

A Pragma-Forensic Study of Advertisement Fraud: Applying Grice's Implicature and Shuy's Analysis

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Abstract - This study focuses on the pragmatic and forensic aspects of fraud. It is based on questions regarding the characteristics of advertisement fraud in terms of implicature, schema, agenda, speech acts, and conversational strategies. It has been hypothesized that assertive and commissive speech acts are mostly performed in fraudulent advertisements. One of the conversational strategies, repetition, is continuously employed by fraudsters in the advertisement field. Third, Grice's quality maxim is strongly assumed to be the most frequently breached maxim. The data consisted of advertisements for two weight loss products. These advertisements are presented as exhibit files in the fraud case 2:16-cv-00023-GZS. The data were retrieved from (www.ftc.gov). The model of the study consists of Shuy's analysis with all its steps and Grice's implicature theory. After a detailed discussion and analysis, it was concluded that advertisement fraudsters perform indirect commissive speech acts to avoid direct liability, and they perform direct requests as a way of showing authority. The fraudster's goal is to hide information that has negative effects, so fewer details are provided about the product. By contrast, the fraudster pours irrelevant information that deceitfully adds legitimacy to the advertisement, which is a big red flag.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Forensics, Fraud, Implicature, Shuy's Analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Skilled advertisers can influence customer decision-making. Some may use deceptive techniques and misrepresent and/or omit material information from customers to affect their choice. The study is triggered by the following questions: What are the most frequently used speech acts in fraudulent advertisement schemes? What conversational strategies do fraudsters employ in fraudulent schemes? What is the most conversational maximum breached in these schemes? It has been hypothesized that assertive and commissive speech acts are highly performed in fraudulent advertisements. It is also speculated that repetition is continuously employed by fraudsters in advertisements (Patel & Singh 2021; King et al., 2023). Lastly, the quality maximum is strongly suggested as the maximum with the highest number of breaches.

The aim of this study is to paint a cohesive and panoramic picture of fraud in the advertising world and to provide a way of analyzing the linguistic evidence of such a crime that never ceased to influence people's choices and cause (at least)

financial harm (Hakiminia et al., 2016; Bhatia & Bansal 2024; Rabet & Mousavi 2017). According to the results, the first hypothesis is partially accurate, that is, direct requesting (directive speech act) and indirect promising (commissive speech act) are the most frequent among all the performed speech acts throughout the advertisements. As for conversational strategies (second hypothesis), urgency building, exaggeration, and repetition are very common and are used with a slight difference in their frequencies. Lastly, as expected, the maxim of quality is found to be the most breached of all Grice's maxims.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Pragmatics

The branch of theoretical linguistics that studies language within its actual use in real-life communications is referred to as pragmatics (Campbell, 1978). It studies how meaning is "encoded, transmitted, and decoded" within the specific context of interaction (Cummins, 2019; Huang, 2017). Pragmatics deals with "language as a social action" (Oswald, 2015). This means that it is not the language itself that matters, but what language users do with language when constructing meanings (Cummings, 2010; Mey, 2006).

B. Forensic Linguistics

Forensic linguistics is an area of study in linguistics. This sub-branch can be defined as the study of language used in forensic contexts (McMenamin, 2002). Forensics include analyzing linguistic evidence or documents, examining legal interactions in/outside the courtroom, and helping determine the acquittal or conviction of the accused (Olsson & Luchjenboers, 2013; Fakiha 2024; Abinaya et al., 2014).

C. The Pragmatic Aspect of Fraud

Fraud is built on manipulative and deceitful interaction. It is based on deceit, lying, manipulating, and hidden intentions of gain or harm (Rabet & Mousavi, 2017). Having a closer look at the language used by fraudsters, one can find some linguistic

features that could help potential victims identify fraudsters and protect themselves in future interactions.

1. *Fraud and Implicature*

Different types of fraud apply different techniques to breach maxims. Fraudsters apply particular uses of language to construct their fake identities as policemen, gangsters, bank accountants, and so on, to reinforce their authority and authenticity (Chen, 2020; Searle, 2013). In conducting their schemes, fraudsters may tend to focus on irrelevant or minor details intended to bring the victim's attention to these aspects and detract them from other relevant and necessary details for the victim to know. A company owner/manager would pour irrelevant details to distract attention from information that can harm the company. Job applicants would focus on items such as the type of paper and font, distracting the employer's attention from poor experience and lack of qualifications (Amat, 2019, pp. 90-92 and Amare & Manning, 2009, p. 44).

