to younger:** *Kakê min. Her kesek u dora xo.*

**Translation:** Brother, everyone has their turn.

In this case, the kinship terms reflect solidarity, not hierarchy, and the short, declarative structure is enforced through the performance of a social rule without any reference to hierarchy or any further mitigation. This suggests that when it comes to politeness among peers, indirectness in Kurdish Badini is employed not for the sake of being polite but rather to maintain the balance within the relationship while observing a certain rule. Overall, the comparison of age-mismatched versus age-matched communication reveals that indirectness in Kurdish Badini depends on



## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

the structure of the relationship: the greater the difference between people, the more indirect the speech becomes.

This pattern aligns with Deborah Tannen's claim since she claims that indirectness is not a sign of politeness but rather a means to achieve certain goals.

On the contrary, older speakers can opt to take a more forthright approach while communicating with younger family members. In doing so, they utilize emotive signals to balance out their directness in order to prevent any threat of loss of face. According to Tannen (1994), there are some communication strategies that are equivocal in the aspect of power solidarity. Indirectness in this case is an excellent example of this. The younger individual uses indirect communication to convey their respect and solidarity with the elder.

The above case can be likened to what was found in the case of Persian language speakers in the study conducted by Aliakbari et al. (2015). Indirect communication techniques were greatly influenced by social factors such as status and age.

**Scenario:** Deciding a family wedding date

**Situation:** a younger man wants to suggest different idea to an elder about a family wedding date.

**Younger to elder (indirect request):** *"Paşayê min, Xudê emrê te bo me dirêj biket u dîtina te her ya di cihê xo da ye. Lê ma çiyê eger em pîçekê xo bigrîn da pismamên me jî bighên, di bît baştir bît. Boçûna te çi ye?"*

**Translation:** my king, may God grant you long life for us, and your vision is always correct, but if we wait a little so our cousin could arrive, perhaps it would be better. What do you say?

The younger is using honorifics and blessings to establish the elder's authority before giving his suggestions. Mitigation is used to soften the request rather than to challenge the elder's authority. Additionally, by asking what do you say? The speaker is returning authority to the elders.

**Elder to younger interaction (direct guidance with care):** *"Kurê min, guhê xo bide min. Ev karê hûn diken ne yê dirist e. Min xêra we divêt. Ji ber vê cendê ji rêka xo nederkevin."*



**Translation:** my son, listen to me. This work that you are doing is not right. I want what is best for you, so do not stray from your path.

The elder is using candor as a direct command *listen to me* with younger but using the emotive cues to moderate speech and feel like care more than impoliteness.

This pattern mirrors findings in language such as Persian, where indirectness increases with age and power distance (Aliakbari et al., 2015), and supports Tannen's view of indirectness as an ambiguous strategy indexing both respect and solidarity.

Taken together, the eight scenarios demonstrate that indirectness in Badini Kurdish is not a marginal stylistic preference but a core interactional resource shaped by age, gender, hierarchy, and relational closeness. Across all scenarios, indirect strategies function simultaneously to preserve face, index solidarity, and negotiate authority, supporting Tannen's view of indirectness as an ambiguous yet socially productive communicative practice.

## 6. Findings

The findings presented in this section are derived from a qualitative analysis of participants' responses to the Discourse Completion Task scenarios, which revealed recurrent patterns of indirectness shaped by social context, relational roles, and cultural expectations.

### 6.1 Badini Kurdish: Between High-Involvement and High-Considerateness

The high-involvement and high-considerateness forms proposed by Tannen (1984) are not realized in Badini Kurdish speech. Instead, it is a combination of characteristics from both orientations that are established by culture. Many storytelling, cooperative overlapping in same-generation peer conversation, passionate emotive expression, and the assumption that listeners would actively deduce underlying meanings are all characteristics of high participation. Some traits are avoiding direct criticism, utilizing buffers and mitigators when talking to people higher up in the social order, and understanding that silence is a way of talking. In some situations, speech groups may lean more toward one end of this scale than the other. This means that Tannen's two-point distinction should really be thought of as a sliding scale.





## 6.2 Indirectness and Solidarity

The basic principle of Badini Kurdish solidarity was indirectness. When people in a community all understand the deeper meaning behind proverbs, stories, or references, it can help them feel like they belong to that culture and that group. Successfully accounting for indirect speech patterns shows that the speaker is an engaged part of the speech community and is familiar with its rules of communication. The findings support what Tannen (1986) assert about indirectness as a relational strategy that has the potential to deepen relationships of understanding and closeness.

## 6.3 Indirectness and Elders

The data show that the degree of indirectness increases in interactions involving greater generational distance. Younger speakers use a less direct style of communication when they address older people. This is because of the distinction that is reflected between elder and younger in Badini Kurdish society. This result highlights a culturally bound expectations to the general machinations of Tannen (1993) and Brown and Levinson (1987) who argued that both politeness in general, and indirectness in particular becomes more prevalent as social distance and/or power differential increased.