2. *Fraud and Speech Acts*

The interconnectedness between the two is that fraud is based on the use of language (with covert intention) to deceive. In this scenario, the fraudster performs things with mere utterances that allow him/her to gain trust, information, and money without physical actions. This is what Austin (1962) referred to as "do[ing] things with words." Thus, fraud includes deceptive speech acts (Trompeter et al., 2014).

D. *The Legal Aspects of Fraud*

1. *The Concept of Fraud*

Fraud has existed throughout history and has been accompanied by trade activities since ancient times. The word "fraud" originates from "fraus," a Latin word meaning deceit (Silverstone & Sheetz, 2006). Despite all the activities and efforts to detect crime and prevent it, fraud is often an unavoidable crime. According to the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA, 2016; Zager et al., 2016), fraud refers specifically to "any illegal acts" based on deceiving others, hiding information from them, or breaching their trust, thus emphasizing the illegality of the action/omission without a requirement of intention. Pedneault (2009) found that "an objective, defensible" definition of fraud is stated in Black's Law Dictionary, i.e., "a knowing misrepresentation [...] or concealment of a material fact" which results in leading people to take decisions or act against their welfare.

2. *Classifications of Fraudulent Activities*

Fraudulent schemes are more frequent than ever before, and should not fall on deaf ears (ACFE, 2024; Felix, 2022). It is essential to identify the various types of fraud and understand the nature of each type, which is essential for preparing efficient tools to prevent and detect fraud. The ACFE (2024) illustrated precisely that there are so many types and ways of committing fraud, which can be put under the broader categories of "individual" and "organizational" fraud. The most common individual frauds include Ponzi schemes and

identity theft. However, organizational fraud is further categorized into internal/occupational fraud (committed by an employee, a manager, or a business owner, e.g., embezzlement and tax fraud) and external fraud (committed by vendors from outside the organization or a third party, e.g., trying to submit fraudulent checks and hacking) (Fernandez, 2009).

3. *Elements of Fraud*

Every fraud must have three elements: *actus reus*, *mens rea* and concurrence. The first refers to the "physical"/material criminal act and encompasses misrepresentation, not disclosing the information one is obliged to, and abuse of one's position of trust. The second element refers to the mental aspect of the crime, which must be proven to convict someone of the fraud. This element encompasses intent, awareness of dishonesty, and recklessness (Nunes & Park, 2021; Salkie, 2011). The third element refers to the immediate relationship between the offender's deceitful action and the victim's desire for the actual provision of information, money, and services (Jennings, 2022).

4. *Fraud systems*

These two systems are mainly involved in fighting fraud. These are prevention and detection systems (Chen, 2020, p. 251). Each system encompasses several methods and techniques for fraud management. The Fraud Prevention System is referred to by Aghili (2019) as the elementary line of defense in opposition to crime. Fraud prevention refers to proactive measures that are needed to avoid fraud before its occurrence (Solan, 2016). The Fraud Detection System includes tools and techniques for detecting fraud after its occurrence, hopefully as soon as possible.

III. METHODOLOGY

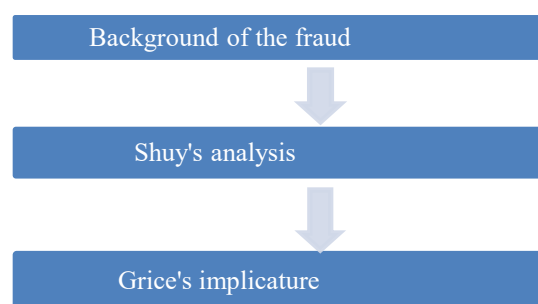


Fig. 1 Model of the Study

A. *Shuy's Fraud Analysis*

Shuy (2016) designed consecutive steps to analyze the language used in fraud case investigations. In Fig 1, his design consisted of five steps: The first type is speech events. This term refers to linguistic interactions that mainly depend on the specific context of the interaction, for example, formal or informal gathering. The second is Schemas. Schemas encompass all the "information, attitudes, ideas, values, and

beliefs" that interlocutors carry with them. The third step is gendas. It refers to individuals' "intentionality and predisposition". The fourth step is speech act analysis. The last step is analyzing conversational strategies, such as ambiguity, blocking, "hit-and-run," camouflaging, and withdrawal strategies.

1. *Speech Acts Theory (Searle, 1969-1975)*

The core idea of this theory is that language performs actions (linguistic rather than physical). Searle, in his (1969) version of the theory, focused on illocutionary acts as the essence of speech. Illocutionary acts were defined by Austin in Panther (2022) as "acts that language users perform" Searle (1975) proposed the following speech acts taxonomy: Representatives or assertives (commitment to the truthfulness of the proposition), Commisives (commitment to future acts), Directives (an obligation is on the part of the receiver), Expressives (conveying the speaker's attitude), Declarations ("saying it makes it so").

B. *Implicature Theory of Grice (1975-1989)*

According to Grice, implicature is the implicitly conveyed meaning that goes beyond "what is said." This theory is based on a conversational principle and four consequent maxims of quality, quantity, manner, and relevance. Quality maxim involves saying what one believes to be true and what one has evidence of. Quantity is concerned with being "cooperative" and "informative" enough no more or less than what the context demands. Relevance: This study is relevant. Lastly, manner concerns the way of saying things rather than what to say; "be perspicuous." It necessitates avoiding obscurity and ambiguity while encouraging conciseness and organization. The non-observance of conversational maxims is a way to implicate meanings.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF CASE 2:16-CV-00023-GZS (DOCUMENTS: 1, 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 9)

A. *Background*

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the State of Maine (plaintiffs) filed a complaint (19/1/2016) against Anthony Dill, Staci Dill, Direct Alternatives, and Original Organics LLC (defendants). The plaintiffs sought permanent injunctions among other equitable reliefs, and so was ordered by the court. Defendants, starting in 2012 until the time of the complaint (2016), utilized marketing tactics that were wrongful and dishonest in the advertising of some weight-loss products, namely AF Plus and Final Trim. Defendants deceived the listeners about the reality of the advertisement by misrepresenting them as "public service announcements." Furthermore, the defendants did not disclose the conditions of their offers (automatic billing of \$79.90) if the consumers did not phone to cancel their enrollment, receive a "return tracking number, and send a minimal unopened bottle back. According to the stated facts, all investigative questions of who, what, when, where, and how were answered. three elements of fraud (actus reus, mens rea, and concurrence) are

also found to be present in this case. The United States District Court for the District of Maine found defendants to be liable of the stated violations and prohibited them from using "negative option features" or making unsupported health claims without "express informed consent."

A. *Linguistic Analysis*

The following is an excerpt of the linguistic analysis of the data:

1. *Shuy's Analysis*

1. *Speech Events*

This is the first step in Shuy's analysis, upon which all other steps are built. Therefore, it is crucial to have a clear view of what speech events constitute fraud. In the current case, fraud revolves around one speech event, which is the speech event of advertising.

This speech event consists of the following steps: opening a statement/question/story, greeting, problem stating, solution presentation and description, offering making, and providing a way of contact. Some advertisements started with the question of whether the listeners, who were addressed immediately by "you," wanted to lose weight, looked at their bodies, and felt sad or requested attention. Others started with a statement of congratulation, warning, etc., yet other advertisements opened with a fabricated story of a presumed character.

Next, advertisers greet listeners directly and falsely identify themselves. Then, a big problem that is crucial to society is asserted (obesity). Immediately following the statement of the problem was the discussion of a shiny solution (in this case it was "one of the healthiest," "all natural," "safe," "easy to use" and most importantly "risk-FREE" AF Plus/ Final Trim. The advertisements repeatedly claim to offer "(absolutely) risk-Free trials" for a limited time and a restricted number of callers. Finally, a toll-free number was repeatedly provided. Deceitfully, in one of the ads, it is claimed that it is not a commercial, but an announcement to give people free trials as a way of contributing to society's efforts to reduce obesity.

The table shows the types and steps of the fraudulent speech act. As discussed earlier, this is an advertisement for the two products mentioned above. It consists of the opening statement, problem and solution presentation, description of the product, offering trials, and constantly stating a toll-free number as a way of contact.