## 6.4 Gendered Indirectness

The findings show that male and female participants use indirectness skillfully in multigenerational and/or mixed-gender conversation, which had gender-based tendencies. Indirectness, on the other hand, is used flexibly by speakers of both genders in response to contextual factors rather than as a fixed gendered trait. This suggests that indirectness in Badini Kurdish functions as a situationally sensitive communicative strategy rather than a categorical marker of gendered communicative style.

## 6.5 Indirectness Strategies Distribution

It can be seen from the data collected, shown in figure 1 that the participants consistently employed indirectness strategies, with an average of (3.89) tokens per participant. The most frequently used strategy is narrative framing (24.29%), followed by proverbs (20.71%). Devices that linguistically soften, such as hedging (17.14%) and mitigation (15.71%), occur at moderate frequencies, while questions



## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*



instead of commands, metaphor, and silence, are used relatively infrequently. Overall, the distribution indicates that indirect meaning in Badini Kurdish is most often achieved through social and cultural contextualization rather than through purely grammatical forms of indirectness.

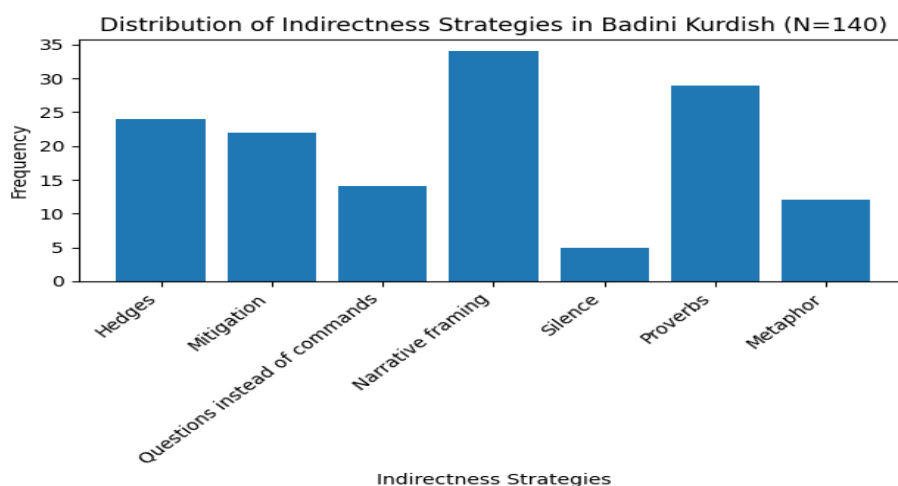


Figure 1: *The frequency of indirectness strategies in Badini Kurdish discourse*

**Table 5: Summary of Key Findings**

Research Question	Key Finding	Style Orientation
How is indirectness realized?	Through hedges, storytelling, proverbs, metaphor, hints, silence, and questions-as-directives	Blended (both involvement and considerateness)
High-involvement or considerateness?	Badini discourse blends features of both styles contextually	Context-dependent continuum
Social functions?	Rapport building, face management, solidarity construction, deference expression	Both orientations serve social functions
Power, solidarity,	Indirectness encodes	Ambiguous and



politeness?	respect for hierarchy, builds in-group solidarity, and manages face	polysemous (Tannen, 1994)
How are indirectness strategies distributed?	Narrative framing and proverb are most frequent, followed by hedges and mitigation; question, metaphor, and silence occur less often.	Preference for discourse-level and culturally bound strategies.

Table 5 shows the realization of indirectness in Badini Kurdish which appears through different strategies such as hedges, storytelling, proverbs, metaphor, hints, silence, and questions as directives, reflecting a blend of high-involvement and high-considerateness style. It functions to build rapport, manage face, foster solidarity, and signal respect for hierarchy, reflecting a flexible, context- dependent style (Tannen, 1994).

### 7. Conclusion

The current study examined indirectness as a type of conversational style used in Badini Kurdish discourse, utilizing Deborah Tannen's dyadic theory of dialogue style with respect to a linguistic community that has not previously been studied. Adopting a mixed-method approach, the study collected participants' written responses to Discourse Completion Task scenarios and analyzed them through a combination of quantitative distributional analysis and qualitative discourse analysis techniques. The findings show that indirect strategies are systematically used in Badini Kurdish and serve as a culturally grounded, pragmatic resource for managing rapport, face and social hierarchy. Indirectness is realized through strategies like softening, mitigation, storytelling, proverbs, metaphors, allusions, and strategic silence. This study indicates that Badini Kurdish discourse has a unique mix of high-involvement and high-considerateness traits. It also appears that the use of indirectness changes systematically depending on the interactional context, the social relationships among participants, as well as differences in social variables such as gender, age, and social status.

The findings add to theories of conversational style by showing that the difference between high-involvement and high-considerateness is not a simple binary choice. They further show that non-Western speech communities may exhibit different patterns of these orientations that do



## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

not necessarily align with those described for Western or East Asian communities. It also adds to the few studies that have been done on pragmatics in different types of Kurdish. This fills in an important gap and highlights the potential of Badini Kurdish discourse as a rich site for pragmatic inquiry.

Some limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The study is largely exploratory, focuses on only one variety of Kurdish, and relies on elicited data, as recording naturally occurring interaction remains challenging due to observer effects.

The scope and quality of future research could be greatly enhanced by extending the focus to include additional varieties of Kurdish, such as Sorani and Southern Kurdish, a more diverse participant pool, and methodologies that integrate discourse analysis with experimental assessments of indirect language comprehension (e.g., Holtgraves, 1997). By shedding light on the larger-scale socio-pragmatic topography, studies comparing the indirectness and verbal subtlety of Badini Kurdish with Arabic, Turkish, and Persian discussions would also serve their purpose.

### **Appendices:**

#### **1: List of Jury Members**

<b>Name</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>Department</b>
Prof. Dr. Aveen Mohammad Hasan	Duhok	Languages	English
Prof. Dr. Sherzad Sabri Ali	Duhok	Basic Education	Kurdish
Asst. Prof. Dr. Hallat Rajab Mohammad	Duhok	Languages	English
Prof. Dr. Vian Ibrahim Ali	Duhok	Languages	Kurdish

#### **2. Discourse Completion Task**

##### **Introduction**

Dear Informants

We are lecturers in English Language and Linguistics, conducting a research study on *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini*





## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

**Kurdish Discourse.** The study examines indirectness in everyday interactions.

Kindly note that all information provided will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any stage without any consequences. We highly appreciate the time and effort you exert in completing this task.

### **Informed Consent**

Q1: Kindly indicate your consent for the use of the data you provide by circling one option:

- I approve
- I don't approve

### **Q2: Personal Information**

Age: .....

Sex: .....

Educational Background: .....

Mother Tongue: .....

Nationality: .....

### **Q3: Scenario 1: Choosing a Career**

- Imagine that you are an uncle (speaker) talking to your nephew (hearer). Your nephew wants to choose a career that you do not agree with. How would you advise him indirectly, without disagreement-----  
-----  
-----? By advising indirectly, it is meant that the speaker may use general reflection, comparison, or storytelling.

### **Q4. Scenario 2: The Overly Talkative Youth**

- Imagine that you are an elder (speaker) in a traditional gathering, and a young man keeps interrupting elders while they are speaking. How would you criticize him indirectly without shaming him? -----  
-----  
------. By criticizing indirectly, it is meant that the speaker may use proverbs or culturally valued expression emphasizing respect and silence.





**Q5. Scenario 3: Offering Condolences**

- Imagine you are offering condolences to a friend after the loss of a family member. what would you say to support your friend indirectly, without explicitly refereeing to death or loss? -----  
-----.

**Q6. Scenario 4: Marriage Proposal**

- Imagine that you are a mother (speaker) talking to your daughter (hearer), who has received a marriage proposal from a wealthy but arrogant man. How would you evaluate the situation indirectly, guiding her to make her own decision without expelctly approving or rejecting the proposal? -----  
----- . By evaluating indirectly, it is meant that the speaker may use reflection, metaphor, or shared wisdom.

**Q7. Scenario 5: Indirect Praise in a Marriage Proposal**

- Imagine you are a mother who is speaking to a visiting family who have come to ask for your daughter’s hand in marriage. What would you say to describe or praise your daughter indirectly? -----  
-----Indirectly means you may use metaphor, religious expressions, or moral qualities rather than explicit praise.

**Q8. Scenario 6: Gendered Use of Indirect Request**

- You are facing a difficult situation and you need help from others. You wish to ask for support without making a direct request, while maintaining politeness and social harmony.
  - a. Response when addressing a **peer or close friend**: -----  
-----
  - b. Response when addressing **elders or people of higher social status**: -----  
-----

**Q9. Scenario 7: Deciding a Family Wedding Date**





## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

- a. A wedding date has been proposed by an elder family member. You are a younger man who wishes to suggest a different date so that another family member can attend. How would you express your idea respectfully and indirectly, without challenging the elder's authority? -----  
-----

-----By expressing ideas indirectly, it is meant that the speaker may use honorifics, mitigations and blessings.

- b. Now imagine that you are the elder responding to a younger family member whose suggestion you find inappropriate. How would you correct him in a way that shows care and concern rather than harshness? -  
-----  
-----.