2. *Schema*

Defendants manipulate a consumer's perception of obesity. They make the listener believe that being fat means losing confidence, missing better jobs, and other life opportunities. Product marketers exploit societal issues to misrepresent their products as the easiest, healthier, and risk-free solutions. Marketers view the products as the best choice for those who

wish to get fit without an obligation to abandon their eating habits. They manipulate the existing bad image of obesity to paint a shiny image of their products.

Advertisements describe the personal experiences of the speaker or listener. In this description, markers of time were employed to create a deceptive image of the listener's heads. Past tense markers are mostly linked to some unpleasant past emotions: *they laughed*", *"I got tired"*, *"limited my life"*, and *"did not have self-confidence"*. Such a dedication separates the time before and after using the products. The use of the present perfect *"I've lost a ton of weight,"* *"you've called in time"* is linked to the present time of the allegedly successful achievements, hence, persuading the listeners to join the successful event and change their lives to the better.

3. Agenda

To pinpoint defendants' real intentions, attention must be paid to the topics they discuss. In the commercials of the first product (AF Plus), topics revolved around weakness, disappointment, willingness to cry, and being laughed at. Other feminist topics of beauty "inches and dresses", jealousy provoking "thinner peers" are also associated with AF Plus. The other product (Final Trim), which is for men, is connected with the topics of strength and "hard-earned muscles", challenge provoking, and help asking. Such a product requires a more powerful language and topics that could be interesting to men. In general, when advertising both products, defendants utilize topics that would add legitimacy to their advertisements. First, they falsely claim to be making announcements to the public about their event and their gifts to individuals who "call now" to get their free trials. They used the results of the Mayo Clinic and related them to the benefits of their products in losing weight and prohibiting serious health issues. They also exploited the Surgeon General statement about obesity and pictured themselves as contributing to fighting obesity with their "generous" risk-free trials. All of these topics reveal the defendants' true intentions to induce people to participate in their alleged event.

The most frequently introduced topics concern the benefits of products. Emphasis has been placed on the claims of risk-free trials (78%). Another topic emphasized is the nature of radio airing as an announcement of the event rather than a commercial (9%). Femininity-related themes account for (5%) percentage and, lastly, the theme associated with masculinity and challenge accounts (6%) of the total percentage. All of these collaborate to seduce the listeners of the benefits and free trials given in the announced event.

4. Speech Acts

In their words, advertisers did a lot to deceive, manipulate, and defraud the audience, as shown below:

(Quote 1)

"Do you want to lose 10 pounds? How about 30 pounds or even 50 pounds? Right now, you can start losing as much weight as you want to absolutely risk-FREE."

The form of the utterance is that of a question, and it functions as an indirect promise. The speaker indirectly promising that the product can make every one lose up to 50 pounds (Commissive Speech Act). Such an implicit commitment avoids accountability on the part of the speaker, but it is persuasive and draws the listeners to their product, hinging on people's desire for fast and not costly results.

(Quote 2)

"Hi! I am Stacey Howard, with AF Plus."

Greeting was used (Expressive Speech Act) to personalize the messages and build a bond with the listeners. This manipulative technique is used by speakers to deceive people, especially when knowing that such a character does not exist in reality.

(Quote 3)

"Hi, I'm Stacey Howard with AF Plus. I have lost a ton of weight with AF Plus, and now you can too. I want you to participate in this [nationwide] risk-free trial. Call now. 1-800-XXX-XXXX."

(Quote 4)

"I've since lost of all the extra pounds and inches with Final Trim. Hi, I'm Jill Moore with the Final Trim. If you need to lose 30 pounds or more, I will inviting you to participate in our nationwide risk-free trial. Call now. 1-800-XXX-XXXX."

The speech act of greeting (quotes 3 and 4) is used again to personalize the message and make it more appellant to listeners (Expressive Speech Act). This is especially effective when such characters share alleged experiences of weight loss. In addition, *"I want you to participate"* (quote 3) is formed as an speech act of stating the speaker's desire and good will (Assertive Speech Act) while, in fact, it functions as an indirect request to participate in the "event" (Directive Speech Act). In addition, the Jill directly inviting people to participate in the Final Trim Free Trial (Directive speech act). The quotes perform indirect speech acts of asserting and promising (Assertive & Commissive Speech Acts) which are embedded in *"our nationwide risk-free trial."* It both asserts the existence of such a global event and promises free trials. Finally, a direct request is made to "Call" (quotes 3 & 4) as a continuous repetition and urging technique. (Directive Speech Act).

(Quote 5)

"That's why we're giving out risk-FREE trials to anyone who calls today as part of our National AF Plus Event. Just call 1-800-XXX-XXXX."

(Quote 6)

"Get yours now and start losing weight before this special event ends! Call 1-800-XXX-XXXX. That toll-free number again: 1-800-XXX-XXXX'."

Such direct requesting to "call" and "get" is repeatedly used throughout the commercials of both products (Directive Speech Act). The purpose of such repetition is to pressure and urge listeners to buy a product. In all these quotes, an indirect speech act of promising a "risk free trial," "toll-free," and "losing weight" is blended within the request. Such a move was made to avoid giving details about the offer (Commissive Speech Act). Additionally, there seems to be an indirect speech act of threatening "before this special event ends!" (Commissive Speech Act). The threat (at the end of the event, the product is no longer free) urges an immediate response from the listeners. It is noticeable that these quotes make an indirect asserting that what is going on is a "national event" rather than a radio commercial (Assertive Speech Act).

(Quote 7)

"Af plus is a proven breakthrough in weight loss! You will safely boost your metabolic heart rate, allowing you to shed pounds in days! Because it is so potent, please take no more than one capsule per day."

The speakers use the speech act of indirect speech act asserting by misrepresenting facts and benefits of the products. They intentionally want to convince listeners that the products are "proven." They also directly asserting that the product is safe and boosts the consumer's "metabolic heart rate" (Assertive Speech Acts). At the same time, indirect promising is used, i.e., promising the listener to "shed pounds in days" if they start using the product (Commissive Speech Act). Furthermore, by instructing consumers on how to use the product, they are implicitly and indirectly inviting; hence, focusing on persuading listeners to call and get the product to benefit from the alleged facts (embedded Directive Speech Acts).

(Quote 8)

"We're so confident you'll lose weight, that as part of the National AF Plus event, you'll get a full size supply of AF Plus to use absolutely risk-free!"

This speaker employs more than one speech act by directly expressing confidence and indirect promise to "lose weight" and a promise to get the "full size" product (Expressive and Commissive Speech Acts). The speech acts of asserting "absolutely" and indirect promising "risk-FREE," are so manipulative and deceitful (Assertive and Commissive Speech Acts). They are used to convince listeners and to ensure complete financial safety. However, in the end, people were charged and obliged to pay the full amount of money.

(Quote 9)

"STACEY: Did you know that if you're a woman and you're overweight, you're less likely to be successful in life than

your thinner peers? Thus, you have two options: either wait for the world to change or lose the extra pounds.

The above quote contains more than one speech act. First, the speaker employs an indirect speech act of threatening "if you are a woman [...] you're less likely to be successful" (Commissive Speech Act). It can be felt that listeners are threatened to abandon any chance of equity or success if they do not purchase the product. The second option (losing weight) is the indirect speech act of requesting. The clause "or lose the extra pounds" is used in this utterance as a hint for the listeners to call and get the magical product because it is the only option available to lose weight (Directive Speech Act).

(Quote 10)

If you would like to lose 30 pounds or more by taking just ONE all natural capsule a day, call now to participate in our nationwide risk-free trial. 1-800-XXX-XXXX. That's 1-800-XXX-XXXX. 1-800-XXX-XXXX.

(Quote 11)

[...] If you need to lose thirty pounds or more and would like to participate in a nationwide risk-free trial [...], call now. 1-800-XXX-XXXX.

These utterances are used as an offer for people to participate in alleged events. The utterances contained a blended speech act in which the desire of people to lose weight was implicitly presented as a promise for the results they would get. Such an implicit/ indirect promising was embedded in the direct request to "call" and "participate" (Commissive+ Directive Speech Acts). Quotes 10 and 11 employ another indirect speech act of promising (Commissive Speech Act). The listeners are promised a "free-trial" when they call.

(Quote 12)

"Be among the first to call for your risk-free trial."

(Quote 13)

"Hurry, this trial ends soon. 1-800-XXX-XXXX."

(Quote 14)

"Be one of the first 100 callers to get a risk-free trial. 1-800-XXX-XXXX."