### **Q10: Scenario 8: Taking Turns at a Bakery**

- Imagine you are waiting with a group of people for your turn at a bakery. A younger person cuts the queue. What would you say to the person to stop him from cutting the line indirectly? -----  
-----

-----By indirect means you may use softening, general statement, or kinship terms rather than a direct command.

Thank you for your active participation

Hilbeen Bahjat Anwar & Hivee Kalid Jamel

### **References:**

Abdullah, D., & Saeed, S. (2024). A comparative study measuring the pragmatic competence of the Badini Kurdish EFL and ESL learners of English in relation to native speakers in producing requests. *Journal of Education for the Humanities*, 4(16.2), 751–787. <https://doi.org/10.33899/jeh.2024.185188>

Ali, S. (2019). Compliment as a politeness strategy in Kurdish language: A pragmatic study. *Humanities Journal of University of Zakho*, 7(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.26436/hjuoz.2019.7.1.457>



## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*



Ali, S. (2020). The speech act of request in Kurdish language according to the model (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain). *Humanities Journal of University of Zakho*, 8(1), 1–18.

<https://doi.org/10.26436/hjuoz.2020.8.1.570>

Aliakbari, M., Aghaee, R., & Azimi Amoli, F. (2015). Directness vs. indirectness: A study of the linguistic choices of Persian speakers when giving advice. *English Linguistics Research*, 4(2), 55–65. <https://doi.org/10.5430/elr.v4n2p55>

Alzebaree, Y., & Yavuz, M. A. (2018). Suggestion and refusal strategies in English by Kurdish undergraduate students. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(5), 151–168. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v8n5p151>

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1987). Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 11(2), 131–146. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(87\)90192-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(87)90192-5)

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Çabuk, S. (2018). Discourse particles in Kurmanjî Kurdish–Turkish contact. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 17(4), 467–484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2018.1454450>

Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2012). *Kurdish language*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurdish-language>





## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2005). Indirectness and politeness in Mexican requests. In D. Eddington (Ed.), *Selected proceedings of the 7th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium* (pp. 66–78). Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

Golato, A. (2003). Studying compliment responses: A comparison of DCTs and recordings of naturally occurring talk. *Applied Linguistics*, 24(1), 90–121.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press.

Haig, G., & Öpengin, E. (2022). Introduction to special issue: Kurdish: A critical research overview. *Kurdish Studies*, 2(2), 99–122. <https://kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/view/59>

Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Holtgraves, T. (1997). Styles of language use: Individual and cultural variability in conversational indirectness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(3), 624–637.

Kasper, G., & Dahl, M. (1991). Research Methods in Interlanguage Pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 13(2), 215–247. doi:10.1017/S0272263100009955

Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Majeed, S. F., & Rasheed, B. A. K. (2019). A socio-pragmatic study of external request modification in Kurdish language. *Journal of University of Garmian*, xx(x), xxx–xxx. <https://doi.org/10.24271/jug.1964024>

Majeed, S. H., & Ahmed, A. L. K. R. (2017). Speech acts in some Kurdish proverbs and sayings. *Journal of the College of Languages*, 21(2), 364–368.



## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*



Marti, L. (2006). Indirectness and politeness in Turkish–German bilingual and Turkish monolingual requests. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(11), 1836–1869. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.05.009>

Mohammed, S. J. (2025). Investigating Badini Kurdish speaker's awareness towards clarifying the intended meaning of homonyms. *Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(1), 478–485. <https://doi.org/10.14500/kujhss.v8n1y2025.pp478-485>

Muntigl, P., & Turnbull, W. (1998). Conversational structure and facework in arguing. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 29(3), 225–256.

Qadir, M. H. S. (2022). A pragmatic analysis of the speech act of warning by Kurdish EFL learners in social contexts. *Journal of University of Human Development*, 8(4), 23–32. <https://doi.org/10.21928/juhd.v8n4y2022.pp23-32rna>

Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to discourse*. Blackwell.

Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics 3: Speech acts* (pp. 59–82). Academic Press.

Tannen, D. (1981). Indirectness in discourse: Ethnicity as conversational style. *Discourse Processes*, 4(3), 221–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01638538109544517>

Tannen, D. (1984). *Conversational style: Analyzing talk among friends*. Ablex.

Tannen, D. (1986). *That's not what I meant! How conversational style makes or breaks relationships*. Ballantine Books.





## *Indirectness as Conversational Style in Badini Kurdish Discourse*

Tannen, D. (1990). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. William Morrow.

Tannen, D. (1993). *Framing in discourse: The role of conversational style in social interaction*. Oxford University Press.

Tannen, D. (1994). *Gender and discourse*. Oxford University Press.

Tannen, D. (2005). *Conversational style: Analyzing talk among friends* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Tannen, D. (2007). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Tannen, D. (2009). *You were always mom's favorite! Sisters in conversation throughout their lives*. Random House.