The direct speech act of requesting to "hurry," "be [...]" is made to urge and pressure people to act fast to guarantee one of a limited set of free trials that was just one call away (Directive Speech Act). The advertisers state that the "trial ends soon" and insist that the free calls are for "the first 100 callers" only. By doing so, they are indirectly and implicitly threatening listeners who might lose the opportunity for free trials (Commissive Speech Act). Again, an indirect speech act of promising (Commissive Speech Act) is employed in quotes (12 and 14) to persuade the listeners of a "free" product.

(Quote 15)

"Because it's so potent, please take no more than one capsule a day."

(Quote 16)

"Take one *capsule* once a day"

These quotes include manipulative speech acts of direct instructing (Directive Speech Act). To instruct someone on how to use a product, they already have it. What the speaker does is indirectly invite the listener to obtain the product.

(Quote 17)

Congratulations - you have called in time to get *one of the last 100 trials* of AF Plus we are giving away for this radio airing, which means you qualify for a *full size supply* of this once-a-day weight loss breakthrough! It is so powerful that *it even works while you sleep*.

The expressive speech act of congratulating was manipulated in the above utterance. It manipulates listeners' feelings to think their call is an accomplishment that deserves congratulation. This gives customers a feeling of guaranteed results. There is another speech act employed here, which is that of indirect threatening "one of the last 100 trials" (Commissive Speech Act). Hearing this, the listener should be intimidated by the idea of losing a good chance to others who are already getting congratulated. Furthermore, a speech act of asserting (Assertive Speech Act) is employed "it even works while you sleep!" By misrepresenting this fact, the speaker aims to persuade listeners to make calls. There is also an indirect promise to get the "full-size supply" to anyone who responds at once (Commissive Speech Act).

(Quote 18)

"With a few quick steps, *I can help you* get your *risk-free* supply."

Once again, they are indirectly promising listeners of providing help "*I can help you*" and "*risk-free*" opportunities (commissive Speech Act).

(Quote 19)

"[AF Plus/ Final Trim for Men] is an *all-natural* weight loss supplement containing extract of the [Brazilian Acai Berry/ konjac root], which has been featured on major television shows because of its powerful health and weight loss benefits! [...] With *metabolism-boosting* [...], *you can keep eating* your favorite foods and STILL lose pounds and inches—in fact, we *guarantee it!* [AF Plus/ FinalTrim] is so easy to use – [...] you can experience maximum weight loss – *pounds in days. It's all natural, safe and healthy* [...]".

Two speech acts are obvious in this quote: The first is the assertive speech act of asserting. The alleged benefits of the AF Plus were misrepresented as facts about the product "*all natural*", "*fat burning power*", "*metabolism-boosting*", and

"*all natural, safe and healthy*". The other is the commissive speech act of promising which is indirectly embedded within those assertions, i.e., continuing to *eat one's "favourite food"* and lose the *guaranteed weight "pounds in days."* Such a promise is associated with a direct speech act of guaranteeing "we guarantee it!" (Commissive Speech Act).

TABLE I DIRECT SPEECH ACTS

Category	Type	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Assertives	Stating	1	28.26	2 nd
	Asserting	12		
Commissives	Promising	2	6.52	4 th
	Guaranteeing	1		
Expressives	Greeting	3	19.57	3 rd
	Thanking	2		
	Congratulating	1		
	Expressing attitude	3		
Directives	Requesting	16	45.65	1 st
	Inviting	1		
	Instructing	4		

TABLE II INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS

Category	Type	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Assertives	Assertive	13	16.46	2 nd
Commissives	Promising	37	63.29	1 st
	Threatening	13		
Expressives	Expressing	5	8.86	4 th
	Complaining	2		
Directives	Requesting	3	11.39	3 rd
	Inviting	6		

Table I and II denotes that the only four categories of speech acts were performed: assertives, commissives, expressives, and directives. However, this is a strange phenomenon. Direct and indirect speech acts are opposite in their occurrences. It was found that the directive speech acts of direct requesting have the highest frequency (16), and with direct inviting and instructing, the percentage of the directives becomes (45%). By contrast, the indirect speech act of requesting has one of the lowest frequencies (3), and indirect inviting the percentage of indirect directives becomes (11).

On the other hand, direct promising and guaranteeing (commissives) are the lowest among the direct speech acts with merely (6%) of occurrence. However, promising as an indirect (commissive speech act) has the highest rate among all speech acts (37) and (46%). Furthermore, direct and indirect assertives and expressives also seem to be opposing in their frequency.

5. Conversational Strategies

1. Urging: This is one of the most common strategies used frequently in commercials. Creating a sense of urgency pressures listeners to act immediately before a limited opportunity ends. Examples include *just call*", "*right now*", "*hurry*", "*[b]e among the first to call*", "*for the next five minutes*", "*[p]articipation is only guaranteed today and space is limited*", "*these last 100 trials*," etc.

2. *Exaggeration*: The commercial makers made quite a number of exaggerated claims, making the products look extremely persuasive to potential listeners who are in need of a fast, inexpensive, and easy way to lose weight. Some instances include “*absolutely risk-FREE*”, “*all natural*”, “*it even works while you sleep!*”, “*join the tens of thousands of people*”, “*I’ve lost a ton of weight*”, “*you can keep eating your favourite foods and STILL lose pounds and inches- in fact we guarantee it!*”, etc. These and more are scattered throughout advertisements.

3. Trust and Authenticity Building

The advertisers created a sense of trustworthiness and legitimacy by relying on the restating opinions of “*the Surgeon General*” and “*Mayo Clinic research*” concerning health issues and obesity. Such references were made solely to legitimize advertisements. In (quote 19) the advisers relied upon the public's perspective of some “*natural ingredients*” in their relation to weight reduction like the “*Brazilian Acai Berry*”, and “*konjac root* (quote 19)”. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), news about Acai Berry concerning weight reduction is fake and deceitful (www.ftc.gov).

4. Appealing to Emotions

When product makers spoke about themselves or their products, the expressions chosen were vibrant in confidence, power, and trustworthiness. Words like “*confident, guarantee, giving out, etc.*” were used. Two different turns of tone occurred: one when addressing women, and the other when addressing men. The language used in the commercial of AF Plus invokes pity, weakness, for beauty “*if you’re a woman and you’re overweight, you’re less likely to be successful*”, “*looked at your body and wanted to cry?*”, “*Countless pounds and inches and dress sizes.*” In the Final Trim ad, the language expressions became more masculine, strong and challenging “*Grab your phone,*” “*hard-earned muscle,*” “*killing your muscle,*” “*this warning is for men,*” “*we need your help,*” “*are you ready to go toe to toe with your belly fat,*” “*pound to pound challenge.*”

5. *Personalisation*: The ads use **personal pronouns** like “*you*” to refer directly to a potential listener in need of a way to lose weight. This technique makes the products tailor made for potential listeners. The use of “*I*” and “*we*” identifies the speakers as providers of personal experience, professional knowledge, and a golden opportunity for losing weight. Utterances like “*I can help you,*” “*we need your help,*” This creates a personal connection as well as a hint of authority that makes the message more personal and more persuasive.

6. *Repetition*: This is a prominent strategy deployed in advertising. Repetition of the same false claims in order to persuade the listeners of those misrepresentations as facts, as the saying goes “*Repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth.*”

TABLE III CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGIES

Conversational strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Urgency/pressure	36	24.32	1 st
Exaggeration	34	22.97	2 nd
Repetition	32	21.62	3 rd
Trust and authenticity building	5	3.38	6 th
Appealing to emotions	12	8.11	5 th
Personalisation	29	19.59	4 th

Table III illustrate the appears that advertisements rely heavily on the conversational strategy of urgency and creating pressure to push customers into the scheme without taking the required time to think or question the offer. Other strategies, such as exaggeration and repetition, are also utilized mainly to persuade listeners with the generous offer and benefits of the products.

2. Implicature

The phrase “*(absolutely) risk-Free*” is mentioned 33 times throughout the commercials (quotes 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 18). This represents a breach of three maxims. Speakers breach the maxim of **quantity** because they are less informative than necessary. The utterance does not specify which risks are avoided (financial risks, health risks, or both). Even if it specifies the risks, the speakers violate the **quality** maxim in saying what

they believed “*to be false.*” They do not intend the trials to be risk-free, and eventually consumers will suffer financially due to false claims. As for the maxim of manner, the speakers did not bother to “*avoid ambiguity*” because the phrase “*risk-free*” might be interpreted differently.

These products (AF Plus and Final Trim) are healthy and “*powerful*” in weight loss are presented as facts, for example, (17, & 19). However, this is not what the speakers believe. Therefore, the maximum quality was breached. Furthermore, without providing scientific proof of their claims, commercial makers are not informative and breach the maxim of quantity.

Advertisers repeatedly state that the products are “*Proven*”. It is not stated who or what *proved* the safety and efficiency of their products; hence, they were found to breach the quantity maximum. Additionally, they breach the quality maxim since such a claim is not what they believe to be true.

(Quotes 2, 3, and 4) present characters that are not real. The speakers knowingly present themselves using false names and stories, hence breaching the quality maxim. Commercial makers claim that these products are safe, efficient, and two of the healthiest ways to lose weight. Furthermore, presenting the three ingredients as if they were powerful in reducing weight lacks scientific evidence and flouts the quality maximum. In (quote 19), to “*keep eating [one’s] favorite foods and STILL lose pounds and inches*” is an illogical exaggeration that was presented as a fact. It is not what the

speaker believes or has evidence for; hence, breaching the maxim of quality.

TABLE IV IMPLICATURE

Maxim breached	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Quality	38	39.58	1 st
Quantity	28	29.17	2 nd
Relation	11	11.46	4 th
Manner	19	19.79	3 rd

In Table IV illustrate the appears as expected, the most breached conversational maxim is the maxim of quality. It is approximately breached 38 times throughout the commercials with a percentage of (39.58%). This adds a heavy layer of lies on most of what is stated by the commercial makers. The characters are false, their experience with weight loss, the efficiency of the product and the alleged risk-free supplies are all lies made up for the sole purpose of persuading people to participate in the alleged event. This prints a picture where the advertisers rely heavily on stating lies in their marketing process. The maxim of quantity is breached 28 times making it second to the maxim of quality. Many details are not stated or omitted from the advertisements such as details about cancelling the trial, scientific evidence for the efficiency of the product, etc. The manner and relation maxim are breached (19) and (11) times respectively. This means that the advertisers relied on ambiguous, unclear and even irrelevant information to persuade add authenticity and legitimacy to their claims.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The present study arrives at the following:

1. Fraud is a crime mostly based on language. Fraudsters rely on language as the first tool for fraudulent conduct. These combined components, that is, misrepresentation, the intent of offenders, and the ignorance of trusting victims, leading them to hand over their property willingly, constitute fraud as a crime.
2. The concept of fraud encompasses several definitions. The dilemma for not adopting a single united definition of fraud is that it would be rigorous, and there would be no room for flexibility among different jurisdictions.
3. Fraudsters intensively and manipulatively employ speech acts in their schemes. They build their intentionally chosen acts by taking advantage of context, fake identities, and assumed shared knowledge.
4. Whether directly/ indirectly, explicitly/ implicitly, criminals apply speech acts in conveying messages that contradict their real intentions to deceive/ harm.
5. Fraudsters' use of the indirect commissive speech act of promising is prominent since they aim to persuade consumers and avoid direct liability or commitment.

6. Advertisers rely heavily on direct requests as a way of enforcing authority, since they have the power (knowledge and product) needed by consumers.
7. Fraudulent advertisements are characterized by a high level of repetition. This is a way of emphasizing the importance of marketed products and a technique for making a lie more believable and lighter on the ear.
8. Advertisements with fraudulent schemes are highly exaggerated. Setting high expectations for the marketed products and highly exaggerated promises just for one listening to the radio commercial must be dealt with as a big red flag.
9. Another red flag that must be considered is pressure and urgency. Pushing the customer to make a hasty decision should not be overlooked in advertisements.
10. The connection between fraud and implicature is that fraudulent actions rely on (false) implicature. Speakers may deliberately omit crucial information or convey misleading messages without correcting others (mis)understanding. This may result in indirect deception.
11. Fraudulent advertisements are filled with false testimonies, unreal characters, misrepresentations, and lies that have no real evidence (high breaching frequency of the quality maximum).
12. The fewer the details provided about the product, the more questionable the advertisement. The more irrelevant the details, the larger the red flag. The fraudster's goal is to hide information that has a negative effect. By contrast, the fraudster pours information that deceitfully adds legitimacy to the advertisement.

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